

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

© Commonwealth Secretariat 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or otherwise without the permission of the publisher.

Published by the Commonwealth Secretariat
Edited by editors4changeLtd
Typeset by Techset Composition
Cover design by Rory Seaford Design
Printed by Charlesworth Press

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author and should in no way be attributed to the institutions to which he is affiliated or to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Wherever possible, the Commonwealth Secretariat uses paper sourced from sustainable forests or from sources that minimise a destructive impact on the environment.

Cover photo credit: (c) Victoria Holdsworth, 2009

Copies of this publication may be obtained from

Publications Section
Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 7747 6534
Fax: +44 (0)20 7839 9081
Email: publications@commonwealth.int
Web: www.thecommonwealth.org/publications

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN (paperback): 978-1-84929-090-6
ISBN (e-book): 978-1-84859-146-2

Foreword

At the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in 2009, the Commonwealth Secretariat was asked 'to prioritise the work to take account of global trends', including 'Education for sustainable development, with particular emphasis on climate change'. Similarly, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group identified climate change as a key priority for action by the Commonwealth in its recommendations presented to Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2011.

The Commonwealth's focus on climate change is not coincidental. Of its 54 members, 32 are considered small states – countries with a population of 1.5 million or less, or, like Jamaica and Papua New Guinea, countries which share many of the characteristics of small states.

Small developing states in the Caribbean Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, a significant number of which are Commonwealth member countries, represent some of the most vulnerable countries with regard to climate change. They are already confronted with its effects, including rising sea levels, increasing drought and the increase in frequency and intensity of tropical cyclones or hurricanes. While current and forthcoming impacts of climate change on agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism and trade put their populations in danger, these states continue to have low adaptive capacity to climate change. Consequently the need to accelerate and deepen understanding and action on the environment is particularly pressing in these states.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is an essential element of the global response to environmental challenges. ESD helps learners of all ages, especially young people, understand and address the impact of global warming, highlights and encourages changes in attitudes and behaviour to help mitigate evolving environmental concerns, and gives them the knowledge and skills necessary for them to adapt to that change. In particular, education of girls and women has a remarkable impact on the capacity of communities to better manage their livelihood practices and adapt to environmental change. While education can help address the root causes of environmental degradation in all countries by promoting sustainable lifestyles and development, the adaptation capacities of affected communities can be further enhanced by education programmes that explicitly prepare for disasters and promote indigenous knowledge.

This study identifies good practices in ESD, analysing the factors underlying their success and how they can be adapted to other contexts. The study also assists in understanding where shortfalls in ESD implementation lie, how these come about, and to learn from and apply the educational initiatives which have been shown to work, so filling in the gaps. The study will enable policy-makers and practitioners

to revitalise the delivery of ESD by revisiting the policies and support frameworks necessary to implement it successfully. It is hoped that the impact of the study will thus be felt from both ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ perspectives – and thereby contribute towards bridging the gap between policy and practice.

Esther Eghobamien

Interim Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division
Commonwealth Secretariat

Acknowledgments

This report has been prepared under the auspices of a Commonwealth Secretariat initiative to support the advancement of education for sustainable development, with a particular focus on the interests of small island developing states. The author is grateful to have had the opportunity to contribute to this important agenda, and would like to express sincere thanks to all of the individuals and organisations who have contributed to this research, especially those in the ministries of education who responded to my requests for information. These contributions have been made both directly, through phone calls and correspondence, and indirectly, by making reports and presentations available online for public consumption. A list of those who have contributed directly to the study is included by name in Appendix B, and the lengthy list of documents which generous individuals and organisations have made available is included in the references. There are also a number of key individuals whose indirect support was invaluable, as they provided additional contacts and leads to follow up with. These individuals reflect the spirit of collaboration and sharing which is so important to our common future. In addition to those individuals named in the appendices, the author would also like to thank Jonathan Penson of the Commonwealth Secretariat for his technical guidance in the framing of this study and his support in liaising with the governments of the focus countries, as well as Kari Donovan and Shannon Bow of Agriteam Canada for their administrative support.

The Commonwealth Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the reviewers of the draft of the report, who made their considerable expertise available at very short notice but who nonetheless provided such astute and considered comments. They are Dr Paulette Bynoe, Omar Mohammed, Dr Suzana Russell and Dr Rachael Williams.