

BARBADOS

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

The eastern most of the Caribbean Islands, Barbados is a small state of the Commonwealth and a contributor to COL since 2005.

SUMMARY

Education and health have been strong themes in the work COL has done with Barbados in the 2003-2006 period. A strong strategic alliance has been forged with the Distance Education Centre of the University of the Western Indies (UWI) particularly in respect of the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF4). This will greatly benefit the working relationship COL has with Barbados. Also favouring a strong alliance with COL is Barbados's participation in the Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

The Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Barbados is participating in VUSSC (see Pan-Commonwealth initiatives section for more details of VUSSC).

Developing capacity in the education sector

In the period 2003-2006 COL worked with the Caribbean Examinations Council to assist in building the capacity to manage the development of open and distance learning materials that support their curricula. An evaluation of the initiative has been done.

Preparation and use of learning materials

A meeting on the proposed book, "Foreign Tertiary Education Providers in the Anglophone Caribbean", was held in Trinidad & Tobago in October 2005. Barbados was represented among the 15 participants. The book will be in hard copy, eBook, CD ROM, PDF and on the COL and UNESCO websites. It will be released during PCF4.

Media Empowerment for AIDS awareness and prevention

COL worked with Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and a local humanitarian organisation, Comfort, Assist, Reach-Out, Educate (CARE), to address issues in the country and region concerning HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. CARE is committed to being the voice of the HIV/AIDS community by educating, rehabilitating, motivating and networking with People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), thus ensuring a better quality of life, making a valuable contribution to society and minimising the impact of HIV/AIDS on the wider community. The COL activity with CARE has given the organisation both the tools and training to tailor their message through television, radio and on-going field events in the communities.

Media Empowerment for schools

In 2006 COL worked with the audio-visual department of the Ministry of Education in Barbados to implement an educational FM radio station to supplement teaching and learning for primary and secondary schools throughout the country.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the request of UWI a meeting was held in Barbados in June 2004 on the quality of distance education in the region. Twenty-three Caribbean professionals attended the event.

Barbadian representatives also attended workshops for Caribbean Chief Education Officers.

LOOKING FORWARD

The excellent working relationship forged between COL and Barbados in the period 2003-2006, particularly the work planned with the UWI in respect of the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF4) will be a good foundation for further progress towards Barbados's education and development goals in the future.

Boys' underachievement at school is a major concern for the Barbadian Ministry of Education. The COL/COMSEC study on this issue includes an account of the position of boys in Barbados and there is scope for further work in this area.

AIDS awareness will continue to be an important theme which will involve UN organisations as well as COL in Barbados.

Participation in VUSSC should yield dividends for Barbados from 2007 onwards.