COL IN THE COMMONWEALTH
2006 – 2009
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FOREWORD

COL in the Commonwealth is a companion text to Learning for Development, the Commonwealth of Learning’s Three-Year Plan for 2009-2012. This compendium reviews COL’s work over the last three years (2006-2009) country by country. Together these two documents are the springboard for the Country Action Plans that will guide COL’s future activities in each country over the 2009-2012 triennium and ensure that they are consistent with the national priorities of governments.

Ministers were enthusiastic about the previous issue of COL in the Commonwealth that was presented to 16CCEM in Cape Town in 2006. That report covered only developing countries whereas this one, at the request of Ministers, covers all members of the Commonwealth, showing also what COL has done in relation to the international development priorities of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These country reviews are grouped under four regions: Africa (and the Mediterranean), Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

COL tries to create synergy within regions and across the Commonwealth by bringing countries and institutions together in common endeavours. For this reason each grouping of countries begins with a short account of the regional activities which COL has promoted in 2006-2009.

Member States also greatly value COL’s Pan-Commonwealth work, which benefits from the unifying characteristics of the Commonwealth such as a common language, similar constitutional and legal frameworks, and a shared commitment to the values of peace, democracy, equality and good government. Some of the Pan-Commonwealth activities and facilities that underpin COL’s work in the regions and countries are listed in the next section.

The production of COL in the Commonwealth 2006-2009 has been an intense collective effort. COL’s advanced knowledge management systems have enabled us to exploit fully the information contained in the numerous event reports prepared by staff as they work and travel. I express particular gratitude to Jasmine Lee, for diligently updating the country profiles that provided the raw material for these reviews, and to Judith Mosley, who brought this volume together in an impressively efficient and expeditious manner.

Sir John Daniel
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning
BACKGROUND

As a Commonwealth inter-governmental organisation, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has the mandate to operate in all 53 member states. Its work focuses particularly on 46 developing countries across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. COL also seeks to align its activities with the education and training priorities and the countries of particular concern for major donor agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID).

COL has developed Action Plans in consultation with Focal Points and country partners in the 46 member states, with activities specific to the individual needs of each country. However, several activities have a regional or pan-Commonwealth nature. This section looks at pan-Commonwealth activities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

COL provides material and capacity building support for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education in the Commonwealth. A toolkit called the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit includes Quality Indicators for Teacher Education and Best Practices in Teacher Education, was launched in December 2007 to be used by Ministries of Education and teacher education institutions.

COL is also developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools. As a first step towards this, staff members from 14 countries across all Commonwealth regions have been trained in the Quality Assurance of Open Schools. A Quality Assurance Toolkit for Higher Education is nearing completion.

OPEN SCHOOLS

COL encourages the application of open and distance learning (ODL) to increase access to primary and secondary schooling. In support of this, two publications, Perspective Series on Open Schools – Open Schools for the 21st Century.
Century and Handbook for Managers of Open Schools have been completed with contributions from chapter authors across the Commonwealth. Both publications will be distributed as a resource to policymakers. Other resources which have been developed include the Evaluation Study on Open Schools and the Cost and Financing of Open Schools as well as a Learner Support Guide for Open Schools.

In addressing the need for quality educational resources, COL has initiated the development of Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects involving six countries. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

ELEARNING FOR EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

COL has two major and related pan-Commonwealth initiatives in this area: WikiEducator and Learning4Content (L4C).

COL’s WikiEducator (www.col.org/WikiEducator) provides an online service to support online educational communities. Use of WikiEducator has grown rapidly during the past year with the number of registered users passing the 9,020 mark and number of hits per day now exceeding 247,653. A wiki is a website on which any user can edit and update pages. The best known is the Wikipedia, the biggest encyclopaedia ever produced. Wikis are a part of the emerging “Web 2.0” environment that includes user-contributed works such as YouTube and MySpace.

COL’s WikiEducator creates online communities whose members participate from remote locations to create educational content collaboratively and to plan conferences and other events. It is one of the tools used by the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). WikiEducator is reaching 79% of countries around the world and COL is now supporting the installation of a French language version.

The L4C initiative aims to build capacity among educators in using WikiEducator to develop free content for education. Training is free and educators “pay” for their training by donating time to develop one free content lesson of their choice. L4C workshops have already been held in 28 Commonwealth countries and at least one face-to-face workshop will be held in each member state. In addition, 26 online workshops have been held and others are scheduled. Commonwealth teachers and educators are thus becoming WikiEducators themselves, developing and donating one free content resource back to the WikiEducator community.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation approved a grant of USD 100,000 to COL over one year as core support for this initiative.

THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

VUSSC is a collaborative network of small states that create and share materials for livelihood-related post-secondary programmes. Activities during this planning period have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes has also been an area of focus.

The VUSSC is a creation of the participating countries and their existing tertiary institutions. It is a collective mechanism for people to develop expertise in online collaboration, eLearning and information and communication technologies (ICTs). It also provides an opportunity for them to produce, adapt and deploy courses and learning materials on selected subjects identified by country Interlocutors and stakeholders.
The model that has emerged is a three-week training and course development workshop at which subject specialists from a subset of the participating states strengthen their information technology (IT) skills and begin to develop course material collaboratively online. Six workshops were held during this planning period:

1. Entrepreneurship and Tourism, hosted in Mauritius in August 2006.
3. Life Skills, hosted in Trinidad & Tobago in June 2007.

Orientations for the selected team leaders in preparation for the workshops took place in Vancouver six weeks before each workshop.

Senior officials from VUSSC countries met in Singapore in February 2008 to consider, refine and agree mechanisms of a transnational qualifications framework (TQF), the first of its kind. This will allow the 30 participating small states to transfer course materials, qualifications and qualified learners between countries. The South African Qualifications Authority, an organisation of the South African Government with more than twelve years experience in establishing frameworks in South and Southern Africa, helped to prepare a concept document and facilitate the proceedings.

The Ministry Interlocutors for VUSSC met in London in July 2008 to discuss the implementation of the TQF, the establishment of a management committee, the logo and branding of VUSSC, monitoring and evaluation, and copyright issues.

**TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES**

COL designs, develops and delivers distance and technology mediated learning programmes for international organisations with a global workforce. During this planning period, COL has developed and delivered a number of new programmes including: Writing Effectively for the International Labour Organization (ILO); World Bank Writing E-mails, Memos and Letters and World Bank Report Writing; and an Operational Data Management Learning Programme for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These eLearning courses are designed to enhance the skill of staff working in field offices and in headquarters.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE**

COL promotes gender equality in all its programmes. Specific gender-related issues are identified during the work-planning process with country stakeholders and addressed through appropriate research, training and materials development.
COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. The work is based on two workshops hosted by ComSec which concluded that there was limited capacity among the majority of policy makers, senior managers and professionals to mainstream gender equality in their daily work. A critical decision was to explore the role of ICTs and ODL in delivering training on a larger scale and to support research on flexible learning opportunities. A status report on what learning materials for gender mainstreaming are currently available to the public service concluded that while there are some materials available online, the current model for accessing the materials is not adequate.

A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the required content using ODL tools. Invited participants included members of administrative staff colleges and other institutions involved in training public servants such as National Women’s Machinerys, Commonwealth partner agencies and resource people. The focus for piloting this initiative is Africa in the first instance.

COL-PROTEIN PROGRAMME

The COL Poverty Reduction Outcomes through Education Innovations and Networks (COL-PROTEIN) programme supports innovative uses of ODL to alleviate poverty in rural areas. In particular, COL-PROTEIN supports initiatives that adapt ODL, ICTs and media to build capacities for community development, for example, in areas such as food security, environmental protection, women’s empowerment, micro-enterprise and good governance. Several projects across the regions have already been recipients of a COL-PROTEIN Award.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUMS

More than 500 people from 64 countries and various international organisations gathered in Ocho Rios, Jamaica for COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) from 30 October to 3 November 2006. In his closing remarks, Sir John Daniel pointed to three key areas of progress since the Third Pan-Commonwealth Forum in Dunedin, New Zealand in 2004:

1. Better research
2. More participation from developing countries
3. Integration of technology.

COL was grateful to the local hosts of the Forum for ensuring the success of the event, in particular the University of the West Indies’ Distance Education Centre, in co-operation with the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning, the Jamaican Association for Distance and Open Learning, the Trinidad & Tobago Distance Learning Association and the Office of Continuing Education and Distance Learning at the University of Technology, Jamaica.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) took place in London, UK, in July 2008, with the theme “Access to Learning for Development”. It was hosted by COL in collaboration with the University of London, as part of the University’s celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of its External Degrees Programme. PCF5 brought together practitioners, researchers, planners and policy makers in the fields of ODL and development to explore the contribution of ODL to international development goals. Over 700 participants from over 70 countries, the majority from the developing Commonwealth, took advantage of opportunities to share experience and expertise, and to contribute to future policy and provision.
COL NEWS SERVICE & NEWSLETTER

COL customises services provided by Google and Yahoo to provide a news service on ODL and specialised topics. The general news service is available from COL’s homepage while the specialised services are available on the appropriate topic pages on the website. The news service is updated approximately every hour.

COL publishes a newsletter, Connections, and a companion publication, EdTech News, three times per year, designed to provide regular news and information to COL’s stakeholders. The publications are distributed in print and electronically directly to 10,000 government officials, ODL and educational technology leaders and practitioners throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. The newsletter offers updates on COL and partner activities; ODL developments, resources and events; and educational technology reviews - all with a “development” focus. It also features an “In Focus” section which highlights a different COL programme in each issue, and periodic editorials as well as “Fair Comment” columns from external sources. It can be found on COL’s website at www.col.org/connections.

COPYRIGHT FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

COL has worked extensively in the area of copyright in education. The focus of COL’s attention is on providing information on how learning resources may be made available at low or no cost by applying the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS). In early 2009 COL published a book on copyright for educators and administrators titled Introducing Copyright which is available on the COL website at no cost.
Africa and the Mediterranean

Botswana | Cameroon | Cyprus (Mediterranean) | The Gambia | Ghana | Kenya | Lesotho | Malawi | Malta (Mediterranean) | Mauritius | Mozambique | Namibia | Nigeria | Seychelles | Sierra Leone | South Africa | Swaziland | Tanzania | Uganda | Zambia
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The African continent is home to 18 Commonwealth member states in various stages of development. It can be divided into the Southern, Eastern and Western African sub-regions and COL is active in all of them.

Distance education is not new to Africa. Correspondence education took root in Africa in the early part of the 20th century through colleges such as Wolsey Hall and Rapid Results. The University of South Africa (UNISA) was the world’s first dedicated distance education university, established in 1951. It provided a model for the British Open University.

There are now four open universities in Africa and a further six are planned over the next three years. Distance education is also being used for increasing the number of trained teachers, for enhancing access to secondary schooling and for skills training.

Two further Commonwealth member states included in this region are in the Mediterranean: Cyprus and Malta.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

COL is a partner of the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium. In June 2007, The BBC World Service Trust, in partnership with the UK Open University and 13 education institutions across Africa, launched the Teachers in Africa Radio Season. The project aims to help train thousands more teachers, so millions more children can receive a quality basic education. The materials developed by TESSA are easily accessed via the internet or provided in print format by teacher training institutions. Colleges and universities across Africa are able to download materials to equip primary school teachers with teaching skills in the key areas of literacy, numeracy, science, life skills, social studies and the arts.

In July 2007, COL and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) signed a Work Plan Agreement. Within the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TITISSA), UNESCO and COL are working to link teacher policy to national development goals, increasing access and improving the quality of teacher education through open and distance learning (ODL) and strengthening the delivery of quality teacher education through effective multi-stakeholder partnerships with civil society, the private sector and academia.
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY – CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)

COL provides funding support for the activities of SADC-CDE, located at the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning. SADC-CDE activities are designed to build and strengthen regional capacity in ODL as well as the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The Centre collaborated with the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) to publish the DEASA – SADC-CDE International Journal of Open and Distance Learning, launched in September 2007. It is a refereed journal that publishes articles drawn from across the SADC sub-region.

COL undertook an evaluation of SADC-CDE in June 2008 and the report of the evaluation was tabled to the Advisory Council.

FREE/LIBRE AND OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative is promoting the development of free content in education using open source software tools among educators. Conceived in East Africa, several chapters have now been established including an East African Chapter and a West African Chapter. Now that a French language installation of WikiEducator is in development, a Francophone Chapter of FLOSS4Edu is being planned. The aim is to establish regional chapters throughout the Commonwealth.

During this planning period, two workshops, in Nairobi in November 2006, and in Ghana in July 2007, took place with participants from a number of African countries.

REGIONAL TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (TVET) SUMMIT

COL and UNESCO’s UNEVOC Centre for TVET co-organised the first African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. UNEVOC is UNESCO’s International Project on Technical and Vocational Education. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the Summit attracted participants from across the region and was part of the 2nd International Conference on ICTs for Development, Education and Training. The sessions considered TVET as central to the effort to foster sustainable development and attain the first Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in Africa. COL, the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa and UNEVOC agreed to collaborate further to assist African countries through the sharing of knowledge and expertise in TVET and to organise a second TVET Africa Summit in 2008.

COL co-funded the second African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit in Accra, Ghana in May 2008. The Summit promoted good practice projects in the use of ICTs in TVET across Africa. COL sponsored two of the three winners. COL also sponsored the keynote speaker for the Summit.
ICTs IN EDUCATION IN AFRICA SURVEY

A survey on ICTs in Education in Africa, funded by the Information for Development Program (InfoDev) was carried out. A team of eight researchers were contracted by COL to produce reports for each African country and the final report was delivered at the end of June 2007. It covered all countries in continental Africa according to the following education sectors: Schools (primary and secondary), higher education, TVET, and non-formal education (adult literacy, health, agriculture, etc.). The study explored answers to several basic questions including how ICTs are currently being used in the education sector in Africa; what strategies and policies are related to this use; what the common challenges and constraints faced by African countries are in this area; what is actually happening on the ground; and to what extent donors are involved.

NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA’S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD) E-SCHOOL INITIATIVE

NEPAD asked COL and InfoDev to monitor and evaluate the NEPAD e-Schools initiative that was launched in a number of countries across Africa during the previous planning period. The completed report is available on COL’s website.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The first Regional Meeting of COL’s Focal Points for Africa and the Mediterranean was held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. During the meeting, each participant reviewed, on behalf of their country, the progress that had been made at the mid-term of COL’s current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009. They provided feedback on COL’s planning process and concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting was also a valuable opportunity for inter-country networking that will facilitate future collaboration.

The role of the COL Focal Points was discussed and a number of key aspects of this valuable role were agreed. The Focal Points will be a one-stop window in each country for COL, will coordinate with other ministries and stakeholders and will disseminate COL-related information to relevant constituencies. The Focal Points will also meet visiting COL staff and arrange appointments with ministry officials and others as necessary. In particular, they will keep their Minister briefed and will ensure timely payment of contributions to COL. Finally, the Focal Points will be advocates for ODL and for COL in their countries and will provide advice and guidance to COL from time to time.

COL created an online “BaseCamp” for the African and Mediterranean Focal Points to encourage online dialogue and the exchange of ideas and information.

REGIONAL BROCHURES

COL has regional brochures which summarise its activities in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth. These can be found on COL’s website at: www.col.org/regional.
BACKGROUND

Botswana has been an active participant in activities in the region, partnering with COL in the promotion of open and distance learning (ODL) and consistently contributing to COL’s budget. A country of 1.9 million people, Botswana has been hard-hit by HIV/AIDS but now has extensive treatment programmes available. Its growing economy has been pushing towards greater diversification for future stability.

SUMMARY

Botswana has continued to be fully involved in COL activities during 2006-2009 and is building its role as a resource centre to the region. The Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning (BOCODOL) is host to the Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) which continues to develop capacity in ODL and establish new open schools in the sub-region. Botswana is also contributing to COL initiatives beyond the region as a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). In addition, a Botswana education company has been contracted by COL to develop a low cost institutional Quality Audit Model to benefit higher education institutions across the Commonwealth. Delegates from Botswana have participated in several COL forums and collaborative activities both in Africa and elsewhere during this period.

EDUCATION

Teacher development

Efforts in teacher development have been supported with partner organisations including BOCODOL and the University of Botswana. Study visits, attachments and other activities have facilitated ODL capacity-building of individuals and groups of practitioners.

COL also contracted a consultant to conduct an evaluation of the Diploma in Primary Education Programme by ODL offered by the Ministry of Education in Botswana. The report was submitted in March 2008.
Open/alternative schooling

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified the cost and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Eight delegates from Botswana attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Gaborone, Botswana.

In October 2008, Ministries of Education and open schools in six countries including Botswana began a two-year partnership with COL to develop Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects to be used in open and conventional schools. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

Botswana was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from BOCODOL attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Botswana is contributing to the development of two new publications for open schools through two chapters authored for the Perspective Series on Open Schools – Open Schools for the 21st Century and a Handbook for Managers of Open Schools.

Other COL support for open schools have included staff members from Botswana receiving training in learner support and also in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for the schools.

Botswana is a member of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) and COL has been working with this organisation to build its research capacity in support of improving the quality and status of ODL in the region.

Higher education

COL is supporting the development of expertise in ODL and ICTs in BOCODOL as a resource for the Southern Africa region. As a result, COL supported the African Access to Knowledge Alliance Trust through BOCODOL, to host the Conference on Open Access in Southern Africa Regional Universities Association (SARUA) in November 2007 in Botswana.

ELearning for education sector development

COL is providing funding support for activities of the SADC-CDE, located at BOCODOL and hosted and supported by the Botswana Ministry of Education and BOCODOL. SADC-CDE and Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, signed a Memorandum of Agreement to provide 40 scholarships for participants from four countries in the region, including ten from Botswana.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, Botswana hosted two face-to-face workshops in March 2009.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The Botswana Training Authority participated in the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the summit was co-organised by COL and the UNEVOC Centre for TVET.

COL is collaborating with the Department of Vocational Education and Training (DVET) under the Ministry of Education, in partnership with BOCODOL, to develop basic programmes in hair dressing and beauty therapy for girls. DVET launched the first unit of a Beauty Therapy Course (The Human Body) in March 2008.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Botswana has continued to be an active member of VUSSC during 2006-2009. Participants from Botswana attended five of the six training and course development workshops that have taken place during this period including participants from BOCODOL, the University of Botswana and the Construction Industry Trust Fund.

Botswana is contributing to the development of the transnational qualifications framework. It has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the senior officials meeting in Singapore.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL is assisting BOCODOL in developing the strategy and plans for an educational radio channel. This is part of COL’s initiative to help colleges and universities improve their use of educational broadcasting, especially radio.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

At COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006, BOCODOL was one of the recipients of the Awards of Excellence for Institutional Achievement. The event was attended by eight delegates from Botswana including four sponsored by COL. Delegates were from BOCODOL, the University of Botswana and SADC-CDE.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in London in July 2008 was attended by nine delegates from Botswana including five sponsored by COL. Delegates came from BOCODOL, Francistown College of Technical & Vocational Education, and the University of Botswana.
The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Botswana.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

As we look forward to 2009-2012, Botswana is set to continue its active involvement in COL initiatives and its contribution in the Sub-Saharan region and beyond. Several projects are already underway through VUSSC, SADC-CDE and BOCODOL. For example, Botswana's partnership in the OERs development project will continue through to 2010 and as a member of VUSSC, Botswana is active in helping this organisation work towards fulfilling its potential in strengthening capacity in ODL.
CAMEROON

COL Focal Points:  Professor Ivo L. Tambo, Ministry of Secondary Education (current)
  Dr. Daniel Akume Akume, Ministry of Higher Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Cameroon has been an active participant in programmes to develop open and distance learning (ODL) in the West African region. This geographically and culturally diverse country of 18.9 million is seeing steady development progress. Cameroon contributed to COL’s budget in 2006.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL has been active in all three sectors of Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment. In higher education, a pilot began in 2008 for a dual-mode delivery system at the University of Buea. In a wider COL initiative, Cameroon, with both French and English as official languages, has been working with COL to convert open educational resources (OERs) courses for skill development into French for the francophone Commonwealth countries. Through this and Learning4Content (L4C), Cameroon has been an early contributor to the development of eLearning material. COL has continued to support the efforts of the University of Dschang Distance Education Centre and its media development.

Over the period, delegates from Cameroon have participated in several COL events and collaborative activities in Africa and elsewhere and have received support from COL to benefit from other regional training activities.

EDUCATION

Open/alternative schooling

COL conducted a fact-finding mission in August 2007 to determine the need in Cameroon for open schools.

COL’s support for open schools has given staff members from Cameroon training in learner support and quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.
A strategy workshop was held in May 2009 to discuss the proposal submitted by Cameroon for the establishment of an open school.

**Higher education**

The final report for a National ODL Policy Framework for Cameroon was received in April 2008. The report includes a needs assessment and policy framework and a draft policy (decree) for Cameroon. The Education Ministries are actively reviewing the recommendations and process issues.

COL is assisting the University of Buea to pilot the conversion of its existing teacher training programme into a dual-mode delivery system including ODL. The interim report on the outcome of the pilot was provided in May 2008 and the final report will be completed by April 2009. If successful, consideration will be given to converting all six Cameroon public universities to dual-mode.

**ELearning for education sector development**

An educational practitioner from Cameroon participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

As part of the same initiative, COL has supported a French installation of WikiEducator. Cameroon has been leading early translation work on the site.

The National Open University of Nigeria, in collaboration with COL, organised a workshop on quality assurance in ODL at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), Ghana, in February 2007. It was attended by 23 academics including three participants from Cameroon. The workshop introduced important issues in quality assurance and ODL. The participants shared best practices and reviewed case studies. They also discussed issues such as international standards, quality assurance indicators and quality assurance in ODL course development, delivery and learner support systems.

UNESCO Paris funded a first workshop on “Open Education Resources Training for Livelihoods: Training Workshop for the Commonwealth and la Francophonie”. The workshop, jointly organised by COL and UNESCO was held at UEW, Ghana, in July 2007. Those from Cameroon were among the 23 participants who attended the workshop where they acquired skills in wiki editing, content development, instructional design, the use of COL’s ODL template and the adaptation of English and Mathematics content materials donated by the College of the Rockies, Canada.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, L4C, Cameroon hosted one of the first face-to-face workshops in March 2008.

A wiki online workshop was held in Cameroon in July 2008 with 33 participants from the country.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Cameroon attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates attended the Assembly, representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from eleven Commonwealth countries.

COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. The first side event provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Cameroon.

The report, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Stakes and Challenges for Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) in Agricultural Education in Cameroon were distributed in September 2008.

Transnational Programmes

Two staff members of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) based in Cameroon were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Two staff members from UNHCR were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. Two delegates from the University of Buea and the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment, Cameroon contributed a short taped interview on their views and ideas on the importance and challenges of gender mainstreaming for the public sector.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL has continued to support the University of Dschang Distance Education Centre with both radio and video production capacity, contributing a new digital editing system and audio system to deliver learning materials both on and off campus.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by one COL-sponsored delegate from Cameroon.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by five delegates from Cameroon including two sponsored by COL. Delegates were from the Movement for the Promotion of Youth Rights and HIV/AIDS Awareness, the Ministry of Basic Education, EITD Research and the University of Dshang.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by one of the COL Focal Points for Cameroon.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Cameroon is set to continue its active participation in COL initiatives. Several major initiatives are already underway. For example, the potential for open schools in Cameroon is being actively explored, and the possibility of converting all six Cameroon public universities to a dual-mode delivery system is being considered.

Cameroon’s input to developing French language resources will begin to pay dividends for francophone countries in the region.
BACKGROUND

Cyprus is a small state of the Commonwealth and a contributor to COL’s budget since 2006.

SUMMARY

Cyprus’ participation in COL activities has continued to focus on initiatives of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Delegates from Cyprus have also attended key regional and international meetings.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Cyprus has been a member of VUSSC during 2006-2009. As part of the initiative to develop a transnational qualifications framework (TQF), Cyprus has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis. The meeting in Singapore in February 2008, to consider, refine and agree on mechanisms for the TQF, was attended by the Interlocutor for Cyprus, a professor of the University of Cyprus.

A chapter on VUSSC is included in his book on information and communications technology for education development and social justice by Professor Charalambos Vrasidas, the Executive Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology in Cyprus.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by two delegates from Cyprus, one from the University of Cyprus and the COL Focal Point.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by one delegate from the University of Cyprus.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to working with Cyprus to further develop its role in VUSSC, particularly in the development of learning resources and the TQF.
BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, The Gambia is an active participant in COL activities in the region and a contributor to COL’s budget.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL has continued to support teacher training at The Gambia College through the West Africa Consortium for Teacher Education Development (WACTED) and the development of open and distance learning (ODL) policy with the Ministry of Education. COL has also worked on health-related issues with the Nova Scotia Gambia Association (NSGA).

COL has accelerated its efforts to improve skills training and human resource development under the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) initiative, in which The Gambia plays a leading role. Through a consultancy, COL helped the Ministry of Education develop a proposal for setting up The Gambia Open Learning and Distance Education Centre (GOLDEC). This Centre, if implemented, would offer distance learning programmes in education, health and agriculture and would have implications for all these ministries. The Gambia and Ghana are jointly developing an ODL certificate course in Community Health Nursing for West Africa.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The Joint COL-UNESCO-UBEC Quality Assurance Forum in Teacher Education for West Africa was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in February 2008 and was attended by two delegates from The Gambia College. The pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed at the Forum. The toolkit was discussed along with quality assurance efforts made to date in The Gambia.
Teacher development

Regional collaboration in teacher education through WACTED has continued. COL supported a workshop in Ghana in February 2007, held in collaboration with Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA). Teacher educators from The Gambia were among 20 delegates who attended from seven countries. The programme introduced new teacher education institutions to TESSA and WACTED and provided a session on quality assurance in teacher education.

COL, in collaboration with The Gambia College, organised an Instructional Design workshop for staff of the College and the Faculty of Education at the University of The Gambia. Held in Banjul in December 2008, it was attended by 28 participants from The Gambia College, University of The Gambia and the Gambia Technical Training Institution. Participants were taught appropriate skills for instructional design and the process of developing learning materials for ODL.

E-Learning for education sector development

The National Open University of Nigeria, in collaboration with COL, organised a workshop on quality assurance in ODL at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, in February 2007. It was attended by 23 academics including two participants from The University of The Gambia. The workshop introduced important issues in quality assurance and ODL. The participants shared best practices and reviewed case studies. They also discussed issues such as international standards, quality assurance indicators and quality assurance in ODL course development, delivery and learner support systems.

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL is supporting the development of basic and middle level entrepreneurial education and training, providing literacy and skills development for youth and adults in West Africa. As part of this initiative, The Gambia and Ghana are jointly developing the Certificate Course in Community Health Nursing Training using ODL.

COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa co-sponsored a policy awareness seminar on integrating ICTs and e-Learning into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. Two representatives from The Gambia were among those from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries and included one from the Gambia Technical Training Institute. The delegates gained valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

COL is assisting the Gambia National Training Authority to develop a framework for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in skills. Two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008 as part of a wider initiative. The second workshop, in June 2008 was attended by a delegate from the National Training Authority.

COL organised a conference on Livelihood Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Accra in November 2008. Two delegates from The Gambia attended, from the University of The Gambia and the National Training Authority. The theme was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. Participants from The Gambia took part in a session on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. They were also in a working group on ODL course materials development for community health nursing, drawing up a plan of action for 2009-2012 and they contributed to the roundtable session
on short and long term training and upgrading of TVET teachers using ODL. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

The Gambia has continued to be a member of VUSSC during 2006-2009, with activities including the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). A delegate from the University of The Gambia participated online at the fourth training workshop held in November 2007 in Samoa, focusing on disaster management.

As part of the initiative to develop a transnational qualifications framework, The Gambia has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis. The meeting in Singapore in February 2008, to consider, refine and agree on mechanisms for the framework, was attended by a delegate from MHERST.

A delegate from the University of The Gambia also attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Health, welfare and community development**

As part of COL’s initiative to build capacity for educational institutions, NGOs and community organisations to produce educational media content and develop non-formal ODL programmes related to livelihoods, health and other aspects of community development, media equipment was provided to the Nova Scotia Gambia Association. This is enabling them to create multimedia learning content about community development issues, especially HIV/AIDS, that are used in peer education programmes in schools and also in village cinema events.

**Good governance**

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. One delegate from The Gambia, the Executive Director of the Women’s Bureau in the Department for Women’s Affairs attended the meeting.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by one delegate from the then Department of State for Education, The Gambia.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three COL-sponsored delegates from The Gambia. Delegates came from the Nova Scotia Gambia Association, the National Training Authority and MHERST.
Regional Focal Points meeting

The COL Focal Point for The Gambia was unable to attend but was represented by a colleague at the Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, The Gambia is continuing with some key initiatives in teacher education, health and community development as well as contributing to the activities of the VUSSC. The Gambia has opportunity to further benefit from regional and pan-Commonwealth activities including COL’s collaboration with the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa.
BACKGROUND

Ghana has had a long-standing interest in open learning and has supported COL and been involved in its work for many years, including at the executive level. Ghana is a contributor to COL’s budget.

SUMMARY

Ghana has continued its full involvement in COL activities and its significant contribution to COL’s work in the region. A Ghanaian has been appointed as Regional Representative for Africa on COL’s Board of Governors, and another is the Education Specialist, Learning for Livelihoods at COL. Mrs. Esi Sutherland-Addy served on COL’s Board of Governors and was recognised as a COL Fellow at the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum held in London in July 2008.

The focus of COL’s work in Ghana continues to be in two sectors: Education and Learning for Livelihoods. COL is currently working with the Ministry to establish the National Open University of Ghana. COL continues to collaborate with institutions in Ghana to support the activities of the West Africa Consortium for Teacher Education Development (WACTED) and Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA).

In Learning for Livelihoods, the initiatives relate to technical and vocational training as well as skills development for agriculture. COL is supporting Ghana in its efforts to introduce ODL in the training of community health nurses and in the professional development of the Police Service.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The Joint COL-UNESCO-UBEC Quality Assurance Forum in Teacher Education for West Africa was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in February 2008 and was attended by two delegates from Ghana, from the National Accreditation Board and the University of Cape Coast. The pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and
Development Toolkit was distributed at the Forum. The toolkit was discussed along with quality assurance efforts made to date in Ghana.

**Teacher development**

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) is offering a Bachelor of Education course in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) using ODL with assistance from COL. The first intake of students is currently in their second year. In 2008, 56 new admissions were made. All learners remain in their teaching post while receiving continuing professional training.

Regional collaboration in teacher education through WACTED has continued. COL supported a workshop in Ghana in February 2007, held in collaboration with TESSA. Teacher educators from Ghana were among 20 delegates who attended from seven countries. The programme introduced new teacher education institutions to TESSA and WACTED and provided a session on quality assurance in teacher education.

COL and UNESCO signed a Work Plan Agreement in July 2007 as part of a plan to work jointly with the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa for policy support and capacity building for teacher development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana will be one of six countries (five Commonwealth) included in the initial implementation of a six-month course for teacher education policymakers and administrators, currently in development.

**Open/alternative schooling**

COL is assisting with the development of plans for an open school focusing on TVET under the President’s Special Initiative on Distance Education (PSI-DL) and linked to UEW. Following a meeting of COL and PSI-DL, the Ministry of Education and PSI-DL are clarifying the different roles and responsibilities, considering formal agreements with the vocational schools and developing a plan for the smooth implementation of the programmes. UEW has prepared a draft to incorporate the project into the University’s operations. Based on the recommendations of the draft, the Government of Ghana is placing PSI-DL under the proposed National Open University.

Ghana was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from PSI-DL attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Other COL support for open schools have included staff members from 17 countries including Ghana receiving training in learner support.

**Higher Education**

From 26 April to 4 May 2007, the President & CEO of COL chaired the first of two visits to the University of Ghana (UoG) by an international visitation panel, charged with reviewing its operations. The panel reviewed:

(a) The academic programmes at UoG to determine their currency, quality and relevance to the mission of creating world-class human resources and capabilities to meet national development needs.
(b) The infrastructure and resources currently in place and advised on additional resources required to enable the University to adequately discharge its mandate to internationally-accepted standards.

(c) The University’s administrative and governance structures, its systems and procedures and advised on their appropriateness and adequacy in relation to the twin goals of effectiveness and efficiency.

The President & CEO of COL also chaired the second of the two visits in August 2007. A final report, prepared by the President, was presented to the University Council and the Academic Board of the University in December 2007.

COL organised a workshop for the Planning Committee of the National Open University of Ghana in Accra in December 2008. It was on ICTs and related issues impacting ODL and on applying creative commons licenses for open educational resources (OERs). The ten participants included the COL Focal Point for Ghana and were from UEW, Zenith College, Micap Institute of Technology, University of Cape Coast (UCC), COL and the National Council for Teacher Education, India.

The Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration/Masters in Public Administration (CE MBA/CEMPA) programmes have been expanded to Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). Six hundred and fifty-one students are enrolled in the programme.

**E-Learning for education sector development**

An educational practitioner from Ghana participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

In February 2007, UEW hosted a workshop on quality assurance in ODL organised by The National Open University of Nigeria in collaboration with COL. It was attended by 23 academics including eight participants, from UoG, University of Cape Town, KNUST, PSI-DL, UEW and UEW Kumasi Campus. The workshop introduced important issues in quality assurance and ODL. The participants shared best practices and reviewed case studies. They also discussed issues such as international standards, quality assurance indicators and quality assurance in ODL course development, delivery and learner support systems.

UNESCO Paris funded a first workshop on “Open Education Resources Training for Livelihoods: Training Workshop for the Commonwealth and la Francophonie”. The workshop, jointly organised by COL and UNESCO, was held at UEW, Ghana in July 2007. Those from Ghana were among the 23 participants who attended the workshop where they acquired skills in wiki editing, content development, instructional design, the use of COL’s ODL template and the adaptation of English and Mathematics content materials donated by the College of the Rockies, Canada.

As part of the FLOSS4Edu initiative, educators from 11 West African countries took part in a training workshop on OERs in Ghana in August 2007. Delegates were introduced to additional skills in content development methodologies in WikiEducator to apply the knowledge in the development of content materials for vocational education. The lessons learned are being applied to the development of content for ODL delivery for community health nursing, building and construction.
Between January and September 2008, several face-to-face wiki workshops took place in Ghana through the initiative of UEW, One Village Foundation in Ghana, the FLOSS4Edu initiative and the major pan-Commonwealth programme, Learning4Content (L4C). As part of L4C, more than 15 delegates from Ghana also participated in online workshops.

COL undertook a review of ICTs at the University of Development Studies (UDS). The consultants travelled to three UDS campuses to examine issues such as using computers in desert conditions, how to make limited ICTs available to learners and how to expand bandwidth in the face of high costs. Their recommendations were aimed at helping UDS make effective use of funding from development agencies, which will lead to better delivery of ODL.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) co-sponsored a policy awareness seminar on integrating ICTs and eLearning into TVET in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. A representative from Ghana was among those from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries. The delegates gained valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

A representative from the National Police Training School, Accra, attended the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the summit was co-organised by COL and the UNEVOC Centre for TVET.

Ghana hosted a second TVET Africa Summit in Accra in May 2008. It promoted good practice projects in the use of ICTs in TVET across Africa.

Ghana is one of four countries taking the lead on a COL initiative to encourage TVET institutions to develop ODL policy. Participants from Ho Polytechnic, Ghana and two other African Polytechnics attended a COL-CAPA conference entitled, “Promoting Innovation in TVET through Public-Private Partnership” to edit a first draft of the ODL policy in TVET, at Makerere University, Kampala in May 2008.

As part of COL’s initiative for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET, two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. The second workshop, in June 2008 was attended by two delegates from Ghana, from the Community Health Nurses Training School (CHNTS) and Ghana Education Services. A further workshop in Lusaka in July 2008 was attended by a delegate from Koforidua Polytechnic. Ghana has started work towards the implementation of RPL in TVET.

COL organised a conference on Livelihood Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Accra in November 2008. Thirty one delegates from Ghana attended from educational institutions and the Community Health Nurses Training School. The theme was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. Participants from Ghana took part in a session on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. They were also in a working group on ODL course materials development for community health nursing, drawing up a plan of action for 2009-2012 and they contributed to the roundtable session on short and long term training and upgrading of TVET teachers using ODL. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association.

COL is training tutors from University of Education, Winneba (UEW) technical institutions, CHNTS and the Police Service in the use of OERs to facilitate conversion of technical and vocational core courses. The first draft of the Semester One course has been completed for editing and formatting on the COL instructional design template.
Rural and peri-urban community development

Winneba Open Digital Village, Ghana, was the recipient of a COL-PROTEIN Award. Winneba Open Digital Village is an all-volunteer NGO that works to increase access to ICTs in under-served communities to address the digital divide and increase economic opportunity. This project focussed on capacity building and community development using ICTs. By providing educational, governmental and health care institutions with increased access to ICTs, this project enhanced education, health care, economic development and livelihoods.

National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Ghana attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from eleven Commonwealth countries.

COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. One provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Ghana.

The report, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) in Agricultural Education and Training for Improved Livelihoods – A Ghana Case Study were distributed in September 2008.

Transnational programmes

Two staff members from UNHCR were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008 through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

COL is assisting in the design and implementation of teacher training for community and public health nursing by dual-mode delivery. An action plan for implementation has been drawn up by the COL consultant in collaboration with the CHNTS and UEW.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. One delegate from Ghana, Director, Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs, attended the meeting.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by eight delegates from Ghana including the COL Focal Point, from PSI-DL, Earthculture and UoG and three others sponsored by COL, from UoG, UEW and CSIR-Crops Research Institute.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 15 delegates from Ghana, including the COL Focal Point and four other delegates from KNUST, the Ministry of Education and FARA along with nine COL-sponsored delegates from the World University Service of Canada, PSI-DL, Ghana Education Service, KNUST, Ghana Health Service and UEW. At this Forum, Mrs. Esi Sutherland Addy of UoG was named Honorary Fellow of COL.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for Ghana.

Appointments

Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr was appointed Regional Representative for Africa on COL’s Board of Governors in July 2008.

COL President’s visit

On a visit to Ghana in November 2006, the President & CEO gave two public lectures on the role of ODL in Ghana’s development. The first lecture was on “The Role of Open and Distance Learning in Breaking Barriers to National Development”, by Sir John Daniel with Joshua Mallet. The second lecture was on “Educating Teachers; Advancing Democracy” and was delivered by Sir John when he received the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa at the UEW.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Ghana’s extensive participation in COL activities, with a focus on Education and Learning for Livelihoods initiatives will continue with many activities already underway including progress towards establishing an open school for TVET and a National Open University in Ghana. Ghana’s extensive participation in teacher training activities in the last three years will see benefits in the next triennium and Ghana’s contribution to the development of OERs will be appreciated by users across the Commonwealth.

COL looks forward to Ghana’s continuing prominent role and contribution to COL activities in the region and beyond.
KENYA

COL Focal Point: Ms. Esther Kakonge (2006-2007)
Mr. Omido Ongonga, Ministry of Higher Education, Science & Technology (current)

BACKGROUND

Kenya has a long history of distance education and is a natural partner of COL. After independence, the Ominde Education Commission (1964-1965), the Gachathi Report (1976), the Mackay Report (1981) and the Kamunge Report (1988) all highlighted the need to adopt open and distance learning (ODL) as an alternative strategy for delivering education. Following a National Consultative Forum on ODL policy organised jointly by COL with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) in 2004, a Sessional Paper No. 1 (2005) was passed which identified ODL as a viable option of addressing the challenges of access, equity and quality in education.

Professor Penina Mlama, Director, Forum for African Women in Education (FAWE), served as the African representative on the COL Board of Governors from 2000 to June 2007. Kenya is a regular contributor to COL’s budget.

SUMMARY

This has been a period of change in Kenya. Both the Honourable Minister of Education and the COL Focal Point changed during this period. COL has continued to work with its partners to address issues in teacher education, eLearning, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and agricultural extension. The focus has been on building capacity and sharing information and resources. Partners have included the Kenya Institute of Education, Kenya Polytechnic University College, the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) and other institutions and civil society organisations.

Professor Penina Mlama was a keynote speaker at the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum held in Jamaica in 2006 at which the then Honourable Minister, Dr. Noah Wekesa was also present. This was an important event for Kenya as the Women in Fishing Project (WIFIP) Education and Development Trust won the Award of Excellence in Distance Education Materials.
EDUCATION

Open/alternative schooling

COL sponsored two participants from the Kenya Institute of Education to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

Higher education

COL is assisting Maseno University in developing its instructional design capacity. Phase I was completed in the 2006-2007 financial year and benefitted 15 instructors. Phase II began in 2008, under which 20 academics were trained in a two-week workshop on instructional design.

E-Learning for education sector development

Educational practitioners from Kenya participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. In all, 22 participants attended from Kenya including senior officials from the ministries, universities and private sector. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

OER Africa was established in Kenya to ensure that the power of OERs are harnessed by Africans for Africans by building collaborative networks across the continent. The premise of OER Africa is that it will facilitate the aggregation of information and human expertise that produces knowledge – an activity which can either be individual, or inter-institutional. In order to continually test this premise, OER Africa has not only developed an action research agenda, but also sought the counsel and support of an Advisory Group of experts in various aspects of higher education. COL provides one member of staff to attend the meetings of the Advisory Group of OER Africa.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Kenya hosted six face-to-face workshops between June 2008 and January 2009.

Advanced learners from Kenya were among those from several African countries to participate in an online pilot of the Practitioners Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) programme. The pilot introduced concepts of research and evaluation to learners within their own contexts. On completion of the online course, learners produced comprehensive draft research proposals that they could use to submit to their own institutions or to funding agencies to support their research projects. Learners demonstrated a critical approach to conducting research in terms of its importance in the planning stages of ODL implementation and how it can impact decision-making within their institutions.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Thirteen Kenyans were among the 19 delegates that attended the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the summit was co-organised by COL and the UNEVOC Centre for TVET.

COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) co-sponsored a policy awareness seminar on integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) and eLearning into TVET in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. Two representatives from Kenya were among those from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries. The delegates gained valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

As part of COL’s initiative for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET, two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. A further workshop in Lusaka in July 2008 was attended by a delegate from CAPA, Kenya. Kenya has started work toward the implementation of RPL in TVET.

COL organised a conference on Livelihood Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Accra in November 2008. A delegate from Kenya attended, from AMREF. The theme was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. Participants from Kenya took part in a session on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. They were also in a working group on ODL course materials development for community health nursing, drawing up a plan of action for 2009-2012. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association.

Kenya is one of four countries taking the lead on a COL initiative to encourage TVET institutions to develop ODL policy. Participants from Kenya Polytechnic University College and two other African Polytechnics attended a COL-CAPA conference entitled, “Promoting Innovation in TVET through Public-Private Partnership” to edit a first draft of the ODL policy in TVET, at Makerere University, Kampala in May 2008.

Rural and peri-urban community development

COL is working to further expand the scope of its rural community development activities in Kenya, drawing on its experiences with the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme and working with a consortium of NGOs and agricultural partners. The second side event prior to the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week in South Africa in June 2007 was on “Lifelong Learning for Farmers and Tech-MODE: A Paradigm Shift in Extension for Africa”. COL sponsored the Executive Director, Kenya AIDS Intervention Prevention Project Group to participate in the meetings and site visits related to the L3F programme in India and Sri Lanka and he is now working on fine-tuning the Grassroots Underpinnings: Poverty, Nutrition, ODL/ICTs and Women (GRASSUP-Now) initiative to incorporate L3F concepts for community development in Western Kenya.

The Charity for African Welfare and Development (CAWD), Kenya was the recipient of a COL-PROTEIN Award. CAWD promotes the use of ICTs in rural Africa. “Teachers Talking” is an introduction to ICTs designed specifically, but not exclusively, for rural teachers. It promotes alternatives to rote learning and encourages teachers to see themselves as members of a worldwide connected community. The ultimate objective is to enable teachers to enter into informed debate and influence policy regarding ICTs in education in rural Africa. The project uses ICTs to provide train-the-trainer sessions to teachers, who can then share their knowledge about ICTs with colleagues, pupils
and local communities. This project built the capacity of teachers to become productive citizens and to compete in the computerised global marketplace.

**National/international community development**

COL-sponsored participants from Kenya attended the 4th FARA General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from eleven Commonwealth countries.

COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. One provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Kenya.

The report, *Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies* and the country paper, *Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) in Agricultural Education and Training in Kenya* were distributed in September 2008.

The World Agro-Forestry Centre (ICRAF) organised the 1st Global Workshop on Improving Forestry Education in Africa at the ICRAF Campus, Nairobi in September 2007. The COL Education Specialist on Food Security and Environment presented a paper on *Perspectives on Technology-mediated open and distance education (Tech-MODE) for Forestry and Improved Livelihoods in Africa*. ICRAF expressed an interest to partner with COL in promoting the use of Tech-MODE learning and WikiEducator.

COL supported the capacity development of members of the project, Strengthening University Capacity for Promoting, Facilitating and Teaching Rural Innovation Processes (SUCAPRI), in the development of OERs for agriculture. SUCAPRI is managed by Makerere University, in partnership with the four universities in Kenya and the International Centre for development-oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA).

**Transnational programmes**

Twenty three staff members of the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank and UNHCR were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Seven staff members from UNHCR were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODM LP) and three staff members from the Office of Internal Oversight Services were trained in Online Audit Report Writing in 2008.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Health, welfare and community development**

COL has supported AMREF in Kenya to develop course materials in child health, malaria, integrated HIV/AIDS, communicable diseases and drug management and rational use. These materials have been released as OERs via COL’s website.
COL is working with Integrated Functional Education for Pastoralist Communities to develop and pilot a non-formal ODL course for woman hawkers in entrepreneurial skills and AIDS awareness. COL is helping Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) to adapt its AIDS awareness course to ODL mode.

Through the regional LearnShare programme, COL is linking local media, AIDS and education partners in Kenya. Three delegates from Kenya attended the LearnShare, HIV/AIDS in Africa Workshop for Community Media, in April 2009.

Environment education

The African Centre for Technology Studies, MMUST and COL are developing an implementation plan for an ODL pilot project on climate change/water resource management to address issues for rural and peri-urban communities in Kenya.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL has developed a campus-based FM radio station at MMUST. COL established a partnership with UNESCO, Nairobi, on developing community-based media and local ICTs, for example, in July 2008.

EcoNews Africa, Nairobi, supported the design of a capacity-building approach, the development of related OERs and the organisation of a pilot workshop at Radio Mang’elete, Kambu, involving over 60 local women’s groups representatives. The results were actively shared as an open content project among the international community media peer group.

An introduction to ODL course development and a hands-on L4C workshop were held at MMUST.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by 10 delegates from Kenya, from ICRAF, the University of Nairobi, FAWE, FARA and MOEST along with COL-sponsored delegates from the University of Nairobi, WIFIP Education and Development Trust, the African Virtual University, Maseno University, Community Initiatives and Social Support Organization (CISSO) and the MOEST.

The Forum was a special event for Kenya as The Women in Fishing Project (WIFIP), Education and Development Trust, Kenya’s materials on A facilitation handbook for women’s learning group facilitators was one of the recipients of the Awards of Excellence for Distance Education Materials – Category A: print or other “low end” media materials as part of a distance education course/programme.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 20 delegates from Kenya, including 13 sponsored by COL.
Regional Focal Points meeting

Pending the nomination of a new Focal Point, a representative from the University of Nairobi, nominated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, attended the Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008.

Awards

Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) that promotes innovation and advancement in Knowledge for Development and ICTs for Development selected Mr. Kennedy Onyango, one COL GRASSUP-Now partner, as a Finalist for the 2007 Global Young Social Entrepreneurs’ Competition. COL supported Kennedy to develop promotional materials for his participation at the Young Social Entrepreneurs’ Forum held during the 3rd Global Knowledge Conference in Kuala Lumpur in December 2007.

LOOKING FORWARD

The key priority areas for ODL in Kenya were outlined by the Kenyan representative at the Regional Focal Points meeting in 2008. The focus will be on open schooling, in-service teacher training, TVET and integrating ICTs in education at all levels. Kenya has decided to establish an open university and COL will offer technical support as required. COL will seek to address these during the next Three Year Plan 2009–2012.
BACKGROUND

Lesotho is a small state of the Commonwealth, facing challenges in economic development and a high rate of HIV/AIDS. The country has embraced the opportunities offered through COL and has been a contributor to COL’s budget since 2006.

SUMMARY

COL’s work in Lesotho focuses on all three areas: Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment. In Education, COL’s work has been in building regional capacity in open and distance learning (ODL) as well as eLearning, including COL support for participating in Commonwealth communities dedicated to the development of free content and capacity building. In Learning for Livelihoods, COL continues to support Lesotho in the development of basic skills in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

EDUCATION

Open/alternative schooling

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified costing and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Three delegates from Lesotho attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Botswana.

COL sponsored two participants from the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

Other COL support for open schools have included 25 staff members from Lesotho being trained in course development. Staff members have also been trained in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for schools.
Lesotho is a member of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa and COL has been working with this organisation to build its research capacity in support of improving the quality and status of ODL in the region.

In October 2008, Ministries of Education and open schools in six countries including Lesotho began a two year partnership with COL to develop open education resources for open schools (OER4OS) in twenty subjects to be used in open and conventional schools. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

Lesotho is participating in the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and COL OER4OS project which is training selected teachers in the search and use of OERs. COL conducted a two-week workshop in Lesotho in February 2009. The 15 participants were trained on copyright issues and BaseCamp navigation.

Higher education

To enhance capacity in ODL materials development, a consultant was provided by COL to train on Creating Learning Materials for Open and Distance Learning, at the National University of Lesotho. This was the first one of two workshops for professors, lecturers and instructors at the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Lesotho, part of a programme aimed at assisting them in developing ODL courses.

E-Learning for education sector development

COL is providing funding support for activities of the South African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), located at the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning, with the goal of building and strengthening regional capacity in ODL and the use of ICTs. SADC-CDE and the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, have signed a Memorandum of Agreement. One of the four institutions included is the Lesotho Distance Teachers Centre. Ten participants in Lesotho have signed up.

Educational practitioners from Lesotho participated in a two day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, Lesotho hosted three face-to-face workshops in March 2009.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Lesotho is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from the National University of Lesotho, the Disaster
Management Authority, Lesotho Agricultural College and Lerotholi Polytechnic attended five of the six training and course development workshops that took place.

Lesotho is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. Lesotho submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore.

A delegate from the National University of Lesotho also attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by four delegates from Lesotho including three sponsored by COL. Delegates were from the National University of Lesotho.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by two COL-sponsored delegates from Lesotho, from the Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Lesotho.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

As we look forward to 2009-2012, initiatives to further develop and support open schooling are ongoing in Lesotho. COL will continue to support the National University of Lesotho in developing ODL resources and the country will also benefit from its participation in the VUSSC and the progress made in strengthening capacity and resources in ODL through this initiative.
COL Focal Point: Mrs. Bethel S. Masauli, Malawi College of Distance Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Malawi has a long history of open and distance learning (ODL). The Malawi College of Distance Education has been in existence since 1965 and today has more than 150,000 active students. Malawi is also a member of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL’s activities in Malawi have been in two of the three programme sectors, Education and the Human Environment. The main focus has been in the Education sector, in four key areas: quality assurance, teacher development, eLearning and ODL for education. Malawi is also benefiting from the work of the South African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE).

The Millennium Development Goals underpinned COL’s previous Three-Year Plan and continue in the current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009 with three of the Goals focussed on health. COL, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), is focusing a health-based activity within the country.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Malawi hosted the first Regional Focal Points Meeting for the African region in Lilongwe in May 2008.

EDUCATION

Teacher development

COL sponsored Malawi’s initiation to the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium by supporting its participation at the TESSA conference in October 2007 in Mozambique.

Open/alternative schooling

COL organised a staff training workshop, “Introduction to Distance Education”, at Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE), in March 2007. There were 21 participants from MCDE (central and regional offices), Muzuzu
and Deee Universities, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Malawi Institute of Education, teachers training colleges and the College of Education. The participants were introduced to the fundamentals of ODL, the student support services in ODL, planning and management of distance education in developing countries, materials design and the development of distance education and were trained on how to prepare training sessions.

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified costing and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. One delegate from Malawi attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Botswana.

COL sponsored two participants from MCDE to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

In other COL support for open schools, staff members have been trained in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for schools.

**ELearning for education sector development**

COL is providing funding support for activities of SADC-CDE, located at Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning (BOCODOL), with the goal of building and strengthening regional capacity in ODL and the use of ICTs. SADC-CDE and the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, have signed a Memorandum of Agreement. One of the four Institutions included is MCDE. Ten participants from Malawi have signed up.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa co-sponsored a policy awareness seminar on integrating ICTs and eLearning into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. A representative from Malawi was among those from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries. The delegates gained valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

**Transnational programmes**

Two staff members of the World Bank based in Malawi were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Health, welfare and community development**

Working with WHO, Ministries of Health and MACRO, an NGO, COL has expanded its health media empowerment initiative in Malawi. In October 2007, a media unit was established, providing audio and video production digital technology and training was completed, towards creating content to reach greater numbers of people with
appropriate health information in the linguistic and cultural context of the targeted groups. A plan of action was agreed upon by WHO and COL concerning the activity.

COL is working with a variety of groups in Mchinji district to develop a community-based learning programme in maternal and child health.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in London in July 2008 was attended by two COL-sponsored delegates from Malawi, including one from the Commonwealth Youth Programme. The other, Mr. David Nthengwe, was the winner of the Award for Learning under Difficult Circumstances.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean was hosted by Malawi in Lilongwe in May 2008. The meeting was jointly organised by COL, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and MCDE and was attended by the Focal Point of Malawi. Colleagues from Mzuzu University attended the meeting as observers.

Other events

The Vice-President of COL made a presentation on “ODL: Trends and Quality Issues” at MCDE in August 2007. A small group of about 15 participants from Mzuzu University, Domasi College of Education and MCDE attended the presentation and there was good interaction on various aspects of ODL. The session was recorded at the request of the Permanent Secretary who wished to share it with the deputy ministers as they had been unable to attend due to parliament being in session.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Malawi will benefit from the partnerships developed during this period as well as COL’s support through SADC-CDE as its activities gather momentum. Support for open schools will continue to be a priority. The media empowerment initiative to disseminate health information in the country will be a focus as the plan is put into action.
MALTA

COL Focal Point: Ms. Louise Cutajar Davis (2006-2009)
Ms. Mary Rose DeBono, Directorate for Educational Services (current)

BACKGROUND

Malta has had a strong relationship with COL since its inception in 1987. As a member of the European Union since 2004, Malta retains a strong connection to the Commonwealth. For Malta, a group of seven islands in the Mediterranean, open and distance learning is of great importance. The country has been a strong proponent and active member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) since the idea was first proposed. Malta contributed to COL’s budget in 2008-2009.

SUMMARY

During 2006-2009, Malta has participated in the activities of VUSSC, including the creation and sharing of learning resources and encouraging the cross-accreditation of learning programmes through a transnational qualifications framework (TQF).

COL has continued to be an active supporter of “Commonwealth Connects” and contributes through the committee of which the Foreign Minister of Malta is Chair.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Malta is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. A participant from the Temi Zammit Foundation, Malta, attended two of the training and course development workshops that took place, including the second workshop in Singapore in March 2007 where he was the workshop team leader.
As part of the initiative to develop a TQF, Malta has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis. The meeting in Singapore in February 2008, to consider, refine and agree mechanisms for the framework, was attended by a delegate from the Malta Qualifications Council.

The Interlocutor for Malta, from the University of Malta attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006, and the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in London in July 2008 were attended by a delegate from the Temi Zammit Foundation, on the second occasion sponsored by COL.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next planning period, 2009-2012, Malta will continue to focus on participation in the activities of the VUSSC.
MAURITIUS

COL Focal Point: Ms. H.C.L. How Fok Cheng (2006)
Mr. H.B. Dansinghani, Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources (current)

BACKGROUND

Mauritius has been engaged with COL since its inception. The first President of COL, the late Professor James Maraj, served as Executive Director of the Mauritius Tertiary Education Commission from 1995-1997. Mauritius has expanded its tertiary education system through the years and embraced open and distance learning (ODL) through the Mauritius College of the Air (MCA). The country is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and an active member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). It hosted the first course development workshop of VUSSC in 2006. Mauritius has also taken an active role in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) initiatives with COL.

SUMMARY

COL works in Mauritius in two of its programme sectors and continues to draw upon the expertise from Mauritius to strengthen COL’s programmes. In the Education sector, priorities were set in consultation with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources and the Tertiary Education Commission, with interest in all five initiatives. In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, the major focus has been on the development and delivery of e-content through the VUSSC.

COL has been working with the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (NPCC) through COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme to address women’s empowerment and through TVET programmes to improve livelihoods. Tertiary institutions have had access to the full text of the Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) including an online version of the programme which is aimed at developing research capacity in institutions.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Two delegates from Mauritius attended the first Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia, jointly organised by COL and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India. It was held in Bangalore, India in December 2007. The Forum was designed to expose policymakers and senior administrators from Ministries of Education to the various quality assurance practices in teacher education.

Teacher development

COL supported participation of delegates from Mauritius in the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa consortium held in Mozambique during October 2007.

Open/alternative schooling

As a part of an initiative to strengthen the capacity of open schools, COL provided support to Mauritius to contextualise materials from Indira Gandhi National Open University, India. Mauritius attended the Quality Assurance for Open Schools workshop in South Africa.

Higher education

COL undertook a review of the tertiary sector in Mauritius to identify the scope for establishing an open university. The review was completed in September 2007 and the report was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources for implementation. This has been accepted and the open university is being established in consultation with COL.

ELearning for education sector development

Educational practitioners from Mauritius participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, about 19 delegates from Mauritius participated in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL and the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) are designing a mechanism on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET to be shared with other institutions in African countries. The Director of MQA is the Lead
Facilitator of RPL for COL in Africa. Two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. The first workshop was attended by 37 participants, including 26 from the public and private sectors of Mauritius. The second workshop in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2008 was attended by a delegate from MQA.

Two representatives from MQA were sponsored by COL to attend the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the Summit was co-organised by COL and was part of the 2nd International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training. A second TVET Africa Summit was held in Ghana in May 2008. It promoted good practice projects in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in TVET across Africa. Mauritius was one of the three winners with a project called “Global Learning: Making job-related personalised post-secondary education accessible and available to and affordable for a much wider population”.

COL organised a conference on Livelihoods Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa, in Accra in November 2008. The theme of the conference was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. A delegate from MQA attended and took part in a session on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association.

Rural and peri-urban community development

COL is working with NPCC so that it can draw on COL’s experience in improving rural livelihoods through the L3F model and add value to the National Empowerment Programme that addresses women’s empowerment, a crucial issue for development.

COL sponsored the Executive Director, NPCC and senior officials of NPCC with a farmer from NPCC to study the L3F activities in India and Sri Lanka. They also participated in a workshop to identify performance indicators for quality assurance for higher education in agriculture. With COL’s support, the council has initiated an L3F Project with a focus on strengthening entrepreneurship among women.

National/international community development

A COL-sponsored participant from Mauritius attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Mauritius is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from the University of Mauritius; MCA; the Mauritius Institute of Education; the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources; the Mauritius Meteorological Services; the Ministry of Fisheries; the University of Technology; and the Industrial and Vocational Training Board attended all six training and course development workshops that took place. Mauritius also hosted the first workshop, on entrepreneurship and tourism in August 2006.
Mauritius is contributing to the development of the transnational qualifications framework (TQF). It has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore.

Three delegates from Mauritius also attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008. The three included the Interlocutor for Mauritius from the Ministry of Education, Culture & Human Resources and delegates from MQA and the Mauritius Institute of Education.

**Transnational programmes**

One staff member of the World Bank based in Mauritius was trained in the Online Report Writing Programme through a tutor-mediated eLearning course of COL.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by three delegates from Mauritius, from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, the Halley Movement and the University of Mauritius.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 11 delegates from Mauritius including nine sponsored by COL.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for Mauritius.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

As we look forward to 2009-2012, Education sector initiatives will continue to be a focus with the opportunity to move forward with the planning and establishment of an open university in Mauritius. Mauritius is taking an active role in the VUSSC, and can contribute to the progress of key initiatives such as the TQF. COL’s support for TVET in the country is ongoing and the organisation will work with Mauritius to strengthen and consolidate the L3F programme.
MOZAMBIQUE

COL Focal Point: Ms. Zaida Paz Helena Baüle, Ministry of Education and Culture (current)

BACKGROUND

Mozambique has made great strides in economic development over the last decade and has experienced benefits in improved health and education. Mozambique is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and has worked with COL in the promotion of open and distance learning (ODL) and building capacity in the country.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s support to Mozambique was in the Education and Learning for Livelihoods sectors. In the Education sector, COL worked in the areas of quality assurance, teacher development and eLearning for education sector development.

Mozambique has partnered with COL in hosting several regional meetings and workshops during this period and has supported Portuguese language participation in the pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C).

EDUCATION

Teacher Development

Mozambique hosted the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa Conference in October 2007.

Open/alternative schooling

COL engaged an external consultant to conduct a quantitative and qualitative evaluation on the work done by COL in Mozambique. The Final Report was made available in June 2008.

Mozambique was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from the National Institute of Distance Education attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-
instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

COL’s support for open schools has given staff members from Mozambique training in learner support and quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

**ELearning for education sector development**

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, L4C, Mozambique hosted a workshop in Portuguese in November 2008.

Advanced learners from Mozambique were among those from several African countries to participate in an online pilot of the Practitioners Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) programme. The pilot introduced concepts of research and evaluation to learners within their own contexts. On completion of the online course, learners produced comprehensive draft research proposals that they could use to submit to their own institutions or to funding agencies to support their research projects. Learners demonstrated a critical approach to conducting research in terms of its importance in the planning stages of ODL implementation and how it can impact decision-making within their institutions.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**National/international community development**

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) and COL organised a meeting on Improving Agricultural Education and Learning through Collaboration and Partnerships during the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Annual General Meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, in December 2008. Participants were from many African and other developing countries, CGIAR institutions, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), GFAR and associated regional member programmes and national partners, the World Bank and several donor agencies.

**Transnational programmes**

Seven staff members of ILO based in Mozambique were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by one delegate from the Higher Institute of Public Administration, Mozambique.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by five delegates from Mozambique including two sponsored by COL. Delegates included the COL Focal Point for Mozambique and a staff member from the National Institute of Distance Education. Others represented the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Institute of Open and Distance Learning, the Eduardo Mondlane University and the Foundation for Community Development. Professor Lidia Brito, Assistant Professor of Wood Science and
Technology, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane and former Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, was a keynote speaker at the Forum.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by a representative of the Focal Point for Mozambique, from the National Institute of Distance Education.

**Other events**

The Vice-President of COL met the Minister of Education and Culture in Angola and 15 ODL providers in Maputo in September 2007. She made a short presentation on ODL trends at the meeting.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

In 2009-2012, Mozambique will continue to benefit from COL activities in-country as well as regional initiatives. The country has an important contribution to make to the development of ODL resources, particularly through the L4C programme, supporting Portuguese language materials and events.
NAMIBIA

COL Focal Point:  Mr. Norman Titus (2006-2007)
Ms. Norah Bennett (2008)
Ms. Eva-Liisa Kafidi, Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (current)

BACKGROUND

A large yet sparsely-populated country, Namibia is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and an active member country in COL’s activities, promoting open and distance learning (ODL). Namibia is also a member of the Distance Education Association of South Africa (DEASA). The former Director of the Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) is now a COL staff in charge of Open Schooling in the Commonwealth.

SUMMARY

During this planning period, open schools have been a particular focus and COL has supported Namibia in both training and content development. Namibia has continued its full participation in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Namibia is included in an Africa-wide survey on the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education in all countries in continental Africa, part of a larger World Bank project to better serve the region. The country has also attended key regional and international meetings.

EDUCATION

Teacher development

COL sponsored Namibia’s initiation to the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium by supporting its participation at the TESSA Conference in October 2007 in Mozambique.

Open/alternative schooling

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified costing and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in
developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Three delegates from Namibia attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Gaborone, Botswana.

Namibia is contributing to the development of two new publications for open schools through two chapter authors for the Perspective Series on Open Schools – Open Schools for the 21st Century and a Handbook for Managers of Open Schools.

COL sponsored 16 participants, including two from NAMCOL, to a workshop on Developing Digital Content run by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

In October 2008, Ministries of Education and open schools in six countries including Namibia began a two-year partnership with COL to develop Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects to be used in open and conventional schools. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

COL commissioned an evaluation study on open schooling for secondary and higher education. The study included an examination of the cost efficiency, effectiveness and benefit of open schools, the student profile, how open schools can best complement the formal system, learner success, course types and development, learner support and assessment, planning and management systems as well as quality assurance. The report was submitted in October 2008.

Namibia was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from the Namibian College of Open Learning attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of ICTs.

Other COL support for open schools have included staff members from Namibia receiving training in learner support and also in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for the schools.

COL also supported NAMCOL in its development of digital content in five subjects and assisted them with the development of a strategy to integrate multimedia in their services.

Namibia is participating in the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and COL’s OER4OS project which is training selected teachers in the search and use of OERs. A workshop was conducted in Namibia in February 2009. The 25 teachers who took part were trained in copyright issues and BaseCamp navigation, part of providing them with the requisite skills in ICTs to start the development of OERs in five subjects: English, Entrepreneurship, Geography, Life Science and Physical Science.

Namibia is a member of DEASA and COL has been working with this organisation to build its research capacity in support of improving the quality and status of ODL in the region.

**Higher education**

COL has worked with the Namibia Open Learning Network Trust towards the development of a national ODL policy framework. A national consultative forum was held to consider the education sector review supported by COL. A costing exercise was completed and the report received in February 2009.
**ELearning for education sector development**

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, Namibia hosted two face-to-face workshops in November 2008.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

As part of COL’s initiative for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET, two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. The second workshop, in June 2008 was attended by a delegate from the Namibian Qualifications Authority.

COL organised a conference on Livelihood Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa in Accra in November 2008. The theme was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. A delegate from NAMCOL attended and took part in a session on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Namibia has continued to be an active member of VUSSC during 2006-2009. Activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Namibia attended all six training and course development workshops that took place including participants from the Namibia Training Authority, the Namibian College of Open Learning, the University of Namibia, the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment and the Polytechnic of Namibia. Workshop team leaders for the third and fifth workshops were from Namibia.

Namibia is contributing to the development of the transnational qualifications framework (TQF). It has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore. Namibia has been a member on the TQF Management Committee.

A delegate from Namibia, from Namibian Open Learning Network Trust (NOLNet), attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Good governance**

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. A gender consultant from Namibia attended the meeting.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by eight delegates from Namibia including the COL Focal Point, from NAMCOL, the University of Namibia, the Polytechnic of Namibia, Schoolnet Namibia and NOLNet. Four others were sponsored by COL, from the University of Namibia and NAMCOL. NAMCOL Online, Welcome to the World of Physical Science Grade 12 was one of the recipients of the Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials - Category B: Interactive, electronically delivered materials, which may be supplemented by materials developed in other media.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 15 delegates from Namibia. Eight were sponsored by COL, among them the COL Focal Point, from the Namibian College of Open Learning, NOLNet, the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Namibia.

LOOKING FORWARD

The work that has taken place with COL in developing capacity and resources for open schools will provide a strong foundation for the next three years in the education sector.

During the next planning period, COL looks forward to Namibia continuing its full contribution to the VUSSC and helping to bring key initiatives, including the TQF, to fruition.
NIGERIA

COL Focal Point:  Mrs. N.I. Umelo (2006)
                 Mrs. N.Y. Atuanya (2006-2007)
                 Dr. Marie E. Uko, Federal Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

The links between Nigeria and COL are strong. Nigeria is a major donor to COL’s budget and has a seat on the Board of Governors, currently held by Professor Michael Omolewa, Nigeria’s Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). COL’s Education Specialist for Teacher Development, Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, is a Nigerian national who was formerly Academic Director of the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI).

Nigeria is one of the E-9 countries with a large population that needs more education and training than existing institutions are providing. Open and distance learning (ODL) is seen as an effective delivery mode for reaching out to large numbers in remote and inaccessible areas. In this spirit, in 2001 the present government re-activated the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), which had been shut down in 1984. Former President Obasanjo is a firm believer in the merits of ODL and enrolled as a student in NOUN in 2006. The early engagement with ODL in Nigeria was focussed on the NTI, which is now recognised as a centre of excellence in teacher training. Given continuing political commitment at the highest levels, ODL systems are set to thrive in Nigeria.

SUMMARY

At the request of the Nigerian Government, COL’s programme in Nigeria is focussed on the development of higher education and teacher education through its support to two national institutions: NOUN and NTI. However COL’s work in Nigeria extends to all three sectors: Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment. Partners include several public institutions as well as regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and UNESCO.

COL has supported the establishment of the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), at NOUN for capacity building in ODL in the West African sub-region. Through this institute training programmes in quality assurance, instructional design, learner support and eLearning are being organised for both Nigerians and colleagues from anglophone West Africa.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from Nigeria took part in a workshop held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India and COL to review the pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit.

UNESCO’s Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA) project held a two-day workshop on Quality Indicators for Teacher Education in Kaduna in February 2007. Forty nine teacher educators from Nigeria examined the key areas of quality for teacher training and analysed their own situations against each quality indicator. They were asked to return to their respective institutions and report on best practices which will be compiled into a publication for other teacher education institutions in Nigeria.

The Joint COL-UNESCO-UBEC Quality Assurance Forum in Teacher Education for West Africa was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in February 2008 and was attended by the Minister of State for Education as well as 17 teacher education policy makers and senior administrators from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), the NTI, the Federal Ministry of Education and other institutions. The Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed at the Forum and was discussed along with quality assurance efforts made to date in Nigeria and three other countries.

A UNESCO-COL Chair in ODL has been established at NOUN under which a three-day forum on “A Decade of Distance Education in the Commonwealth - Achievements and Challenges” was held in May 2009.

Teacher development

Regional collaboration in teacher education through WACTED has continued. COL supported a workshop in Ghana in February 2007, held in association with the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium. Teacher educators from Nigeria were among 20 delegates who attended from seven countries. The programme introduced new teacher education institutions to TESSA and WACTED and provided a session on quality assurance in teacher education.

COL and UNESCO signed a Work Plan Agreement in July 2007 as part of a plan to work jointly with the International Institute for Educational Planning and TTISSA for policy support and capacity building for teacher development in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria will be one of six countries (five Commonwealth) included in the initial implementation of a six-month course for teacher education policymakers and administrators, currently in development.

A Green Teacher Programme, leading to a Diploma in Environment Education, has been adapted by NTI for teacher development in primary schools. This was a joint COL-UNESCO-NTI project. As part of the project, a delegation from NTI visited the Centre for Environment Education, India in March 2008 to attend a 10-day training workshop, among them the Deputy Director, Field Operations and Students’ Services, the Assistant Director, Programme Design and Development, the Deputy Director, Area of Specialisation: Science/Ecology/Materials Development and the NTI State Coordinator.
Open/alternative schooling

COL supported a consultancy for the development of an open school. A proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Education in October 2006.

COL’s support for open schools has given staff members from Nigeria training in learner support and quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

Higher education

The COL supported course on Legislative Drafting Programme, is being offered by NOUN to students in Nigeria.

COL has provided support for 50 Nigerian students enrolled in the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education and the Master of Arts in Distance Education programmes of the Indira Gandhi National Open University under the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme. Training was arranged for local Nigerian tutors to provide the necessary learner support. Two workshops were held for the programme, with 27 students attending the workshop in Lagos and 20 in Abuja. The Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and Masters in Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes are offered by NOUN, which is a member of a nine-country consortium.

RETRIDOL

COL has supported the establishment of RETRIDOL at NOUN to cater for the West African Region. RETRIDOL aims to develop expertise in ODL and information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as to organise capacity building based on the needs of the region. To date, over 200 participants from across Commonwealth West Africa have taken part in workshops held by RETRIDOL, dealing with course writing, eLearning, quality assurance, learner support, instructional design/multimedia, dual-mode provision and research methods.

In February 2007, the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) in Ghana hosted a workshop on quality assurance in ODL organised by NOUN in collaboration with COL. It was attended by 23 academics including 10 participants from Nigeria: representing RETRIDOL, NOUN, the National Universities Commission, the Quality Assurance and Research Development Agency, the University of Buea, the University of Lagos and NTI. The workshop introduced important issues in quality assurance and ODL. The participants shared best practices and reviewed case studies. They also discussed issues such as international standards, quality assurance indicators and quality assurance in ODL course development, delivery and learner support systems.

In May 2008, COL undertook a programme-monitoring tour of West Africa and held focus group meetings with participants in Nigeria who have taken part in the training workshops offered by RETRIDOL. While there is room for improvement in its work, all indications are that RETRIDOL’s performance has been fully satisfactory.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, 20 delegates from Nigeria participated in online workshops.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Nineteen participants from Nigeria, including a representative from the National Commission for Nomadic Education, attended the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC technical and vocational education and training (TVET) Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the summit was co-organised by COL and the UNEVOC Centre for TVET and was part of the 2nd International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training.

As part of COL’s initiative for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET, two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. The second workshop, in June 2008, was attended by a delegate from Nigeria from the National Commission for Nomadic Education. Nigeria has started work toward implementation of RPL in TVET.

To assist Nigeria in a restructuring of TVET on a national level, COL organised a training workshop in June 2008 for 20 coordinators from all six geo-political zones in the delivery of TVET using ODL and ICTs.

COL organised a conference on Livelihood Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa in Accra in November 2008. A delegate from Nigeria, Dr. Nuru Yakubu of the National Board of Technical Education, attended. The theme was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. He took part in a session on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. He was also in a working group on ODL course materials development for community health nursing, drawing up a plan of action for 2009-2012 and contributed to the roundtable session on short and long term training and upgrading of TVET teachers using ODL. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association. Dr. Yakubu was elected President of the Association.

As part of COL’s initiative to develop basic and middle level entrepreneurial education and training in literacy and skills development for youth and adults, Nigeria is participating in the development of vocational courses in Community Health Nursing using ODL. The pilot course development began in Ghana and Nigeria will adapt it at a future workshop in Abuja.

COL is collaborating with NOUN and the Department of Basic and Secondary Education of the Federal Ministry of Education to train course writers to use wiki open educational resource skills to convert core courses for vocational training. TVET experts from all six geo-political regions in Nigeria were trained by COL in 2008.

National/international community development

As part of the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly & African Agricultural Science Week at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007, COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. One provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Nigeria.

The report, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods – A Nigerian Case Study were distributed in September 2008.
Transnational programmes

Workshops to train course writers to use ICTs to develop courses for TVET were held in January and March 2007. Four participants from NOUN and one each from the Federal Ministry of Education and one Village Foundation attended. The participants of the workshops will form a core team of trainers for teachers across Nigeria.

Ten staff members of the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Nigeria were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

COL’s guide for caregivers working with orphans and other vulnerable children and youth has been adapted for Nigeria and is available online. Counselling for Caregivers is a set of self-instructional learning materials that provides caregivers with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to support effectively the healthy development of children and youth in their care. It can be downloaded at no cost from the COL website.

COL is assisting Nigeria with the development of basic and middle level entrepreneurial education and training along with other West African countries and in partnership with ECOWAS, is developing common courses in vocational training. The ECOWAS office in Abuja is the host institution. In May 2008, COL organised an orientation for officials of the Federal Ministry of Education and ECOWAS in using ODL and ICTs for TVET in Nigeria, in preparation for a training programme for TVET coordinators across Nigeria.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. One delegate from Nigeria, the Gender Coordinator and Chief Development Officer at the Nigerian Administrative Staff College, attended the meeting.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

As part of an on-going programme of media empowerment, COL is supporting and enhancing technology, training and the delivery of information via radio and television at NTI and the National Commission on Nomadic Education. COL upgraded the duplication, video editing and camera technology at NTI in March 2007. Advanced training and assessment of NTI’s media unit was completed in October 2007 and COL was able to secure an FM licence for NTI through the President of Nigeria’s office. In March 2007, COL also began a capacity building exercise with the National Commission on Nomadic Education by upgrading their audio and video production technology. Further training was undertaken in October 2007.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by 20 Nigerian delegates from various educational institutions and the Federal
Ministry of Education. In addition, seven delegates were sponsored by COL, from the National Commission for Nomadic Education, the University of Ado-Ekiti, the Federal Ministry of Education and the Guardian Newspaper Ltd.

At this Forum, His Excellency Professor Michael Omolewa, Ambassador/Permanent Delegate for the Permanent Delegation of Nigeria to UNESCO and a member of COL’s Board of Governors was named Honorary Fellow of COL.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in London in July 2008 was attended by 48 delegates from Nigeria, including 13 COL-sponsored delegates, from various educational institutions and the Federal Ministry of Education.

**Appointments**

His Excellency Professor Michael Omolewa is a member of the Board of Governors and Executive Committee of COL.

**Other events**

The Vice-President attended the special convocation ceremony for the formal grand opening and commissioning of the headquarters at NOUN in March 2007. The Vice-President also gave a presentation on “Recent Developments in Higher Education and Implications for NOUN” to academics at NOUN. The topics included the shift of distance education focus from the developed to the developing world, increased cross-border provision, the rise of private provision, the deepening research divide, the open source movement and finally the advent of the “new learner”.

COL sponsored a delegate from NOUN to participate at the 12th Cambridge Conference on ODL in the UK in September 2007.

The Vice-President returned to NOUN in March 2008 and gave a special lecture on “Digital Divide or Digital Dividend: postcards from the south” to NOUN staff.

The President & CEO gave the closing address, entitled “eLearning on the far side of the digital divide” at the 2nd Conference of the African Council for Distance Education held in Lagos in July 2008.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

In 2009-2012, Nigeria will continue to be a major partner for COL activities in the region. NOUN and RETRIDOL are well positioned to provide regional leadership and expertise along with other institutions and partners in the country. The development of programmes and materials will be a priority area. COL initiatives in all three sectors are planned to continue in-country as well as involving Nigeria regionally. Nigerian expertise will reach Commonwealth-wide through the work of Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, COL’s Education Specialist: Teacher Education.

COL will continue to support Nigeria’s efforts in the innovative use of educational media and broadcasting.
SEYCHELLES

COL Focal Point: Ms. Marie-Reine Hoareau, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, this archipelago in the Indian Ocean has a firm commitment to open learning. Seychelles played a major role in establishing the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and has participated fully in its activities since inception. Seychelles contributed to COL’s budget in 2008. It would only seem natural that a Seychelles national, John Lesperance, is now on COL’s staff as the Education Specialist - VUSSC.

SUMMARY

COL’s activity in support of the priorities of the Government of Seychelles in 2006-2009 has been in the programme sectors of Education and Learning for Livelihoods. In the Education sector, Seychelles has benefited from COL’s regional and international support for open schools. COL has also supported Seychelles in the planning of tertiary education development in the country. In the Learning for Livelihoods sector area, Seychelles is participating in the activities of VUSSC.

EDUCATION

Teacher development

COL sponsored Seychelles' initiation to the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium by supporting its participation at the TESSA Conference in October 2007 in Mozambique.

Open/alternative schooling

COL support for open schools has included staff members from Seychelles receiving training in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for the schools.

In October 2008, Ministries of Education and open schools in six countries including Seychelles began a two-year partnership with COL to develop Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects to be used
in open and conventional schools. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

Higher education

COL has been working with the Ministry of Education and Youth and the National Human Resources Development Council to provide policy advice and assist in developing an implementation plan for expanding and diversifying the provision of tertiary education through a blended-learning approach.

As part of this initiative, a National Consultative Forum on Tertiary Education Provision was held in Seychelles in April 2008. The Forum engaged a wide range of stakeholders in reflecting on issues pertinent to future developments in tertiary education which are relevant and sustainable in the context of Seychelles. The Forum achieved a number of objectives:

- Broadened consultation and enriched the findings of the draft consultancy report,
- Enabled the sharing of experiences from other Small Islands Developing States tertiary education systems,
- Identified the most viable options for the development of tertiary education in Seychelles,
- Enabled consensus building on future policies for tertiary education in Seychelles.

The Government of Seychelles has received the reports of the Forum.

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, Seychelles hosted a face-to-face workshop in November 2008.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

A participant from Seychelles is assisting in a COL initiative to design a mechanism on recognition of prior learning (RPL) in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to be shared with other institutions in African countries. As part of this initiative, two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. Both were attended by a representative from The Seychelles Qualifications Authority. He also attended a further workshop held in Lusaka in July 2008.

Nineteen participants from Seychelles, including one from the Ministry of Education attended the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007, the summit was co-organised by COL and the UNEVOC Centre for TVET.

At the request of the Ministry of Education and Youth, COL is collaborating with Ghana to train TVET teachers in Seychelles using open and distance learning (ODL). The first Curriculum Review Workshop for the Seychelles Institute of Technology took place in May 2008 in Seychelles. It was organised by COL with a consultant from the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.
Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Seychelles is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from the Ministry of Education and Youth, the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the Seychelles Maritime Training Centre, the Seychelles Fishing Authority and the Seychelles Institute of Technology attended all six training and course development workshops that took place.

Seychelles is contributing to the development of a transnational qualifications framework. Seychelles has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore.

The Interlocutor for Seychelles, from the Ministry of Education and Youth also attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

Transnational programmes

One staff member of the World Health Organisation (WHO) based in Seychelles was trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

A delegate from the Ministry of Education and Youth attended COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 as well as the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in London in July 2008.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for Seychelles.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Seychelles will continue to support the RPL initiative, participating in the committee. The country also has the opportunity to continue its full involvement in the VUSSC. COL looks forward to further working with our partners in the expansion of tertiary education following the National Consultative Forum held in 2008.
BACKGROUND

Even though Sierra Leone only has a population of five million, it does not qualify as a “small state”. However, at the request of the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Dr. Alpha T. Wurie, Sierra Leone was invited to join the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

The COL-organised National Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Forum held in February 2005 resulted in the passing of a bill on ODL. A national ODL policy is under development and a Distance Education College is proposed. COL will support its implementation which will serve not just education but health and agriculture as well. Capacity building in different aspects of ODL will continue through COL and the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), the COL-supported regional centre of expertise in ODL for West Africa, either in face-to-face training workshops or through the Master of Arts in Distance Education programme offered by the Indira Gandhi National Open University, India.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) has developed a comprehensive ten-year Education Sector Plan. Areas of focus include “meeting the teacher needs of an expanding school system”, “expanding and improving post-primary schooling” and issues of HIV/AIDS, gender equality, and capacity-building. COL will work with partners in Sierra Leone to provide technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and eLearning as well as support the FM radio station of MEYS.

Sierra Leone has contributed to the COL budget in 2008/2009.

SUMMARY

During the previous triennium, COL’s work in Sierra Leone focussed mainly in the areas of policy development in ODL, teacher training, peri-urban agriculture and community health. This involved a range of partners: the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Freetown Teacher Training College (FTTC), Njala College of Agriculture and the Nova Scotia Sierra Leone Programme (NSSLP). This work has continued during this three year period. The specific outcomes are that staff from Sierra Leone institutions have received training in teacher education, quality assurance and TVET. COL has also worked closely with NSSLP to organise workshops in schools for raising awareness about HIV/AIDS and STDs. Two radio transmitters were installed in Sierra Leone during this period.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The Joint COL-UNESCO-UBEC Quality Assurance Forum in Teacher Education for West Africa was held in Abuja, Nigeria, in February 2008 and was attended by the COL Focal Point for Sierra Leone from the Ministry of Education and another delegate from the University of Sierra Leone. The pan-Commonwealth Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed at the Forum and was discussed along with quality assurance efforts made to date in Sierra Leone and three other countries.

Teacher development

Regional collaboration in teacher education through the West Africa Consortium for Teacher Education Development (WACTED) has continued. COL supported a workshop in Ghana in February 2007, held in collaboration with Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA). Teacher educators from Sierra Leone were among 20 delegates who attended from seven countries. The programme introduced new teacher education institutions to TESSA and WACTED and provided a session on quality assurance in teacher education. A recent meeting of WACTED was held in Abuja in February 2009 where four delegates from Sierra Leone participated.

COL and FTTC organised an Instructional Design workshop in Freetown in December 2008. It was attended by 30 staff from Milton Margai College of Education and Technology, Fourah Bay College, the University of Sierra Leone, Njala University Bo Campus, Port Loko Teachers’ College, FTTC and the International Rescue Committee. Participants were taught appropriate skills for instructional design and development and the process of developing learning materials for ODL.

E-Learning for education sector development

In February 2007, the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) in Ghana hosted a workshop on quality assurance in ODL organised by The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) in collaboration with COL. It was attended by 23 academics including two participants from Sierra Leone, from the Institute of Advanced Management and Technology and FTTC. The workshop introduced important issues in quality assurance and ODL. The participants shared best practices and reviewed case studies. They also discussed issues such as international standards, quality assurance indicators and quality assurance in ODL course development, delivery and learner support systems.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Sierra Leone hosted a policy awareness seminar on integrating information and communication technologies (ICTs) and eLearning into TVET in Freetown in May 2007. The event was co-sponsored by COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA). Delegates came from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries. They received valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

Nineteen participants from Sierra Leone attended the 1st African UNESCO-UNEVOC TVET Summit on the theme of “Access to and Inclusion in TVET in Africa Through New ICT-based Solutions”. Held in Nairobi in May 2007,
the summit was co-organised by COL and the UNEVOC Centre for TVET and was part of the 2nd International Conference on ICT for Development, Education and Training.

A second TVET Africa Summit was held in Ghana in May 2008. It promoted good practice projects in the use of ICTs in TVET across Africa. Sierra Leone was one of the three winners with a project called “Help a Needy Child, Street Boys and Street Girls Reintegration Project”.

**National/international community development**

COL-sponsored participants from Sierra Leone attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries.

As part of the Forum, COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. One provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Sierra Leone.

The report, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Toward the Introduction of Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) – An overview of Agricultural Education and Training in Sierra Leone were distributed in September 2008.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Sierra Leone is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. A participant from the Ministry of Marine Resources attended the fifth of six training and course development workshops that took place.

The Interlocutor for Sierra Leone, from FTTC, attended a key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

**Transnational programmes**

One staff member of the World Health Organisation (WHO) based in Sierra Leone was trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. One staff member UNHCR was trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.

**Health, welfare and community development**

COL has continued to support NSSLP in its efforts to address HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma throughout the country. COL implemented a media unit and FM radio station with NSSLP in Freetown in November 2006. Health video productions are now being delivered, via village cinema events, throughout the country.
Two delegates attended the LearnShare, HIV/AIDS in Africa Workshop for Community Radio in April 2009.

**Educational use of mass media and ICTs**

COL has continued to support the multimedia development of teacher education course materials for the FTTC, updating the video editing system at the College in April 2007. COL has also continued support for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology efforts to utilise FM radio for education support for schools in the Freetown area. COL updated the FM radio transmitter at the Ministry in November 2006.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by four delegates including two sponsored by COL. Delegates were from Angels Haven Outreach, Fourah Bay College (FBC), the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Childhelp Sierra Leone.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three COL-sponsored delegates from Sierra Leone, from NSSLP, FTTC and Childhelp Sierra Leone.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Sierra Leone.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

For 2009-2012, Sierra Leone has the opportunity to increase involvement in the VUSSC and further benefit from the capacity and resources it offers. TVET and teacher training will continue to be a major theme with initiatives during this period building on the work already done. COL will support the development of the Higher Teachers Certificate at the FTTC. It will also continue to strengthen capacity in the use of the FM radio stations for education and health.

It is hoped that regular contributions will be received over 2009-2012 to enable COL to make a significant impact on education and training in Sierra Leone.
SOUTH AFRICA

COL Focal Point: Ms. Trudi van Wyk, Department of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

South Africa is a major donor to COL and has a seat on the Board of Governors currently held by Ms. Jenny Glennie, Executive Director of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE). She is also a member of the Executive Committee and Performance Sub-Committee and chairs the Audit Committee. COL’s Director of Information Technology and Knowledge Management, Mr. Paul West, is a South African national.

South Africa is a key partner to COL in Africa and sees its contribution to COL as an investment in the development of the SADC countries in particular. It is a provider of expertise for the region as well as an active participant in COL activities. Professor Barney Pityana, Principal of the University of South Africa (UNISA), was a keynote speaker at the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in London in 2008. Consultants from SAIDE, the University of Pretoria and the Mindset Network are engaged regularly for quality assurance, learner support and developing digital content and research. The Mindset Network has also been contracted to assist the Namibian College of Open Learning with the development of strategy. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has played a critical facilitating role in the development of a transnational qualifications framework (TQF) for VUSSC.

SUMMARY

COL works in South Africa in all three of its programme sectors. In the Education Sector, COL provides material and capacity-building support for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education programmes and institutions. In 2007, COL conducted a trial quality audit at the request of UNISA which was very satisfied with the results. In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, the focus was on literacy and skills development for youth, particularly girls, and the possible extension of COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme is being explored with South African partners. Without the expertise brought to the process by the South African Qualifications Authority, the VUSSC would have found it much more difficult to develop the TQF that is key to its objective of course sharing. Work in the Human Environment sector relates to media and health and continues the work already initiated in the previous triennium 2003-2006.

COL’s Knowledge Management service is available to South African institutions and individuals. COL has carried out capacity building in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs)...
either directly with South African institutions or through the Southern African Development Community - Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) facility located in Botswana. COL has supported conferences organised by distance education associations such as the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA), the African Council for Distance Education and the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa. South African expertise in ODL and ICTs is being used in other developing Commonwealth countries and, importantly, for the development of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Research in ICTs in education in Africa included South Africa as one of the countries in the survey.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from South Africa took part in a workshop to critically review the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit. The workshop was held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India and COL.

Open/alternative schooling

South Africa is a member of DEASA and COL has been working with this organisation to build its research capacity so as to improve the quality and status of ODL in the region. COL also researched the use of mobile technologies with educational institutions in South Africa as well as Uganda and the UK, in its efforts to develop sustainable models for mLearning (mobile learning).

The Mindset Network hosted a workshop on Developing Digital Content in Johannesburg in September 2007. Part of COL’s initiative to strengthen the capacity of open schools, the workshop objectives were to share experiences among participants about digital content development and to develop skills in development and production. Twelve participants from South Africa’s Mindset Network took part in the workshop.

SAIDE hosted a Quality Assurance workshop in October 2008 with participants from across the region.

COL is assisting in the development of partnerships to facilitate collaboration and increase access to quality education through a project on twinning of secondary schools in the UK with secondary schools in South Africa. The BBC and the Open Learning Systems Education Trust (OLSET) are COL’s partners in this initiative.

Higher education

COL led a trial audit exercise to prepare UNISA for the institutional audit that was conducted in 2008 by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education. The report of the trial audit was published in August 2007. UNISA staff reported that they found the trial audit very useful.

The Certificate Course for Distance Education Practitioners created by the Institute of Continuing Education at UNISA in collaboration with the South African Committee for Higher Education Distance Education Training Unit provides a basic introduction for all staff involved in or about to become involved in ODL. COL conducted an evaluation of the program to determine its effectiveness which was very positive.

COL is supporting the development of expertise in ODL and ICTs at the Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning (BOCODOL) as a resource for the Southern African region. As a result, COL supported the African Access...
SOUTH AFRICA

COL ACTIVITIES 2006-2009

to Knowledge Alliance Trust (AAKAT) through BOCODOL, to host the Conference on Open Access in Southern Africa Regional Universities Association in November 2007 in Botswana. COL sponsored two delegates from South Africa to attend the conference, from the University of Pretoria and Witswaterstrand University.

ELearning for education sector development

An educational practitioner from South Africa participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, over 40 delegates from South Africa participated in online workshops.

Advanced learners from South Africa were among those from several African countries to participate in an online pilot of the Practitioners Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) programme. The pilot introduced concepts of research and evaluation to learners within their own contexts. On completion of the online course, learners produced comprehensive draft research proposals that they could submit to their own institutions or to funding agencies to support their research projects. Learners demonstrated a critical approach to conducting research in terms of its importance in the planning stages of ODL implementation and how it can impact decision-making within their institutions.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The South African Adult and Basic Education and Training sector and the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) are working with COL in designing a mechanism on recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET to be shared with other institutions in Africa. The Director of the National Literacy Campaign was contracted to assist. Two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. A further workshop in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2008 was attended by a delegate from UNISA. South Africa shared with participants at the workshop its experiences of the national literacy campaign, launched earlier in 2008, and the RPL policy which was developed under its Professional Accreditation Board.

The Commonwealth Computer Navigator’s Certificate is an international collaboration to develop a basic skills qualification in ICTs using open source software. South Africa is a founding module developer and has assisted COL in the educational design and development of the materials based on the Open International Computer Driving Licence. Seven content developers including one from South Africa attended a review meeting in Vancouver in June 2007. They reviewed the status of local certification of the programme, collaboratively identified areas of improvement potential in the course materials, designed an assessment strategy for the course, identified and specified potential multimedia support resources and the student support requirements for the course.

COL organised a conference on Livelihood Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa in Accra in November 2008, attended by a delegate from South Africa. The theme was “Think Globally; Act Locally”. The delegate took part in a session...
on RPL resulting in a strategic plan for 2009-2012. The participant was also in a working group on ODL course materials development for community health nursing, drawing up a plan of action for 2009-2012 and contributed to the roundtable session on short- and long-term training and upgrading of TVET teachers using ODL. The conference participants created the West African TVET (WATVET), a regional TVET association.

National/international community development

South Africa hosted the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries. COL and FARA also organised side events prior to the General Assembly including one on “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa” and another on “Lifelong learning for Farmers and Tech-MODE: A paradigm shift in extension for Africa”.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has supported COL and VUSSC in the drafting of a concept document for a transnational qualifications framework (TQF). A delegate from SAQA attended the workshop on professional development of educators in Singapore in March 2007, assisting in designing ways that the SAQA could help VUSSC create a TQF for all VUSSC countries. In February 2008, two representatives from SAQA attended the TQF meeting in Singapore.

The Shuttleworth Foundation hosted a meeting on OERs in Cape Town in September 2007 which was attended by COL and VUSSC. The Cape Town Declaration on Open Education that was released in January 2008 is a compromise document that attempts to take into account a wide range of views in the field of OERs. COL’s statement on this Declaration is available at www.col.org/capetowndeclaration.

A representative from SAQA also attended the meeting of Interlocutors for VUSSC in London in July 2008.

Transnational programmes

COL was engaged by the World Bank to develop a distance learning CD for editors and publishers in Sub-Saharan Africa to enhance their professional skills in textbook production. A faculty member at UNISA was the content developer for this course. The interactive, self-contained CD-ROM was completed in June 2007. The World Bank’s Office of the Publisher plans to deliver the course through its African Publishers’ Network after testing it with 15 pilot takers.

Eight staff members of the International Labour Organisation, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the World Bank based in South Africa were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. One staff member from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

As part of its Media Empowerment programme, COL has been supporting the Valley Trust in combating HIV/AIDS stigma, helping the Trust to enlarge its capacity to produce video content by contributing equipment and providing training. Media content production has been strongly integrated into the operations of the Trust, primarily in communicating their activities, in particular to donors. The degree of integration is an important achievement and a valuable lesson in communicating development in areas like HIV/AIDS. The Trust has also been using their media unit for participatory video programmes in which they work directly with community groups to produce their own content and then share it with other groups.

Five delegates attended the LearnShare, HIV/AIDS in Africa Workshop for Community Media in April 2009.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL has continued to support multimedia delivery by OLSET of primary education materials and health education. COL has helped OLSET to enlarge its capacity to produce video content by contributing equipment and providing content. Video production has added value to OLSET’s core work of using radio to support English-language learning at the primary school level. Video has also been used to communicate with stakeholders, especially donors, to help them visualise OLSET’s approach of using radio to model and use new curricula. OLSET rates these contributions highly, especially for organisational communications.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by 18 participants from South Africa. COL also sponsored three delegates, from UNISA, Worldwide Resources Training Centre and the University of Pretoria. One of the recipients of the Awards of Excellence for Distance Education Materials, Category A: print or other “low-end” media materials as part of a distance education course/programme was the Advanced Certificate in Education in the Field of Learners with Special Educational Needs submitted by the School of Education, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 11 delegates from South Africa as well as 15 sponsored by COL, from the Mindset Network, Neil Butcher and Associates, the University of Pretoria, TSiBA Education, SAQA, the Faculty of Adult Basic Education and Training Institute, Worldwide Resources Training Centre, OLSET, University of Cape Town, AAKAT and UNISA. Professor Barney Pityana, Vice-Chancellor, UNISA was named Honorary Fellow of COL at the Forum and was a keynote speaker.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for South Africa.
LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, South Africa will continue to be a major resource for the region, providing leadership and expertise and contributing to COL’s work both regionally and internationally. In one such collaboration, COL and SAQA will work together to formalise ways in which the Authority can add value to VUSSC initiatives and the TQF development. COL appreciates the consistent quality of the consultancy work that it commissions from South African individuals and organisations and understands that South Africa wants its contribution to COL to benefit the SADC region in particular and Africa generally.
SWAZILAND

COL Focal Point: Mr. Sibusiso Mkhonta, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Swaziland is a small state of the Commonwealth and a regular contributor to COL’s budget. The country is a member of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA).

SUMMARY

COL’s work in Swaziland is in all three sectors: Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment. In education, COL’s work is predominantly on building regional capacity in open and distance learning (ODL) as well as eLearning, which includes invitations and COL support for participating in Commonwealth communities dedicated to the development of free content and capacity building. In Learning for Livelihoods, COL also supports Swaziland in the development of basic skills in information and communication technologies (ICTs). Working with the World Health Organization (WHO), Ministries of Health and NGOs, COL has continued support of its health media empowerment initiative in Swaziland.

EDUCATION

Open/alternative schooling

Swaziland is a member of DEASA and COL has been working with this organisation to build its research capacity in support of improving the quality and status of ODL in the region.

COL’s support for open schools has given staff members from Swaziland training in learner support and quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

Higher education

COL has engaged a consultant to review the current systems and develop strategies for improving provision and management of distance learning courses at the University of Swaziland.
ELearning for education sector development

COL is supporting the activities of the South African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), located in Botswana, which are designed to build and strengthen regional capacity in ODL and the use of ICTs. Swaziland is benefiting from the activities that SADC-CDE is organising and managing for practitioners and institutions within the region.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) co-sponsored a policy awareness seminar on integrating ICTs and eLearning into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. A representative from Swaziland was among those from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries. The delegates gained valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Swaziland is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included the capacity building and creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Swaziland attended five of the six training and course development workshops that took place, from the University of Swaziland, the Ministry of Education and the Vocational and Commercial Training Institute. The workshop team leader for the second workshop, in Singapore in March 2007, was from Swaziland.

A delegate from the Ministry of Education participated in the officials meeting for a transnational qualifications framework in Singapore.

The Interlocutor for Swaziland, from the Institute of Distance Education at the University of Swaziland attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

COL, in partnership with WHO, has continued to support the efforts of The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC) in delivering AIDS/HIV prevention and stigma-based information to the general public. COL provided a Canadian intern, new equipment and the supporting technology training to TASC in January 2007.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by four participants from the University of Swaziland including three sponsored by COL.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by a delegate from the Ministry of Education and a COL-sponsored delegate from the University of Swaziland.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for Swaziland.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Swaziland will continue to benefit from COL initiatives both in-country and regionally. The results of the consultancy on distance learning at the University of Swaziland will provide the groundwork for clear strategies for COL to support the University’s development in ODL. COL looks forward to Swaziland’s continuing participation in the activities of VUSSC and its contribution to the achievement of key initiatives.
TANZANIA

COL Focal Point: Mrs. Lambertha H. Mahai, Institute of Adult Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Tanzania has had a long association with COL and has been a regular contributor to COL’s budget since 2003. The country has made economic progress in recent years and has advanced strongly towards universal primary education even if significant challenges remain. It has been an active participant in COL activities, particularly through the Open University of Tanzania (OUT) which was established in 1992.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s assistance to Tanzania has been quality assurance, teacher development and the expansion of open schooling in support of the Secondary Education Development Plan. This work has included advocacy, curriculum development and capacity building, carried out in association with the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and the Institute for Adult Education (IAE). COL is also assisting Tanzanian institutions such as OUT, the Tanzanian Universities Commission and other universities and colleges in the areas of teacher education, eLearning, and administrative staff development.

During this period there has been notable progress in the development and use of media materials produced by the Health Media Unit that COL helped to establish in the Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC). COL has initiated new activities in the area of Learning for Livelihoods and begun to explore how COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme might contribute to the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy within the national development plan.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

COL and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) jointly presented a workshop on quality assurance in teacher education for a group of teacher educators at the Third Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications, held in Dar es Salaam in...
September 2007. COL presented the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit developed by 20 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa through COL’s strategy for south-south cooperation.

A UNESCO-COL Chair in open and distance learning (ODL) has been established at OUT.

**Teacher development**

COL has assisted OUT in capacity building, developing courses for primary teacher education, using materials developed by the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa consortium of which COL is a partner.

**Open/alternative schooling**

COL organised a workshop on the Management of Open and Distance Learning for 23 participants, mainly from IAE, in March 2007. The workshop introduced participants to the fundamentals of ODL, student support services in ODL, the planning and management of distance education in developing countries, materials design and development and how to prepare training sessions.

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified the cost and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Two delegates from Tanzania attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Botswana.

COL sponsored two participants from IAE to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

Tanzania was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from the Institute of Adult Education attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

COL’s support for open schools has given staff members from Tanzania training in learner support and quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

**Higher education**

COL is assisting in the professional development of OUT administrative staff and staff at the Tanzanian Commission for Universities. As part of this support, an eLearning workshop was facilitated by the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) in November 2008 in Begamoyo.

COL also provided assistance to the Tanzanian Commission for Universities in conducting a leadership seminar for senior university executives from Tanzania and four other countries in Dar es Salaam in 2008.
ELearning for education sector development

COL is supporting the activities of the South African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), located in Botswana, which are designed to build and strengthen regional capacity in ODL and the use of ICTs. Tanzania is benefiting from the activities that SADC-CDE is organising and managing for practitioners and institutions within the Southern African region.

An educational practitioner from Tanzania participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Tanzania attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries.

COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. The first side event provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Tanzania.

The report, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Status, Opportunities, Potential and Challenges of Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods – A case study of Tanzania were distributed in September 2008.

Transnational programmes

Fourteen staff members of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organisation (WHO) based in Tanzania were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

COL has continued to support the Health Media Unit created with CSSC in partnership with WHO in 2005 to deliver health information about HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. COL completed an assessment visit to CSSC and WHO in October 2007.

Three delegates attended the LearnShare, HIV/AIDS in Africa workshop for Community Media in April 2009.

Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. The Director of the Tanzania Global Development Learning Centre attended the meeting.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

In partnership with UNESCO, COL supported the Media Institute of Southern Africa – Tanzania Office, the Community Media Association and the Ministry of Communication, Science and Technology in the design of a capacity building approach, the development of related OERs, and the organisation of a pilot workshop at Radio Sengerema involving over five community radio, media and telecentre groups from Tanzania. The results were actively shared as an open content project among COL’s international community media peer group.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by a delegate from OUT, sponsored by COL.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by six delegates from OUT, the National Council for Technical Education, GlobalHort and the University of Dar-es-Salaam. COL also sponsored two further delegates from OUT.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Tanzania.
LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, COL will work with Tanzania to support further development of open schooling in the country. COL will also seek to partner further with OUT for activities in Tanzania, supporting capacity and expertise at the University, as well as other Tanzanian institutions. COL looks forward to Tanzania’s continuing contribution to OERs development through the FLOSS4Edu and L4C initiatives and Tanzania will have opportunity to benefit from COL activities in the region, both directly and through SADC-CDE. COL will work with UNESCO to strengthen the Chair at OUT.
UGANDA

COL Focal Point: Mrs. Elizabeth K.M. Gabona, Ministry of Education and Sports (current)

BACKGROUND

Uganda is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and an active participant in COL’s activities. The higher education system in Uganda is one of the oldest in East Africa, with Makerere University providing education to the entire region. However, there is great potential for the further development of open and distance learning (ODL) and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for education in the country. Economic growth has been significant in the past decade and Uganda has won praise for its progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Expanding education and vocational training is essential to better prepare people to build and sustain the economy.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL has been involved in providing professional and technical support to education and training in all three sectors: Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment.

The major focus of COL’s assistance to Uganda is in the Education sector with considerable actions taken towards formulating ODL and ICTs in an integrated national education policy with a focus on higher education. Work involves the area of developing capacity for initiating open schooling approaches for secondary and vocational education and also quality assurance in teacher education. COL continues to work in Uganda as member of the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium. The Makerere University is involved in TESSA course material development. Ugandan expertise in ODL is used to run orientation workshops and assist with the adaptation of ODL materials for the local context in Malawi and Tanzania.

During this period, COL also initiated work in the area of using media for health.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from Uganda took part in a workshop to critically review the pan-
Commonwealth publication, Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit. The workshop was
held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India and COL.

The Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was launched in December 2007. Makerere
University has adapted the Quality Indicators for Teacher Education, included in the Toolkit, for quality assurance at
the University.

Teacher development

COL supported five participants from Sub-Saharan Africa to attend the Distance Education and Teachers’ Training
in Africa conference in Uganda in August 2007.

Open/alternative schooling

COL engaged two staff from Uganda, from Kyambogo University (KYU) and the Shimoni Primary Teachers’
College Kampala, to conduct Trainers’ workshops in Malawi and Tanzania in March 2007. The workshops on the
Management of ODL introduced participants to the fundamentals of ODL, student support services in ODL, the
planning and management of distance education in developing countries, materials design and development and how
to prepare training sessions. Malawi and Tanzania hope to adapt and contextualise the training materials and to
register tutors for the distance education professional course offered by KYU.

COL has commissioned a study on the use of Mobile Technology and Makerere University is part of this study.

Higher education

COL is assisting Uganda in the development of a national ODL policy framework and implementation action plan
for Uganda. As part of this, COL supported a National Consultative Forum on ODL, “Opening New Frontiers for
Equity and Quality Education through Open and Distance Learning”, held in Kampala in December 2006. The
Forum brought together key stakeholders from ministries, educational institutions and representatives of civil society
to examine the potential of ODL to reach out to all levels of education. It explored ways in which distance education
methodologies can serve to fulfill the development needs of Uganda and established a consensus on the broad
framework for a national policy on ODL. It attracted 99 participants from different ministries, the 13 universities
(four public and nine private) and civil society organisations and featured presentations and group discussions. The
Vice-President of COL gave two presentations at the Forum, “Open and Distance Learning: Challenges and
Innovations” and “Quality Assurance in Distance Education”.

COL is supporting the development of expertise in ODL and ICTs at the Botswana College of Open and Distance
Learning (BOCODOL) as a resource for the Southern Africa region. As a result, COL supported the African Access
to Knowledge Alliance Trust through BOCODOL, to host the Conference on Open Access in Southern Africa
Regional Universities Association in November 2007 in Botswana. COL sponsored two delegates from Uganda to
attend the conference, including one from the National Book Trust.
COL is supporting the creation of a National Open University in Uganda. COL has sent materials to the Commissioner of Higher Education to assist in the administration and planning of the University.

**E-Learning for education sector development**

An educational practitioner from Uganda participated in a two-day workshop in Nairobi in November 2006. The workshop was organised by COL and the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative to discuss the role of free and open educational resources (OERs) in the East African Region. The workshop also focussed on identifying innovative and creative ways for partnerships to build OERs as a direct input in the provision of lifelong learning and alternative education for all. The workshop discussed establishing a content development group to spearhead the development of free educational resources in Africa and several content production and dissemination technologies were demonstrated.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, Uganda hosted three face-to-face workshops from December 2008 to February 2009 and more than ten participants from Uganda have taken part in online workshops.

Advanced learners from Uganda were among those from several African countries to participate in an online pilot of the Practitioners Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) programme. The pilot introduced concepts of research and evaluation to learners within their own contexts. On completion of the online course, learners produced comprehensive draft research proposals that they could use to submit to their own institutions or to funding agencies to support their research projects. Learners demonstrated a critical approach to conducting research in terms of its importance in the planning stages of ODL implementation and how it can impact decision-making within their institutions.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

Makerere University, Kampala, was host to a joint COL and Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) conference held in May 2008 and entitled, “Promoting Innovation in TVET through Public-Private Partnership”. The conference objective was to edit a first draft of the ODL policy in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and was attended by participants from three African Polytechnics from Ghana, Kenya and Zambia.

COL is also assisting Makerere University School of Business to develop an ODL policy for TVET.

**Rural and peri-urban community development**

COL is working with the Ministry of Education, Makerere University, the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services to explore their interests in introducing and adapting Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) concepts and greater use of ODL and ICTs for rural community development. Makerere University organised a one-day visioning exercise aimed at developing an innovation system for promoting learning using ICTs with a focus on organic farming. The meeting was attended by a range of public, private and NGO groups involved in agricultural development. Makerere University plans to hold further consultations to develop a proposal along the lines of L3F. COL sponsored a delegate from NARO and one from
Makerere University to participate in the meetings and site visits related to L3F in India and Sri Lanka, respectively. They are planning to incorporate the concepts for their community development initiatives in Uganda.

National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Uganda attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries.

COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. The first side event provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Uganda.

The report, Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Status and Potential of Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education in Uganda were distributed in September 2008.

Makerere University, its partners and COL developed the Electronic Uganda National Agricultural Innovation System (eUNAIS) to strengthen the use of ICTs in the agriculture sector in Uganda. eUNAIS is a multi-stakeholder forum and a platform for members to share agriculture-related market information, participate in curriculum reform and to support grassroots extension workers and farmers to use decision support tools.

COL, in partnership with the Technical Centre for Rural and Agricultural Cooperation, Netherlands, and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), organised a training course, Web 2.0 Tools for Research Support and Networking in Africa, in Kampala, Uganda, in September 2008. Thirty five scientists from the RUFORUM member institutions in nine countries including Uganda attended the workshop to build capacity in the use of web 2.0 tools. It resulted in developing an online network of developers of OERs for agricultural training and research and the establishment of two online collaborative projects. Each RUFORUM partner institution agreed to hold at least two follow-up workshops in the use of web 2.0 tools.

Makerere University and four universities in Kenya are working with the International Centre for Development-oriented Research in Agriculture in the Netherlands for a project, Strengthening of University Capacity for Promoting, Facilitating and Teaching Rural Innovations Processes. COL is helping to build faculty capacity to develop open agricultural education resources as a contribution towards the project.

Transnational programmes

Six staff members of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organisation and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Uganda were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Four staff members from UNHCR were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

Two delegates attended the LearnShare, HIV/AIDS in Africa Workshop for Community Radio in April 2009.

Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. The Principal Gender Officer from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development attended the meeting.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by six participants from Uganda, from the National Book Trust of Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports and Makerere University. COL also sponsored two participants from Makerere University.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by eight delegates from Uganda, from the Ministry of Education and Sports, Makerere University, Ndegeya Primary Teachers College and the Government of Uganda. COL sponsored 10 participants from the National Library of Uganda, Makerere University, Mbarara University, Civil and Social Rights Awareness, Association of Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and East African Center for Open Source Software (EACOSS). The Right Honourable Professor Apolo R. Nsibambi, Prime Minister of Uganda, was one of the keynote speakers at the Forum. The Honourable Gabriel Opio, Minister of State for Higher Education was also present.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for Africa and the Mediterranean, held in Lilongwe, Malawi, in May 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Uganda.

Other events

The President and Vice-President of COL attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Uganda in November 2007. They met with the Minister of Education, the Minister of State for Primary Education and the Minister of State for Higher Education together with the COL Focal Point for Uganda.

LOOKING FORWARD

The next planning period of 2009-2012 will see Uganda continue to work closely with COL in all three sectors. In Education, in particular, the groundwork has been laid for the planning of an open university in Uganda and during
this period COL will assist in formulating the national ODL policy framework and implementation action plan already in development.

As part of its collaboration with TESSA, COL will support the dissemination of the TESSA OERs in Uganda. The aim is to enable the primary school teachers and teacher educators to use OERs to support and enrich their classroom practices in the subjects, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Life Skills.

In partnership with COL, Uganda will continue to develop capacity and expertise that can provide support locally to Tanzania and Malawi.
BACKGROUND

Zambia is a proponent of distance education and an active participant in COL’s activities. The country is a regular contributor to COL’s budget. With an established open university and a Directorate of Distance Education, Zambia is also able to provide expertise and experience in the region. Rates of primary education and literacy are improving but huge potential remains to utilise open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for education in the country. Vocational skill development is a major focus for agriculture, mining and other industries.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL has been involved in providing professional and technical support to education and training in all three sectors: Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment.

The focus of COL’s work in Zambia is the Education sector with considerable actions in the areas of capacity building and quality assurance in teacher education as well as strengthening open schooling approaches in the country. COL continues to work in Zambia as a member of the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium and the University of Zambia is involved in TESSA course material development, formulating ODL and ICTs in an integrated national education policy with a focus on higher education. Zambia’s ODL expertise has been used to support related activities, especially in Southern Africa.

In other sectors, training courses for Caregivers to Orphans and Children have been adapted for Zambia and COL, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), focusing on a health-based activity within the country.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

In 2005, COL provided consultancy on capacity building for enhancing the quality of teacher education in colleges in Zambia. The Ministry of Education has now begun implementation of the plan.
Seven international experts including one from Zambia took part in a workshop to critically review the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit. The workshop was held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India and COL.

**Teacher development**

COL supported five participants from Sub-Saharan Africa to attend the Distance Education and Teachers’ Training in Africa conference in Uganda in August 2007.

**Open/alternative schooling**

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified cost and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Three delegates from Zambia attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Botswana.

COL sponsored two participants from the Directorate of Distance Education and Zambia College of Open and Distance Education to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

Zambia was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from the Ministry of Education attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of ICTs.

Other COL support for open schools have included staff members from Zambia receiving training in learner support and also in quality assurance as a step towards developing a quality assurance toolkit for the schools.

**E-Learning for Education Sector Development**

COL is providing funding support for activities of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), located at Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning (BOCODOL), Botswana. SADC-CDE and Indira Gandhi National Open University, India, signed a Memorandum of Agreement. One of the four institutions included is the Department of Open and Distance Education, Zambia. Forty participants from the four countries involved have signed up.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two face-to-face workshops have been held in Zambia, one in June and one in September 2008. Over 60 participants attended the two events. The project manager of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) in Zambia is in the process of training Zambian institutions on wiki skills under the L4C programme.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) co-sponsored a policy awareness seminar on integrating ICTs and eLearning into technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. A representative from Zambia was among those from 120 TVET institutions across 17 African countries. The delegates gained valuable information about the potential of using ODL to improve livelihoods.

Zambia is one of four countries taking the lead on a COL initiative to encourage TVET institutions to develop ODL policy. Participants from the Technical and Vocational Teachers’ College, Zambia and two other African Polytechnics attended a COL-CAPA conference entitled, “Promoting Innovation in TVET through Public-Private Partnership” to edit a first draft of the ODL policy in TVET, at Makerere University, Kampala in May 2008.

As part of COL’s initiative for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in TVET, a workshop was held in Lusaka in July 2008 to adopt the report on the pilot prepared by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority. The workshop was attended by 14 delegates from Zambia including the Senior Tourism Development Officer; the Principal, Technical Vocational Training College; the Director, Ministry of Science, Technical and Vocational Training; and representatives from the Technical Educational Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority and the Hotel and Tourism Training Institute Trust.

National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Zambia attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries.

COL and FARA organised side events prior to the General Assembly. The first side event provided an opportunity to promote ODL/ICTs: “Technology-M ediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for agriculture education and livelihoods in Africa”. COL facilitated the development of country case studies on Tech-MODE from eight countries including Zambia.

The report, Technology-M ediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis of Eight Country Studies and the country paper, Introduction and Adoption of Technology-M ediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) in Agricultural Education and Training in Africa: A case study of Zambia were distributed in September 2008.

Transnational programmes

Eleven staff members of the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and Red Crescent Societies were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Two staff members from UNHCR were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. The Vice-Chancellor of the Zambian Open University attended the meeting.

COL has partnered with In-Service Training Trust, an organisation that provides training to NGOs, to develop ODL materials on local organisation strengthening, collaborating with learning centers, church community radio centres and NGOs.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by five participants from Zambia including one from ComSec and five sponsored by COL, from In-Service Training Trust of Zambia, the University of Zambia and the Ministry of Education.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by five delegates from Zambia, including one from CY P (African Regional Office), and four sponsored by COL, from the In-Service Training Trust of Zambia, the University of Zambia, the Educational Broadcasting of the Directorate of Distance Education and the Ministry of Education.

Other events

The Vice-President was the guest speaker at the Commonwealth Heads of Mission Luncheon in October 2007, organised by the High Commission of Zambia, Ottawa, Canada.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, the focus of COL’s work in Zambia will continue to be in the Education sector, with ongoing support for open schooling as well as teacher development and quality assurance. Participation in the L4C programme training has been excellent in Zambia and the country will be able to contribute considerably to the development of content through this initiative. Further exploration of the application of ODL and ICTs for the benefit of agricultural livelihoods in the country will take place during this time.

As part of its collaboration with TESSA, COL will support the dissemination of the TESSA open education resources (OERs) in Zambia. The aim is to enable the primary school teachers and teacher educators to use the OERs to support and enrich their classroom practices in the subjects, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and Life Skills.
Asia

Bangladesh | Brunei Darussalam | India | Malaysia | Maldives | Pakistan | Singapore | Sri Lanka
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The Asia region comprises eight countries, three in South-East Asia and five in South Asia. Three of them are E-9 countries, that are the most populated in the world: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Asia has experienced a phenomenal increase in distance education over the last three decades. India alone has 14 open universities and 14 open schools in addition to over 140 dual-mode institutions serving nearly seven million distance learners. This region has become a natural ally of COL in promoting South-South collaborations, sharing best practice and harnessing low-cost technologies to reach the unreached.

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), based in India, plans and implements activities in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Maldives, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam and acts as COL’s regional office in India. CEMCA is COL’s only unit outside of its Vancouver headquarters.

Its basic aim is to develop regional expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as organising capacity building in response to identified needs, including providing support to new and emerging institutions in the region. CEMCA has initiated several activities related to the quality assurance of education, teacher education and multimedia materials, working with countries throughout the region. CEMCA is also facilitating regional activities in teacher development, open schools and higher education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

COL and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India, co-organised a regional forum on quality assurance in teacher education for policy makers and senior administrators from Ministries of Education responsible for quality in teacher education. Held in Bangalore, India in December 2007, the forum was designed to expose participants to the various quality assurance practices and to the modalities of addressing challenges related to policies and practices for quality assurance in the professional development of teachers.

ICTs FOR WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

CEMCA hosted a regional expert roundtable on Improving Existing Understanding of Contexts and Conditions in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Women’s Empowerment. The meeting was
SUPPORTING GENDER FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, which includes indicators and guidance on how to develop them for primary and secondary schools. The initial focus of the activity is South Asia. In March 2008, COL, along with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and the Commonwealth Foundation convened a roundtable in Bangalore, India with several institutions and participants from across South Asia. The result of the workshop was a set of draft indicators for school management committees, parents, schools and students. These indicators were then field tested with groups in both Bangladesh and India. A second workshop was held in November, 2008.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The first Regional Focal Points Meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions was co-organised by COL and the Ministry of Higher Education, Malasyia, and was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. At the 2008 meeting, each participant reviewed, on behalf of their country, the progress that had been made so far in COL’s current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009, provided feedback on COL’s planning processes and gave concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting also provided a valuable opportunity for networking, facilitating future inter-country collaboration. As part of the event, the group visited the Open University Malaysia and Universiti Tun Abdul Razak.

REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS

CEMCA regularly highlights best practices and innovative developments in technology for development and ODL in their quarterly publication, EduComm Asia.

COL also has regional brochures which summarise its activities in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth. These can be found on COL’s website at: www.col.org/regional.
COL Focal Point:  Mr. M. Haque (2006-2007)
Mr. Md. Nazrul Islam, Directorate of Primary Education (current)

BACKGROUND

COL has worked extensively with Bangladesh for a number of years on the development of open and distance learning (ODL). The Bangladesh Open University (BOU) was established on the basis of a consultancy carried out by COL in the early 1990s and COL has worked with the University since then to provide critical support in capacity building. COL activities in the country support all levels of education. Bangladesh is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and an active participant in local and regional activities.

SUMMARY

During 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s work has been on capacity building and professional development. The objective has been to widen access to quality secondary education through open schools, scale-up teacher training through ODL to address the deficit in the number of trained teachers and to increase age participation rates in higher education. COL works with public institutions such as BOU as well as with civil society organisations like Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Rupantar Development Research Network (DNet) and the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). Roundtables, policy dialogues and training workshops were organised in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that ODL and eLearning expertise is built within the country so that quality education can be provided.

Some of the outcomes include the joint development of a skills training package with DAM to empower rural girls to access gainful employment, a Learner Support Guide with BOU, the training of several BOU staff members in different aspects of ODL and the provision of a cost-effective Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration/Masters in Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme in collaboration with BOU to many Bangladeshis who otherwise might not have had the opportunity. This programme continues to be very popular in Bangladesh.

The previous Vice-Chancellor of BOU, Professor Dr. M. Farid Ahmed, received support to visit the Open University of Hong Kong to study an institutional example of best practice in ODL in the region.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The first COL-NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India) Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia, held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by the Director-General, Directorate of Primary Education and the COL Focal Point.

Teacher development

BOU sent a delegate to the workshop on “ODL for differently abled teachers”, organised by Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, in December 2007.

Open/alternative schooling

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified cost and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Three delegates from Bangladesh attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Gaborone, Botswana.

COL sponsored two participants from BOU to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

Bangladesh was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from BOU attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Other COL support for open schools have included 20 staff members from Bangladesh receiving training in course development. Twenty staff members were also trained in learner support through two workshops and a Learner Support Guide has been developed for Bangladesh. Staff members from Bangladesh and 13 other countries were also trained in quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

Higher education

CEMCA facilitated the participation of the President, University and Industry Alliance, Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka to a conference on Higher Education in India in September 2006. Such support enables Bangladesh ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education to attend professional development programmes in the region.

Bangladesh is one of the partners in the CEM BA/CEMPA programme. The programme is offered through BOU and registration has grown from 133 students in 2006 to 170 in 2007 and 206 in 2008.
**E-Learning for education sector development**

Bangladesh was represented at the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Sri Lanka, to develop knowledge resources focusing on the contexts and conditions of the use of ICTs for women in the Asian region.

CEMCA organised a one-day workshop on Video Production and e-Content in May 2007, which enabled participants from new ODL institutions to have hands-on training in the production of video programmes and their subsequent modification into e-learning material. Two participants from BOU attended the workshop at the EMMRC IIT campus Roorkee, India.

CEMCA in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has undertaken a project to train ODL professionals in quality mixed media courseware, using an authoring tool Metamorphosis. Three distance and open universities in the region, including BOU are participating. As a further value addition, CEMCA has incorporated a two-day orientation to script writing for audio and video formats, to enable ODL course writers/teachers to create audio and video clips to integrate into the authoring tools package. In March 2008, UNESCO funded a 5-day Metamorphosis authoring tools course for 20 faculty members from BOU.

ODL professionals from Bangladesh are listed in the Biographical Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is also available on the CEMCA website.

Bangladesh is one of the countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). CEMCA continues to highlight ODL best practice in Bangladesh through its quarterly publication EduComm Asia. The article Moni, The Mobile Lady: An initiative of DNet, Bangladesh was published in the March issue.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

CEMCA is supporting capacity building in ICTs for women using NGO networks in DNet. A participant from the region attended the regional roundtable on ICTs for Women held in Sri Lanka in December 2006. Bangladesh also participated in a regional review workshop to assess progress made in the development of ODL courses, resulting in revisions introduced to the curriculum. In April 2007, CEMCA, in participation with DNet Bangladesh, brought together a network of grassroots organisations to develop audio content on livelihoods issues with 50% of the participants being women.

Four participants from BOU, CAMPE and DAM were among those from five countries to attend a review workshop on the Livelihoods Skills Activities of COL in South Asia, held in Chennai in February 2007.

COL is working with DAM for the development of ODL courses for house helpers, as part of Basic and Middle Level Entrepreneurial Education and Training. DAM has completed the activities of the first phase of the project and the Literacy Primer I, II and III, Teachers’ Guide Training Manual and Video Script are available. Netaji Subhash Open University (NSOU), India, is supporting DAM in editing and translating the course materials developed for Home Management for girls and young women.
Rural and peri-urban community development

The Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) and Masjid Council for Community Advancement (MACCA) were recipients of a COL-PROTEIN Award. Working with partners, CUS established a learning centre that uses ICTs to provide education and skills training in one of the least developed areas of Bangladesh. This is one of the first initiatives in the country to use technology-mediated learning for adult literacy. By providing learners, primarily rural girls and women, with functional literacy and skills development, this project helped families generate income, which substantially improved livelihoods. MACCA developed a curriculum and self-instructional training modules using ODL to train religious leaders so they can work as “Faith Ambassadors” to complement ongoing efforts to achieve social development goals and poverty reduction. The project developed the capacity of different religious leaders to support and strengthen development initiatives.

COL is working with a number of countries including Bangladesh in pursuing the concept of Knowledge Infomediaries for the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme. COL commissioned a study, “Characterisation of Knowledge Infomediaries and introduction of ICTs in Bangladesh Agriculture and Rural Development”. The study included the agricultural extension component implemented by the Department of Agricultural Extension, the Agricultural Information Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as NGO initiatives like the Grameen Phone concept supported by the well-known Grameen Bank programme, KATALYST ICTs enabled services, WIN Incorporate initiative and the e-Krishok of the Bangladesh Institute of ICTs in Development (BIID). BIID and COL are developing a proposal to link the e-Krishok programme in partnership with public, private and NGOs with L3F.

The workshop on Capacity Building for Community Based Organisations (CBO) on and Science for Women at Khulna, Bangladesh was held in January 2009.

Transnational programmes

Fifty-three members of the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, UNICEF and UNHCR in Bangladesh were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Gender and development

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, consisting of indicators including how to develop such schools for the primary and secondary level in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008, a roundtable was held at the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore, India, jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), the Commonwealth Foundation and COL. The outcome was a set of draft indicators for school management committees, parents, schools and students. Two participants from Bangladesh, from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education participated in the workshop.

The draft indicators were then field-tested with the user groups in both Bangladesh and India. A follow-up meeting was held at ISEC in November when participants from India and Bangladesh discussed the preliminary findings of the field testing. It was noted that additional time was needed to fully test the indicators and it was anticipated that testing would be complete by Spring 2009. This second meeting included input from the Amandhar School project.
with Concern Worldwide and other experiences from South Asia. Representatives from Shariatpur also attended this meeting.

**Good governance**

COL is working with two NGOs, Action Aid Bangladesh and Rupantar to develop good governance modules for the community level. The work with Action Aid is part of a Commonwealth Education Fund initiative in 16 countries to strengthen the role of civil society in informed public decision-making for matters concerning the local school. Rupantar will develop ODL material to strengthen local level government and will also train up to 300 people in ODL through a Master Trainers programme. For Women’s Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL), it was determined that Bangladesh, India and Pakistan could benefit from sharing ideas leading to the development of a model to strengthen the role of women in decision-making at the local level.

Rupantar has developed four modules incorporating the new Local Government Act, 2008 to strengthen 225 local government clusters and reaching almost 20,000 government officials including committee members. An ODL network has been established, headed by Rupantar, as a clearing house to share ideas and materials and as a resource to train master trainers, discuss new approaches and bring together key organisations to further ODL work in communities.

**Educational use of mass media and ICTs**

CEMCA facilitated the first national workshop to spread awareness of community radio. The workshop was held in March 2008 at the Media Centre at BOU in collaboration with the Bangladesh NGO Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC). The workshop took over 50 participants from various civil society organisations through the concept of community radio, experiences elsewhere, the draft policy in Bangladesh, technical requirements and related issues. By the end of the workshop, participants were prepared to run more than 50 community radio stations.

CEMCA also organised a study tour for a team of three people with different skills: DNet (production), Rupantar (community mobilisation) and BNNRC (technology). The team visited three community radio stations in different parts of India to get a first-hand exposure. They are part of the Master Training Team in Bangladesh.

CEMCA further organised a second workshop, in partnership with Rupantar, for 20 participants of community radio licences in Khulna, Bangladesh in January 2009. This was a hands-on skills development workshop and the Master Trainer Team supported the workshop as Resource People.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by five COL-sponsored delegates including three from Bangladesh from BOU and one from Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP), Bangladesh.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 18 COL-sponsored delegates from Bangladesh. Mr. Zamal Uddin Biswas of Grameen Bank was one of the guest speakers at the Forum.
Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008 was attended by the Joint Secretary (Secondary), from the Ministry of Education, representing the COL Focal Point for Bangladesh.

Resources

Bangladesh is one of the countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from Bangladesh are listed in the Biographic Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is also available on the CEMCA website.

Appointments

The previous Vice-Chancellor of BOU, Professor Dr. M. Farid Ahmed, accepted COL’s invitation to join the CEMCA Advisory Council and attended the 7th CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in New Delhi in December 2007. Bangladesh is now represented on the CEMCA Advisory by the new Vice Chancellor, Professor R.I.M. Aminur Rashid.

LOOKING FORWARD

COL will continue to build on the significant progress of the past three years during the next triennium and will identify other specific interventions in consultation with in-country partners. In the future, COL hopes to see a greater engagement with Bangladesh as both a source and provider of ODL experience and expertise and as a recipient of support.
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

COL Focal Point:  Mr. Rashid Hamid (2006-2007)
Awang Othman Simbran (2008-2009)
Mr. Khalid Mahmood, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

When COL was first established in 1987, it was His Majesty, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah M u’izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, who made a magnificent contribution to put this fledgling organisation on its feet. COL is very grateful for this generosity which has contributed significantly to bringing education and training to thousands of Commonwealth citizens in Africa and South Asia, which might otherwise never have had this opportunity. The first Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning was held in Brunei Darussalam in March 1999.

SUMMARY

Brunei is participating in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and the Quality Assurance for the development of Multi-media Learning Materials Guidelines.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The first COL-NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India) Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia, held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by a representative from the Universiti Brunei Darussalam.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Brunei Darussalam has recently joined VUSSC and has begun to participate in its activities. Brunei Darussalam has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore in February 2008.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008 was attended by two representatives from the Ministry of Education, including the COL Focal Point.

Other events

The Vice-President gave a keynote address at the 12th International Conference of the Universiti of Brunei Darussalam entitled “Changing Contours of Education: Future Trends” in May 2007.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, the focus for Brunei Darussalam will be to increase participation in VUSSC to take advantage of the many benefits it offers and contribute further to this initiative. COL will also work with partners in the country to make progress on other areas in the plan set out with the Ministry of Education.
BACKGROUND

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver in 1987, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi led the drive to create COL. This strong support has continued ever since, as India’s economy has been transformed and the country has become a technology leader and a recognised innovator in matters of development.

India is the largest Commonwealth country and a major donor to COL, which has its most extensive country programme in India. This assists with developments in India but also promotes Indian expertise and facilitates knowledge transfer to other Commonwealth countries, notably in Africa.

India is also home to the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), a dedicated regional centre for COL’s activities and COL’s only unit outside of its Vancouver headquarters. CEMCA plans and implements activities in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Maldives, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam and acts as COL’s regional office in India. Its basic aim is to develop regional expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) within the Asian region as well as organising capacity building in response to identified needs.

India has a seat on the COL Board of Governors that is currently held by Mr. Shri R. P. Agrawal, Secretary, Department of Higher and Secondary Education. He is also a member of the Executive Committee and the Performance Sub-Committee. COL’s Vice-President, Professor Asha Kanwar, is an Indian national as is Dr. Kodhandaraman Balasubramian, Education Specialist: Food Security and Environment.

SUMMARY

COL’s activities in India in this triennium have involved all three programme sectors and most programme initiatives. COL has many partnerships with Indian institutions and community bodies. In the Education sector there has been broad-based work in quality assurance, teacher development, open schooling and higher education. In the Learning for Livelihoods sector the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme has demonstrated its ability to increase rural prosperity. Other livelihood-related activities are now being pursued. Work in the Human Environment sector is focussing on environmental education in India at all levels.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

An Assessors’ Handbook for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was completed in April 2007 in partnership with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India. It is being adopted in Sierra Leone and Nigeria and by the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan.

The first COL-NAAC Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia was held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007. Eleven participants from India attended the Forum, including representatives from Kurukshetra University, the Institute of Education, Chandrashekar Agashe College of Physical Education, SNDT Women’s University, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Regional Institute of Education, Mysore.

As part of an initiative with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India and the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), CEMCA organised a roundtable meeting at Bangalore in August 2007 to discuss the need for and approach to certification and assessment of multimedia learning materials. Participants included those from the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT), NASSCOM, NAAC, HP Labs, Azim Premji Foundation and CEMCA. There was a general consensus at the meeting that an initiative for developing certification and assessment standards was essential. Several action points were agreed: It should involve the major players and production agencies both government as well as private; a core group representing the interested agencies and stakeholders should meet to develop the approach to assessment and certification; a portal should be created to get feedback from students and other users. The process was viewed in a three to five year perspective. A second meeting was held in Delhi in October 2007, attended by 20 participants.

India is taking a lead role, along with Malaysia in a CEMCA/COL project to define a framework and criteria for quality assurance of multimedia learning. Two working groups have been established and several meetings held, in India and Malaysia in 2007 and 2008.

The core group for this project in India includes representatives from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) including the Vice-Chancellor, a former President of NASSCOM, a former Director of NAAC, the Joint Director of the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), the Principal of the Acharya Narendra Dev College (ANDC) and the Head, Content Development at the Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Corporation (IL&FS). Two representatives from CEMCA, the Director and a Programme Officer, also participated in meetings.

The first report of the two core groups gave a framework for a generic production process and the parameters to be examined at each stage of the process. It also provided a framework for documentation required for quality assessment. The first draft of the Guidelines for Quality Assurance of E-Content, a collaboration of the Malaysian core group for Ministry of Higher Education and CEMCA was released in June 2008. The audience of the Guidelines includes teachers, instructors, trainers and facilitators as well as e-Content developers and eLearning communities and users. The draft Guidelines were released and circulated during the Regional Focal Points Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008.

Teacher development

COL is supporting several activities for the professional development of teachers, teacher educators and other personnel in the education system. One such initiative is facilitating the work of the Indian Consortium for Education...
Transfer of Information (I-CONSENT) and Shreemati National Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) Women’s University. An editing workshop of e-B.Ed materials of I-CONSENT was held in Mumbai in January 2008, supported by COL. The course was launched in March 2008. COL is also supporting course development and the delivery of teacher education materials with NCERT. Editing by a COL consultant is in progress and the 60 unit development phase is nearing completion.

About 30 school education administrators and academics from the states of Karnataka, Kerala and Orissa attended a two-day workshop in August 2007 hosted by the Education for All (EFA) office in Kerala and supported by COL. The purpose was to develop a document which would outline the action to be initiated in using school community informatics for school and teacher support at district and sub-district levels. The meeting also attracted participation from Intel, NIIT, and some other IT related organisations who might be interested in joining hands with EFA structures in India, namely District Institutes of Education and Training, Block Resource Centres and Cluster Resource Centres.

COL also supported the teacher educators’ forum hosted by the Indian Association of Teacher Education (IATE) and the University of Delhi. COL has collected selected papers presented at the conference and is editing them for publication. A TeacherNet involving Delhi schools has been created and is functioning.

The Green Teacher (GT) training programme of print-based and online courses has digitised the GT course and added support for the Masters of Art in Teacher Education (MATE) course as well as extending use to other regions. Workshops for module development were held in June, July and August 2007, with participants from India and an expert author. GT online was officially launched in November 2007. A meeting was held in March 2008 to review the work carried out from 2002 to date.

Other related activities include a workshop organised by a COL consultant for training in Scenario-based Design and Course Development organised for the faculty of the Centre for Adult Continuing and Extension Education, Kerala University, organised in August 2007, attended by 19 participants. A workshop was also held in November 2007 and January 2008 at IGNOU with support from a COL consultant in designing and developing exemplar eLearning materials using scenario-based design.

COL is in the process of facilitating the development of training strategy and materials for the teachers, tutors and other personnel at the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in Delhi. Six training modules have been developed for field functionaries have been launched. The modules are (1) Historical and Philosophical Bases of NIOS Operations, (2) Accredited Institutions and Student Support Services, (3) Instructional Strategies for Open Schooling, (4) Operational Strategies for Coordinators and Academic facilitators, (5) Life Skills for Open School Learners, and (6) Training of Trainers.

CEMCA has been extending the use of EasyNow software with teachers in developing different deliverables. Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) in India was one of the first two ODL institutions, along with the Open University of Sri Lanka, to adopt and integrate EasyNow software into their basket of technologies for content creation. CEMCA held two workshops for academics, technical and media staff at both institutions where participants tried out the software to create interesting content in varied formats. The software was initially tested in collaboration with NIOS, using their courseware. CEMCA also conducted EasyNow workshops for NCERT in June 2008 and August 2008 with 25 participants and another workshop at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad. In September 2008, CEMCA organised two workshops where Indian experts provided training to Malaysians and Sri Lankans on EasyNow. CEMCA has engaged two consultants to prepare a report on capacity building with teachers in developing different deliverables through one electronic source. NIOS is also a partner in this project.
CEMCA organised a four-day workshop on Quality Governance for ODL for the mid-level ODL Professionals of the School of Open Learning, Campus of Open Learning, University of Delhi in February 2009. Thirty six participants were trained in various aspects of governance and office organisation.

Open/alternative schooling

COL sponsored 16 participants including two from NIOS to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

COL is working to raise awareness of the strength of open schooling and, to promote the establishment of new open schools through various activities in partnership with NIOS. During this planning period, COL has been extending its support to NIOS in different ways for enhancing the quality and standard of teaching-learning through ODL and for the training and development of the staff at NIOS. Two officers of NIOS were nominated by the Chairman of NIOS to visit Saskatchewan Learning in Regina, Canada. The visit was conceptualised and funded by COL and took place in December 2007. The purpose was to review Saskatchewan Learning’s expertise in certain areas:

- Digital material development,
- Video streaming at Campbell Collegiate,
- Saskatchewan Community Network (SCN),
- System integration at the curriculum and eLearning branch, and
- Student record database.

The major objectives of the visit were to:

- Visit various organisations to see how the technology is being used for imparting distance education,
- Share experience in the field of distance education between the two countries, particularly the use of technology,
- Explore the possibility of using the same technology-based instruction in India, particularly at NIOS,
- Identify the possible areas for mutual collaboration in the field of open and distance education,
- Give recommendations to COL and NIOS regarding further action points in this regard.

CEMCA in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has undertaken a project to train ODL professionals in quality mixed media courseware, using an authoring tool called Metamorphosis. Three distance and open universities in the region, including YCMOU, are participating. As a further value addition, CEMCA has incorporated a two-day orientation to script writing for audio and video formats, to enable ODL course writers/teachers to create audio and video clips to integrate into the authoring tools package. In February 2008, UNESCO funded a five-day Metamorphosis Authoring Tools course for 15 faculty members from YCMOU.

COL commissioned an evaluation study on open schooling for secondary and higher secondary education. Focussing on NIOS, the study included an examination of the cost efficiency, effectiveness and benefit of open schools, the student profile, how open schools can best complement the formal system, learner success, course types and
development, learner support and assessment, planning and management systems as well as quality assurance. The report was submitted in October 2008.

In October 2008, Ministries of Education and open schools in six countries including India began a two-year partnership with COL to develop Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects to be used in open and conventional schools. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

In further support for open schools, India was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from NIOS attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of ICTs.

Staff members from India were trained in learner support and others from India and 13 other countries were trained in quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

An advanced Self-learning Multiple Media Training was organised for the course writers of Haryana Open School in December 2008. The training programme was organised by CEMCA in association with CIET, NCERT, New Delhi.

CEMCA collaborated with NIOS in conducting a three-day induction programme/brain storming on ODL in general and Self-Learning Multiple Media (SLMD) materials in particular with the Assam State Open School, Guwahati, Assam in January 2009.

India is contributing to the development of two new publications for open schools through a chapter author, the Chairman of NIOS, for the Perspective Series on Open Schools – Open Schools for the 21st Century and a Handbook for Managers of Open Schools.

Higher education

COL has continued its Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme that supports students who study the IGNOU programmes, the Post Graduate Diploma in Distance Education and the Master of Arts in Distance Education, at a distance. COL offers 25 scholarships to Commonwealth citizens, covering tuition fees for the programmes. COL will be selecting two universities in developing countries of the Commonwealth to act as regional institutions to represent and administer the programme for neighbouring institutions. Preference for scholarships is given to faculty members seeking professional development in ODL, particularly those with conventional teaching experience who are teaching students learning by distance or who will be teaching via distance methods.

As part of COL’s support for leadership training for vice-chancellors and heads of tertiary institutions, the Vice-Chancellor of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University participated in a conference on Higher Education in the Administrative Staff College, India, in September 2006.

To assist in capacity-building in ODL, a consultant was engaged to write a 10,000 word essay on the development of State Open Universities in India. The essay was submitted in November 2007 and is available on COL’s website.

Participants from India were among 20 from five South Asian countries who received training at a workshop organised by CEMCA on “ODL for differently-abled teachers” at IGNOU in December 2007.
India, through IGNOU, has been one of the partners in the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme.

CEMCA supported the Director, Campus of Open Learning and the Executive Director of the School Open Learning, University of Delhi to carry out a study tour to the Open University of Malaysia and Multimedia University, Malaysia and an observation tour to the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore in June 2008.

CEMCA has contributed to the course development process of the Certificate Programme on Community Radio Management offered by IGNOU. In January 2009, CEMCA also offered 150 scholarships to learners enrolled from both Commonwealth Asia and India.

Ms. Bhavana Shukla won the CEMCA Award for Best Female Student in ICTs in ODL in February 2008 and Ms. Namita Bajaj won the Award in February 2009. These Awards were presented at the Convocation of IGNOU.

ELearning for education sector development

India was represented at the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Sri Lanka, to develop knowledge resources focusing on the contexts and conditions of the use of ICTs for women in the Asian region.

Educational Multimedia Research Centre (EMMRC), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee in India hosted a one-day workshop organised by COL on Video Production and e-Content in May 2007. The workshop enabled participants from new ODL institutions to have hands-on training in the production of video programmes and their subsequent modification into e-learning material. It was attended by three participants from India.

COL supports the development of regional expertise in ODL and ICTs as well as organising capacity building actions as needed, including supporting new and emerging institutions in the region. During this planning period, CEMCA fostered collaboration with Haryana Open School for developing self-learning instructional multimedia material. A preliminary meeting with a core group was held in September 2007, and a capacity-building workshop was held in October in New Delhi.

As part of CEMCA’s assistance in capacity building for using the dedicated educational satellite facilities provided by the Government of India (EDUSAT), the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and the Indian Space Research Organisation, two workshops were held at YCMOU in March and at NCERT in June 2008. YCMOU has started using the training materials for their Radio on Demand EDUSAT lessons.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), India hosted seven face-to-face workshops between October 2008 and April 2009 at the Acharya Narendra Dev College and Gargi College, University of India. In addition, over 175 participants from India have taken part in online workshops.

CEMCA launched the India Chapter of the WikiEducator in November 2008, inaugurated by Professor M.S. Swaminathan, Honourable Member of Parliament and Agriculturist and Social Reformist, in the presence of Shri Jairinder Singh, Secretary, Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. WikiEducator pages in five Indian languages, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Gujarati, were also initiated on the day.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

India hosted a review workshop on the Livelihoods Skills Activities of COL in South Asia, held in Chennai in February 2007. COL is partnering with NIOS and Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) in developing and adapting technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes for use in other regions. Participants from India included eight from MICO-BOSCH, TNOU, Arul Anandar College (AAC), IL&FS Education and Technology Services, Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education, Jawaharlal Nehru University and IGNOU.

Women coordinators of continuing education are undergoing training in Kerala to develop literacy materials with support from COL. The first phase of curriculum development was completed in March 2007 and 30 women coordinators were trained for the district literacy programme.

India is a founding module developer for the Commonwealth Computer Navigator’s Certificate, an international collaboration to develop a qualification in basic skills in ICTs using open source software. Seven content developers including two from India met in Vancouver in June 2007. They reviewed the status of the local certification programme at their own institutions, examined progress and identified areas for improvement in the course materials. They also designed an assessment strategy, specified potential multimedia support resources and student support requirements.

COL is in partnership with Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Bangladesh for the development of ODL courses for house helpers, as part of “Basic and Middle Level Entrepreneurial Education and Training”. Netaji Subhash Open University (NSOU), India is supporting DAM in editing the course materials developed for Home Management for girls and young women.

Rural and peri-urban community development

The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative has continued to expand across Tamil Nadu and other states in India. In partnership with AAC, L3F developed a touch-screen approach to integrate the concept of L3F for rural development and to build the capacity of staff and students in its concepts. Approximately 1,000 members, nearly 50% of them women, are utilising the mobile-based learning materials on credit, banking, goat rearing and agriculture for their livelihoods. The L3F programme in India has attracted the attention of a number of COL partners in the country and elsewhere. COL facilitated participants from Kenya, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Uganda and India to visit the L3F sites and to meet the programme partners in Tamil Nadu. The familiarisation is aimed at helping the partners to adapt the concepts for their own community development initiatives.

COL is working with a number of countries including India in pursuing the concept of Knowledge Infomediaries for the L3F programme. COL and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) organised a think-tank meeting on Knowledge Infomediaries at ICRISAT, Hyderabad in September 2008. The participants from India and Bangladesh reviewed their experiences regarding the roles, responsibilities and learning needs of Knowledge Infomediaries, who facilitate information sharing and knowledge creation for community development. The group recognised the need to promote the concept of Knowledge Infomediaries for ICTs for development initiatives. The World Bank-supported National Agricultural Innovation Programme (NAIP) in India showed interest in the concept. Five universities, research institutes, NGO partners and ICRISAT have been facilitated by COL to come together for developing online agricultural resource materials called AGRID.
The Society for the Development of Rural Women and Children (SDRWC) India was a recipient of a COL-PROTEIN Award. SDRWC promotes health, education and women’s empowerment among disadvantaged people in Andhra Pradesh State. Through COL-PROTEIN, SDRWC established a Livelihood Resource Centre to help enhance the livelihood opportunities of the most vulnerable and marginalised populations in the Prakasam District of Andhra.

National/international community development

COL is working with the Veterinary Council of India and associated institutions to develop agricultural education programmes and to promote the use of wikis for skills-development materials. MAFSU is institutionalising Technology-mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) and is involving a number of partner institutions. MAFSU has offered four ODL courses to field veterinarians and has triggered the development of a digital archive and experimentation with a Learning Management System for regular academic activities. The Bombay Veterinary College of MAFSU has developed an intranet using various open source platforms and is offering an online repository of course materials and instructions to its regular students. It has initiated technology-aided discussion forums and an internet radio for the student services. MAFSU has also trained a limited number of its staff in optimised technology-assisted operations and academic functioning.

COL is working with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and various state agricultural universities to promote the use of community radio for agricultural education programmes. The University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, commissioned its first community radio in May 2007, thereby becoming the first community radio station in the state of Karnataka and the first agriculture university in India to possess the facility. The university and CEMCA jointly organised a workshop on “Operationisation of community radio stations in the State Agricultural Universities” in May 2007. The workshop was attended by 15 senior officials from various agricultural institutions where they got a first-hand experience of the workings of a community radio station. After the workshop two other universities submitted their applications for setting up stations.

CEMCA supported the development of a multimedia training resource kit for children with special needs in the community. The resource kit, produced in partnership with the Centre for Applied Research and Education on Neurodevelopment Impairments and Disabilities related Health Initiatives, was released in April 2008 and is aimed at community-based rehabilitation workers, parents, teachers and caregivers of special-needs children in resource-poor settings. Over 1,000 copies of the resource kit have been distributed to agencies working with special-needs children through the National Trust, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. Localisation of the resource kit in Indian languages is also being undertaken by CEMCA.

Transnational programmes

159 staff members of the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank and UNICEF based in India were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Gender and development

CEMCA partnered with the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, in their initiative to offer scientific information on health and nutrition-related information for women in resource-poor settings, using community radio. Twenty-two radio partners were invited for an exploratory and proposal formulation workshop in March 2007. Thirteen partners were selected and CEMCA conducted a baseline study in 13 locations covering 1,000
women per location, making a total of 13,000 women. Phase one of the project was successfully concluded in 11 locations. Phase two is currently underway.

CEMCA has also been working with the Foundation for Research in Community Health (FRCH), by training women community health workers in developing audio and video content on health-related issues by holding capacity building and refresher workshops. The programmes were narrowcast and disseminated through audio, video tapes and CDs. In June 2008, CEMCA started working with FRCH to build capacity among communities to use community radio to support development initiatives.

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, consisting of indicators including how to develop such schools for the primary and secondary level in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008, a roundtable was held at the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore, India, jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), the Commonwealth Foundation and COL. The outcome was a set of draft indicators for school management committees, parents, schools and students. Participants included 13 from India from a variety of organisations including Care India, Women’s Action Group, the Central Institute of Education (CIE), NCERT, the Centre for Socio-Economic and Environmental Studies (CEES), National Law Society, Azim Premji Foundation and Sarva Shikhsa Abhiyan.

The draft indicators were then field-tested with the user groups in both Bangladesh and India. A follow-up meeting was held at ISEC in November when participants from India and Bangladesh discussed the preliminary findings of the field testing. The indicators have been completed and are available as an open resource.

Health, welfare and community development

During this planning period, COL has been working with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) in a project to address HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma in rural Tamil Nadu. For this initiative, the digital video production system was upgraded at the media unit in November 2006. An assessment of the media unit’s work was undertaken by COL in December 2006. Reports concerning the health activity were submitted to COL and the first phase of the activity was completed. Video productions were completed and delivered to targeted groups through the state broadcaster.

CEMCA also trained poor rural women in Mysore in audio content development in partnership with IT for Change, a Bangalore-based NGO in November 2006 and April 2007. The programmes produced by the women were put on CDs and given to the radio station for broadcast.

Environment education

COL has continued to support the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE), UNESCO and other international agencies in the application of ODL/ICTs for professional development leading to sustainable development. COL was a partner and member of the International Advisory Committee for the 4th International Conference on Environment Education (ICEE) towards a sustainable future in November 2007. COL, in partnership with CEE, held a pre-ICEE workshop on “Climate Change and Water Resource Management” to discuss and develop plans to enhance the capacity of partner institutions and arrangements to use Tech-MODE for addressing the global environmental issues of climate change and water resource management, where these relate to sustainable development and specifically to communities involved in agriculture and food production.

COL and CEE are jointly developing a programme framework for Tech-MODE assisted delivery of material and instructions for an International Training Programme in Education and Communication for Sustainable Development based on an earlier international Certificate Course in Environmental Education that was offered as a three-month
residential programme. COL and CEE are also developing a learning object repository and an umbrella structure has been decided for a primary Learning Content Management System to link all content available at CEE and elsewhere that is in digitised mixed-media format and related to climate change.

COL’s support for the Indian Institute of Science and the Karnataka State Open University in environmental education continued with a new phase including the validation and piloting of 10 modules developed for school children and teachers, beginning in November 2007.

**Good governance**

For Women’s Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL), it was determined that Bangladesh, India and Pakistan could benefit from sharing ideas to lead to the development of a model to strengthen the role of women in decision-making at the local level. A study was undertaken by Himgiri Nabh Vishwavidyalaya University in the state of Uttarakhand to determine some of the underlying issues in women’s empowerment. CEMCA helped COL to hold a two-day meeting in New Delhi in November 2008 that included five participants from India. It further explored the key characteristics necessary for successful empowerment activities. As a result of the WELL workshop, work is now underway with Mahila Samakhya in Uttarakhand on a pilot model to empower women through expanding their “People’s Court” activities and learning through ODL. This programme is poised for expansion in 12 states in the country soon.

**Educational use of mass media and ICTs**

An assessment of the University of Delhi’s Faculty of Education multimedia development was completed in December 2006. Digital video editing technology was upgraded with accompanying training at NIOS in December 2006. A media unit was implemented at CEE by COL in Ahmedabad in December 2006 and training of staff was completed.

CEMCA also functions as the nodal agency for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India for community radio related initiatives. From 2007-2008, seven regional consultations about community radio awareness have been held in different parts of the country including Puducherry (South), Kolkata (East), Baramati and Ahmedabad (West), Lucknow and Solan (North) and Guwahati (North-East) where live broadcasts from the host community radio station using simple and readily available mobile telephones were demonstrated. More than 1,000 participants, many of them potential applicants for community radio licences from educational and agricultural institutions and civil society organisations participated in these consultations, resulting in about 50 completed applications.

Two capacity-building workshops for station managers of functional community radio stations have also been held on behalf of the Ministry in Delhi in February 2008 and Chennai in February 2009. CEMCA has set up a help desk to facilitate and guide the licence application process.

CEMCA, with the support of IGNOU and Wawasan Open University (WOU), Malaysia, achieved a breakthrough in operationalising a new economical IP-based teleconferencing system in September 2008. A consultant commissioned by CEMCA, conducted a presentation workshop on skills for effective teleconferencing for Deans and faculty members of WOU.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by 34 participants from various educational institutions in India. In addition, COL sponsored 13 delegates from Netaji Subhas Open University (NSOU), NIOS, Mother Teresa Women’s University, IGNOU, Centre for World Solidarity, Sandhan Foundation, Association of Indian Universities, Edupro Foundation, TNAU, YCMOU and I-CONSENT.

At the Forum, the Reverend Father Thomas V. Kunnunkal, Research Director, Indian Social Institute, and founding Chairman of India’s National Open School (now NIOS), was named Honorary Fellow of COL. In addition, NSOU was one of the recipients of the Awards of Excellence for Institutional Achievement.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by approximately 85 participants from India including 68 COL-sponsored delegates. Professor Abdul K han, Assistant Director-General for Communications and Information, UNESCO and Mr. Mahesh Chandra Pant, Chairman of NIOS, were named Honorary Fellows of COL. The Right Honourable Mr. Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General and former High Commissioner for India to the United Kingdom, was one of the guest speakers at the Forum.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for India.

Other events

A Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Workshop was held in Delhi from 29 November to 1 December 2007. The workshop was designed to enable COL and its partner organisations to effectively monitor and evaluate their collaborative programme activities. Participants are now expected to be able to describe how M&E could be incorporated into the COL model of programme planning, develop an exemplary M&E plan for a programme currently being undertaken by COL and a partner organisation and assist colleagues in their own organisations to develop M&E plans. Twenty five participants from various institutions including IGNOU, NCERT, Delhi University, State Bank of India, AAC, MAFSU and GT Secretariat attended the workshop.

CEMCA facilitated the recording of a video series on “Civil Paths to Peace” based on the report by Nobel Laureate, Professor Amartya Sen. Three recordings were completed: an introductory episode with Professor Amartya Sen in discussion with Professor Asha Kanwar, Vice-President of COL and two discussions with Professor Amartya Sen and His Excellency Mr. Kamalesh Sharma, Secretary-General of ComSec, that were conducted by Mr. Dileep Padgaonkar, a renowned Indian journalist.
Resources

India is one of the major countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from India are listed in the Biographical Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is available on the CEMCA website.

Appointments

Mr. Agrawal, Professor R. Pillai, Vice-Chancellor, IGNOU, Mr. M.C. Pant, Chairman of NIOS and Mr. Kiran Karnik, President, NASSCOM accepted COL’s invitation to join the CEMCA Advisory Council.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, COL anticipates another period of close collaboration with partners and institutions in India. COL has activities planned in all eight initiatives in the two programme sectors, Education and Livelihoods and Health. COL greatly values the expertise that it can draw on in India and its many institutions will continue to be active in every field of COL’s work, contributing knowledge and resources to the Asian region and beyond.
BACKGROUND

Malaysia has been a consistent supporter and valuable partner of COL over the years and provides a rich resource of knowledge and experience for Commonwealth Asian countries. One of its most eminent citizens and educators, Tan Sri Dato’ Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan was the President and Chief Executive of COL from 1996 to 2004 and other Malaysian nationals have held leadership roles within COL.

Malaysia has developed expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and eLearning and shares its expertise and experience with other developing countries of the Commonwealth. Malaysia is a regular contributor to COL’s budget.

SUMMARY


COL’s work in Malaysia has been focussed on two sectors: Education and Learning for Livelihoods. Capacity-building in eLearning, research and quality assurance are key thrust areas. Partners include public and private institutions as well as civil society organisations.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The first COL-NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India) Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia held in Bangalore, India,
in December 2007 was attended by three representatives from Malaysia, from the Department of Higher Education, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), the Universiti Sains Malaysia and the Wawasan Open University (WOU).

Malaysia is taking a lead role, along with India in a CEMCA/COL project to define a framework and criteria for quality assurance of multimedia learning materials. Two working groups have been established and several meetings held, in India and Malaysia in 2007 and 2008.

The Core Group and Secretariat in Malaysia includes three representatives from MOHE. Representatives from the Open University Malaysia (OUM), Multimedia University (MMU) and University of Information and Technology of Malaysia formed the Technical Committee. Eight participants from Malaysia attended the workshops in Delhi and Kuala Lumpur. The Fourth International Roundtable on QAML was organised by MOHE and CEMCA in November 2008 in Kuala Lumpur.

The first report of the two core groups gave a framework of a generic production process and the parameters to be examined at each stage of the process. It also provided a framework for documentation required for quality assessment. The first draft of the Guidelines for Quality Assurance of E-Content, a collaboration of the Malaysian Core Group for MOHE and CEMCA was released in June 2008. The audience of the Guidelines includes teachers, instructors, trainers and facilitators as well as e-Content developers and eLearning communities and users.

Teacher development

OUM sent a delegate to the workshop on “ODL for differently abled teachers”, organised by COL at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi in December 2007.

Higher education

CEMCA facilitated the participation of two Senior Educational Administrators from Malaysia, the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Vice-President of OUM at a Conference on “Managing Change in Higher Education” in India in September 2006. Such support enables Malaysian ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education to attend professional development programmes in the region.

As part of CEMCA’s work with OUM on the assessment, standardisation and certification of multimedia materials, the Acting Director, Centre for Instructional Design and Technology (CIDT), OUM and the Director of CEMCA visited WOU in May 2007.

The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme has expanded to WOU. The University hosted a boot camp in September 2007 to develop an action plan for converting existing CEMBA/CEMPA courses into a suitable format for online delivery. WOU launched its online programme in early 2008. The total enrolment in the programme by 2008 stood at 466.

In June 2008, OUM and MMU hosted a CEMCA facilitated study tour by Dr. Savita Datta, Director and Professor H.C. Pokhriyal, Executive Director of the Delhi University, School of Open Learning.
ELearning for education sector development

Malaysia was represented at the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with the Center for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Sri Lanka to develop knowledge resources focussing on the contexts and conditions of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for women in the Asian region.

CEMCA organised two workshops in September 2008 where Indian experts provided training to 22 Malaysians and two Sri Lankans on EasyNow software.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), WOU hosted two workshops in February 2009. A number of participants from Malaysia have taken part in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Malaysia is a founding module developer for the Commonwealth Computer Navigator’s Certificate, an international collaboration to develop a qualification in basic skills in ICTs using open source software. The project continued when seven content developers met in Vancouver in June 2007.

Transnational programmes

Six staff members of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Malaysia were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. One staff member from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

CEMCA, with the support of IGNOU and WOU, Malaysia, achieved a breakthrough in operationalising a new economical IP based teleconferencing system in September 2008. As a result, WOU will be setting up the system with assistance from CEMCA.

Ms. Jai Chandiram, a consultant of CEMCA, conducted a presentation workshop on skills for effective teleconferencing for Deans and faculty members of WOU.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by two delegates from Asia e University and OUM. In addition, COL sponsored three delegates from Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia and OUM. Tan Sri Dato’ Professor Gajaraj
Dhanarajan, Vice-Chancellor and CEO of WOU, was named Honorary Fellow of COL. OUM’s materials on Learning skills for open and distance learners was one of the recipients of the Awards of Excellence for Distance Education Materials – Category A: print or other “low end” media materials as part of a distance education course/programme.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 17 delegates from various educational institutions in Malaysia including 10 COL-sponsored delegates. Professor Tan Sri Anuwar Ali, President and Vice-Chancellor of OUM, was named Honorary Fellow of COL.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The first Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions was co-organised by MOHE and COL. It was held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008 and was attended by the COL Focal Point for Malaysia. The Honourable Dato Seri Mohamed Khaled bin Nordin, Minister of Higher Education, addressed the participants on the opening day.

**Resources**

Malaysia is one of the major countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from Malaysia are listed in the Biographical Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is available on the CEMCA website.

**Appointments**

Dato Dr. Professor Hassan Said accepted COL’s invitation to be a member of the CEMCA Advisory Council in 2007 and participated in the 7th CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in Delhi in December 2007. Dr. Mohamed Nasser bin Mohamad Noor represented Dato’ Professor Ir. Dr. Radin Umar Radin Sohahi, Director-General, Department of Higher Education, MOHE at the 8th CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in Delhi in December 2008.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to another period of close partnership with Malaysia and its continuing contribution to COL’s work in Asia and other regions, providing expertise and capacity to projects, particularly in the Education sector.

As a valued partner in the region, COL continues to involve Malaysian expertise in international forums and conferences and looks forward to testing models in the use of ICTs for improved quality of materials and distance learning outcomes.
MALDIVES

COL Focal Points:  Mr. Hamid Sodique (2006-2007)
                 Mrs. Khadeeja Adam (2006-2007)
                 Dr. Ali Fawaz Shareef, Centre for Open Learning (current)
                 Mr. Ahmed Yasir, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Maldives is an archipelago with a small population dispersed across far-flung islands and atolls. As a result, the country faces particular development challenges and is benefiting immensely from the further expansion of distance learning. While adult literacy is high and the education system is well-developed and effective, there is an urgent need to develop an innovative student support system which will reach out to learners located in remote areas. Maldives is a contributor to COL’s budget.

SUMMARY

The quality of school education was of primary importance to the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Mrs. Zahiya Zareer, and has continued as a priority during this triennium. The Minister was nominated as the Asian representative on COL’s Board of Governors and is also a member of the Advisory Council of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). Maldives is an active player in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). This is developing the capacity of individuals as well as supporting the strengthening of the Centre for Open Learning at the Maldives College of Higher Education.

CEMCA has trained Maldives professionals in the development of multimedia content and is working on an internet radio option for reaching the unreached islands. Under the COL Media Empowerment (COLME) project, a multimedia unit was set up at the Ministry of Education and COL supported capacity-building in all aspects of open and distance learning (ODL) and eLearning in support of this facility.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The first COL-NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India) Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for Policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by a representative from the College of Higher Education, Maldives.

Higher education

CEMCA facilitated the participation of a senior educational administrator from Maldives, the Director General, Ministry of Higher Education, Employment and Social Security at a Conference on Higher Education in India in September 2006. Such support enables ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education from the Maldives to attend professional development programmes in the region.

Participants from the Maldives were among 20 from five South Asian countries who received training at a workshop organised by CEMCA on “ODL for differently abled teachers” at Indira Gandhi National Open University in December 2007.

E-Learning for education sector development

Maldives was represented at the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Sri Lanka, to develop knowledge resources focussing on the contexts and conditions of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for women in the Asian region.

COL organised a one-day workshop on Video Production and e-Content in May 2007, which enabled participants from new ODL institutions to have hands-on training in the production of video programmes and their subsequent modification into e-Learning material. Four participants from the Educational Development Centre, Maldives, attended the workshop at the Educational Multi-media Research Centre Indian Institute of Technology (EM MRC IIT) campus Roorkee, India.

Maldives is one of the countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). CEMCA continues to highlight ODL best practice in Maldives through its quarterly publication EduComm Asia. The article Making Waves in Telecommunications - Maldives was published in the March issue.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Participants from five countries including one from the Educational Development Centre, Maldives attended a review workshop on the Livelihoods Skills Activities of COL in South Asia, held in Chennai in February 2007.

CEMCA organised a workshop in June 2008 on EasyNow software for faculty members, electronic media personnel and computer literate people in Maldives, with a view to trialing a distance education course in Tourism using the software.
Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Maldives is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area during this period. Participants from the Centre for Open Learning, the Maldives College of Higher Education and Iskandar School attended five of the six training and course development workshops that took place.

A delegate from the Ministry of Higher Education participated in the officials meeting in Singapore regarding the development of a transnational qualifications framework (TQF).

Maldives is also an active partner in the management of the VUSSC. The Interlocutor for Maldives, from the Centre for Open Learning is a member of the VUSSC Management Committee. A member of the TQF Management Committee is also from Maldives.

Transnational programmes

Five staff members of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Maldives were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL, through COL Media Empowerment (COLME) programme, worked with the Educational Technology Unit (ETU) in the Ministry of Education to increase the Unit’s multimedia capacity to deliver quality learning to all education sectors of the country. COL upgraded the digital video editing technology and capacity at ETU in December 2006 and provided an audio library to enhance productions. COL has made an assessment of the activity to date with the Unit.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by one of the COL Focal Points for Maldives and a representative of the Ministry of Higher Education.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008 was attended by one of the COL Focal Points for Maldives, from the Ministry of Education.

Appointments

The Honourable Mrs. Zahiya Zareer, the then Minister of Education was appointed Regional Representative for Asia on COL’s Board of Governors in July 2008 and has also accepted COL’s invitation to be a member of the CEMCA Advisory Council. Mr. Ahmed Ali Didi, the Deputy Minister of Education, represented The Honourable Zahiya Zareer, at the 7th CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in New Delhi in December 2007. Mr. Ahmed Shafeeu,
Director-General, Ministry of Education represented the Honourable Minister of Education at the 8th CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in New Delhi in December 2008.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, Maldives is set to continue its full participation in COL's initiatives in the country as well as expanding its role in the region and beyond through membership of the Board of Governors. The Maldives already takes an active role in VUSSC activities and management which will help the VUSSC achieve its goals during this period. COL will work with partners in the Maldives to further extend ODL and learner support throughout the country.
Pakistan has a long history of experience in distance education. During 2003-2006, COL’s work in Pakistan was limited mainly to the Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and Masters in Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme and some capacity-building in media at the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU).

However, since 2005, Pakistan has made renewed commitment to COL and its activities in the country have expanded significantly. Pakistan is once again a regular contributor to COL’s budget and participates in regional initiatives.

During this triennium, COL not only expanded its activities to include open schooling, rural development and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) with AIOU, it also worked with civil society organisations like the Adult Basic Education Society (ABES) to develop a basic primer for adult literacy called Roshni and a teachers manual for rural teachers. Several middle-level academics have participated in various COL-organised training workshops and conferences across the Commonwealth.

One of the highlights of this period was the two-week leadership training programme in Vancouver in May 2008 organised by COL and the Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan for 13 Vice-Chancellors and senior administrators (including three women) from Pakistan. The overall objective was to enhance the quality of higher education in Pakistan and to provide opportunities for forging research and academic exchange links with universities in British Columbia. Professor Mahmood Butt, the Vice-Chancellor of AIOU is a member of the Advisory Council of COL’s regional office, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from Pakistan took part in a workshop to critically review the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit. The workshop was held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India and COL.

The first COL-NAAC Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by two Professors from AIOU.

COL was invited to provide technical support and attend a seminar on teacher education standards and accreditation in August 2008 in Islamabad. At the suggestion of COL, Dr. Rama Kondapalli of NAAC was invited by UNESCO to attend the seminar to present the COL Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit to key stakeholders in Pakistan.

Teacher development

CEMCA is working with AIOU to adopt and integrate EasyNow software into their basket of technologies for content creation.

Open/alternative schooling

COL provided a consultancy to carry out a feasibility study on the establishment of an open school at AIOU. The study took place in 2008 and has made recommendations.

Higher education

As part of COL’s facilitation of the training of Vice-Chancellors in leadership and in partnership with HEC and AIOU, COL sponsored the visit of Professor Dr. Mahmood H. Butt, Vice-Chancellor of AIOU to Vancouver in early September 2007 where he met COL staff to discuss a range of COL/AIOU activities and collaboration.

At the request of HEC, COL assisted in arranging a study tour to Canada of 13 senior university administrators from Pakistan in 2008. They studied innovative practices in Canadian universities, formed links with universities for further faculty development, explored possibilities of offering joint/split degrees, identified areas of collaborative research and created a network of Vice-Chancellors for further information sharing and collaboration within Canada.

Participants from Pakistan were among 20 from five South Asian countries who received training at a workshop organised by CEMCA on “ODL for differently abled teachers” at Indira Gandhi National Open University in December 2007.

Pakistan, through AIOU, is one of the partners in the CEMBA/CEMPA programme. By 2008, seven thousand seven hundred and sixty-five students had enrolled in the programme.
ELearning for education sector development

Pakistan was represented at the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Sri Lanka, to develop knowledge resources focussing on the contexts and conditions of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for women in the Asian region.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), a face-to-face workshop was held in September 2008. Twenty participants from Pakistan also attended other face-to-face workshops and nine participated in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

As part of COL’s support to ABES, COL sponsored a training workshop in late 2006 at ABES for the conversion of an existing teachers’ manual into ODL format.

Two participants from ABES and AIOU were among those from five countries to attend a review workshop on the Livelihoods Skills Activities of COL in South Asia, held in Chennai in February 2007.

COL is working with AIOU to adapt TVET materials at the certificate level for use in Pakistan. COL and AIOU signed an agreement in April 2007 whereby AIOU would be the institution in Pakistan to use the curriculum and learning materials of the Special Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching (in-service) that was jointly developed by COL and the University of Technology in Jamaica.

Rural and peri-urban community development

At the request of AIOU, COL facilitated a study in 2008 to investigate and identify potential solutions to human and physical constraints/issues to ensure that AIOU will successfully meet its goal and objectives set for an MSc (Honours) in the Rural Development Programme offered by distance.

AIOU was a recipient of a COL-PROTEIN Award. The project provided functional literacy, health education, psychological rehabilitation and skills-based training to the youth of Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province. Teachers used multimedia ODL to provide a second chance at education and the opportunity to learn livelihood skills for the garment-making industry. All the materials were available online through AIOU’s website. This helped bring out-of-school youth back into the stream of educational development and economic activity.

National/international community development

COL is working with Pakistan institutions to support their interests to participate in COL’s Global Forum on Agricultural Research and its regional coordinating agency for Asia, the Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institute.
Transnational programmes

Forty staff members of the International Labour Organization, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, World Bank and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) based in Pakistan were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Two staff members from UNHCR were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) and 19 staff members from the Office of Internal Oversight Services were trained in Online Audit Report Writing in 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Gender and development

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, consisting of indicators including how to develop them for primary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008, COL, along with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and the Commonwealth Foundation convened a roundtable at the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore, India, with several institutions from South Asia. A second workshop was held in November at ISEC with two representatives from Pakistan.

Environment education

COL supported the visit of three representatives from AIOU to the Centre for Environment Education, India, in December 2008 to explore the possibility of adopting the Green Teacher programme.

Good governance

COL and ComSec are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. A senior advisor with Shirkat Gah – Women’s Resource Centre contributed a short taped interview on her views and ideas on the importance and challenges of gender mainstreaming for the public sector.

For Women’s Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL), participants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India met to share ideas leading to the development of a model to strengthen the role of women in decision-making at the local level. A two-day meeting in New Delhi in November 2008 included three participants from Pakistan. It further explored the key characteristics necessary for successful empowerment activities.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by three COL-sponsored delegates from AIOU. The Honourable Zobaida Jalal, women’s and community education advocate, the then Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education, and former Minister for Education and Women, was named an Honorary Fellow of COL at the Forum.
The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by four delegates from Pakistan, the International Islamic University Islamabad and the Foundation University. In addition, COL-sponsored three delegates from AIOU.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Pakistan.

**Other events**

COL sponsored Dr. Majed Rashid of AIOU to participate at the 12th Cambridge Conference on ODL in the UK in September 2007.

A M&E workshop was held in Delhi, India, from 29 November to 1 December 2007. The workshop was designed to enable COL and its partner organisations to effectively monitor and evaluate their collaborative programme activities. Participants are now expected to be able to describe how M&E could be incorporated into the COL model of programme planning, develop an exemplary M&E plan for a programme currently being undertaken by COL and a partner organisation and assist colleagues in their own organisations to develop M&E plans. Two participants from AIOU attended the workshop.

Professor Mahmood Butt attended the seventh CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in Delhi in December 2007.

**Resources**

Pakistan is one of the major countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from Pakistan are listed in the Biographical Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is available on the CEMCA website.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

COL will continue to work in support of education and livelihoods training with partners in Pakistan during the next Three-Year Plan. The focus will be on quality assurance in ODL for teachers and higher education and setting up systems for open schooling. There will be special attention on capacity-building in eLearning and ODL at all levels, institutional and individual, so that a cadre of experts is available in-country.

COL will facilitate appropriate linkages with distance education institutions in other developing countries of the Commonwealth where Pakistan’s expertise in ODL can add value to local efforts.
BACKGROUND

Singapore’s rich resources in education form the backdrop to COL’s engagement with this Commonwealth country. An increasing number of Singapore professionals and institutions have been encouraged to participate in the regional and international conferences in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for education efforts in the region.

SUMMARY

The Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs has continued to collaborate with COL to support Education and Learning for Livelihoods sector activities, in particular the work of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The first COL-NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India) Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by a representative of the National Institute of Education (NIE).


Higher education

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) facilitated the participation of a senior educational administrator from Singapore, the Deputy Head of Learning Sciences and Technologies, NIE, at a...
Conference on Higher Education, in India in September 2006. Such support enables Singapore ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education to attend professional development programmes in the region.

In June 2008, NIE hosted a CEMCA-facilitated observation tour by Dr. Savita Datta, Director and Professor H.C. Pokhriyal, Executive Director of Delhi University, School of Open Learning.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL and the Mauritius Qualifications Authority are designing a mechanism on recognition of prior learning in technical and vocational education and training to be shared with other institutions in African countries. Two workshops took place in Mauritius in 2007 and 2008. The first workshop was attended by 37 participants, including one from the Singapore Workforce Development Agency.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Singapore has hosted a number of meetings for VUSSC and provided extensive professional support during these activities. Activities already started by VUSSC and supported by Singapore include the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes has also been a focus area in this planning period. Singapore hosted a three-week VUSSC boot camp at NIE in March 2007. All local costs were covered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In addition, Singapore hosted a one-week Officials Meeting on the establishment of a transnational qualifications framework (TQF) in February 2008 to consider, refine and agree mechanisms of such a framework, the first of its kind to be attempted. Three representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and one from NIE attended the TQF meeting.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for Singapore.

Resources

Singapore is one of the major countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet).

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to Singapore’s continuing involvement in VUSSC, lending valuable support and expertise to this and other pan-Commonwealth and regional activities.
SRI LANKA

COL Focal Point: Mr. S.U. Wijerathne, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Sri Lanka has high literacy rates, a good gender balance in education and an extremely valuable network of very efficient NGOs. COL has an ongoing productive partnership with both the Ministry of Education and institutions in Sri Lanka. A Sri Lankan, Dr. Tara de Mel, represented Asia on the COL Board of Governors from 2002 to June 2008. Sri Lanka is a regular contributor to COL’s budget.

SUMMARY

In this triennium, COL worked to support education and development in Sri Lanka through a variety of activities in quality assurance, teacher training, higher education, capacity building in open and distance learning (ODL) and testing new models of community engagement. While much of the focus remained on tertiary level educational institutions, major in-roads in collaboration with NGOs and other agencies resulted in the development of strategic partnerships and networks in the use of ODL and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Some of the outcomes were the establishment of the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) project, the development of materials for teacher training under the Master of Arts in Teacher Education (MATE) programme, quality assurance tools for distance education, and training for Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) staff in developing multimedia course materials.

Distinguished Sri Lankans, including the Honourable Minister of Education, visited COL Headquarters in Vancouver and other prominent visitors came to COL under the Executive Attachment Programme. Sri Lanka also received recognition for its contribution to the promotion of ODL, at the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) in 2008.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from Sri Lanka took part in a workshop to critically review the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit. The workshop was held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and COL.

A workshop on Performance Indicators for Quality assurance in Distance Higher Education was held in Sri Lanka in August 2007. It was organised by the Distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP) of the Ministry of Education, co-sponsored by COL and supported by the Asian Development Bank. At the end of the workshop, the participants succeeded in drafting quality indicators for distance higher education.

The first COL-NAAC Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by three representatives from Sri Lanka, from the Ministry of Education and DEMP.

A Senior Lecturer from OUSL attended the workshops to develop an Assessment, Standardisation and Certification of Multimedia Materials Handbook, held in New Delhi in October 2007, November 2007 and June 2008.

Teacher development

COL engaged a consultant to train the faculty and other staff of OUSL on monitoring and evaluation for the pilot run of the MATE-1 programme and to evaluate its organisation and impact of the programme. The evaluation was completed and the final report received in September 2007.

Open/alternative schooling

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified cost and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. A delegate from Sri Lanka attended the workshop which was held in 2007 in Gaborone, Botswana.

Sri Lanka was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from the National Institute of Education attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of ICTs.

In order to strengthen the capacity of open schools, three staff members from Sri Lanka were trained in course development at a Learner Support workshop in India, while two staff members attended the Learner Support workshop in South Africa.
Higher education

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) facilitated the participation of a senior educational administrator from Sri Lanka, a Professor of Political Science and Chairman of the University Grants Commission, at a conference on Higher Education, in India in September 2006. Such support enables ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education from Sri Lanka to attend professional development programmes in the region.

Sri Lanka, through OUSL, is one of the partners in the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme. By 2008, three hundred and twenty-eight students from Sri Lanka had enrolled in the programme.

Participants from Sri Lanka were among 20 from five South Asian countries who received training at a workshop organised by CEMCA on “ODL for differently abled teachers” at Indira Gandhi National Open University in December 2007.

COL, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Higher Education (through DEMP) are cooperating to develop a Quality Assurance Toolkit for Higher Education.

E-Learning for education sector development

Sri Lanka hosted the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Colombo. The objectives of the meeting were to develop knowledge resources focussing on the contexts and conditions of the use of ICTs for women in the Asian region. Several delegates from Sri Lanka attended the meeting along with other experts from the region.

OUSL and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), India were the first two ODL institutions to adopt and integrate EasyNow software into their basket of technologies for content creation. CEMCA held two workshops for academics, technical and media staff at OUSL and YCMOU where participants tried out the software to create interesting content in varied formats. A senior lecturer at OUSL represented Sri Lanka at the Quality Assurance, Quality Assessment and Multimedia Learning meeting in November 2007 and again in June 2008 and was also the Resource Person at the training workshop in the Maldives in June 2008. Three representatives from Sri Lanka attended the workshop on EasyNow in September 2008, organised by CEMCA at the Open University of Malaysia.

CEMCA, in collaboration with UNESCO, has undertaken a project to train ODL professionals in multi-mixed media courseware, using an authoring tool, Metamorphosis. Three distance and open universities in the region, including OUSL participated. As a further value addition, CEMCA has incorporated a two-day orientation to script writing for audio and video formats, to enable ODL course writers/teachers to create audio and video clips to integrate into the authoring tools package. In January 2008, UNESCO funded a 5-day Metamorphosis course for 19 faculty members from OUSL.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Sri Lanka hosted a face-to-face workshop in March/April 2008, attended by 28 participants from Sri Lanka. A further five participated in online workshops.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL is working with Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries to develop vocational education for youth. Sri Lanka participated in a regional review workshop in July 2006 and presented draft proposals on livelihood activities for consideration.

A number of other activities have taken place in this area. Sri Lanka hosted the workshop on Capacity Building in ICTs for women using NGO networks in December 2006. In addition, three participants from OUSL were among those from five countries to attend a review workshop on the Livelihoods Skills Activities of COL in South Asia, held in Chennai in February 2007. In addition, the President & CEO of COL gave the inaugural speech at the newly-formed University of Vocational Technology in Sri Lanka in September 2008.

Rural and peri-urban community development

The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme was officially launched in Hambantota, Sri Lanka in April 2007. L3F empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning process, organise themselves to solve problems by marketing their products and food security, improve their living conditions and increase their freedom and independence from government support.

Three universities in Sri Lanka are implementing L3F. The pilot phase of L3F in Sri Lanka has been taking place in Weligatta Village, Hambantota District and involves four key partners:

- Farmers.
- A consortium of learning institutions including OUSL, the University of Colombo, Eastern University, the Export Development Board and the Irrigation Department.
- Vidhatha centres, equipped with computers, internet, and other facilities, proposed for 300 villages. The centres will facilitate the transfer of information from scientific and research institutions to rural farmers.
- Rural Cooperative Bank which provides loans to farmers.

The President & CEO of COL visited Hambantota during the launch and was impressed by the impact of L3F and by the quality and the dedication of the Sri Lanka collaborators.

COL organised its first Collaborative Digital Content Development meeting with L3F and Sri Lanka university partners in Colombo in March/April 2008. The aim was to develop exemplary learning materials that reflect farmers’ demands and using multimedia of farmers’ choice. WikiEducator was used to encourage collaborative content development. The materials were tested with farming communities, revised and shared during PCF5. The feedback is being further discussed with farming communities to make appropriate changes.

The COL President launched L3F to be implemented by the Eastern University with the farmers association in Batticaloa. The Government of Sri Lanka has recognised that L3F would complement the President’s national rural development initiative Gama Neguma Programme.
National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Sri Lanka attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries.

Transnational programmes

Seventeen staff members of the International Labour Organization, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and World Bank based in Sri Lanka were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Two staff members from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Gender and development

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, consisting of indicators including how to develop them for primary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008, COL, along with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and the Commonwealth Foundation convened a roundtable at the Institute of Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, India, with several institutions from South Asia and attended by a representative from Sri Lanka.

Health, welfare and community development

COL, in partnership with the World Health Organization continues to support the efforts of Sarvodaya to reach all regions of the country with health and governance information. COL upgraded the video editing capacity at Sarvodaya in December 2006. An assessment of the activity was also completed at that time.

Good governance

To develop a framework for Women’s Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL), a two-day meeting was held in India with the support of CEMCA in November 2008 to further explore the key characteristics necessary for successful empowerment activities. A representative from Sri Lanka participated in this meeting.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by two delegates from the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), Save the Children and OUSL. In addition, COL sponsored six delegates, including several from the Distance Education Partnership Programme (DEPP) and OUSL.
PCF5, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 23 delegates from Sri Lanka, 11 sponsored by COL. Professor Uma Coomaraswamy, Emeritus Professor of Botany and a former Vice-Chancellor, OUSL, was named Honorary Fellow of COL at the Forum. The Master of Arts in Teacher Education, submitted by the Faculty of Education, OUSL, was one of the recipients of the fiercely contested Awards of Excellence for Distance Education Materials - Category A: print or other “low-end” media materials, such as audio/video tapes or a combination of these.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in October 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Sri Lanka.

Other events

A Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) workshop was held in Delhi, India, in November/December 2007. The workshop was designed to enable COL and its partner organisations to effectively monitor and evaluate their collaborative programme activities. Participants are now expected to be able to describe how M&E could be incorporated into the COL model of programme planning, develop an exemplary M&E plan for a programme currently being undertaken by COL and a partner organisation and assist colleagues in their own organisations to develop M&E plans. Three participants from Sri Lanka attended the workshop, from the University of Colombo, DEMP and DEPP.

Under the COL Executive Attachment Programme, Dr. Gamini Kulatunga, Coordinator Rural Research Unit, OUSL visited COL from 2 June to 2 July 2008. He undertook a study of a series of initiatives at COL and methods of evaluation carried out in other parts of the world in the Learning for Livelihoods sector.

COL supported the attendance of Professor Nandani de Silva, Vice-Chancellor of OUSL, at the Association of Asian Open Universities Conference 2007 in October/November in Malaysia.

Resources

Sri Lanka is one of the major countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from Sri Lanka are listed in the Biographical Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is available on the CEMCA website.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, COL will continue to support work in the areas of quality assurance, access to higher education, teacher education and eLearning in Sri Lanka. COL looks forward to adding initiatives in the areas of Education and Livelihoods and Health in consultation with COL’s many partners in the country.
BACKGROUND

Ten of the twelve Commonwealth Caribbean countries are island states. Belize and Guyana, located in Central and South America respectively, are the two exceptions. While Jamaica has a population of 2.6 million and Trinidad & Tobago has 1.3 million, all the other countries have a population of less than one million.

In spite of the growing number of tertiary institutions in the region and the growth of distance education, there is a huge unmet demand for tertiary qualifications. This has attracted private and cross-border providers. In order to document this phenomenon, COL, in collaboration with UNESCO and the University of the West Indies, published a book, *Foreign Providers in the Caribbean: Pillagers or Preceptors?*, edited by Stewart Marshall, Ed Brandon, Michael Thomas, Asha Kanwar and Tove Lyngra, in 2008. This can be downloaded from the COL website.

CARIBBEAN CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICERS MEETINGS

The Chief Education Officers (CEOs) of the Caribbean hold annual meetings sponsored by COL. As well as an opportunity for a briefing on COL's activities in the region, the meetings provide the CEOs with a chance to discuss new developments in open and distance learning (ODL) and education technologies, in their countries, both planned and in progress.

In March 2008, the CEO Meeting was held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. A quality assurance institute was organised and there were discussions on the issue of school children at risk and the underachievement of boys. The meeting identified two critical issues needing immediate attention, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and violence and the underachievement of boys.

In TVET, COL is assisting in the development of ODL material for relevant courses such as autotronics, agro processing, graphic design, entrepreneurship, and the visual and performing arts including training for teachers to develop ODL material for TVET and to deliver ODL programmes effectively.

For violence and underachievement, COL is assisting in documenting good practices, the development of motivational material and the distribution of research findings. Recent reform efforts in the Caribbean were discussed and noted. COL also created a “BaseCamp” to facilitate ongoing dialogue among the CEOs.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The first in a series of Regional Focal Points Meetings was held for the Caribbean region, in Ocho Rios in March 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. During the meeting, each participant reviewed, on
behalf of their country, the progress that had been made at the mid-term of COL’s current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009. They provided feedback on COL’s planning process and concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting was also a valuable opportunity for updating information on the status of ODL in each country and for inter-country networking that will facilitate future collaboration.

The role of the COL Focal Points was discussed and a number of key aspects of this valuable role were agreed. The Focal Points will be a one-stop window in each country for COL, will coordinate with other ministries and stakeholders and will disseminate COL-related information to relevant constituencies. The Focal Points will also meet visiting COL staff and arrange appointments with ministry officials and others as necessary. In particular, they will keep their Minister briefed and will ensure timely payment of contributions to COL. Finally, the Focal Points will be advocates for ODL and for COL in their countries and will provide advice and guidance to COL from time to time.

COL created an online “BaseCamp” for the Caribbean Focal Points to encourage online dialogue and the exchange of ideas and information.

REGIONAL INSTITUTE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

A regional institute on quality assurance in teacher education was held for policy makers and administrators in education/teacher education in conjunction with the Caribbean CEO Meeting in Jamaica in March 2008. COL’s Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed and discussed at the meeting.

TVET DEVELOPMENT

A meeting of Caribbean School Principals was held in Christ Church, Barbados, in November 2008, to discuss and identify projects in skills development in the area of building construction and disaster mitigation and management. The workshop was designed to assess the current state of TVET in the region and to develop a strategy and action plan for the short and long term.

This was a follow-up workshop to the CEO’s Meeting that was held in March. At that gathering, the CEOs put TVET at the top of their agenda.

The workshop came up with a long list of areas in which COL could help. They were prioritised into high, medium and low priorities. A log frame and action plan were developed. Twenty one heads of technical institutes, community colleges and vocational training NGOs in the Caribbean attended the workshop.

EDUCATIONAL USE OF MASS MEDIA AND ICTs CAPACITY BUILDING

COL is working throughout the region to develop capacity for the educational use of mass media and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Projects include upgrading media unit facilities and training staff in the development of multimedia materials as well as supporting the set-up of FM radio stations in several countries.

COL held a regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean. Held in November 2008 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, it was attended by representatives from across the region. The focus was on sharing good practices in educational media as well as frameworks and processes for developing new learning programmes for community and public media. By the end of the workshop, the participants were familiar with the programme...
development framework and had applied it to a community development priority. Over 60% of the participants indicated that they would use the approach to develop new programmes. Sixteen media workers from across the region participated in the workshop.

COL also held a well-attended regional workshop in Ocho Rios, Jamaica in March 2008 on Media Empowerment for Livelihoods. The workshop was part of COL’s support for educational institutions, NGOs and community organisations to produce educational media content and develop non-formal ODL programmes related to livelihoods.

DEVELOPING CAPACITY IN CURRICULUM WRITING

In June 2007, working with the Commonwealth Youth Programme’s Caribbean Regional Office, COL jointly facilitated a Curriculum Development Workshop with Jamaica’s National Training Agency/HEART Trust. For curriculum writers from across the Caribbean, the workshop focussed on upgrading participants’ skills in writing a competency-based curriculum. The training standards qualification framework was developed by the HEART Trust and has been adopted by many other Caribbean countries. The writers were assisting in the development of CYP’s diploma programme into a certificate programme that uses the new training standards qualification framework for youth development work.

REGIONAL BROCHURES

COL has regional brochures which summarise its activities in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth. These can be found on COL’s website at: www.col.org/regional.
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

COL Focal Point:  Mrs. Peecheeta Spencer, Antigua State College (current)

BACKGROUND

Antigua & Barbuda is a small state of the Commonwealth. It is an active participant in regional activities and meetings and a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Antigua & Barbuda has started contributing regularly to COL’s budget since 2007-2008.

SUMMARY

Activities during the 2006-2009 period revolved around quality assurance indicators to guide institutional strengthening in teacher education such as eLearning, educational technology, and open educational resources (OERs). Antigua & Barbuda is also participating in the activities of the VUSSC.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Antigua & Barbuda was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Two delegates from Antigua & Barbuda participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The two delegates were from Antigua State College and from the Antigua & Barbuda Institute of Continuing Education.
Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Antigua & Barbuda is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Antigua & Barbuda attended three of the six training and course development workshops that took place, on the professional development of educators, on life skills and on the construction industry. Participants included two from Antigua State College and one from the Ministry of Education.

Antigua & Barbuda has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore for the transnational qualifications framework initiative.

The Interlocutor for Antigua & Barbuda, from the Antigua State College, also attended another key VUSSC meeting, when the Ministry Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

A delegate from the Ministry of Education participated in the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL is working with the Ministry of Education to enhance the Ministry’s ability to deliver multimedia educational information to educators and learners in Antigua & Barbuda. In November 2007, Ministry of Education staff were trained in the technology for the creation of multimedia as a first phase of this. A plan is in development for the future development of learning materials and policy information by the Ministry for delivery via radio, television and the internet.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by a delegate from Antigua State College.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by two delegates from Antigua State College.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Antigua & Barbuda.
Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Antigua & Barbuda.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, the focus for Antigua & Barbuda will be its continued involvement in the activities of the VUSSC. COL will also continue the work with the Ministry of Education to further develop its capacity and expertise in the production of multimedia materials. In addition COL will explore the possibility of collaborating with authorities in Antigua & Barbuda to host a pan-Commonwealth conference on the evolution of colleges into universities.
BACKGROUND

The Bahamas is a small state of the Commonwealth. It contributes regularly to COL’s budget, participates in COL activities and takes an active role in regional initiatives and meetings.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s assistance to The Bahamas has been on educational media and curriculum development, including an active role in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Representatives participated in three major course development workshops and a planning meeting in London in July 2008. The Bahamas hosted the course development workshop on the construction industry in November 2008.

Alongside activities in the country, The Bahamas continues to benefit through regional and international activities and programmes as well as tools and resources that COL makes available as open content. With COL support The Bahamas participated in key regional and pan-Commonwealth meetings.

EDUCATION

Higher education

A participant from The Bahamas attended the Curriculum Development Workshop, organised in conjunction with the Commonwealth Youth Programme that took place in June 2007 with curriculum writers from across the Caribbean.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

In November 2006, 16 participants from The Bahamas completed the Special Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) offered by COL and the University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica. The programme, jointly designed by COL and UTech, for teachers in the Caribbean is building capacity in TVET through open and distance learning.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

The Bahamas is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from The Bahamas attended four of the six training and course development workshops that took place. Participants were from the College of the Bahamas, C.V. Bethel Senior High School, The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute and the Ministry of Education. A team leader at the fifth workshop in Seychelles, on the fishing industry, was from The Bahamas. Two team leaders from The Bahamas participated in the Team Leaders Orientations in Vancouver in October 2007 and January 2008. The Bahamas hosted the sixth workshop in November 2008, on the construction industry.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by two representatives from the Ministry of Education, including Dr. Leon Higgs who is a member of the VUSSC Management Committee and the Interlocutor for The Bahamas.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL implemented a video production system with the Ministry of Education in February 2007. In April 2007, The Bahamas Learning Channel (BLC) was launched following consultations by COL on the development of the channel with Ministry staff. The BLC aims to promote educational television throughout the country.

COL is supporting the Ministry in increasing its ability to create multimedia materials for primary and secondary schools through the implementation of an FM radio station and links to regional networks concerned with educational broadcasting and applications of media for learning.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by two representatives from the Ministry of Education.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three COL-sponsored delegates, from the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture and the College of The Bahamas. A fourth delegate, from the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture also attended the Forum.
Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by a representative of the Ministry of Education.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for The Bahamas.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, COL looks forward to continuing progress on the several initiatives already begun, including the use of multimedia for educational television and radio which promises to be of great value in the country. The Bahamas is also well positioned to continue its active role in the VUSSC.
BARBADOS

COL Focal Points: Dr. Idamay Denny and Mr. Laurie King, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MoEHRD) (current)

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, Barbados is the most eastern of the Caribbean islands. It has been a contributor to COL’s budget since 2005 and takes an active role in regional activities.

SUMMARY

COL’s work in Barbados in 2006-2009 has touched all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment.

In Education, the focus has been on quality assurance and higher education. Barbados participates in the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers and COL continues to work on the regional priorities identified at the meeting in March 2008 in Jamaica.

In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, Barbados has been participating in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

Work in the Human Environment sector has related to the health, welfare and community development initiative and in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and local NGOs, health information has been distributed to girls, women, farmers, government officials, ministers and others. COL continues to support the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development’s educational radio efforts.

EDUCATION

Teacher development

Barbados hosted a workshop in September 2006 for COL technical and vocational education and training (TVET) administrators and tutors on the TVET programme co-designed and run by COL and the University of Technology, Jamaica.
E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Barbados hosted the first regional Caribbean wiki workshop in November 2008. Nineteen participants from the region including two from MoEHRD attended the workshop. The participants achieved the certification of Wiki Apprentice, Level 2 in accordance with the WikiEducator community-based competency framework.

Eighteen participants from Barbados participated in the Barbados second in-country workshop, held in November 2008. All participants at this workshop also achieved the certification of Wiki Apprentice, Level 2.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Barbados hosted the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals in November 2008. Four delegates from Barbados were present.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Barbados is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Barbados attended two of the six training and course development workshops that took place, on entrepreneurship and tourism and on the professional development of educators.

Barbados is participating in the development of a transnational qualifications framework. Barbados has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and a representative from the Barbados Accreditation Council attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by a representative of the MoEHRD.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

COL is supporting a media and health activity with WHO and the Pan-American Health Organisation and a local NGO, Comfort Assist Reach-Out Education (CARE) for the distribution of health information focussed on HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma for the general public. An on-site assessment of the work done by CARE was completed in February 2006 and support is ongoing.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL has installed an FM radio station with the MoEHRD to facilitate educational radio in Barbados and continues to support content development. COL has also enhanced the Ministry’s capacity to create and deliver video productions through the implementation of digital editing technology.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by 24 participants from Barbados, from the MoEHRD, the Caribbean Tourism Organization, University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre, the University of the West Indies and other educational institutions.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by five delegates from Barbados including two sponsored by COL, from the MoEHRD and from Barbados Community College.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by a representative from the MoEHRD.

LOOKING FORWARD

COL’s excellent working relationship with Barbados has continued during this period and sets a strong foundation for further progress and initiatives in the two sectors of Education and Livelihoods and Health that COL will focus on in its next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. Barbados has made a strong start in the L4C initiative and is well positioned to build a substantial contribution to this in the future. COL looks forward to seeing Barbados continue to increase its role in VUSSC.
BELIZE

COL Focal Point:  Ms. Maud Hyde (2006-2009)
Mr. Christopher Aird, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Belize is a small state of the Commonwealth. An active partner in COL’s activities, Belize has been a contributor to COL’s budget since 2006.

Teacher education is a key priority for the Government of Belize since only 52% of primary teachers and 40% of secondary teachers are fully trained. A comprehensive training programme for new teachers is now in place but more remains to be done to support those already in the workforce.

Much of Belize’s natural environment – terrestrial and aquatic – is unspoilt and the country places strong emphasis on environmental education.

SUMMARY

Belize participates in the annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers and COL continues to work on the regional priority activities identified at the meeting in March 2008 in Jamaica.

Quality assurance in education is a focus in Belize and the country has been benefiting from COL’s provision of material and capacity-building support for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education programmes and institutions in the Commonwealth.

Belize is participating in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Belize was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Barbados hosted the first regional Caribbean wiki workshop in November 2008. Nineteen participants including two from the University of Belize attended the workshop. The participants achieved the certification of Wiki Apprentice, Level 2 in accordance with the WikiEducator community-based competency framework.

Belize hosted a face-to-face workshop for this initiative in January and April 2009.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Two delegates from Belize participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The two delegates were from the Ministry of Education and from Corozal Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ITVET).

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Belize is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from the University of Belize attended four of the six training and course development workshops that took place.

Belize is participating in the development of a transnational qualifications framework. Belize has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the Officials meeting in Singapore.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by the Interlocutor for Belize and a representative from the University of Belize.

Transnational programmes

One staff member of the World Health Organisation based in Belize was trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Environment education

COL and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) are exploring the use of open and distance learning (ODL) to address climate change issues as they influence rural livelihoods in the Caribbean, including Belize.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL has been working to support the participation of Tuml K’in Centre of Learning/Ak’Kutan FM and Hamalali Garinuga Community Radio in regional networking about educational broadcasting and the use of local media for learning.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by four delegates from Belize including from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, the University of Belize and K.M. Touré Associates.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three delegates from Belize including the COL Focal Point from the Ministry of Education and two others from the Information Technology Department and the CCCCC.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Belize.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Belize.

LOOKING FORWARD

The positive partnership developed between Belize and COL is a valuable foundation for further progress in the next triennium. A number of opportunities exist for future initiatives to meet Belize’s needs and priorities including using ODL for in-service teacher training for teachers already in the workforce, and the development of eLearning and ODL at the tertiary level. There is also an opportunity for ODL to provide flexible training for public servants in issues of accountability and good governance. The use of the mass media for education may also see an expansion in Belize in 2009-2012.
DOMINICA

COL Focal Point: Senior Administrative Officer, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth Affairs and Sports (MOEHRDYAS) (current)

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, Dominica is a developing economy with the potential to diversify further from its dominant agricultural base. The country has been an active participant in the regional annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers since COL’s inception.

SUMMARY

In the 2006-2009 period, COL undertook activities with Dominica in quality assurance indicators designed to strengthen teacher education, educational use of mass media for targeted groups in agriculture, fisheries and environment, and open educational resources (OERs). COL continues to work with Dominica on the regional priorities identified by Caribbean Chief Education Officers at their meeting in March 2008 in Jamaica. Dominica also participates in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). COL has also been working to strengthen the multimedia capacity of the MOEHRDYAS and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MOAFF).

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Dominica was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

Higher education

A participant from Dominica attended the Curriculum Development Workshop, organised in conjunction with the Commonwealth Youth Programme that took place in June 2007 with curriculum writers from across the Caribbean.
E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), nine participants from Dominica have taken part in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Dominica is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. A participant from Dominica attended one of the six training and course development workshops that took place, in Singapore on the professional development of educators.

Dominica is participating in the development of a transnational qualifications framework. The Interlocutor for Dominica, from MOEHRDYAS attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by a representative from the MOEHRDYAS.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

Representatives from MOEHRDYAS and MOAFF participated in the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

As part of COL’s support for MOAFF in producing media to address the needs of targeted groups in the country, COL upgraded the technology and training at the Agriculture Division with new software and cameras. COL also aided the Fisheries Division with a new camera for the development of an underwater survey of reefs.

COL implemented a media unit at MOEHRDYAS in February 2007 that will develop multimedia learning materials for students and teachers. In addition, a representative from the Ministry participated in the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by two representatives from MOEHRDYAS.
The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by two COL-sponsored delegates from the Education Planning Unit and MOAFF.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for Dominica.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Dominica.

LOOKING FORWARD

Dominica has increased its participation in COL activities both in-country and in the region during this triennium. COL looks forward to Dominica further increasing its involvement in activities of the VUSSC in 2009-2012.
GRENADA

COL Focal Point: Mr. Martin Baptise (2006-2008)
Mr. Julien Ogilvie, Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MoEHRD) (current)

BACKGROUND

Grenada is a small state of the Commonwealth. It participates in regional meetings and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and contributed to COL’s budget in 2007/2008.

SUMMARY

COL activities with Grenada in the 2006-2009 period have covered a variety of areas in all three sectors. Grenada has participated in meetings and workshops to examine quality assurance indicators for improvements in teacher education, develop open educational resources (OERs), eLearning and educational technologies. COL has supported media development to assist farmers, and learners in Grenada have benefited from the development of a Special Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for practising teachers.

Grenada has taken part in the activities of the VUSSC. The country also participated in the annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers and COL continues to work with Grenada on the regional priorities identified by Caribbean Chief Education Officers at their meeting in March 2008 in Jamaica.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Grenada was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

Higher education

A participant from Grenada attended the Curriculum Development Workshop, organised in conjunction with the Commonwealth Youth Programme that took place in June 2007 with curriculum writers from across the Caribbean.


E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two participants from Grenada took part in the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop in Barbados in November 2008, from T.A. Marryshow Community College and from the Ministry of Education.

Grenada hosted two face-to-face workshops for this initiative in February 2009.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Two delegates from Grenada participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The two delegates were from T.A. Marryshow Community College and New Life Organisation.

Twenty learners from Grenada have completed the Special Diploma in TVET offered by COL and the University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica. The programme, jointly designed by COL and UTech, for teachers in the Caribbean is building capacity in TVET through open and distance learning.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Grenada is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from the Ministry of Education attended three of the six training and course development workshops that took place, on the professional development of educators, on life skills and on the construction industry.

Grenada is participating in the development of a transnational qualifications framework. A representative from the Ministry of Education attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

A representative from Grenada, from the Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

A participant from the Ministry of Education attended the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

As part of COL’s support for the Ministry of Agriculture in their media development to address agricultural issues for farmers throughout the country, COL upgraded the digital video editing technology at the media unit in the

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by five delegates from Grenada from the Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN), the Ministry of Education, T.A. Marryshow Community College and St. George’s University.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by two delegates from CKLN and one COL-sponsored delegate from T.A. Marryshow Community College.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Grenada.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Grenada.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, COL looks forward to continuing its partnership with Grenada on existing and new initiatives both in-country and regionally. The VUSSC will remain an important focus for 2009-2012 and there is opportunity for greater involvement in these activities for the benefit of Grenada.
GUYANA

COL Focal Point:  Ms. Dawn Braithwaite (2006-2007)
Ms. Inge Nathoo, Guyana National Commission for UNESCO (current)

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, Guyana is a regular contributor to COL’s budget. It is committed to developing open and distance learning (ODL) and education is identified as a key sector in Guyana’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Guyana attends the regional annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers and takes part in other regional activities.

SUMMARY

During 2006-2009, COL assisted Guyana in all three sectors. In the Education sector, Guyana benefited from COL’s pan-Commonwealth activities. Guyana participated in the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers and COL has continued to work with Guyana on the regional priority activities identified at the meeting in March 2008 in Jamaica.

In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, COL has continued its work with the University of Guyana in supporting farmers and entrepreneurs. In addition, COL is exploring avenues to offer the Special Diploma in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to practicing teachers through ODL in Guyana.

In the Human Environment sector COL has addressed health issues, liaising with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA).

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Guyana was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.
**Higher education**

Three participants from Guyana attended the Curriculum Development Workshop, organised in conjunction with the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) that took place in June 2007 with curriculum writers from across the Caribbean.

**E-Learning for education sector development**

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two participants from Guyana took part in the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop in Barbados in November 2008, from the National Centre for Educational Development and from the Interactive Radio Instruction Mathematics for Grades 1-3.

Guyana also hosted a regional workshop for this initiative in February 2009.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

Two delegates from Guyana participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The two delegates were from the New Amsterdam Technical Institute and from the Board of Industrial Training.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Guyana is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period.

Guyana is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. A representative from the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

**Transnational programmes**

The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CE MBA/CEMPA) programme was officially launched at the University of Guyana in November 2008. Thirty-six students had enrolled in the programme in the initial intake.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Health, welfare and community development**

In partnership with PAHO, COL has continued to support GRPA in its efforts to address HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma issues throughout the country. COL undertook an assessment of the work of GRPA in March 2007 and support is ongoing.
Educational use of mass media and ICTs

A representative from Guyana participated in the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008, from Radio Paiwomak.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by seven delegates from Guyana including those from CYP - Caribbean Centre, the University of Guyana and the Ministry of Education.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by two delegates, from the CYP - Caribbean Centre and CARICOM.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point of Guyana.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Guyana.

Other events

At the First Dennis Irvine Lecture Series at the University of Guyana in February 2007, Sir John Daniel, President & CEO of COL, presented a paper on “How can Learning Contribute to Development?”

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, Guyana will continue to participate in and contribute to regional initiatives and meetings. The VUSSC will remain an important focus and COL hopes to see Guyana increase its involvement in the group’s activities. In 2009-2012, the CEMBA/CEMPA programme will become fully established and will see its first graduates.
JAMAICA

COL Focal Point:  Mr. Philbert Dhyll, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Jamaica is a strong partner for COL in the Caribbean. One of the larger small states of the Commonwealth, Jamaica is a regular contributor to COL’s budget. It has hosted international events as well as regional meetings in recent years. His Excellency the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, OJ, High Commissioner to London and former Education Minister, has been Chair of COL’s Board of Governors since September 2008.

SUMMARY

Jamaica hosted the highly successful Fourth Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) in Ocho Rios from 30 October to 3 November 2006 as well as a number of regional meetings during the period.

In 2006-2009, COL has worked in Jamaica in all three sectors. In the Education sector, COL has assisted the Ministry of Education in the areas of capacity building and quality assurance in teacher education and in strengthening open schooling approaches in the country. Jamaica attends the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers and hosted the meeting in March 2008.

In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, COL has worked for the possible introduction and adaptation of COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme and Jamaica has participated in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). In addition, COL continues to work in Jamaica by developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET) using open and distance learning (ODL) methods for low technology environments.

In the Human Environment sector, a number of initiatives for the educational use of mass media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been completed.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Jamaica was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

Higher education

COL is collaborating with the University of Technology (UTech) and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Distance Education Centre in developing and delivering course modules in long-term development planning at the local government level. A workshop was held in June 2007 with further work to be done.

Seven participants from Jamaica attended the Curriculum Development Workshop with curriculum writers from across the Caribbean in June 2007, organised in conjunction with the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and jointly facilitated with Jamaica’s National Training Agency/HEART Trust which provided eight facilitators.

The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme was officially launched at the University College of the Caribbean (UCC) in September 2007. The initial enrolment was eighty-three students across the two programmes.

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, more than ten participants from Jamaica have taken part in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Jamaica is a founding module developer for the Commonwealth Computer Navigator's Certificate, an international collaboration to develop a qualification in basic skills in ICTs using open source software. The project continued when seven content developers met in Vancouver in June 2007.

Three delegates from Jamaica participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The delegates were from the Ministry of Education, UTech and Brown's Town Community College.

Rural and peri-urban community development

COL is working with The Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) and the Jeffrey Town Farmers Association for the possible introduction and adaptation of Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) in Jamaica. Several areas were surveyed for possible implementation and a report completed in January 2008. The organisations are now developing plans to link
with L3F and the use of media, particularly community radio and computer-based training, for supporting learning for agriculture-based livelihoods for the Jeffrey Town community.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Jamaica is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Jamaica attended four of the six training and course development workshops that took place, from the Council of Community Colleges, the Ministry of Education, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and from the Caribbean School of Architecture, UTech.

Jamaica is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework (TQF). The country has submitted its national qualifications framework for analysis and a representative from the Ministry of Education attended the officials meeting in Singapore. A representative from the Ministry of Education is also a member of the TQF Management Committee.

Jamaica also attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

**Transnational programmes**

Three staff members of the World Health Organisation based in Jamaica were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

Jamaica is supporting Trinidad & Tobago to promote the Special Diploma in TVET programme. Jointly designed and offered by COL and UTech for teachers in the Caribbean, it is building capacity in TVET through ODL.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Gender and development**

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, consisting of indicators including how to develop them for primary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008 COL, along with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and the Commonwealth Foundation, convened a roundtable at the Institute of Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, India, with several institutions from South Asia and attended by a representative from Jamaica, the Dean of Social Sciences, UWI.

**Health, welfare and community development**

**Educational use of mass media and ICTs**

As part of COL’s support for RADA within the Ministry of Agriculture to address the needs of farmers throughout the country, COL updated the editing system at the Ministry and assessed the progress of their media effort in October 2006.

COL is also supporting the multimedia efforts of the Ministry of Education. COL visited and assessed the multimedia capacity of the Ministry and subsequently sent both training and audio support materials to the media unit.

In support of capacity building in educational media, COL held a Media for Learning workshop in Jeffrey Town for Jet FM, a new community media centre. The workshop had 18 participants including 15 youth. A new radio programme has been developed focussed on youth and agriculture and a partnership established with ICT4D Jamaica and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Kingston.

Six representatives of Jamaica also participated in the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008. Participants were from Roots FM, Jet FM, Free FM and Students Expressing Truth, ICT4D Jamaica and The Container Project.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

Jamaica hosted PCF4 in Ocho Rios from 30 October to 3 November 2006. It was attended by 78 delegates from Jamaica, from universities, institutions and the Caribbean Examinations Council as well as four COL-sponsored delegates including three from the Faculty of Education & Liberal Studies at UTech. His Excellency the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, Regional Representative for the Caribbean on COL’s Board of Governors was named an Honorary Fellow of COL at the Forum.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) held in London in July 2008 was attended by three delegates from Jamaica, from Norman Manley Law School, CKLN and CYP as well as seven COL-sponsored delegates from UTech, University College of the Caribbean (UCC), the Ministry of Education and Youth, UWI and St. George's College and including the COL Focal Point for Jamaica. His Excellency the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, the then Acting Chair of COL’s Board of Governors and Regional Representative for the Caribbean was also present at the Forum.

**Regional Focal Points meeting**

Jamaica hosted the Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, in Ocho Rios, in March 2008. It was attended by the COL Focal Point for Jamaica.

**Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting**

Jamaica also hosted the Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, in Ocho Rios, in March 2008 following the Regional Focal Points meeting. It was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Jamaica.
Appointments

His Excellency the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, OJ, was appointed Chair to COL’s Board of Governors in September 2008.

Other events

Dr. Nancy George of Jamaica was the COL consultant at the Policy Awareness Seminar on Integrating ICTs and eLearning into TVET in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 2007. The Seminar was co-sponsored by COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa.


LOOKING FORWARD

COL looks forward to its continuing partnership with Jamaica on regional activities and events in 2009-2012 and Jamaica’s continuing commitment to VUSSC will be valuable in this triennium. A number of initiatives are already underway in-country, with improving teacher training and exploring the application of the L3F programme being major areas of focus. Work will also continue to develop the benefits of the investments made in equipment and training for the educational use of mass media.
ST. KITTS & NEVIS

COL Focal Point:  Ms. Jacqueline Flemming, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs, Labour, Social Security, Information Technology (current)

BACKGROUND

The islands of St. Kitts & Nevis form a small state of the Commonwealth. St. Kitts & Nevis is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and an active participant in regional activities as well as a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), taking a part in establishing this initiative.

SUMMARY

COL activities for 2006-2009 have involved continued media development in the production of TV and radio programmes in agriculture, meetings and workshops to examine quality assurance indicators for the improvement of teacher education and the development of educational technology and open educational resources (OERs). Learners in St. Kitts & Nevis have also benefited from the development of a Special Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for practising teachers.

St. Kitts & Nevis has participated in the activities of the VUSSC and attended the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

St. Kitts & Nevis was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content, two participants from the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College took part in the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop in Barbados in November 2008.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

In November 2006, eight learners from St. Kitts & Nevis completed the Special Diploma in TVET offered by COL and the University of Technology (UTech), Jamaica. The programme, jointly designed by COL and UTech, for teachers in the Caribbean is building capacity in TVET through open and distance learning.

Two delegates from St. Kitts & Nevis participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008, including one from the Department of Youth.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

St. Kitts & Nevis is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from St. Kitts & Nevis, from Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College and the Ministry of Education, attended the first three of the six training and course development workshops that took place during this period.

St. Kitts & Nevis is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. A representative from the Ministry of Education attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by the Interlocutor for St. Kitts & Nevis.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

Two representatives, from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Education participated in the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

As part of COL’s support for media development in the Ministry of Agriculture to produce television and radio programmes on effective agricultural methodologies, COL contributed a new digital editing suite, camera and accessories to the media unit at the ministry. COL also made an on-site assessment visit in February 2007.

COL implemented a media unit at the Ministry of Education in February 2007 to develop multimedia learning materials for students and teachers. Training and planning for the unit was also done and COL made a follow-up visit in November 2007.

In partnership with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), COL executed a feasibility assessment for a national network of community media learning centres. The report was delivered to UNESCO in June 2008.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by three delegates from St. Kitts & Nevis, including representatives from the Ministry of Education and Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by a COL-sponsored delegate from Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by a representative of the COL Focal Point for St. Kitts & Nevis.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for St. Kitts & Nevis.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, participation in the activities of the VUSSC will continue to be a focus for St. Kitts & Nevis. COL will also continue its initiatives for further media development support in the country.
ST. LUCIA

COL Focal Point: Ms. Esther Brathwaite (2006-2007)
Dr. Rufina Frederick, Ministry of Education and Culture (current)

BACKGROUND

The island of St. Lucia is a small state of the Commonwealth. Tourism is the largest contributor to the economy. St. Lucia is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and participates in the regional annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers as well as being a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

SUMMARY

In the 2006-2009 period, COL’s activities with St. Lucia have focussed on its participation in annual institutes to examine quality assurance indicators for the improvement of teacher education, use of educational technology, and open educational resources (OERs). St. Lucia has participated in the activities of the VUSSC. St. Lucia also attended the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers and COL continues to address the regional priority activities identified at the meeting in March 2008 in Jamaica. In November 2007, a delegation from Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) visited COL as part of their visit of institutions across Canada.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

St. Lucia was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two participants from St. Lucia attended the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop held in Barbados in November 2008, from the Ministry of Education.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

A delegate from SALCC, St. Lucia participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

St. Lucia is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from St. Lucia attended one of the six training and course development workshops that took place, on the construction industry, held in The Bahamas.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by the Interlocutor for St. Lucia.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL is working with SALCC to increase the College’s ability to deliver multimedia learning materials both in St. Lucia and regionally. A media unit and FM transmitter were installed at the College in December 2007. Staff were trained in the technology for the creation of multimedia as a first phase of the activity.

Two representatives of St. Lucia participated in the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008. The participants were from SALCC and Soufriere FM.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by three delegates from St. Lucia including one from the Ministry of Education and Culture and one from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECs).

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by a COL-sponsored delegate from the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by a representative for the COL Focal Point for St. Lucia.
Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for St. Lucia.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, increasing participation in the activities of the VUSSC will be a focus for St. Lucia. In addition to encouraging St. Lucia’s involvement in a range of regional opportunities, COL will also continue its work in-country, in particular with SALCC to further increase its ability to deliver multimedia learning materials.
ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

COL Focal Point: Mrs. Susan Dougan, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

St. Vincent & the Grenadines includes many islands and cays in this small state of the Commonwealth. A contributor to COL’s budget since 2006, the country participates in the annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers and other regional meetings and activities.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL’s activities with St. Vincent & the Grenadines have been in two of the three programme sectors, Education and Learning for Livelihoods. The country participates in annual institutes that focus on quality assurance indicators for the improvement of teacher education as well as activities in educational technology use and open educational resources (OERs). COL is also supporting a Special Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for practising teachers.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines participated in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and attended the annual meetings of the Caribbean Chief Education Officers.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

St. Vincent & the Grenadines was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two participants from St. Vincent & the Grenadines Ministry of Education attended the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop held in Barbados in November 2008.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Two delegates from St. Vincent & the Grenadines participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The delegates were from the Ministry of Education and the St. Vincent Technical College.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

St. Vincent & the Grenadines is a member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from St. Vincent & the Grenadines attended three of the six training and course development workshops that took place, on entrepreneurship and tourism, on the professional development of educators and on life skills.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by the Interlocutor for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

Mr. Jethro Greene of the Caribbean Farmers Network attended the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines hosted the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008, attended by 16 media workers from across the region. Four representatives from St. Vincent & the Grenadines participated in the event, including representatives from the Ministry of Education, Garifuna FM and Bester School CMC.

COL supported a Technical Assistance Placement for Bequia Community High School Media Centre to expand and improve the educational use of media and community participation.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by four delegates from St. Vincent & the Grenadines including representatives from the Ministry of Education and St. Vincent & the Grenadines Community College, the latter sponsored by COL.
The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three delegates from St. Vincent & the Grenadines including two sponsored by COL. Delegates were from St. Vincent & the Grenadines Community College and the Ministry of Education.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

LOOKING FORWARD

St. Vincent & the Grenadines’ growing participation in regional activities as well as its continued participation in the VUSSC provides a solid foundation for further partnership in 2009-2012.
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

COL Focal Points:  Ms. Lystra Sampson-Ovid, Ministry of Education (current)
Ms. Karen Rosemin, Ministry of Science, Technology &
Tertiary Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Trinidad & Tobago has a well-established working relationship with COL and is actively involved in regional and
pan-Commonwealth activities. A consistent supporter of COL, Trinidad & Tobago continues to contribute annually
to COL’s budget. The country is also an active member of the Virtual University for Small States of the
Commonwealth (VUSSC).

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, Trinidad & Tobago has built on its already strong working links with COL with activities in all three
programme sectors. COL’s work in Trinidad & Tobago focuses particularly on the following priority areas:
supporting the implementation of the Open School, advising on the development of Teacher Education in the College
of Science, Technology and the Applied Arts of Trinidad & Tobago and the University of Trinidad & Tobago,
helping the country exploit opportunities to use educational media and finally, coordinating the development of the
VUSSC, which held a course development workshop on life skills in Trinidad & Tobago in 2007.

Trinidad & Tobago participates in the annual meetings of Caribbean Chief Education Officers.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from Trinidad & Tobago took part in a workshop to review critically the
Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit. The workshop was held in December 2006 in
India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India and COL.
Trinidad & Tobago was represented at the regional institute for policy makers/administrators in education/teacher education, held in Jamaica in March 2008, where the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit was distributed.

Open/alternative schooling

The new National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago (NOSTT) enrolled its first students in June 2007. The President & CEO of COL attended the first orientation session for students, held at Waterloo High School. NOSTT uses a blend of conventional and distance education methods, allowing learners to choose how, when, where and what they will learn. NOSTT emphasises skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies rather than qualifications. A pilot programme is being conducted in nine secondary schools, targeting more than 1200 students.

COL has supported the development of NOSTT, and its work is aimed at building local capacity to ensure the sustainability of this initiative.

As part of COL’s efforts to strengthen capacity in open schools, staff members from Trinidad & Tobago have received training in learner support, management of the open school and instructional design. COL also supported the development of an in-house style manual for Trinidad & Tobago.

Trinidad & Tobago was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from the Ministry of Education attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

In October 2008, Ministries of Education and open schools in six countries including Trinidad & Tobago began a two-year partnership with COL to develop open educational resources (OERs) for open schools (OER4OS) in twenty subjects to be used in open and conventional schools.

ELearning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), five participants from Trinidad & Tobago took part in the first Caribbean regional wiki workshop in Barbados in November 2008. They were from the Ministry of Education, the University of Trinidad & Tobago and the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts.

Trinidad & Tobago hosted a regional workshop for this initiative in February 2009 and is hosting two further workshops in March and June 2009.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

Trinidad & Tobago is contributing to the Commonwealth Computer Navigator’s Certificate, an international collaboration to develop a qualification in basic skills in ICTs using open source software. A representative from the University of the West Indies (UWI), Trinidad & Tobago was among seven content developers who met in
Vancouver in June 2007. At the meeting, they reviewed the status of local certification of the programme at their own institution (where applicable) as well as progress and collaboratively identified areas of potential improvement in the course materials. They designed an assessment strategy, identified and specified potential multimedia support resources and the student support requirements for the course.

COL has been in consultation with the Ministry of Education to support the training of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) teachers and to review curriculum in TVET for young boys and girls. A COL/Ministry of Education TVET meeting was held in August 2007. Thirty eight participants representing TVET teachers, TVET principals and supervisors and policy makers and officials at the Ministry attended the workshop. The tasks assigned to the groups were to identify the status of TVET in Trinidad & Tobago, to envision what it should be, to suggest the ways and means to meet the requirements and to fix the timelines within which the requirements must be met. An outline plan was developed and it was agreed that COL would coordinate development.

Three delegates from Trinidad & Tobago participated in the regional meeting of Caribbean School Principals, held in Barbados in November 2008. The delegates were from the Metal Industries Company and Goodwill Industries Ltd.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Trinidad & Tobago is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Trinidad & Tobago attended all of the six training and course development workshops that took place.

Trinidad & Tobago is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework (TQF). Two representatives from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad & Tobago attended the officials meeting in Singapore, one of whom is also a member of the TQF Management Committee.

The Ministry Interlocutors meeting in London in July 2008 was attended by both Interlocutors for Trinidad & Tobago, from the Ministry of Education and from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education.

Transnational programmes

One staff member of the International Labour Organisation based in Trinidad & Tobago was trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

A participant from Toco Foundation attended the Media Empowerment for Livelihoods regional workshop in Jamaica in March 2008.

A representative from Toco Foundation also participated in the regional workshop on the use of media for learning in the Caribbean, in November 2008.
Good governance

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop open and distance learning (ODL) training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. The Chief Education Officer at the Ministry of Education, Trinidad & Tobago, contributed a short taped interview on his views and ideas on the importance and challenges of gender mainstreaming for the public sector.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by 32 delegates from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, UWI and other educational institutions.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by six delegates from UWI, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education. In addition, COL sponsored six delegates to the Forum, from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and the Commonwealth Youth Programme, including both COL Focal Points for Trinidad & Tobago.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in March 2008 was attended by both COL Focal Points for Trinidad & Tobago.

Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting

The Caribbean Chief Education Officers meeting, held in March 2008 in Jamaica, was attended by the Chief Education Officer for Trinidad & Tobago.

Other events

COL sponsored a delegate from the Ministry of Education to participate at the 12th Cambridge International Conference on ODL in the UK in September 2007.

LOOKING FORWARD

The 2006-2009 period has been very productive for Trinidad & Tobago, with full participation in regional activities and a number of valuable initiatives underway in the country, particularly in open schooling and TVET. COL looks forward to seeing this continue in the next triennium and greatly appreciates Trinidad & Tobago’s leadership in the ongoing development of the VUSSC as well as its valuable contributions to regional and international activities.
Pacific

Fiji Islands | Kiribati | Nauru | Papua New Guinea | Samoa |
Solomon Islands | Tonga | Tuvalu | Vanuatu
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The Pacific region is home to 11 Commonwealth member states, including larger countries such as Australia and small island states such as Nauru. This diverse region is divided into three areas, Melanesia (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), Micronesia (Kiribati and Nauru) and Polynesia (New Zealand and Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga).

Within the region, there is considerable expertise and leadership in open and distance learning. Australia has a long history of distance education and is the model of best practice in dual-mode provision. Fiji has developed multi-modal distance education through the University of the South Pacific (USP). New Zealand is a leader in how distance education can be used for technical and vocational education and training.

FREE/LIBRE AND OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative is promoting the development of free content in education using open source software tools among educators. Following the establishment of the East African Chapter in Kenya and the West African Chapter in Ghana, COL launched the initiative in the Pacific region.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, New Zealand, COL hosted a regional workshop on open educational resources (OERs) in August 2007 in Wellington, New Zealand. Nominated representatives from Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau and Tuvalu attended the workshop. The workshop established a firm foundation for future collaboration in eLearning for the region. The group also successfully launched a Pacific chapter of the FLOSS4Edu initiative called WikiPacifica and have commenced planning for both national and regional activities associated with the development of OERs.

The workshop developed a number of recommendations for the region:

- Establish and promote wiki Ambassadors for each country,
- Conduct workshops on the use of WikiEducator,
- Utilise existing wiki support resources and integrate with locally available resources,
- Re-examine existing and/or develop new policies in the light of the outcomes of this workshop,
- Maintain and promote national and regional networks for OERs,
- Lobby publicly-funded content development projects to release materials under a free content license,
• Develop fundraising strategies,
• Advocate senior-level support and commitment.

**LITERACY AND OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING**

COL continues to work with the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) to develop and offer basic trades courses for young people throughout the region. During this planning period, three courses were made available, in Timber, Concrete and Small Engines.

**DISTANCE LEARNING FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

COL and USP Alafua Campus, Samoa, organised a regional strategic workshop on the theme of Delivering Distance Learning Programs for Agriculture and Rural Development in June 2007 in Samoa. The workshop engaged 23 participants in presentations and discussions about strengthening the role of the School of Agriculture and Food Technology, at USP in Samoa, in distance learning for agriculture and rural development across the South Pacific. Participants represented the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu, as well as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

It was agreed that appropriate distance learning strategies could help address challenges related to agriculture and rural development in the region. Further, the Alafua Campus received specific advice regarding the formal and informal educational programming that would be most useful in this field. Three potential objectives for collaboration were identified:

• Developing Lifelong Learning for Farmers work for uptake at a regional level through USP.
• Collaboration between USP Alafua Campus and COL for non-formal and continuing education at Alafua.
• Collaboration with USP Alafua Campus and other stakeholders in the region, including the National University of Samoa, the FAO and other local and regional agencies, including some units affiliated with the United Nations or the European Union.

The initiative is now with the USP Alafua campus to confirm next steps.

**REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING**

The first Regional Focal Points Meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. At the 2008 meeting, each participant reviewed, on behalf of their country, the progress that had been made so far in COL’s current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009, provided feedback on COL’s planning process and gave concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting also provided a valuable opportunity for networking, facilitating future inter-country collaboration. As part of the event, the group visited the Open University Malaysia and Universiti Tun Abdul Razak.
REGIONAL BROCHURES

COL has regional brochures which summarise its activities in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth. These can be found on COL’s website at: www.col.org/regional.
BACKGROUND

The Fiji Islands are part of the South Pacific group. A small state of the Commonwealth, Fiji is a member of the regional network, Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) and has benefited from many of COL’s activities via this network. Fiji contributed to COL’s budget in 2006.

Pending the end of Fiji’s suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth, COL is not initiating new activities in the country. However, activities already under way are being completed.

SUMMARY

COL’s work in Fiji has been in all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment. In Education, COL has focussed predominantly on eLearning by inviting and supporting active engagement from Fijians in initiatives for developing free content and capacity building.

The work in Learning for Livelihoods has been in supporting Fiji to participate in regional training and capacity-building opportunities. Fiji has begun to participate in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

In the Human Environment sector, COL has continued to expand its ongoing programme of developing media capacity for open and distance learning (ODL).

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with PATVET, have been made available to young workers in Fiji.
National/international community development

Three representatives from Fiji were among 23 from seven countries in the Pacific to participate in the regional strategic workshop, Delivering Distance Learning Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development, held in June 2007 in Samoa. Participants from Fiji included one from the Centre for Educational Development and Technology and one from the University of the South Pacific (USP).

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

During 2006-2009, Fiji has begun to participate in the activities of the VUSSC. Fiji is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework (TQF). Two representatives from Fiji, from the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment and from the Ministry of Education, attended the officials meeting in Singapore, the first of whom is a member of the TQF Management Committee.

Transnational programmes

Five staff members of the International Labour Organization based in Fiji were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

As part of COL’s support for the ongoing efforts of the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) in multimedia development for technical and vocational education, COL upgraded the video editing technology at FIT in March 2007. COL also provided training in advanced audio and video production in May 2007, as part of an earlier activity.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by five delegates from USP in Fiji, three of them sponsored by COL. The University was also one of the recipients of the Awards of Excellence for Institutional Achievement. USP received the Award Recognising Distance Learning Experience for the Degree Granting Programme: Acknowledging a notable distance education learning experience.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by six delegates from USP Fiji including one sponsored by COL.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, COL will continue to support activities already underway in Fiji and encourages its continued participation in VUSSC activities and other regional and international initiatives. COL looks forward to being able to expand its work in Fiji in the near future.
KIRIBATI

COL Focal Point: Mr. Tebania Tebakabo (2007-2008)
Mrs. Maria-Teretia Kaiboia, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Kiribati is a small state of the Commonwealth made up of an island and atolls spread over an immense expanse of ocean. COL has worked in Kiribati for over a decade and the country became a contributor to COL’s budget in 2006.

SUMMARY

COL’s work in Kiribati is in all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment.

In Education, Kiribati is able to benefit from the regional and pan-Commonwealth activities of COL, providing material and capacity building support to Kiribati for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education programmes and institutions. In the Learning for Livelihoods sector, basic trades courses developed for the South Pacific islands are available for Kiribati. In the Human Environment sector, COL has continued to work with Kiribati Video and has upgraded their technology and training during this period.

EDUCATION

Higher education

COL has provided a scholarship to a student from Kiribati to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting at the University of the South Pacific, as part of its programme to provide 15 such scholarships to nationals in the South Pacific.

ELEARNING for education sector development

A delegate from Kiribati attended the regional open education resources (OERs) workshop in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007. This workshop was organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET), have been made available to young workers in Kiribati.

National/international community development

Representatives from Kiribati participated in the regional strategic workshop on Delivering Distance Learning Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development, held in June 2007 in Samoa.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

COL has continued to work with Kiribati Video and utilise its video production capacity to train others in the South Pacific to develop high quality video-based educational programmes for the Pacific region. In December 2006, COL increased the capacity of Kiribati Video to deliver video training on health and environment issues to the remote atolls with upgraded video editing and camera technology.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Kiribati.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Kiribati will continue to benefit from COL’s initiatives in the region. Kiribati has been invited to participate in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth which could help to strengthen the human resource development process.
NAURU

COL Focal Point:  Mr. Michael Longhurst, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Nauru is a very small state of the Commonwealth and the world’s smallest independent republic with a population of 10,000 and covering just 21 sq. km. Literacy rates are high and the University of the South Pacific has a campus on the island.

Nauru contributed to COL’s budget in 2008/2009.

SUMMARY

Nauru is benefiting from COL’s work in the region, providing materials and capacity building support for assuring quality in education and teacher education programmes. COL is also providing technical and vocational training programmes.

EDUCATION

E-Learning for education sector development

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), a face-to-face workshop was held in Nauru in August 2008.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET), have been made available to young workers in Nauru.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Nauru.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Nauru is set to continue to benefit from COL’s activities in the region. Nauru has been invited to participate in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth which could provide significant benefits for the country.
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

COL Focal Point: Mr. Ouka Lavaki, General Education Services (current)

BACKGROUND

Papua New Guinea is the largest of the Pacific Island countries, yet with a population just over four million, qualifies as a small state of the Commonwealth. The country faces many significant development challenges including a growing level of HIV/AIDS and many people without access to clean water. Papua New Guinea is a priority country for NZAID and the organisation signed a joint strategy with the government in July 2008. Education, health and rural livelihoods were all identified as priority areas and a focus was put on addressing gender inequality.

COL’s work in Papua New Guinea is the most extensive in the Pacific region and the country works in partnership with COL, participating fully in regional and pan-Commonwealth opportunities. The Regional Representative for the Pacific on COL’s Board of Governors since January 2008, The Honourable Dr. Dame Carol Kidu, Minister for Community Development, Women, Religion and Sports, is from Papua New Guinea. The Open College at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) has been a partner in many COL initiatives and received Awards of Excellence at both recent Pan-Commonwealth Forums.


SUMMARY

COL’s work in Papua New Guinea in 2006-2009 has been in all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and the Human Environment.

In Education, the focus is on quality assurance, teacher education and supporting the development of open/alternative schooling. Papua New Guinea is participating in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). In Learning for Livelihoods, the focus is on rural and peri-urban community development where the feasibility of introducing the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme is being explored. Additionally, the opportunity to use open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote education and training related to issues such as water use management, global warming and climate change are being explored. COL is providing training for local government as well as supporting health education, particularly in the battle with HIV/AIDS through the effective use of mass media.
EDUCATION

Teacher development

A COL consultant completed a review of the Teacher Education Programme at the Open College, UPNG and the report was submitted in late 2007 with clear recommendations on the way forward.

Open/alternative schooling

Papua New Guinea was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from UPNG attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of ICTs.

Papua New Guinea is contributing to the development of one of two new publications for open schools through a chapter author, from UPNG, for the Perspective Series on Open Schools – Open Schools for the 21st Century.

Other COL support for open schools have included staff members from Papua New Guinea receiving training in learner support and also in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for the schools.

Higher education

COL provided two consultants to undertake reviews. The first was of the existing models of dual mode delivery and recommended how the higher education systems in Papua New Guinea could be improved. The second was a review of quality assurance in higher education in the country. Both reports were submitted in 2008 and officials in Papua New Guinea are considering the recommendations.

The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CE MBA/CEMPA) programme has been expanded to UPNG.

ELearning for education sector development

A delegate from Papua New Guinea, from Department of Education, Flexible Open and Distance Learning, attended the regional open education resources workshop, organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand and held in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Papua New Guinea hosted two face-to-face workshops, in March and August 2008.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Rural and peri-urban community development

COL is working with the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), UPNG Open College and other stakeholders concerned with improving the livelihoods of farmers and rural women, by helping them to introduce or...
adapt COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme and to identify and prioritise ODL strategies which will increase access for farmers and rural women to lifelong learning and earning opportunities.

An initial meeting among potential partners took place at Port Moresby during September 2007 during which the partners agreed to review the potential communities for a L3F initiative in Papua New Guinea. A COL consultant conducted a needs analysis and feasibility study for introducing or adapting components of the framework. The study took place from 27 February to 7 March 2008 and a report and budget were provided.

COL supported a representative from NARI to participate in the meetings and site visits related to the L3F programme in India and Sri Lanka. NARI now plans to implement the programme, co-ordinated from Bubia in the Morobe Province in partnership with the University of Technology (Unitech) and UPNG Open College.

The South Pacific Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SPISARD) of the Department of Agriculture of Unitech, was the recipient of a COL-PROTEIN Award for 2008. The proposal titled “Training of Women and Youth at Selected Model Villages in Papua New Guinea” aimed to establish a kiosk information centre and work with model villages through ODL mode in support of women and youth to have access to their livelihoods need-based learning.

**National/international community development**

COL is supporting the Papua New Guinea Association of Distance Education (PNGADE), facilitating the involvement of representatives from a wider range of areas and interests including agriculture, literacy, community development, health and gender. During this period, PNGADE has been active in widening ODL coverage through increasing membership and partnership. Two conferences organised by PNGADE were well attended by policy makers, professionals and practitioners. COL provided financial support for the 2008 conference where COL’s President & CEO gave the keynote address.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Papua New Guinea is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Papua New Guinea attended five of the six training and course development workshops that took place, from UPNG, the National Department of Health, NARI Livestock Programme and the University of Goroka. On two occasions workshop team leaders were from Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. The country has submitted its national qualifications framework for analysis and a representative from the Office of Higher Education attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

Papua New Guinea also attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Health, welfare and community development

COL, in partnership with the World Health Organization has continued to support the NGO, Anglicare STOPAIDS in its efforts to address HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma in the country. In April 2007, with the addition of large screens and projection systems, COL increased the capacity of the organisation to deliver health information to larger audiences throughout the country.

Good governance

COL is supporting local level government training as part of the public service reform initiative involving all levels of government and a number of training institutions. COL is working directly with UPNG in this activity. The work is intended to be gender sensitive. Two workshops were held in Port Moresby, coordinated by UPNG Open School to bring together all training partners, senior levels of government and the European Union to jointly develop curricula and a plan of action. Course materials are in development at UPNG with a unique system of learner support to facilitate success. Two modules have been developed.

COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the appropriate content using ODL tools. The focus for the initiative in the first instance is Africa. Papua New Guinea participated due to COL’s current focus there on governance issues. Three delegates from Papua New Guinea attended, among them the High Commissioner to the UK along with the Executive Director of UPNG Open College and a representative of the Department of Provincial and Local Government Affairs. The Minister for Community Development, Women, Religion and Sports contributed a short taped interview on her views and ideas on the importance and challenges of gender mainstreaming for the public sector.

COL supported the distribution of DVD drama and activity guides on conflict resolution and women’s role in society to village cinema events, schools and television in Papua New Guinea in September 2008. The materials were produced in Vanuatu with COL’s support.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by five delegates from UPNG. In addition, COL sponsored four delegates, including two from the Department of Education and one from Unitech. The Degree-Granting Programme submitted by UPNG was a recipient of an Award of Excellence for Learning Experience.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 16 delegates from Papua New Guinea including seven sponsored by COL, from Unitech, UPNG, Divine Word University, Bougainville Open University Campus and the Department of Finance. UPNG was a recipient of an Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement.
Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Papua New Guinea.

Appointments

The Honourable Dr. Dame Carol Kidu was appointed Regional Representative for the Pacific on COL’s Board of Governors in January 2008.

LOOKING FORWARD

As we look forward to 2009-2012, Papua New Guinea’s strong partnership with COL will provide an excellent foundation for further progress in all areas with many initiatives already in progress across all three sectors. The possible implementation of the L3F programme will be an important development and will be of interest to other countries in the region.
BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, Samoa has been a regular contributor to COL’s budget since inception. Samoa participates in regional and pan-Commonwealth meetings and benefits from COL’s activities in the region, including through the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) with which COL is involved. A former Minister of Education, the Honourable Fiamè Naomi Mata’afa, served on COL’s Board of Directors from 1998 until 2004.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s assistance to Samoa has been on-going capacity development for educators, particularly with open educational resources (OERs) and in areas related to technical and vocational education. Alongside activities in-country, Samoa has continued to benefit through regional and international activities and programmes as well as tools and resources that COL makes available as open content.

Samoa has continued to be an active participant and partner of COL. Samoa has been a contributor to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Samoa hosted several workshops and participated at key regional and pan-Commonwealth meetings. Samoa was prominent at the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) in 2006 where the Honourable Fiamè Naomi Mata’afa was named an Honorary Fellow of COL. In 2008, Mr. Perive Tanuvasa Lene became COL’s regional coordinator for the Pacific.

EDUCATION

Teacher development

COL met with representatives of the University of Samoa in 2007 to discuss how COL could facilitate the strengthening of teacher education through open and distance learning (ODL) in the country. Capacity-building needs in teacher education were identified.
Open/alternative schooling

Staff members from Samoa have received training in learner support and also in quality assurance as a step towards a quality assurance toolkit for the schools.

Higher education

COL has provided a scholarship to three students from Samoa to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting through the University of the South Pacific (USP), as part of its programme to provide 15 such scholarships to nationals in the South Pacific.

E-Learning for education sector development

A delegate from Samoa attended the regional open education resources (OERs) workshop, organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand and held in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Samoa hosted a face-to-face workshop in September 2008 and two further face-to-face workshops in March 2009.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

National/international community development

COL and USP Alafua Campus, Samoa, organised the regional strategic workshop on the theme of Delivering Distance Learning Programs for Agriculture and Rural Development in June 2007 in Samoa. The workshop engaged 23 participants representing seven countries including Samoa, as well as the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It was agreed that appropriate distance learning strategies could help address challenges related to agriculture and rural development in the South Pacific. Further, the Alafua Campus received specific advice regarding the formal and informal educational programming that would be most useful in this field.

Three potential objectives for collaboration were identified, including the potential for collaboration between USP Alafua Campus and COL for non-formal and continuing education at Alafua, and the potential collaboration with USP Alafua Campus and other stakeholders in the region, including the National University of Samoa, the FAO and other local and regional agencies, including some units affiliated with the United Nations and the European Union. COL is waiting for a response from the USP Alafua campus.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Samoa is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Samoa attended all six training and course development workshops that took place, from the National University of Samoa (NUS) and the University of Samoa and in two cases Samoa provided a workshop team leader. A member of the VUSSC Management Committee is from Samoa.
Samoa is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. A representative attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

Two representatives from Samoa also attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

PCF4, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by a COL-sponsored delegate from the University of Samoa. The Honourable Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Minister for Women, Community and Social Development, former Minister of Education and former member of COL’s Board of Governors, was named Honorary Fellow of COL at the Forum.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by three COL-sponsored delegates from Samoa including two from the University of Samoa.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Samoa.

Other events

COL sponsored a delegate from NUS to participate at the 12th Cambridge International Conference on ODL in the UK in September 2007.

LOOKING FORWARD

Samoa’s positive contribution and participation in 2006-2009 sets the tone for the next triennium. Several activities are already underway and benefits should be seen from progress in the agriculture and rural development initiatives with USP. In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to Samoa’s continued participation and leadership contribution to the VUSSC.
SOLOMON ISLANDS

COL Focal Point: Mr. Bernard Rapasia, Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development (current)

BACKGROUND

The Solomon Islands are a small state of the Commonwealth and part of the South Pacific group of island nations. The country faces many development challenges after years of conflict. It is a major focus of NZAID support with priorities including education for all children, addressing gender disparity in education as well as developing sustainable livelihoods. The Solomon Islands contributed to COL’s budget in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s support to Solomon Islands has been on-going capacity development for educators, particularly with open educational resources (OERs) and in areas related to technical and vocational education, as well as the use of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) for non-formal learning. Alongside activities in-country, Solomon Islands continues to benefit through regional and international activities and programmes as well as tools and resources that COL makes available as open content.

Solomon Islands has begun participation in the activities of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and has participated in regional workshops and meetings, hosting one for the Learning4Content (L4C) initiative in 2008.

EDUCATION

Higher education

COL has provided a scholarship to four students from Solomon Islands to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting through the University of the South Pacific, as part of its programme to provide 15 such scholarships to nationals in the South Pacific.
ELearning for education sector development

A delegate from Solomon Islands attended the regional OERs workshop, organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand and held in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Solomon Islands hosted one of the first face-to-face workshops in February 2008. Sixteen participants from Solomon Islands attended and a further 26 took part in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

A residential writing workshop on the development of literacy materials to supplement three basic trade courses was held in Solomon Islands in June 2007. Over 20 participants attended the workshop, organised by COL and The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

National/international community development

Representatives from Solomon Islands were among 23 from seven countries in the Pacific to participate in the regional strategic workshop, Delivering Distance Learning Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development, held in June 2007 in Samoa.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Solomon Islands have begun to participate in the activities of VUSSC. A participant from Solomon Islands attended the last of the six training and course development workshops that have taken place during this period, on the construction industry.

A representative from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) attended a key VUSSC meeting on behalf of Solomon Islands when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

Health, welfare and community development

COL, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), has continued to support the efforts of the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) to address HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma through effective media productions delivered to the remote areas of the country. COL implemented a media unit for audio and video production at SIDT in 2005 and has continued to support that effort with additional training and updates. COL upgraded the digital editing system at SIDT with accompanying training in March 2007. Following the severe earthquake and tsunami in April 2007 in the Western Province, SIDT was involved in the post tsunami effort with video productions dealing with health issues and awareness.

In 2009, COL initiated a new activity involving existing and new media, technology and health partners to network and share content.

COL also implemented digital video production and projection systems with the Don Bosco Institute of Technology and provided appropriate training.
Good governance

COL conducted a workshop with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and developed a draft ODL policy and an overview of school board training curricula. Further development of the policy and curricula is pending with the Ministry.

COL supported the distribution of DVD drama and activity guides on conflict resolution and women’s role in society to village cinema events, schools and television in Solomon Islands in September 2008. The materials were produced in Vanuatu with COL’s support.

COL, in partnership with the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), is working with local organisations and youth groups in Isabel, to develop capacity in youth to produce digital video and audio content relating to conflict resolution and peace-building using community radio, email stations and distance learning centres.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008 was attended by two COL-sponsored delegates, from SIDT and the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Solomon Islands.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Solomon Islands has the opportunity to benefit from increased participation in VUSSC activities. COL looks forward to making further progress with initiatives concerning healthy communities, livelihoods and skills development, including increased capacity to use media and ICTs as part of non-formal ODL.
BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Tonga is a small state of the Commonwealth and has been a steady contributor to COL’s budget since inception. The country has made good progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Education remains a key priority.

SUMMARY

The major focus of COL’s assistance to Tonga in 2006-2009 has been in on-going capacity development for educators, particularly to work with open educational resources (OERs). Alongside activities in-country, Tonga continues to benefit through regional and international activities and programmes as well as tools and resources that COL makes available as open content. Tonga has participated in regional workshops and hosted two for the Learning4Content (L4C) initiative. Tonga has been an active contributor to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and was represented at VUSSC international planning meetings in 2008. Tonga has also participated in key regional and pan-Commonwealth meetings.

EDUCATION

Higher education

COL has provided a scholarship to three students from Tonga to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting through the University of the South Pacific, as part of its programme to provide 15 such scholarships to nationals in the South Pacific.

ELearning for education sector development

A delegate from Tonga attended the regional OERs workshop, organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand and held in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007.
As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Tonga hosted two face-to-face workshops in August 2008.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET), have been made available to young workers in Tonga.

National/international community development

Representatives from Tonga were among 23 from seven countries in the Pacific to participate in the regional strategic workshop, Delivering Distance Learning Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development, held in June 2007 in Samoa.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Tonga is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Tonga attended three of the six training and course development workshops that took place, from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Works.

Tonga is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. Tonga has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and participated in the officials meeting in Singapore.

Tonga also attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008 was attended by the COL Focal Point for Tonga, sponsored by COL.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Tonga.
LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, Tonga’s participation in COL’s work in the Pacific will show benefits for Tonga and the region. Tonga will continue to gain from its participation in the activities of the VUSSC as that initiative gathers further momentum. Tonga has already begun to build capacity in developing OERs and will be encouraged to expand its contribution in 2009-2012.
BACKGROUND

Made up of nine islands and atolls in the South Pacific, Tuvalu is one of the small states of the Commonwealth. Tuvalu is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and has worked with COL to develop the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the country. With a high literacy rate, Tuvalu’s educational focus is on vocational skills such as fishing, tourism and agriculture.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL has provided professional and technical support to education and training in Tuvalu. Alongside activities in-country, Tuvalu continues to benefit through regional and international activities and programmes as well as tools and resources that COL makes available as open content.

Tuvalu has participated in regional workshops and hosted one for the Learning4Content (L4C) initiative. Tuvalu has been a contributor to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and was represented at VUSSC international planning meetings in 2008. Tuvalu has also participated in key regional and pan-Commonwealth meetings.

COL has been working with the Ministry of Education on the development of multimedia capacity for the delivery of training to the outlying atolls of the country.

EDUCATION

E-Learning for education sector development

A delegate from Tuvalu attended the regional open education resources (OERs) workshop, organised by COL and the Ministry of Education, New Zealand and held in Wellington, New Zealand in August 2007.
As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), two face-to-face workshops were held in Tuvalu in November 2008.

**LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS**

**Learning and skills for livelihoods**

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET), have been made available to young workers in Tuvalu.

**Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Tuvalu is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Tuvalu attended five of the six training and course development workshops that took place, from the Ministry of Education and Sports and Motufoua Secondary School.

Tuvalu is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. A representative from the Ministry of Education and Sports attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

A representative from Tuvalu also attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Educational use of mass media and ICTs**

COL is working with the Ministry of Education and Sports on its capacity to deliver multimedia-based learning materials to remote atolls of the country. COL implemented a media unit in May 2007 and provided training for staff at the Ministry. A production concerning education in Tuvalu was completed as an output of the training and technology implemented.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by a delegate from the Ministry of Education and Sports.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by a COL-sponsored delegate from the Ministry of Education and Sports.
Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Tuvalu.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, Tuvalu will continue to benefit from COL’s activities in the region and through its participation in the VUSSC. It should also see benefits from the media unit development work completed and COL’s ongoing support.
VANUATU

COL Focal Point: Mr. Daniel Lamoureux, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Vanuatu comprises a chain of 83 islands in the South Pacific. It is one of the small states of the Commonwealth with a population of 232,000. Vanuatu last contributed to COL’s budget in 1992 but continues to be a strong supporter of COL’s activities and has worked in partnership to develop open and distance learning and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the country.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL has provided professional and technical support to education and training in Vanuatu. Alongside activities in-country, Vanuatu continues to benefit through regional and international activities and programmes as well as tools and resources that COL makes available as open content. Vanuatu has participated in regional workshops. It has been a contributor to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and was represented at VUSSC international planning meetings in 2008. Vanuatu has also participated in key regional and international meetings.

EDUCATION

Higher education

COL has provided a scholarship to three students from Vanuatu to study for the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting through the University of the South Pacific (USP), as part of its programme to provide 15 such scholarships to nationals in the South Pacific.
LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

The basic trades courses on Timber, Concrete and Small Engines, developed by COL in collaboration with the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET), have been made available to young workers in Vanuatu.

National/international community development

Representatives from Vanuatu were among 23 from seven countries in the Pacific to participate in the regional strategic workshop, Delivering Distance Learning Programmes for Agriculture and Rural Development, held in June 2007 in Samoa.

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Vanuatu is an active member of VUSSC. During 2006-2009, activities have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of open educational resources (OERs). Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes have also been a focus area in this planning period. Participants from Vanuatu attended four of the six training and course development workshops that took place, from the Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) and the Ministry of Education.

Vanuatu is participating in the development of the transnational qualifications framework. Vanuatu has submitted information on its national qualifications framework for analysis and a representative from the Ministry of Education attended the officials meeting in Singapore.

Vanuatu also attended another key VUSSC meeting when the Interlocutors met in London in July 2008.

Transnational programmes

One staff member of the World Bank based in Vanuatu was trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Educational use of mass media and ICTs

COL supported Wan Smolbag of Vanuatu to develop and distribute DVD drama and activity guides on conflict resolution and women’s role in society. The materials were provided to all areas of Vanuatu through village cinema events, schools and television as well as Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

COL has continued to support VIT in its multimedia capacity to deliver technical and vocational learning materials, implementing a new digital video editing system at the Institute in December 2006.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

Pan-Commonwealth Forum

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008 was attended by three COL-sponsored delegates from the Ministry of Education and USP.

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008, was attended by a representative for the COL Focal Point for Vanuatu, from the Ministry of Education.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to Vanuatu’s continuing participation in regional activities and anticipates that Vanuatu will benefit considerably from these and its ongoing participation in the VUSSC.
Partner Countries

Australia | Canada | New Zealand | United Kingdom
BACKGROUND

Australia was a regular contributor and a major donor until 2004. More recent support has been for COL’s Pan-Commonwealth Forums on Open Learning with Australia sending many participants to the Third Forum in New Zealand in 2004 and continuing its involvement with the fourth and fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forums.

The Australian government provides resources and financial support to projects around the globe through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Australia’s aid programme focuses on the Asia Pacific region. Australia also continues to provide selective assistance to Africa. Many of the developing Commonwealth countries that COL works in are located in these regions.

SUMMARY

Australia’s support to COL during 2006-2009 was through sponsorship, planning and participation for the Pan-Commonwealth Forums in 2006 and 2008. Australia also provided expertise through the consultants hired by COL for a range of projects. As a leader in open distance and technology-mediated learning, Australia is a natural partner of COL.

AusAID MANDATE AND PRIORITIES

The aim of Australia’s aid programme is to assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. Australia, as a member of the United Nations, supports efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Australia is an active member of the Commonwealth and particularly values its role in supporting the developing countries and the small states. It also contributes to the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OF FOCUS

AusAID focuses primarily on the Asia Pacific region where two thirds of the world’s poor reside. Australia also supports selected projects in Africa and elsewhere. COL is active in all these regions, where many Commonwealth member states are located.
Priorities for AusAID in the Pacific include basic education, adult learning and vocational education as well as primary health care. In Bangladesh, the focus is on quality in education while in Pakistan it is on improving girls’ education.

EVENTS

Australia’s primary support to COL’s activities during this period was for the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5), held in London in 2008. AusAID was a major sponsor of the event, enabling the attendance of a number of representatives from the Pacific region. About seven Australians also attended or presented at the Forum.

Delegates from Australia attended the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) in Jamaica in 2006 and one of the theme leaders was from Australia.

Individuals participated in pre-Forum online discussions and programme planning committees for both PCF4 and PCF5.

ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE

Since July 2006, COL has hired ten Australian consultants to provide expertise and resources to projects in the region.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to regular support from Australia for activities in the Asia and Pacific regions and hopes to build a more substantial partnership with AusAID to achieve common goals in these regions and beyond. COL also hopes that a Focal Point will be nominated to facilitate information sharing and collaboration. The nature of the support would not just be financial but also intellectual. COL would seek to bring Australian expertise in open distance and technology-mediated learning to its partners in Asia and Africa and to forge strong links between open and distance learning (ODL) institutions for further collaboration.
BACKGROUND

When COL was established in 1987, the Canadian government offered to host it in British Columbia. Ever since, COL has continued to operate out of Vancouver. Of its 37 staff, 29 are Canadians or Permanent Residents of Canada. The current President and Chief Executive Officer of COL, Sir John Daniel, is a former President of Laurentian University, Ontario.

Canada is a major contributor to COL’s budget and a primary supporter of COL’s activities. As a major donor, Canada has a seat on COL’s Board of Governors. The renowned Canadian author, Ms. Denise Chong, represents Canada.

Canada is a rich resource of expertise for COL activities. Institutions within Canada have cooperated with COL on occasion to host developing world visitors and share experiences. Canadian consultants have provided expertise in a range of fields for COL projects throughout the Commonwealth.

Canada works through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to deliver support to countries and regions around the globe, including many Commonwealth countries. COL, as a programme, is located within the United Nations and Commonwealth Programmes Division, Multilateral Programmes Branch at CIDA.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL’s work has been aligned with CIDA’s goals in many of its priority countries and regions. COL’s work in all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment is reflected in CIDA’s priorities.

Canada has also continued to be a valuable partner to COL. Universities in British Columbia participated in a study tour of senior administrators from universities in Pakistan in 2008 and Canadian consultants contributed considerable expertise to COL projects in all regions. Canada supported COL’s Fourth and Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forums in planning, sponsorship and participation.
CIDA MANDATE AND PRIORITIES

CIDA’s purpose is “to support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world”. Canada seeks to address the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Overall, COL’s priorities are aligned with those of CIDA including basic education, gender equality and environmental sustainability during the current triennium.

In terms of education, Canada’s priority is to improve the quality of, access to, and equality in basic education in the countries on which CIDA focuses. Canada has significantly increased spending in this area and in Africa in particular. COL works in teacher training, secondary education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) using open and distance learning (ODL).

COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OF FOCUS

Canada’s priorities include Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

In Africa, CIDA is supporting African-owned and African-led development to help achieve the MDGs, through its Pan-Africa Programme, seeing cooperation and collaboration as a key tool for Africa to identify and implement solutions more widely. The Agency has supported education initiatives in many countries in the region. CIDA supports basic-education programming in nine partner countries in Africa including Commonwealth members Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania.

In Asia, CIDA’s development-partner countries include Bangladesh and Pakistan. In Bangladesh, CIDA is particularly supporting improving the quality of primary education as well as access to education.

In the Caribbean, CIDA’s regional programme includes a focus on “human capital formation”, helping to train future leaders, as well as technical and vocational training for youth and increased gender equality, all areas of COL’s work.

EVENTS

Canada supported both Pan-Commonwealth Forums during 2006-2009 in a number of ways. Approximately 30 delegates from Canada took part in the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) and approximately 50 delegates from Canada participated in the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5), in addition to COL staff. Canada was a minor sponsor of both events through Athabasca University and on both occasions provided presenters and a theme leader. Individuals from Canada also participated in pre-Forum online discussions and programme planning committees for both PCF4 and PCF5.

A two-week leadership training programme was organised by COL and the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan for 13 Vice-Chancellors and senior administrators (including three women) from universities in Pakistan, in May 2008. The overall objective was to enhance the quality of higher education in Pakistan and to provide opportunities for forging research and academic exchange links with universities in British Columbia. The participants studied innovative practices in Canadian universities, formed links with universities for further faculty development, explored possibilities of offering joint/split degrees, identified areas of collaborative research and created a network of Vice-Chancellors for further information sharing and collaboration with Canada.

COL ACTIVITIES 2006-2009
COL has hosted team leaders from the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and numerous staff members from different institutions in the developing world to its Headquarters in Vancouver for training programmes, meetings and consultations.

COL GOVERNANCE

As a major donor, Canada has a permanent seat on COL’s Board of Governors. This has been held by Ms. Denise Chong since 2001.

ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE

Since July 2006, 85 consultants from Canada have been hired by COL to assist with projects throughout the Commonwealth.

COL works with a range of Canadian partners including a number of universities, organisations and private companies. COL’s partners include Athabasca University, Simon Fraser University, Royal Roads University, York University, CIDA, the Canadian Council on Learning, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), private providers and individual consultants.

The Executive Attachment Programme was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and initiated in 2000. During this Three-year Plan, ten interns were placed in developing countries. Over the life of this programme, 78 young Canadians have been placed in 14 countries to gain international experience including in policy, project management and educational technology.

LOOKING FORWARD

After two decades of partnership, COL looks forward to Canada’s ongoing contribution in 2009-2012. Canada will continue to be a major sponsor of COL’s activities, working towards common goals. Canada will also continue to provide valuable resources in terms of expertise through consultants and leadership through the Board of Governors and staff members.
NEW ZEALAND

COL Focal Point: Ms. Myra Harrison, NZAID (current)

BACKGROUND

New Zealand is a major contributor to COL’s budget, doubling its input in the past few years. As a key donor, New Zealand is represented on COL’s Board of Governors. It provides considerable support and expertise to COL projects in the Pacific region in particular as well as contributing to pan-Commonwealth activities. New Zealand hosted the Third Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Dunedin in 2004.

New Zealand works through NZAID, the Government’s international aid and development agency, to deliver New Zealand’s Official Development Assistance to priority projects, countries and regions.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL’s work has been aligned with NZAID’s goals in the Pacific, New Zealand’s area of focus. COL’s work in all three sectors, Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment is reflected in NZAID’s priorities. Over the next triennium, COL will continue to work in three of NZAID’s priority areas: education, livelihoods and health.

New Zealand has continued to be a valuable partner to COL in the region. New Zealand has hosted several regional meetings and workshops and provided support for both Pan-Commonwealth Forums including planning and participation. New Zealand consultants contributed considerable expertise to COL projects during this planning period.

NZAID MANDATE AND PRIORITIES

NZAID was formed in 2002 and since then it has given central priority to activities that contribute to poverty reduction. New Zealand recognises that the causes of poverty are multidimensional and interrelated so NZAID supports initiatives that address many areas including creating safe, just and inclusive societies, fulfilling basic needs, and working towards environmental sustainability and sustainable livelihoods. New Zealand supports the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals and Education for All (EFA) goals. COL’s work in “Learning for Development” helps to support these goals.
Education is the top priority for NZAID. Historically, approximately one third of the total annual bilateral aid has been allocated to education. Since 2000, the focus has shifted away from tertiary education in the form of scholarships, to greater support for the provision of basic education towards achieving the EFA goals. Around half the budget now targets basic education. NZAID also supports post-basic and tertiary education, to develop leadership as well as technical, analytical and strategic capabilities. This includes technical and vocational training and distance learning and training, all key priorities in COL’s activities.

COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OF FOCUS

New Zealand places particular focus on the Pacific region as well as projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America, working with partner organisations to achieve its goals.

In the Pacific, NZAID supports regional cooperation and provides particular assistance to all Commonwealth countries included in COL’s work: Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. A particular focus for New Zealand is Papua New Guinea, which has the lowest living standards of any country in the Pacific and accounts for much of the region’s population. COL is making special efforts to work in Papua New Guinea in the areas of open schooling, teacher education, quality assurance, lifelong learning for farmers and media empowerment.

EVENTS

New Zealand supported both Pan-Commonwealth Forums during 2006-2009 in a number of ways. Four delegates from New Zealand took part in the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) in Jamaica and 11 delegates participated in the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) in London. For PCF4, New Zealand provided two theme leaders. Individuals also participated in pre-Forum online discussions and programme planning committees for both PCF4 and PCF5.

The Ministry of Education collaborated with COL to host a regional workshop on open educational resources in August 2007 in Wellington. Representatives from Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau and Tuvalu attended the workshop which established a firm foundation for future collaboration in eLearning for the region and launched a Pacific chapter of the Free/Libre and Open Source Software for Education (FLOSS4Edu) initiative called WikiPacifica.

A representative from New Zealand was present at the Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in October 2008.

Dr. Wayne Mackintosh, Education Specialist, eLearning & ICT Policy, was one of the speakers at the Digital Learning Resources Conference on “A Day in the Life of a Digital Learning Resource: from access to reuse” in Wellington in March 2009.

COL GOVERNANCE

As a major contributor to COL’s budget, New Zealand has a seat on the Board of Governors, currently held by Dr. Linda Sissons, Chief Executive Officer of the Wellington Institute of Technology.
Her predecessor, Ms. Shona Butterfield, CNZM, the then Commissioner on New Zealand’s Tertiary Education Commission, served on COL’s Board of Governors from 1998 to 2007.

ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE

Since July 2006, 12 consultants from New Zealand have been hired by COL to assist with projects throughout the region.

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) worked with COL to develop a residential writing workshop on the development of literacy materials to supplement three basic trade courses developed by COL and the Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET). The workshop took place in June 2007 in Solomon Islands.

TOPNZ also hosted the office of COL’s representative for the Pacific region from 2002 to 2008.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2009-2012, COL looks forward to its continued partnership with New Zealand, working towards achieving key goals in education in the Pacific region. New Zealand’s significant support for COL through sponsorship and expertise is invaluable to COL’s activities in the region and throughout the Commonwealth.

New Zealand expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) for skills development is a valuable model for the developing world and will be used especially in Africa. Over the next three years COL will engage more actively with the dependencies, Cook Islands and Niue, among others.
BACKGROUND

The United Kingdom (UK) is a major contributor to COL’s budget and a provider of significant resources for COL’s work, including leadership and expertise. As a major donor, the UK has a seat on COL’s board of governors.

Institutions in the UK regularly cooperate with COL to share expertise, experience and to support projects, including the UK Open University (UKOU) which has long been involved in COL activities. The current President & CEO of COL, Sir John Daniel, is a former Vice-Chancellor of the Open University.

The UK works through the Department for International Development (DFID) to deliver assistance to priority regions, countries and projects. COL, as a programme, falls under the United Nations and Commonwealth Department of DFID.

SUMMARY

In 2006-2009, COL’s work has supported DFID’s priorities in three regions, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Activities in all three sectors of Education, Learning for Livelihoods and Human Environment are relevant to DFID’s goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The UK has provided specific support to COL in a variety of ways during this planning period. The UK hosted the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) in 2008, providing sponsorship, planning, content and participation for the event. The UK also supported the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) in 2006. A key meeting for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) was held in London in July 2008. UK institutions have been involved in several projects and UK consultants have contributed considerable expertise to COL activities throughout the Commonwealth.

DFID MANDATE AND PRIORITIES

DFID’s primary goals are poverty reduction and sustainable development with an emphasis on helping people to help themselves and create a better future for all. For DFID, fighting poverty means working together to settle conflicts, increase opportunities for trade, tackle climate change, improve people’s health and their chance to get an education. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are at the heart of DFID’s work. The MDGs include goals
to achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, improve health and ensure environmental sustainability.

COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OF FOCUS

The UK provides assistance through DFID in regions around the globe, the Commonwealth.

Africa is a primary focus and DFID supports activities throughout the region, including most of the countries COL is engaged with. Priorities include education as well as agriculture, environment, governance, health and HIV/AIDS. There are still 75 million primary school-aged children not in school, of which 35 million live in Africa alone. Africa needs an extra 1.6 million teachers if every child is to be sent to school. While primary education is a priority, there is also a need to invest in secondary and higher education and vocational skills training.

In Asia, DFID focuses on the poorest people in the poorest countries, seeking to ensure more people have access to basic services including education.

For the Caribbean, where many people still face persistent poverty even though overall the region is more developed, DFID puts emphasis on gender equality and HIV/AIDS initiatives.

COL works in most of the Commonwealth countries in these regions and is active in education, skills development, agriculture and health.

EVENTS

London was the venue for PCF5 in July 2008. The event was hosted by COL in collaboration with the University of London as part of the University’s celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of its External Degrees initiative. The University of London, UKOU, DFID and Nexus Strategic Partnerships were major sponsors of the event. Over 100 delegates attended from the UK, among them presenters and two theme leaders (in addition to staff from international organisations based in the UK). Several public and private sector exhibitors took part.

The UK also supported PCF4, held in Jamaica in 2006. The University of London was a minor sponsor of the event and about 40 participants and presenters attended.

For both PCF4 and PCF5, individuals from the UK took part in pre-Forum online discussions and programme planning committees.

In July 2008, the Ministry Interlocutors for VUSSC met in London to discuss the transnational qualifications framework and several key management issues.

Every two years, an open and distance learning (ODL) conference is held in Cambridge, UK. COL supports this event by providing at least one keynote speaker and supporting five participants from developing Commonwealth countries to attend.
COL GOVERNANCE

As a primary donor to COL’s budget, the UK has a seat on the Board of Governors, currently held by Dr. David Levesque, Senior Education Advisor Education and Skills in the Policy Division of DFID.

ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE

Since July 2006, COL has hired 16 consultants from the UK to provide expertise to projects across the regions.

In June 2007, The BBC World Service Trust, in partnership with UKOU and 13 education institutions across Africa, launched the Teachers in Africa Radio Season. Working with the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa consortium in which COL is a partner, the project aimed to help train thousands more teachers, so millions more children can receive a quality basic education.

LOOKING FORWARD

COL looks forward to its continued partnership with DFID and close collaboration with UK partners. In 2009-2012, the UK will continue to be a major sponsor of COL’s activities, as well as providing valuable resources in terms of leadership and expertise through the Board of Governors, UK educational institutions and consultants.

COL will seek to engage more fully with the British Overseas Territory of Bermuda and the UK dependencies such as Anguilla, Cayman Islands and Turks & Caicos Islands.