

# LESOTHO

## COL activities in 2003-2006

### BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, Lesotho became a contributor to COL's budget in 2006.

### SUMMARY

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

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

### POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

#### Working in Partnership to Strengthen National Systems

The President made a planning visit to Lesotho in August 2005 during which he met the Deputy Prime Minister, Archibald Lecro Lehohla, the Acting Minister of Education (and Minister of Health), Dr. M. Phooko and all the senior officials of the Ministry of Education. Teacher training and open schooling emerged as major priorities in these discussions. A visit to the Lesotho College of Education and a meeting with its Rector, Dr. Lesoetsa, identified specific needs in getting ICTs in local centres and the promotion of special needs education.

In a meeting with the Acting Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Lesotho, Professor Mafa M. Sejanamane Lesotho's participation in the VUSSC was discussed and Lesotho agreed to participate.

The Minister of Health expressed a keen interest in working with COL on health issues. In response to this request, COL's education specialist working in the Health arena visited Lesotho in December 2005. Meetings and discussion were held with the WHO Lesotho country office to explore partnership opportunities in an in-country activity.

### **Strategic Planning**

A Senior administrator from the National University of Lesotho attended the 4<sup>th</sup> "Managing Change, Leadership and Strategic Change in Higher Education – a strategic development programme for leaders of Commonwealth Universities in Africa" Conference in Scotland from 17-22 August 2003.

### **Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

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

### **Open Schooling**

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

Lesotho is participating in the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative and the E-School Demonstrator Project (for more details see regional summary for Africa).

The President of COL visited the Lesotho High School where training of the teachers was under way for the launch of the NEPAD eSchools Initiative in Lesotho in August 2005.

### **Working with Regional Partners**

Lesotho is a partner in the regional centre to support the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries to develop their ODL systems. The centre was the subject of a Memorandum of Agreement between COL and the Ministry of Education Botswana signed in June 2004.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Lesotho was represented at the eLearning workshop hosted in Nairobi, Kenya in August 2004 which produced a draft policy framework including ways to create online study materials and support and facilitate learners.

Two participants from Lesotho attended the Management Development Institutes in India (February 2004). These institutes, organised by COL in partnership with the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(October 2003) and the Indian National Council for Educational Research and Training (February 2004), were designed to benefit teacher training college principals and senior administrators from Sub-Saharan Africa.

In October 2004, Singapore hosted the fourth out of a series of five Management Development Institutes. A total of 20 teacher educators from Sub-Saharan Africa participated, including one from Lesotho. All these workshops are jointly sponsored by COL and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore.

In the second phase of the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, five students from Lesotho 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 (MADE) by IGNOU.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

COL and Lesotho have had a very successful partnership in 2003-2006 which has included several face to face meetings to discuss future direction. In the next planning period COL's work with Lesotho will focus on education, learning for livelihoods and the human environment. Lesotho's commitment to VUSSC will be an important support to its efforts to strengthen the education system.