

SWAZILAND

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

Swaziland is a small state of the Commonwealth and a regular contributor to COL's budget.

SUMMARY

In the 2003-2006 planning period COL's work with Swaziland has included:

- Supporting numerous representatives from Swaziland in attending professional development programmes, forums and policy development initiatives in the areas of copyright, open schooling and ODL;
- Supporting active participation from Swaziland in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) initiative; and
- Various visits by the President of COL and COL education specialists to discuss country specific needs and planning on how COL can assist Swaziland in the attainment of its education and agriculture objectives.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

Working in partnership to Strengthen National Systems

The President of COL, Sir John Daniel, visited the University of Swaziland in August 2005. The University faces severe capacity constraints and would like to upgrade its distance education infrastructure.

The President met the Minister of Education, Ms. Constance Simelane in August 2005. Swaziland sees an increasing role for ODL but will need help in translating this into policy and organisation. COL will explore holding an ODL policy forum including participation from Swaziland.

COL sponsored three members from the University of Swaziland to visit the British Open University to investigate the management of a distance education institution.

Working with Regional Partners

Swaziland attended the Africa Copyright Forum Conference which COL co-sponsored. The event was held in Kampala in November 2005 and was attended by 120 delegates from 23 countries. The “Africa Copyright and Access to Information Alliance” was established at the conference and an Interim Board was elected to start the process of addressing copyright and related issues in Africa, with particular reference to education, libraries and people with disabilities.

COL and the Minister of Education (Botswana) agreed to the establishment of a regional centre to support Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries (of which Swaziland is a part) to develop their ODL systems. A Memorandum of Agreement between COL and the Ministry of Education Botswana was signed in June 2004. The SADC Ministers are being informed of the development of the Centre.

Open Schooling

Swaziland participated in the Forum on Open Schooling for Secondary Education, which was held in Botswana in October 2004, to raise awareness and to advocate for the establishment of open schools in the Sub-Saharan region.

Strategic Planning

A Senior administrator from the University of Swaziland attended the 5th “Managing Change, Leadership and Strategic Change in Higher Education – a strategic development programme for leaders of Commonwealth Universities in Africa” Conference in Scotland in August 2004.

Preparation and use of learning materials

Swaziland was a partner in the initiative: “Increasing Access to Secondary School Level Education through the production of Quality Learning Materials” which was initiated at a meeting organised by COL. The meeting was attended by senior Ministry of Education officials and heads of distance education institutions from a number of Sub-Saharan countries in the Commonwealth. Through the project, ODL materials on English, Mathematics and Science at the junior secondary school level were produced. The materials on English and Science have been completed and the materials on Mathematics are being piloted.

Improving Prosperity for Farmers

The report: "Lifelong Learning for Subsistence and Small Scale Farmers" was based on the environmental scan and three case studies in Southern Africa including one on the Swaziland Agricultural Extension Service. The report found that while there are Internet services which provide a range of information and training opportunities, they are not generally within the reach of small scale farmers and that there is no evidence that they are being used by this group in Southern Africa. The report recommended that the "agriculture extension services" appears to be the most obvious point at which COL could become involved in the life long learning for farmers (L3 Farmers) in Southern Africa. Judicious use of the radio by the extension services could ensure that both extension officers and farmers receive relevant information and knowledge.

AIDS awareness and prevention

COL has helped the AIDS Support Centre (TASC) by providing video equipment and training, enabling it to produce weekly programmes that are broadcasted on national TV. The core role of TASC is testing people for HIV and counselling them and training counsellors. COL visited TASC in December 2005 to look at any technological issues/training that TASC might need, assess the situation with the national broadcaster, Swazi TV, who has been broadcasting TASC's weekly AIDS information programme.

Achieving Development Goals through ODL

Swaziland attended the high level institute hosted by COL in Vancouver in May 2005 to explore the relationship between ODL and development. The Institute provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to dialogue across the boundaries of disciplines and functions. The dialogue was facilitated and structured to maximise participation and to ensure the outcome of producing a publication that would address the relationship between ODL and development.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Swaziland is an active participant in the VUSSC (for more details of VUSSC see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

COL sponsored one delegate from Swaziland to attend the 3rd Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning which was held in partnership with Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ) in Dunedin, New Zealand in July 2004.

In the second phase of the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, five students from Swaziland have successfully completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education offered by the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). The five students are now working towards the Masters of Arts in Distance Education offered by IGNOU.

LOOKING FORWARD

Swaziland's successful partnership with COL in 2003-2006 has laid the foundations for future progress in the next planning period 2006-2009. In this period COL will work with Swaziland in three main areas: education, learning for livelihoods and the human environment. COL will also continue to work with WHO and national authorities in Swaziland to support its health media empowerment initiative. Swaziland's commitment to VUSSC was an important element in its 2003-2006 activities and this will form a key part of its future plans to strengthen its education system.