ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

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Guidelines from the Commonwealth of Learning:
1. Review the use of ODL in St. Vincent and the Grenadines;
2. Give the top priorities (not more than 5) and what COL can do to further support the national agenda;
3. How can COL best serve its stakeholders' interests?

Using ODL in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with the assistance of various donor agencies, has invested a tremendous amount of resources into the integration of ICT in the education system. Partners such as the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and UNESCO have provided useful financial and technical support in preparing the country to promote and use Open and Distance Learning as another option in our aim to educate the masses.

The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College (SVGCC) is working steadfastly to offer online courses to off-campus students. In the interim, the College has been using its moodle open source learning platform to offer some blended mode courses to some of its on-campus students. At the moment, some tutors use a mixture of online and face-to-face tutoring in delivering some of their courses at the college. The College is working to offer full online TVET programmes to off-campus students by the beginning of the academic year 2014-2015. COL has been involved in working with the College for several years now, primarily in the area of capacity building and helping to lay the platform for ICT integration.

COL has continued its partnership with the SVGCC to strengthen its capacity in the area of eLearning. Several tutors of the college continue to receive training in preparation for the launch of online programmes that will be offered by the college.

TOP PRIORITIES:

Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment
1. Promotion of good health and wellness / Disease prevention and control: Non-communicable Diseases, Communicable Diseases, Mental Health, Health promotion/education, Nutrition and Dental services.
2. Strengthening Health Technologies: A Health Information System, Laboratory Information System, Radiological and Pharmacologic services and E- Health.

Ministry of Education:
3. Enhance the competence of the Education Officers, school administrators and teachers to harness ICT effectively to support high quality teaching, learning / skills development as well as human resource management and development (EMIS) in all educational institutions.
4. Further support the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College in introducing flexible learning modalities to reach remote communities in our multi-island state and strengthen the policy framework for ICT and ODL.

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (Livelihood Programme):
5. Training of farmers in the diversification of agriculture and in agro-processing using mobile phones and other ICT.

In the five priority areas identified above, the Commonwealth of Learning can provide Technical Assistance to develop policies where none exist, to conduct education and sensitization campaigns and to develop teaching and learning materials and resources for the integration of ICT into the curriculum and for delivering ODL.

With regard to the implementation of the second phase of the One Laptop per Child initiative which will provide a state-of-the-art Acer laptop to each student of the secondary schools (approximately 10,000 students) and to the first-year students of the Division of Arts, Sciences and General Studies of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College, the Ministry of Education and the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD) will need to have trained a cadre of technicians to conduct basic troubleshooting of the hardware and for conducting repairs and providing maintenance services for the laptops which are 12,500 in number.

With the enhancement of ICT used as a management tool in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment as well as in the Ministry of Agriculture, it will be necessary for additional support to upgrade the security features of the government's IT and ICT operations with the accompanying policy framework which needs to be developed.

The Commonwealth of Learning can best support its stakeholders by providing technical assistance for the areas outlined above, while ensuring that there are multiple opportunities for the transfer of knowledge and skills so that there is sustainability of the initiatives and activities undertaken.

Two areas of weakness which have been identified in the region are the non-collection of data to use as an evidence base for decision making and Monitoring and Evaluation. The Commonwealth of Learning can therefore work with its stakeholders on eliminating these issues alongside the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), whose Education Development Management Unit (EDMU) has done sterling work in causing countries to produce Education Statistical Digests, alongside CARICOM (and its organs) in its initiatives to develop education and health and wellness and specifically alongside the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) which is the regional repository for pertinent data on student

performance and which can provide invaluable information on trends in education and educational services.

In the region, we need to create synergies and common frameworks within which to operate as a means of gaining greater efficiency in our approaches to development and regional integration.

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