



UNITED NATIONS



TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT

NATIONAL STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

FOR

SAINT LUCIA

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NATIONAL STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Decision-making in the education sector in St. Lucia is centralized yet consultative. While key decisions are made in the upper echelons of the Ministry of Education, stakeholder engagement is also a hallmark of the management process. The development of key policy documents such as the Education Sector Plan have always included consultations with key representatives of teachers, students, principals, parents and the business community to name a few. Hence convening national consultations on the focus areas of the Transforming Education Summit provided a further opportunity to engage stakeholders in reflective discussions on education issues.

The deleterious impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education sector was one area which most stakeholders identified. Concerns for loss of instructional time, fear of the school being a haven for mass transmission of the virus and general lack of preparedness of the education sector for the COVID-19 onslaught were persistently voiced during the national consultations. While the initial response to the pandemic seemed haphazard the Ministry of Education has now instituted clear learning recovery programmes and measures to ensure continuity of instruction in light of the persistence of the pandemic. Such measures include enhancing the physical and human capacities for online learning and working with parents to ensure sufficient time on task when students have to engage in online learning from home.

The key policies and initiatives for transforming education in St. Lucia are documented in the Education Sector Development Plan 2015 - 2020, Medium Term Development Strategy 2020 - 2023, the OESS 2012 - 2026 and to a lesser extent the CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy. These documents highlight the key focus areas for the education sector in the medium and long terms. Focus areas include ICT in Education, TVET, Early Childhood Education, Special Education, school management and student achievement. Plans are afoot to develop a new Education Sector Plan that will encapsulate the priority issues facing the education sector with clear strategies and timelines for accomplishment of goals and targets.

Linked to the proposed formulation of the new Education Sector Plan is the review of national education targets and benchmarks to engender recommitment to local, regional and international education goals. In many areas St. Lucia was on track towards meeting the SDG targets by the 2030 deadline. While the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly retarded progress as much needed

resources were diverted to pressing national issues, the Ministry of Education remains resolute in its pursuit of the SDG targets as key pillars for physical, social and economic development of the island nation. The national consultations provided opportunities to share with stakeholders the many commitments of the education sector to the regional and international community. The Ministry has made it clear to stakeholders its commitment towards the local realization of the SDG targets.

Recognising the critical importance of finance to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 and other challenges in the education sector, the Ministry of Education is constantly seeking ways to harness more resources for the education sector. A cursory analysis of cost and financing of education will reveal the significant disparities in the distribution of the resources. Two thirds of the budget is allocated towards primary and secondary education leaving the remaining third to be shared among critical sectors such as Early Childhood Education, Tertiary Education and Special Education. At another level, the disaggregation of the education budget will reveal that approximately 85% of the education budget is allocated for remuneration of staff. The remaining 15% has to cover the costs associated with training of teachers and principals, procurement of instructional courseware, operational expenses and school repairs.

Improving efficiency in the use of resources is of paramount importance while the Ministry seeks to expand and deepen collaborations with other government agencies and non-governmental organisations. The national consultations provided a useful avenue for various agencies including government and non-government entities to reflect on their level of collaboration with the education sector and to pledge further and deeper collaboration to assist the education sector in achieving its targets.

Grant funding from the international community has been a welcomed supplement to the government allocations to the sector. St. Lucia has demonstrated an inalienable capacity to effectively utilise these additional resources when they are made available and to this end, the Ministry of Education expects that the Transforming Education Summit will catalyze the flow of support to needy states like St. Lucia to increase momentum towards national and international education targets. St. Lucia reaffirms its commitment to the attainment of the SDGs in particular SDG 4 which pertains to the education sector for the holistic development of the country's human resource base.