

THRASS in Mauritius and Southern Sudan – Even More African Children Now Set to Benefit from the THRASS Synthetic Phonics Programme

The THRASS synthetic phonics programme has already been welcomed in the world of education as heralding the start of a new era in the teaching of English in Africa. However, recent developments in Mauritius, where discussions are currently taking place about the implementation of THRASS in a number of government and private primary schools from January 2007, and in Southern Sudan, where the Government has asked THRASS UK to set up three 'Centres of Excellence' for the teaching of THRASS, are further evidence of the esteem in which the THRASS programme is held for teaching children for whom English is a second language.

In Mauritius the mother-tongue is Creole and, even after six years of school, many pupils still haven't mastered the basic principles of reading and writing English. The discussions currently taking place are between representatives of the Mauritius Government, DCDM Business School, private businesses and THRASS UK. DCDM Business School is keen to help local under-privileged children and the proposed pilot scheme is the direct result of the attendance of Soraya Sayed Hassen, Head of the Humanities Faculty, at a THRASS two-day Certificate Course in South Africa at the end of June.

Soraya was extremely impressed by the THRASS course and by Alan Davies, Educational Psychologist and author of Teaching THRASS. She immediately recognized THRASS as having the potential to solve many of the problems faced by children in Mauritius and returned there determined to use THRASS to help improve this situation.

If the pilot scheme goes ahead as planned, training for more than 80 delegates, including teachers, headteachers, cluster co-ordinators and inspectors working in or with the government ZEP (Zones d'Education Prioritaire) schools, is likely to take place in December. THRASS is also likely to be incorporated into the Teacher Training provided to government school teachers so that it becomes easier to implement the THRASS methodology nationwide.

In Southern Sudan, where it is estimated that only 15 percent of the population are literate, the Government has asked THRASS UK to set up three primary schools as 'Centres of Excellence' in the southern capital cities of Wau, Malakal and Juba. Only 20 to 30 percent of children in Southern Sudan are enrolled in school and only 12 percent (eight percent for girls) continue past grade four.

At the end of August, Edward Kokole Juma, Director for Quality Promotion and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology asked Alan Davies, Executive Director of THRASS UK to go ahead and pilot THRASS in Southern Sudan. Kokole has asked the Director General of the Ministry of Education in each of the Western Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile and Central Equatoria states to select the best primary school in their capital city. These schools will be developed into 'Centres of Excellence' for the teaching of THRASS and will then serve as centres for training staff from universities, teacher training institutes and other schools. Juba Arabic is widely used in Southern Sudan, although the language of education and government business is English.

But the Governments of Mauritius and Southern Sudan are by no means the first African governments to recognise the valuable role that THRASS can play in teaching children English. In South Africa the success of THRASS is such that the THRASS Accredited Certificate is already a compulsory module for Foundation Phase student teachers at both the University of the Witwatersrand in

Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria. And in June, Mandla Maseko, the South African Government's Chief Education Specialist for Literacy stated that his Government wants to consider how it can use a programme such as THRASS to benefit the majority of South Africans in public schools. The Botswana Government is also to pilot THRASS and, if successful, it will be implemented in all primary and secondary schools.

Support for the THRASS synthetic phonics programme is growing all the time and the pilot schemes now under development in Mauritius and Southern Sudan will, if they go ahead as planned, enable even more African children to benefit from this truly inspirational resource.

The prospective partners in the THRASS pilot scheme in Mauritius are [DCDM Business School](#), the [Government of Mauritius \(Ministry of Education and Human Resources\)](#), the ZEP stakeholders, such as the [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) and private sector companies [Beachcomber Hotels](#) and the [Mauritius Commercial Bank](#).

The THRASS synthetic phonics programme was the subject of the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation's TV programme, 'Le Journal de 19h30' on 16 July. A videostream of the programme in which the presenter explained the principles of THRASS and spoke about its use and success elsewhere can be seen at mms://thrass.sc-streaming.com/MBC1930_160606.wmv

An article about THRASS and how the THRASS Phoneme Machine and SMART interactive whiteboards could revolutionise the teaching of English in countries where children struggle with it as a second language appeared in the July edition of 'The Propagator' – the Newsletter of the DCDM Business School. It can be seen at www.thrass.co.uk/thrassgoeslive1607.htm.

More information about the autonomous region of Southern Sudan is at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Sudan.

A collection of press releases, articles and videostreams about the success of THRASS across Africa is at www.thrass.co.uk/africanchild.htm

Full details of the THRASS Phoneme Machine, a ground-breaking computer programme that use the International Phonetic Alphabet and moving human lips to demonstrate the pronunciation of sounds (phonemes) and hundreds of frequently used English words are at www.phonememachine.com

Details of THRASS Professional Development Courses which are held regularly in the UK, Europe, West and Southern Africa are at www.thrass.co.uk/courses.htm

A wide range of THRASS resources for parents and schools are at www.thrass.co.uk/resources.htm. A new resource, 'THRASS - 15 Minutes a Day', a four-year scheme of work for schools, will be launched in the UK, Europe and Africa on 18 September.

More detailed 'Notes to Editors' about THRASS in Africa, DCDM Business School, Southern Sudan and the benefits of using THRASS are at www.thrass.co.uk/mauritius_s_sudan_notes.htm

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