



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
July – September 2007**

1. Follow-up to the June 2007 Board Meeting

Minutes of the meetings of the Board and its committees have now been circulated and a document on extrabudgetary funding was circulated in July as requested. The Executive Committee will meet by teleconference on 3 October with an agenda that includes, *inter alia*, the proposed list of COL Honorary Fellows for 2008 and a report on the 2007 Performance Management and Salary Review exercise. The annual audit is underway with the Audit Committee scheduled to meet in November 2007 to approve the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2007.

I am now working with H.E. The Hon. Burchell Whiteman as Acting Chair and thank him for his attention to COL business despite the excitement of an election in Jamaica. We were able to have a useful meeting at the Jamaican High Commission when I was on leave in the UK on August 13.

Mr. Lewis Perinbam was re-admitted to hospital on 2 September for a week but is now continuing his convalescence at home.

2. CHOGM

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting will take place in Kampala, Uganda on 23-25 November with preliminary events, such as the People's Forum and the Foreign Ministers' Meeting being held in the preceding days. COL will be represented by the Acting Chair, H.E. The Hon. Burchell Whiteman, who will likely also attend in his capacity as Jamaica's High Commissioner to the UK; the President; the Vice-President & Programme Director (VP & PD); and the Director of Knowledge Management and Information Technology.

COL's Report to CHOGM will be circulated to Board members at the end of September. Following discussion of the format at the June Board meeting, it relates COL's work to quotations from the communiqués of each of the CHOGMs held since our establishment in 1987. We have also suggested wording about COL for the Kampala Communiqué and contributed to the drafting of the Secretary-General's Memorandum on Functional Co-operation.

3. President's activities

Sri Lanka and India

In July I visited Sri Lanka to be present for the official launch of our Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3Farmers) initiative in that country. During my visit I was privileged to have an audience with the President (and former Prime Minister), H.E. Mahinda Rajapaksa, and to meet several ministers and members of the University Grants Commission. It was also a privilege to be the guest of honour at the launch of the Sri Lankan Association for Distance Educators. I am most grateful to our Board member for Asia, Dr. Tara de Mel, for the hospitality that she showed to me during my stay in Colombo.

L3Farmers has made an impressive start in Sri Lanka thanks to the excellent team that our project leader, Professor Uma Coomaraswamy (former Vice-Chancellor of the Open University of Sri Lanka), has put together. The initiative is being implemented in the eastern, northern, central and southern regions of the country in association with leading figures in local universities. I visited the project in the south, where farmers converting from rice paddy to growing vegetables and sour bananas (from suckers created locally by tissue culture) have increased their prosperity impressively.

On the same trip I visited southern India for two events. At Arul Anandar College (Madurai) I took part in a ceremony to launch a new programme that will train people to use information and communications technologies in development and to welcome the involvement of an influential women's NGO, VIDIYAL, in L3 Farmers. I then went to Tiruchirappalli (Trichy) where CEMCA is facilitating a community radio project in the slums (see below for a further report on CEMCA's fast developing work in community radio).

Higher Education

I noted in my last quarterly report that I was chairing a Visitation Panel set up by the University of Ghana and that COL (Dr. Willie Clarke-Okah) was leading a trial institutional audit of the University of South Africa (UNISA). The UNISA team submitted its report on 31 August. My own Panel spent a second week in Ghana in late August and will submit its report by the end of the year. Conducting these two institutional audits concurrently has led Dr. Clarke-Okah and me to reflect on how this tool can be made even more cost effective as a mechanism for quality improvement. We presented a paper on this at the 2nd *International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa* in mid-September.

That conference was the second of three events held consecutively in Tanzania. The first was UNESCO's 3rd *Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications*, with the theme *Learners and New Higher Education Spaces: Challenges for Quality Assurance and the Recognition of Qualifications*, at which I

gave one of the opening addresses. Professor Mohan Menon also spoke at these events in the context of the partnership between COL and UNESCO on Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The third event was a *Training Workshop on the Development of National Qualifications/Quality Assurance Frameworks for SADC Countries* held in Zanzibar at which Mr. Paul West and I presented a paper on a Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. (These presentations are on the COL website at www.col.org/speeches.)

COL has continued to support developments in higher education ever since its establishment, even when it was a low priority for some development agencies. Now, with a growing realisation that higher education is the strategic heart of all education, it is rising up the development agenda again. COL regularly receives requests for help in this sector from governments and institutions, the most recent being a request from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, which is contracting with COL to train incumbent and potential vice-chancellors.

We are re-assessing COL's role in assisting higher education in the Commonwealth following the proposal made at 16CCEM last December by the then Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) for the creation of a Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF). The future of this proposal will be discussed at a meeting in October at which ComSec, the ACU and COL will harmonise their efforts. I shall propose that COL, which is presently doing more work in this area than any other Commonwealth body, play a lead role in putting together a modest CTEF that can evolve in response to demand from governments and institutions.

4. Programme

4.1 General

The budget for this financial year (2007-08) was provisionally allocated for each programme sector in April so that following Board approval in June, all proposed activities could begin on schedule in July. This year's budget is 25% larger than in the previous year and we expect this to be a particularly intense year of activity.

Some of the activities undertaken during this quarter include:

The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, in partnership with the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) has initiated Science for Women (SFW), a radio series broadcast through fourteen Community Radio Stations in the country. This involves conducting baseline studies with community participation, building local capacities in content development and delivering live

interactive programmes. This is being funded entirely by the DST and is an extrabudgetary initiative.

Comprising four reef islands and five true atolls, Tuvalu is the smallest member of the United Nations by population. COL worked with the Ministry of Education to develop audio and video capacity to create learning materials that will complement the national curriculum in both formal and non-formal education sectors. The COL Media Unit proposes to develop case studies of teaching methodology and good practice for in-service teacher training sessions.

Having received financial support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, COL has been able to convert the Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) modules into open educational texts. These are now available in editable formats on COL's website (www.col.org/prest) using open copyright licenses. Another part of this activity was to create an online course for the foundation section and release this to institutions. The course, which is a "wrap-around", uses the previously produced texts, to provide the online equivalent of the classroom experience. The materials will be pilot tested with a cohort of senior academics in African countries during the period September to November before being released for free use. Participating institutions have indicated a desire to adopt both the series of open education texts and the online course materials.

Monitoring and Evaluation training for both professional and support staff is being carried out systematically. Programme assistants were trained in developing questionnaires and using survey monkey. Education Specialists and senior management participated in a one-day workshop to develop gender sensitive Performance Indicators (PI's) for specific activities.

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

The Virtual University for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), having co-hosted three International Training and Materials Development Workshops, has now embarked on a second area of activity. Two letters have been sent to Ministers of Education, COL Focal Points and VUSSC Interlocutors requesting information on existing and planned national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). Since relatively few small states have embarked on the establishment of NQFs, it has been a pleasant surprise to have already received responses from 12 countries. Work will now commence in collaboration with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to analyse and merge the available data, to create a set of exemplars and templates, and prepare an initial draft of a qualifications framework.

An initial evaluation report on VUSSC has shown that the initiative is on-track and activities are very popular with the participants. Improved skills and an enlarged network are helping educators in small states to understand better how to locate expertise and materials. Materials for which development began at each of the Workshops (affectionately called "boot camps") are being prepared for release as course modules (using the COL

Instructional Design Template). Institutions have shown interest in incorporating and accrediting the materials into courses

4.3 Partnerships

4.3.1 UNESCO

COL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO in 1994 and updated the associated work plan in 1999. Both parties signed a new work plan in early July. Its 19 headings create linkages between the two organisations in most areas of COL's work and an implementation structure has been set up (www.col.org/unesco).

4.3.2 La Francophonie

I noted in my last Quarterly Report that COL will be working with La Francophonie in the area of teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa. Colleagues at La Francophonie are enthusiastic about this collaboration and are working on creating an 'associate organisation' status within La Francophonie with COL as the first organisation to have this status.

4.3.3 Commonwealth Secretariat

Dr. Jyotsna Jha, Advisor, Gender & Education and HIV/AIDS of the Social Transformations Programmes Division (STPD), will present a one-day workshop to colleagues during the October no-travel period. The focus of the workshop is the application of gender mainstreaming techniques at each stage of a programme activity or initiative by providing colleagues' with some gender analysis tools.

At the request of the Director of the STPD COL developed a proposal for a Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF) which will be discussed by the Ministerial Working Group to be convened at Marlborough House on October 12, 2007.

4.3.4 Commonwealth Foundation

COL was asked to participate in designing a new knowledge management system at the Commonwealth Foundation. The resulting system has now been created by a specialist company in London and is being beta tested by the Foundation. In exchange for COL providing expertise and guidance in the conceptual design of the Foundation's new system, the program code will be made available to COL at no charge. This activity has shown the value of collaboration between international agencies in that the Foundation has been able to benefit from COL's experience, and COL will be able to benefit from the investment made by the Foundation.

The Commonwealth Foundation invited COL to address their training programme for new diplomats in London in September. A presentation on behalf of COL was made by

the former Programme Director Rod Tyrer, who has now returned to the Department for International Development.

5. Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

The conference will be hosted by COL in partnership with the University of London as part of its celebrations of 150 years of external studies, a seminal event in the development of distance learning worldwide. PCF5 will run from 13-17 July 2008.

A call for proposals has been issued. The deadline for submitting abstracts for presentations (formal papers, workshop sessions, discussions/debates, demonstrations/displays) is 30 November 2007 (www.col.org/pcf5).

PCF5 will explore how open and distance learning can help to achieve the international development goals and education for all. The conference theme is “Access to Learning for Development”, with a focus on four key areas:

- Governance, conflict and social justice;
- Health;
- Livelihoods; and
- Provision for children and young people.

6. Stakeholder Relations

Our Focal Point network is proving to be very useful in terms of i) coordinating country visits for COL staff; ii) following-up on contribution payments and iii) providing general advice on country action plans. Through the Focal Point listserv, we have kept them informed of all new developments such as the revised Attachments and Professional Development opportunity for ODL policy makers and practitioners as well as the call for submissions of abstracts for PCF 5. The President's Quarterly report gives them an overview of all that is happening at COL. Four new Focal Points have been nominated in Bangladesh, Brunei, Solomon Islands and St Lucia to replace outgoing colleagues.

As part of our ongoing stakeholder engagement strategy, we send congratulatory letters to all new Heads of State, Ministers of Education, High Commissioners to Canada and heads of partner institutions. During this quarter, we have had the privilege of sending such messages to congratulate new office holders in Canada, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, St. Lucia, Samoa and Tanzania.

In the previous year 2006-07, we received contributions from 38 countries with two first-time contributors – Fiji and Zambia.

Letters soliciting contributions from all members States were sent out in the first half of August. Contributions from twelve countries have been received so far – these are Antigua & Barbuda (first-time contributor); Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, India, Kenya, Mauritius, New Zealand, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, South Africa, Tanzania and Trinidad & Tobago.

7. Finances

7.1 Revenues

COL forecasted that member governments funding will exceed the 2006-07 level of \$7.8 million by at least \$400,000 based on increases that had already been confirmed from Cyprus, India and New Zealand and Nigeria recently confirmed that it will also be increasing its contribution level from \$500,000 to \$750,000 for 2007-08.

Member Governments contributions of \$4,378,023 were received in the first quarter as follows: Antigua & Barbuda - \$5,050 (first-time contributor); Bahamas - \$26,984; Barbados - \$45,000; Canada - \$2,600,000; India - \$ 641,818 (first instalment); Kenya - \$47,638; Mauritius - \$50,000 (first instalment); New Zealand - \$594,000; St. Vincent & the Grenadines - \$15,150; South Africa - \$250,000; Tanzania - \$27,383; and Trinidad & Tobago - \$75,000. This represents receipt of over 50% of forecasted revenues for the 2007-08 year in the first quarter. This is a significant increase from the previous year at the same time when only 20% of the annual forecast had been received and from earlier funding patterns where 50% of member government funding was received only after the second quarter.

COL also received payments from Cyprus (\$12,238) and Zambia (\$91,800) in the first quarter from pledges receivable set up for 2006-07 where the revenue has already been recognised in that financial year.

COL has set a target of \$2 million in extrabudgetary revenues for 2007-08 where \$450,000 of the revenue deferred at June 30, 2007 will be recognised in this year towards this target along with £250,000 from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (second year of a four-year grant for VUSSC) and three new contracts totalling US\$160,000 for COL's eLearning for International Organisations programme. Proposals for other funding are underway.

7.2 Cash Flow

COL began the new fiscal year on July 1, 2007 with cash of \$7.65 million (inclusive of cash held in foreign currencies). Of this sum \$1.2 million is committed for deferred revenue and accounts payable and accrued liabilities recorded at June 30, 2007 and another \$1.6 million is restricted in accordance with the cash reserve policy. The balance of \$4.85 million will support current operations.

At June 30, 2007, the approximate net assets denominated in foreign currencies were as follows: in UK pounds - £707,966; in US\$ - \$1,548,728 and in Indian rupees – Rs. 4,130,865. COL is exposed to the risk of loss depending on the relative movement of these currencies against the Canadian dollar. Recent exchange rates have seen the Canadian and US dollar trading at par which will translate to a loss if the Canadian dollar stays strong.

7.3 Expenditures

The annual budget for 2007-08 was approved at a level of \$10.26 million. At September 30, approximately \$1.4 million is estimated to have been spent (final September figures in progress) as follows: \$425,000 for the programme and extrabudgetary grants; \$175,000 on contracts for eLearning for International Organisations; \$700,000 for human resource costs; and \$100,000 for site and office costs. Commitments stemming from contracts entered into during the first quarter have not been included. In addition to current year expenditures, \$445,000 was paid for accounts payable and accrued liabilities recognised at June 30, 2007 as expenditures in 2006-07.

8. Human Resources

8.1 Staff Changes

8.1.1 Arrivals

Mr. Dalip Tetri joined CEMCA in August 2007 as Head, Administration and Finance, from Indira Gandhi National Open University where he served as Registrar.

Ms. Haizley Trevor-Smith joined COL in a temporary part-time role as Course Coordinator (job share) during Ms. Georgina Dowsett's maternity leave.

8.1.2 Recruitment

Mr. Ian Pringle will join COL in January 2008 as Education Specialist – Media. He has worked with community and public media for the past twenty years, in Canada, where he was born, and later in South Asia and internationally.

8.1.3 Departures

Mr. Nanda Kumar departed CEMCA in July 2007 where he had served as Head, Administration and Finance for the past two years.

Ms. Carol Obure, Administrative Assistant at COL, departed in August 2007 to pursue further studies. Her position is currently being recruited locally in Vancouver.

8.2 Performance Management

The Performance Management exercise has been completed for 2006-07. A report will be made to the Executive Committee on 3 October.

9. Publications/resources

A new and improved Knowledge Finder is now available on COL's website. The new Knowledge Finder is now even better at locating information in focussed areas through its 22 specialised search fields that source information from researched and trusted websites. It takes advantage of the free "Google Co-op" service (instead of proprietary software) (www.col.org/kf).

infoDev (World Bank) and COL jointly released a public report highlighting the lessons learned from their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the first "demonstration" phase of the ambitious NEPAD e-Schools project, a multi-country, multi-stakeholder, continental initiative to impart ICT skills to young Africans and to use ICT to improve the provision of education in schools. The report, entitled *The NEPAD e-Schools Demonstration Project: A Work in Progress* examines the achievement of the specific objectives that were set for the Demo, key assumptions that have impacted the implementation of the project, constraints and challenges faced during implementation, project impact on participating schools and project impact on ICT in education policy developments (www.col.org/newsreleases; www.col.org/consultancies).

A report entitled *Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education (Tech-MODE) for Agricultural Education and Improved Livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa: A Synthesis Report from Eight Country Case Studies* is ready. COL commissioned eight country case studies with the objective of documenting an inventory of local institutions, facilities, capabilities and potential for Tech-MODE. The countries included are Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. This synthesis report summarises information from the individual country reports.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
September 30, 2007*