



Enhancing India-Comoros Bi-lateral Relations in the Field of Education



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Introduction

The Union of Comoros, a former French Colony, is an archipelago of four islands (Anjouan, Mayotte, Moheli, and the largest island, Grande Comore). It has 98 per cent Muslim population and 2 per cent Roman Catholics. Its commonly used language is Shikomoro (Swahili dialect). French and Arabic are also widely spoken as official languages. Around 60 per cent of the population is literate. India established its diplomatic relations with the Union of Comoros in June 1976.

India-Comoros Bilateral Relations

The Indian Mission in Antananarivo is concurrently accredited to Comoros, and India and Comoros have always enjoyed close and friendly relations. Both the countries have similar view on regional and global issues. Comoros is a supporter of India's permanent membership of the UNSC; India is looked upon as a role model of development in Comoros. A proposal to set-up a vocational training centre (VTC) in Moroni to impart skills in plumbing, welding, electricity, civil works, IT, etc. is under consideration by the Government of India. The EXIM Bank of India has offered a concessional credit of US\$41.6 million for establishment of a power plant in Moroni, and this has been accepted by Comoros. An agreement to implement the LoC was signed on 22 February 2013 at New Delhi. Pan African E-network started its operations in Comoros in September 2010. The Government of India had granted exemption from ban on export of 25,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice to the Union of Comoros to relieve food crisis in Comoros in 2008. In December 2012, the Government of India provided

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US\$ 100,000 as assistance to Comoros in April 2012 to combat for losses suffered on account of torrential rains. A number of VVIP/High-Level visits to Comoros from India took place during 2004 to 2013 which are (listed at Appendix 'A'). In October 2011, Shri Gurjit Singh, formerly Additional Secretary (E&SA), Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, paid a visit to the Island to strengthen existing bilateral relations between the countries and also promised to take necessary steps to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the countries. During the visit, announcement of an offer was made for an additional concessional credit of US \$ 35 million for projects to be chosen by the Government of Comoros.

Education in Comoros

The Comorian Ministry of National Education, Research and Arts, headed by Mr Abdou Mhoumadi, is responsible for preparing and implementing government policies in education, teaching, research and to develop and implement its policies, the Ministry of National Education is assisted by a set of departments and services, making up the central administration, which are as follows:

- a general inspection;
- three Commissariats in charge of Education: Ngazidja, Ndzuanani and Mwali; and
- Related institutions.

Three National Commissions

The Comorian education system consists of formal and non-formal education. Formal education involves many levels and types of education. It is composed of pre-school, basic education, general secondary education, technical education and higher education. At each of these levels, besides public education, there is a system of private education, which has been developed considerably in the recent years. The non-formal education sector includes literacy and Islamic schools. Taking into account the analysis done in 2012 of the Comorian education system, to be in line with the national strategy documents, the national education policy is based on the following three priorities:

- Advancing towards the goals of Education for all and the MDGs;
- Creating conditions for the optimisation of resources allocated to education; and
- Improving management and results-based management.
- In addition, strategic orientation defined aim to integrate educational system with the development dynamics of the country. These orientations are in line with the global sectoral vision of a convergence between the internal strengths of the system, capacity development, increasing equal opportunities and the management of development aid. In the end, the Ministry of Education need to meet the following challenges.
- Accelerating access to early childhood development initiatives through the integration of renewed Islamic education into the national education system;
- Accelerating universal primary schooling;
- Diversifying and revitalizing secondary education to increase accessibility and equality of opportunities and to improve quality of teaching and learning;
- Promoting science education in secondary schools in view of the challenges of globalisation;
- Diversifying technical education and vocational training through the creation of technical and vocational secondary schools to meet needs of employment and work;
- Establishing vocational training centres to foster learning for jobs for young people for their integration into working life which is a major challenges for the development of the subsector;
- Strengthening capacity of the SVP to increase the accessibility of a large number of students;
- Improving quality of teaching and learning at the SVP to meet country's human resources needs;
- Strengthening capacities and value research at the SVP to face challenge of globalisation; the major challenge for this sub-sector;
- Promoting functional literacy;

- Guaranteeing empowerment of women to eliminate all forms of disparity between men and women;
- Strengthening capacity of the system in resources and putting in place the planning, administration and management tools; and
- Including systematically in all education programmes and projects effective interventions to ensure awareness, recovery and continuity of education during and after emergencies.

Cooperation in education

It is difficult for the Comorian students to travel to India and integrate with the Indian education system where English is used. However, Comorian student's initiative to come to India is appreciable. They can learn English first and then start their education. Many students from Comoros have come to India to learn English and complete their graduation in different subjects. Some of them have even pursued post-graduation courses. Ten years back, there were almost no Comorian students in India. At present, more than 130 students from Comoros are studying in different colleges and cities in India.

Each year the Government of India offers nine scholarships for the benefit of Comorian students, all in the field of education .

The Government of India has also allocated 30 slots under the ITEC programme, which we have not been able to fill completely under this programme. Comorian officials and students in different disciplines have been trained in Computer, English learning, etc. The Government of India provides free training and full hospitality including airfares.

Moreover, the Government of the India under the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) provides for scholarships to the students.

A number of young diplomats from the Comorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs took part in diplomatic training course in the Foreign Service Institute with full hospitality.

Conclusion

The Indian government has made commendable efforts in favouring the union of the Comoros in all fields, and more particularly in education. Long lasting development cooperation between the Comoros Union and the Republic of India for science, technology and innovation is a pre-requisite.