Education in the Commonwealth
18CCEM reviews progress in the context of MDGs

The progress of education in the Commonwealth in the context of the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets, together known as the Internationally Agreed Goals (IAGs), was reviewed during the Ministerial meeting on 31 August 2012, by participating Ministers of the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM).

The 18CCEM hosted by Mauritius from 28 to 31 August 2012 at the Swami Vivekananda International Convention Centre, in Pailles, explored the theme Education in the Commonwealth: Bridging the Gap as we accelerate towards achieving internationally agreed goals. The Conference was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of of Public utilities and Renewable Energy, Dr A. Rashid Beebeejaun, who stressed the importance of education as the driver of economic growth and development of human capital.

Dr Vasant K Bunwaree, Minister of Education and Human Resources, chaired the Conference. The keynote address was delivered by Dr Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, on the theme “Not money but education – valuing Human Development in the face of financial crisis.”
Delegations from 39 countries, of which 34 were led by Ministers, attended the 18CCEM, which also included four parallel forums: Stakeholders, Teachers, Post-Secondary/Higher Education, and Youth. In parallel with the Conference, an exhibition showcased the latest developments in the field of education.

In the communiqué issued after the conference, the Education Ministers affirmed that good progress has been made towards the achievement of the education-related MDGs and EFA targets, namely universal primary education.

However, Ministers noted that despite significant increase of access to education, quality and equity represented common challenges across all Commonwealth countries, thus the call for expanding the core work of the Education Section leading up to 2015 and beyond. The Ministers also urged for the integration in the post-2015 development framework of knowledge and skills that enable young people to meet 21st century requirements.

18CCEM - The forums

The discussions of each of the forums provided specialised background knowledge for Ministerial deliberations from wide-ranging and diverse perspectives. The issues highlighted by the forums were noted by Education Ministers.

The Ministers:
- welcomed the establishment of the Commonwealth Students’ Association;
- agreed that education should remain a core priority of the Secretariat’s work, given the central role of education in development programmes throughout Commonwealth countries, especially its key role in nation building, developing economies, citizenship, personal aspiration, and meeting the needs of the very high number of people aged under 25 in many Commonwealth countries;
- called on the Commonwealth Secretariat to ensure that stakeholders are engaged in the process of meeting the needs of education in the Commonwealth;
- noted that post-secondary education had not been addressed in the existing MDGs for Education, and advocated that it be explicitly included in any forthcoming IAGs for education;
- emphasised the need for education for children in conflict and post-conflict situations.

18CCEM - The outcomes

The launching of Commonwealth Connects, a workspace on-line platform for Commonwealth Education Ministers to share documents, plan projects, collaborate online and access resolutions and repertoire of research in education, was one of the major outcomes of 18CCEM.

The online platform came at an opportune time with the establishment of a Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group during the conference. The Working Group has been tasked with the elaboration of recommendations as regards the new strategies for education for the post-MDGs and post-EFA targets. These recommendations will be presented to the UN high level panel in November 2012.

Further outcomes of the conference included, amongst others, ministerial calls for a common framework for all open universities in the Commonwealth; a variety of strategies to turn Education for Sustainable Development policies into practice through multi-sectorial approach, public/private partnership, and community engagement; and the inclusion of post-secondary education in any forthcoming internationally agreed goals for education.
The construction of the new facility, financed by New Mauritius Hotels as part of its corporate social responsibility commitments, is built on a plot of land of an extent of 585m². The Centre caters for some 3,000 people living in the regions of Trou aux Biches, Pointe aux Biches, Mon Choisy, Triolet Terminus and nearby localities. Basic health services, family planning clinic, antenatal and postnatal care as well as doctor consultations are available in the community health centre.

Hospital dedicated to women’s health care to be set up, says Dr Ramgoolam

An eminent British doctor has been requested to look into the setting up of a hospital specialising in the healthcare for women, recalled the Prime Minister during his address at the inauguration of the Trou aux Biches Community Health Centre.

According to him, the specialist will be called upon to provide consultancy on the matter and that the institution is expected to be operational by 2015. Dr Ramgoolam said that a hospital devoted solely to women’s health care is a must as women have unique health care needs that require special focus, particularly in cases of breast and cervical cancers as well as reproductive health. “Women account for more than half the population and as such, providing quality care to them features among the main concerns of government”, he added.

The Prime Minister also highlighted government’s commitment to ensure that health facilities are within reach of the population as seen by the recent inauguration of several health infrastructure projects namely the new Block C at Flacq Hospital and Mahmoodkhan Hyderkhan Mediclinic in Plaine Verte.

About 8.5% of the 2012 national budget, that is some Rs 7.9 billion, is directed to the health sector.
Health
Training for 20 Mauritian surgeons in Laparoscopic Surgery

A five-day training session in laparoscopic surgery, at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, brought together around 20 Mauritian surgeons from across the five regional hospitals of Mauritius. The aim was to train the surgeons in adopting minimally invasive surgery in all hospitals of the country and thus reduce the practice of conventional surgery in the years to come.

The training session, which opened on 21 August 2012, was conducted by Prof Jean Michel Fabre, Head of Department of Digestive Surgery, Centre Hospitalier Regional Universitaire de Montpellier and Dr Pierre Blanc, Visceral Surgeon, St Etienne Hospital in France.

Laparoscopic surgery
Laparoscopic surgery, which is also known as minimally invasive surgery, is a modern surgical technique in which operations in the abdomen are performed through small incisions (usually 0.5–1.5cm) as opposed to the larger incisions needed in laparotomy.

This type of surgery will be primarily beneficial to the patients in terms of lesser scars and pain as well as early recovery and discharge from hospital. To the surgeons, this technique provides better vision and implies lesser risk of complications.

The practice of laparoscopic surgery will result in less bed occupancy, reduction of the waiting list and early return of patients to their routine and to their work.

New boost to Mauritian seafood hub
Massive investment from French Fishing company

The Mauritian fisheries sector will benefit from some Rs 8 to 10 billion worth of investment to be made by French fishing group Sapmer. This direct investment will provide a new boost to the seafood hub of the country.

Sapmer, which will operate from Mauritius, will acquire a new fleet of high performing purse seiners with -40°C freezing capacity. It will also build a new processing plant. The project is expected to provide direct job opportunities to some 500 persons.

A total of five vessels, including two of 90m and three of 80m length, will be purchased from 2012 to 2014. Each vessel will cost around Rs 1 billion and their construction undertaken in Vietnam.

The new fish processing plant, valued at Rs 3 billion, will be located in the port area. Product development will focus essentially on the highly-sought ‘sashimi’ grated products for the international markets, especially Japan where raw fish is preferred.

Such development will ensure an average of 6 000 tonnes of fish per year per vessel and these ships will bring about 30 000 tonnes of frozen fish to Port Louis for storage and processing. The purse seiners that will operate from Port Louis harbour will bear the Mauritian flag and will be registered in Mauritius.

It is recalled that Sapmer already operates from Reunion island and has been present in Mauritius through joint ventures with Mauritian seafood processing and storage companies.
Mauritius-Nigeria
Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement signed

A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) which will give further spur to the positive evolution of economic ties between Mauritius and Nigeria was signed on 10 August 2012 at Le Maritim Hotel in Balaclava. Signatories were the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mr Xavier-Luc Duval, and the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for Economy of Nigeria, Dr. Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

It is expected that the DTAA will provide greater tax certainty for businessmen while making clear the taxing rights of Mauritius and Nigeria on all forms of income arising from cross-border economic activities. It will also give a boost to cross-border investment by protecting investors from direct or indirect double taxation and enhance the commercial and economic relations and broaden investment opportunities for the business community of both countries.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Vice-Prime Minister Duval highlighted the increasing role of Mauritius as a gateway for investment in Africa, adding that Mauritius is willing to strengthen economic relations with Nigeria. Nigeria which is the second fastest growing economy in Africa with seven percent average growth over the last decade offers important opportunities for Mauritian businessmen, he said. Mr. Duval outlined the hotel industry, agriculture, food processing, ICT, construction and financial services as potential sectors where both countries can trade.

For her part, Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala recalled that Nigeria has several natural resources mainly minerals and oil. According to her, the level of trade within Africa is low mainly due to trade barriers. She expressed the hope that the DTAA will help bring down those barriers and improve integration between Nigeria and Mauritius.

Mauritius has so far signed Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements with thirty-seven countries and is also committed to developing a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with countries with which we do not have a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement.

Integrated Social Development Programme
Twenty-two families of Dubreuil receive housing units

Twenty-two families, namely ex-squatters in the region of Dubreuil, have been allocated housing units constructed under the Integrated Social Development Programme of the National Empowerment Foundation. The house keys were handed over to them on 10 August 2012.

Funded to the tune of around Rs 7.3 million, the project initiated in collaboration with the Mauritius Housing Company, is in line with Government’s endeavour to provide assistance to low-income families who have a monthly income of less than Rs 6 200, and to provide support to vulnerable families who have difficulties to meet their housing needs.

The housing units, made up of concrete and of floor area of about 32.5 m², have been structured in such a way so as to offer the possibility to the residents, if they wish at a later stage, to extend their houses both laterally and vertically.

Moreover, in a bid to provide a decent dwelling to all, Government intends to construct around 1 000 housing units annually to meet housing demand for families of different income levels. For this year, some 581 such houses have already been delivered to beneficiaries across the island. More similar projects are in the pipeline, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development having allocated a budget of about Rs 1.5 billion for the housing project.
Economic Indicators
Contribution of ICT sector to GDP increases to 6.7% in 2011

The contribution of the ICT Sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from 6.4% in 2010 to 6.7% in 2011 according to the latest figures released by Statistics Mauritius in its August 2012 issue of the Economic Indicators.

The value added of the ICT sector rose by around 12% from Rs 17,036 million in 2010 to Rs 19,004 million in 2011 leading to the increased share in GDP.

The Mauritian ICT sector comprises ICT-related activities in the following areas: Manufacturing, Telecommunications, Wholesale and Retail Trade, and Business Services such as call centres, software development and website development. Around 43% of value added of the ICT sector in 2011 was generated by activities of Telecommunications and 11% by Wholesale and Retail Trade.

As reported by Statistics Mauritius, between 2010 and 2011, ICT access improved in the country. Increases were registered in:

- The incoming and outgoing capacity of internet access by 71.3%, that is, from 3,900.0 Megabits per second to 5,806.0 Megabits per second
- The number of internet subscriptions by 30%, that is, from 284,200 to 370,000
- The total number of mobile cellular subscriptions from 1,190,900 to 1,294,100
- The proportion of households with a computer: 37.5% (2011)
- The proportion of households with internet access at home: 27.9% (2011).

Figures also show that:

- The international internet bandwidth increased from 2641.4 to 4505.4 bits per inhabitant.
- Employment in large establishments (employing 10 or more persons) operating in the ICT sector increased by around 2% from 12,826 in 2010 to 13,116 in 2011.

Mauritius made progress towards becoming an information society from 2010 to 2011. The ICT Development Index (IDI) for the country, which ranges from 0 (lowest ICT development) to 10 (highest ICT development), improved from 4.00 in 2010 to 4.37 in 2011.

Latest IDI figures compiled by the International Telecommunications Union are available by country for 2010. According to these figures, Mauritius ranked 69th among 152 countries in 2010 in terms of ICT development while Korea (IDI of 8.40) ranked first.
International Association of Prosecutors Conference hosted by Mauritius

The 2nd regional conference of the International Association of Prosecutors (IAP) for Africa-Indian Ocean region was hosted from 26 to 29 August 2012 by Mauritius.

Plenary sessions focused on the following themes: struggle against impunity; challenges to prosecutorial discretion; piracy in the Indian Ocean; victim and witness protection and asset recovery.

Jointly organised by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the IAP, the conference held at Sofitel Imperial Hotel, Flic en Flac, brought together some 175 participants from the judiciary, both local and foreign. Participants from United Kingdom, South Africa, Cameroon, Benin, Ireland, Uganda, Australia, Kenya, Seychelles, Singapore, United States, Zambia and Hong Kong attended.

About IAP

IAP, a non-governmental and non-political body, is the only worldwide organisation of prosecutors. It has over 144 Organisational members – comprising associations of prosecutors, prosecution agencies and crime prevention agencies. Together with its individual membership IAP represents over 200,000 prosecutors in more than 140 countries/jurisdictions.

Established in June 1995 at the United Nations offices in Vienna, the IAP was formally inaugurated in September 1996 at its first general meeting in Budapest. The rapid growth in serious transnational crime, particularly drug trafficking, money laundering and fraud led to the creation of the IAP.

Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies launched

The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies was launched on 27 July 2012 by the President of the Republic, Mr Rajkeswur Purryag at the Grand Baie International Conference Centre. The Attorney-General, Mr Yatin Varma and the Chief Justice Mr Sik Yuen, were also present.

Currently based in the premises of the Mediation Division of the Supreme Court at the Happy World House in Port Louis, the Institute is in the process of finalising the details of the first courses to be dispensed during the first quarter of its first academic year.

The Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Act 2011 establishes the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies which is entrusted with the responsibility to:

- Conduct or supervise courses, seminars or workshops for the continuous training of judicial and legal officers
- Devise, organise and conduct Continuing Professional Development Programmes for law practitioners and legal officers, and courses for prospective judicial and legal officers and law practitioners who qualified as such in a State other than Mauritius
- Organise and conduct courses for police and public officers, court staff and persons employed by law practitioners, with a view to improving the administration of justice
- Promote proficiency and ensure the maintenance of standards in the Judiciary and among law practitioners and legal officers, and in the delivery of court services in general
- Establish areas of cooperation and linkages with local, regional and international bodies in the judicial and legal sectors.

It is to be noted that the Law Practitioners (Amendment) Act 2011 makes it compulsory as from 3 September 2012 for every law practitioner and legal officer to participate every year in a Continuing Professional Development Programme for the prescribed number of hours.
A get-together, in honour of the 31 laureates of the 2011 Higher School Certificate (HSC) Examinations, was hosted on 9 August 2012 at Clarisse House in Vacoas. Addressing the laureates on that occasion, the Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, observed that life is a constant battle and to succeed, one needs perseverance, determination and preparedness.

Dr Ramgoolam stressed the importance of a liberal education and broadening one’s horizon in a bid to have an edge in this globalised world. He said that a well-read and cultured person is bound to succeed in life. To that end, he told the laureates that they should learn to communicate properly as well as read great authors to master language and to have clarity of mind.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister appealed to them to keep an open mind and to search for a larger role and purpose in their lives. He pointed out that it is during that time that their character will be moulded and they will learn to establish a solid foundation for later life. Dr Ramgoolam invited them to come back to Mauritius after their studies and to move the country forward.

It is recalled that each year, scholarships are granted to laureates under various categories, namely the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National scholarship, State of Mauritius scholarship, MCB Foundation scholarship, Additional scholarship, and Rodrigues Open scholarship.

The meeting served as platform for participants to look at the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in efforts to harness the development potential of labour mobility for the benefit of the people in the SADC region.

Discussions focused on the broader view on labour migration management that takes into account development needs, the management of human mobility and the broader contribution of labour migration within the overall context of regional development.

The meeting was also a preparatory platform for the main Global Forum on Migration and Development Summit to be chaired by Mauritius in November this year.

Enhancing intraregional labour mobility towards social and economic development in the SADC region - was the focus of a three-day technical meeting on Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) 2012 which opened on 27 August at Intercontinental Hotel, Balaclava.

Jointly organised by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Regional Office for East and Southern Africa in Pretoria, IOM Mauritius, the SADC Secretariat and the Government of Mauritius, the event brought together local and foreign delegates. These delegates were from government, private sector, regional economic commissions and civil society groups working to advance labour mobility and skills development. Permanent Secretaries responsible for issues of migration and their counterparts responsible for labour mobility also attended.
**Economic Indicators**  

The population of the Republic of Mauritius is growing at a rate of 0.4% since mid-2011 and was estimated at 1,291,456 as at 1st July 2012, reveals the last issue of the Economic and Social Indicators on the Population and Vital Statistics (January-June 2012).

The population of the Islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues were estimated at 1,253,000 and 38,167 respectively. In both islands, females outnumbered males. Agalega and St. Brandon had an estimated population of 289 with 97 more males than females.

Figures reported by Statistics Mauritius also show that:

- The number of live births registered during the first semester of 2012 was 7,429, that is, three live births less than that registered in the period January to June 2011. Some 14,760 live births are forecast for the year 2012. The crude birth rate will be 11.4 in 2012 (same as in 2011).

- There were 4,512 deaths registered during the first six months of 2012, 120 more than that registered in the corresponding period in 2011. About 9,210 deaths are expected for the year 2012, resulting in a crude death rate of 7.1 (same as in 2011).

- The number of infant deaths registered during the period January to June 2012 was 101 against 103 for the same period in 2011. About 195 infant deaths are forecast for the year 2012, resulting in an infant mortality rate of 13.2, against 12.9 in 2011.

- The number of still births registered during the first half of 2012 was 74 compared to 73 for the same period in 2011. Around 147 still births are expected during the year 2012, resulting in a still birth rate of 9.9 compared to 9.4 in 2011.

- The number of marriages registered from January to June 2012 was 4,595 compared to 4,913 for the same period in 2011. About 10,240 marriages are forecast for the year 2012. The crude marriage rate will be around 15.9 against 16.3 in 2011.
Rodrigues
Grants totalling Rs 1.76 million presented to three NGOs

Three Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from Rodrigues received, on 27 August 2012, grants totalling Rs 1.76 million under the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress to fund approved projects.

The cheques were handed over to the three NGOs at Mon Plaisir Cultural and Leisure Centre, Rodrigues, by the Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs Mireille Martin, during her visit to Rodrigues from 26 to 29 August 2012.

In 2011, nine projects benefitted from the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress and received cheques totalling up to Rs 6.827 million.

Other activities
Several other activities were organised during the visit of Minister Martin in Rodrigues. These included the launching of a campaign on Gender Equality at Papayes Community Centre with the aim to sensitise participants on the concept; the holding of a Consultative Meeting, at the Human Resource Centre, Malabar, on the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence; and, several workshops focusing on the facilities and activities of the Family Unit, the Gender Unit and the Child Development Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare.

The Minister also had a working session with the Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Women’s Affairs, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs Franchette Gaspard-Pierre Louis.

The Special Collaborative Programme

The objective of the Programme, run by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, is to provide financial support to NGOs, Community Based Organisations and Non-State Actors to implement projects focused on enhancing the livelihoods of women and children in distress and creating opportunities for their integration in the mainstream of development.