

# MAURITIUS

## COL Activities 2003-2006

### BACKGROUND

Mauritius has a history of close links with COL and its presidents. James Maraj, COL's first president, served as Executive Director of the Mauritius Tertiary Education Commission from 1995-1997. In 1989 Mauritius commissioned a study from COL on *Distance Education for Human Resources Development in Mauritius: The Way Forward* which was carried out by John Daniel, then president of Laurentian University, Canada and, since 2004 the third president of COL. COL's second president, Gajaraj Dhanarajan, was a regular visitor to the island.

The 1989 report led directly to the University of Mauritius' decision to embark on distance education and become a dual mode institution. Since then, in keeping with its steady economic development and diversification, Mauritius has expanded its tertiary system with the creation of the Mauritius University of Technology and COL is now involved in discussions about a third university, designated as the Open University. Mauritius is a regular contributor to COL's budget (\$50,000 annually) and is closely involved in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Successive Ministers of Education have taken personal interest in the development of COL and more recently the Minister of Education was an active member of the Steering Committee of VUSSC. In August 2006 Mauritius hosted representatives from 14 states for VUSSC's first three-week course development session.

### SUMMARY

Mauritius has worked closely with COL over the period 2003-2006 and has been active in several new initiatives as well as pursuing on-going goals. It has played an important role in developing the VUSSC and has been an active participant in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-schools initiative as well as contributing towards policy development with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Notably on the professional development side, Mauritius hosted a training of trainers workshop for 12 countries of the South African Development Community sub-region.

## **POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT**

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

Mauritius has supported the creation of VUSSC (see Pan-Commonwealth initiatives section for more details of VUSSC) in a number of ways. It participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Strategy meeting of Interlocutors and Institutional Managers in Singapore in April 2006 and in August 2006 it hosted the VUSSC Workshop on course creation. This was a very successful meeting which drew support from the highest levels of Mauritian government (three ministers attended the event). A number of new directions were agreed on by the participants which will set the foundations for VUSSC's courses and Mauritius will lead future work on the eco-tourism and environment component of these.

### **New Partnerships for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-schools initiative**

Mauritius has been an active participant in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) e-schools initiative from its inception (see regional summary for more details of the initiative). It took part in the international symposium convened by COL on the application of multimedia to the schooling sector of the education system. Mauritius is also helping to test the application of the theory. Six Mauritian schools (along with schools from 15 other countries) are included in the e-schools demonstrator project. The project aims to accrue a body of knowledge, based on real-life experiences of the implementation of information and communications technology (ICT) in schools across the African continent that will serve to inform the rollout of the broader e-schools initiative. COL (with INFODEV) has the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the demonstrator project.

### **Policy on Distance Education in Africa**

Mauritius leads the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Working Group on Distance Education.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Mauritius has both attended and hosted international professional development events promoted by COL in the 2003-2006 period. This activity has been valuable in fostering international co-operation and enabling decision makers and professionals involved in delivering educational objectives to share valuable expertise and experience.

The Industrial and Vocational Training Board in Mauritius hosted a training of trainers workshop for 12 countries of the SADC Sub-Region in April 2005. The workshop was organised jointly by COL, UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre and UNESCO-BREDA. It provided a useful introduction to the benefits of using ICT in delivering technical and vocational education and training (TVET) core curricula. The workshop also looked at how using ICT for TVET could contribute to achieving Education for All.

Mauritius was represented at the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa's advocacy meeting in March 2005. At the meeting, supported by COL, Permanent Secretaries and Senior Education Officials were briefed about ODL and DEASA's programme.

Mauritius sent a representative to the BA in ODL Writers Workshop organised by COL and the University of South Africa from 28 November - 5 December 2004.

A Mauritian teacher-educator joined 19 other teacher-educators from Sub-Saharan Africa for the fourth out of a series of five Management Development Institutes which was held in Singapore in October 2004.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

Mauritius looks set to build upon its achievements in the period 2003-2006 by continuing to work with COL and its commonwealth partners to further education and development goals in 2006-2009.

In the period 2006-2009 it hopes to build capacity in its university sector. It will establish a third national university, designated as the Open University. COL proposes to assist in this by helping to define the mission and methods of the new university. The University of Technology Mauritius, the Mauritius Institute of Education and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute have all also expressed interest in working with COL to expand their capacity in ODL. Mauritius has expressed interest in drawing on COL's experiences in Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) to add value to their initiatives related to their development initiative on agro-industries that is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Mauritius will continue its active international co-operation. It will be a major player in the creation of VUSSC and will lead course and curricula development in eco-tourism and environment. Mauritius will continue to be an active partner in the NEPAD e-schools initiative as it rolls out a more extensive programme. It will also continue to lead the ADEA Working Group on Distance Education.