



BOARD OF GOVERNORS President's Quarterly Progress Report: October – December 2007

1. Mr. Lewis Perinbam, O.C., Hon. LL.D. 1925-2007

I begin by recording with deep regret the death of our Chair, Lewis Perinbam, on December 12. As Special Advisor to COL's first two presidents, Dr James Maraj and Tan Sri Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, from 1991, and as Chair of the Board of Governors since 2003, Lewis served COL with commitment, devotion and distinction for most of its existence. A tribute to Lewis is posted on COL's website at www.col.org/lperinbam. COL's Vancouver-based staff members were able to pay their respects at a memorial service on December 28 at which Denise Chong gave a most fitting eulogy. We have received a large number of letters and messages of condolence to the family and to COL. They express deep admiration and appreciation for Lewis' contributions to public service and to international development as well as for his work at COL.

2. Meetings of the Executive Committee and the Audit Committee

The Executive Committee met by teleconference on October 3 and minutes have been circulated. The main issues on the agenda were the extrabudgetary policy; agreement that the Terms of Reference for each of the three Committees of the Board of Governors be redrafted for consideration by the Board when it meets in June 2008; the impact of the strengthening Canadian dollar; the proposal for a Commonwealth Tertiary Education Fund; and an update on the direction of COL's work on gender mainstreaming. Information on preparations for PCF5 and the list of Honorary Fellowships to be conferred by COL in 2008 were also provided.

The Audit Committee met by teleconference on November 8. It approved the audited consolidated financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2007, and appointed the audit firm of Deloitte to serve as auditors from 2007. The Committee expressed its warm thanks to PricewaterhouseCoopers, which has given excellent service as COL's auditors since its establishment.

3. CHOGM

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting took place in Kampala, Uganda during November 23-25, with preliminary events being held in the preceding days.

COL was represented at the Foreign Ministers Meeting by the Acting Chair, H.E. The Honourable Burchell Whiteman; the President; the Vice-President & Programme Director, Professor Asha Kanwar; and the Director of Knowledge Management and Information Technology, Mr. Paul West. The Acting Chair and the President made a brief presentation of COL's Report to CHOGM, *Towards a Commonwealth of Learning: Twenty Years of Progress*. Several Member States complimented COL on its work. The presentation can be seen at www.col.org/speeches.

In my quarterly report following the Malta CHOGM in 2005, I stated that, for all its useful social and networking opportunities, the organisation of CHOGM was unsatisfactory from the point of view of COL's formal business. I am pleased to report that there has been some improvement in the last two years, notably the introduction, in the procedural manuals for CHOGM and ministerial meetings, of a clear distinction between intergovernmental agencies like COL and Commonwealth non-governmental organisations.

However, there is still room for improvement. Members of the Board have seen COL's Report to CHOGM. We invested considerable effort in the content and design of this document as a celebration of COL's 20th anniversary and submitted it to ComSec on schedule. We were therefore dismayed to find that ComSec neglected to forward advance copies of the COL Report to country delegations, nor did they send any to Kampala, with the result that they were not available for participants in the CHOGM events.

At the People's Forum, Professor Kanwar gave a plenary address *Life After Universal Primary? Scaling Schooling for the Secondary Surge* (also available at www.col.org/speeches). This reported the results of the major study of Open Schooling that COL has conducted this year by comparing the experience of India's National Institute of Open Schooling and the Namibian College of Open Learning.

The People's Forum (Commonwealth Foundation/Civil Society) also had an open exhibition area where local people could see the Commonwealth in action through displays and booths. A COL agricultural project with Makerere University was one of the activities featured. Professor Kanwar, Mr. West and I met the Prince of Wales when he visited this area.

4. President's Activities

This has been a busy and productive quarter. As I have reported above, I judge our presence at CHOGM to have been effective thanks to careful preparation and attendance at the meeting of the Committee of the Whole in October.

My direct involvement with the programme has been deeper than usual this quarter. Some of these activities, such as chairing the visitation panel to the University of Ghana, representing COL at discussions on a Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility, and

launching the online Green Teacher Diploma at the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education are noted in Section 5 below.

The eight major speeches that I have made are on COL's website at www.col.org/speeches. They include plenary addresses to the conferences of the Asian Association of Open Universities and the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities and the inaugural address to a conference on research into the use of information and communications technologies in education organised by the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie and the Agence Universitaire Francophone. Participation in the latter event reflected my strategy of building stronger links between COL and La Francophonie.

I am now a member of the steering committee of the Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity, a UNESCO programme funded by the World Bank to support training in quality assurance in all regions of the world. The project is being managed through 'Basecamp' software hosted by COL.

After CHOGM, I spent a very full week in India. As well as the events noted in the Programme report below, I was the guest of honour at an Ashwamedh (inter-university sports tournament) organised for the universities of Maharashtra by the Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University. I was privileged to have a second meeting there with Her Excellency the President of India, Smt. Pratibha Patil, who presided over the event, and to attend a dinner that she hosted for the university vice-chancellors of Maharashtra. (Earlier this year, she had conferred an honorary degree on me in her then capacity as Governor of Rajasthan and Chancellor of the Kota Open University). I also gave the Annual Foundation Day Endowment Lecture at the Netaji Subhas West Bengal Open University and made a short inaugural statement at a forum on research in disability at the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

5. Programme

5.1 General

During this quarter, we have put a special focus on elaborating Evaluation Plans for selected initiatives and identifying consultants who will carry out the evaluations in 2008. As part of this integrated and ongoing approach, a workshop for South Asia was held in Delhi at the end of November to train regional partners in monitoring and evaluation methods so that the outputs and outcomes achieved are backed by appropriate data and concrete evidence.

A selection of completed and ongoing activities in each programme sector is described below.

5.2 Education

Four significant projects were completed in this quarter:

- (i) The Green Teacher Online diploma programme, developed by COL and India's Centre for Environmental Education, was formally launched in Ahmedabad in November at the end of my presentation to the opening plenary session of the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education. Enrolment of students will commence in early 2008.
- (ii) I was able to launch a Quality Assurance Toolkit for Teacher Education Institutions, a joint effort of COL and India's National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), supported by a Pan-Commonwealth team of experts, at a Joint Forum held in Bangalore from December 2-5. Some 30 policy makers and teacher education administrators from all Commonwealth countries in Asia participated. This is an impressive product and we may develop a similar toolkit, probably in collaboration with UNESCO, for quality assurance in higher education generally.
- (iii) COL has facilitated the development of training modules for learner support staff and functionaries of India's National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS). I launched these with the Chair of NIOS in Delhi in November and they are being placed online for wider use and dissemination.
- (iv) This year a major component of my own work within our programme has been devoted to chairing a Visitation Panel to the University of Ghana and editing its 127-page report, which I presented to the Council and the Academic Board of the University in Accra on December 20. Please see www.col.org/GhanaVisitation.

In the category of ongoing work, I am pleased to report that the impact of COL's WikiEducator continues to grow steadily. There are now some 2000 registered users and 3500 unique visitors to the WikiEducator site daily. Following the establishment of WikiPacifica, the Pacific hub for WikiEducator initiatives, COL hosted an online training workshop which attracted 60 participants. WikiEducator has secured a grant of US\$100,000 from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for a *Learning4Content* activity that aims to train 3000 educators around the Commonwealth in the use of WikiEducator free of charge. In return, each educator will contribute one lesson of free content to the growing pool of open educational resources.

5.3 Learning for Livelihoods

Following the international conference on Integrating ICT and eLearning into Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) held in Sierra Leone last May, four institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Zambia have filled out a survey form

prepared by COL and the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) for the formulation of an institutional policy in TVET. The four colleges and polytechnics will develop draft policies early next year with the assistance of a consultant.

COL and ECOWAS are converting community health nursing training into dual-mode formats (on-campus and distance learning) in West Africa. Ten tutors from The Gambia and Ghana produced sample lessons in ODL mode and will continue with the course writing next year. The courses will be translated later into French using the wiki.

To introduce the L3 Farmers' model in Uganda, Makerere University and COL organised multi-stakeholder consultations. A common vision was developed that recognised the need to build win-win partnerships among the different members of the value chain in the agricultural community. In order to facilitate the sharing of just-in-time information among the partners, an ICT-mediated facility called the Uganda Agricultural Innovation System (eUNIS) has been developed. This was demonstrated to an international audience during the People's Forum, attended by HRH The Prince of Wales, that was held in parallel with CHOGM. There are encouraging signs that the L3Farmers model is beginning to influence large-scale rural development projects in India. One of COL's L3Farmers associates from the State Bank of India has been recruited to a state-wide programme of IT for rural development in Andhra Pradesh so that it can integrate the COL model.

5.4 Human Environment

In Antigua & Barbuda, with the Ministry of Education, and in St. Lucia with Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, the COL Media Empowerment Programme is enhancing audio and video production technology and training which will extend the reach of programmes to teachers and students via television, radio and the Internet.

Workshops on developing ODL policy and materials in governance in the Pacific and in South Asia were held for over 80 participants. The materials focus on building capacity in local government, enhancing the financial literacy of citizens, strengthening school boards, empowering women and conflict resolution. Partners include ministries of education, NGOs and universities.

COL and the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE), Ahmedabad, India, hosted a workshop on Climate Change and Water Resource Management prior to the 4th International Conference on Environmental Education held at CEE in November 2007.

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

The Fourth VUSSC programme development workshop was held in Samoa in November with the Minister of Education giving the opening address. This workshop focused on Disaster Management and the creation of learning materials at university-entry level.

The Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs has agreed to co-sponsor a five-day meeting of government officials of small states who are responsible for national qualifications frameworks to be held in February 2008. I consider that agreement on a qualifications framework will be an important driver in ensuring that the learning materials produced through the VUSSC enter the 'programme bloodstream' of tertiary institutions in the small states.

The ministries of education of Seychelles and The Bahamas have agreed to host the Fifth and Sixth VUSSC workshops in 2008.

5.6 Partnerships

5.6.1 UNESCO

COL has been invited by UNESCO to evaluate the CUPIDE project, a major distance learning initiative in the Caribbean funded partly by the European Union.

UNESCO was represented on both the Institutional Trial Quality Audit Panel organised by COL for the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the Visitation Panel for the University of Ghana.

5.6.2 La Francophonie

COL's co-operation with La Francophonie took concrete form when I addressed a Francophonie meeting on research in the use of educational technology (with special reference to teacher education) in December. I have been invited to address a ministerial meeting of the Francophonie on distance learning in 2008.

5.6.3 Commonwealth Secretariat

Dr. Jyotsna Jha, Advisor, Gender & Education and HIV/AIDS of the Social Transformations Programmes Division (STPD), presented a one-day workshop to colleagues during the October no-travel period. The focus of the workshop was the application of gender mainstreaming techniques at each stage of a programme activity/initiative through the use of gender analysis tools.

A Senior Officials Working Group convened at Marlborough House on October 12, 2007 to discuss the proposal for a Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility. It recommended that this function should be carried out by better networking between existing agencies, notably COL, ComSec and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, rather than by the creation of a new institution. Malaysia offered to make its two centres of excellence on Higher Education Policy and Higher Education Leadership part of the network. There will be a further meeting focussing on more technical issues in the spring of 2008.

We are extremely sorry that Ms Ann Keeling, Director of the Social Transformation Programmes Division at ComSec will leave the organisation early in 2008 to return to the UK Government. Her presence at ComSec has greatly facilitated our co-operative endeavours and we shall miss her.

5.6.4 Commonwealth Foundation

COL is sharing with the Commonwealth Foundation the Knowledge Management software that we have developed to capture the information contained in the trip reports submitted by members of our staff after their missions.

5.6.5 UNICEF

Dr. Cream A. Wright, Chief, Education Section, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), visited COL in October and met with several Specialists. A programme of co-operation is being developed.

6. Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

PCF5's call for proposals resulted in over 500 submissions by the end-of-November deadline. This is roughly double what we received for PCF4 at the close of its call. We have also had good assurances from ComSec and UNESCO as to their participation and delegate sponsorship and have negotiated an agreement with Nexus Strategic Partnerships where they will liaise with the corporate sector on our behalf, soliciting sponsorships and managing the exhibition, and adding valuable communications aspects to the Forum; together with a guaranteed minimum cash contribution. All indications are that it will be a well attended, successful event. I continue to express my appreciation for our partnership with the University of London and their significant contributions. The Forum will be held from July 13-17, 2008 at the University of London (www.col.org/pcf5).

7. Stakeholder Relations

7.1 New Board Members

The Government of New Zealand has appointed Dr. Linda Sissons to succeed Ms. Shona Butterfield as its representative on the COL Board and the Government of India has appointed Mr. R.P. Agarwal, who succeeded Mr. Sudeep K. Banerjee as Secretary, Department of Higher Education. We welcome both warmly.

7.2 New Appointment

I congratulate Professor Penina Mlama on her appointment as Executive Director of Camfed Tanzania (<http://uk.camfed.org/about/team/penina-mlama.html>). She left the Forum of African Women Educationists in August after serving there for nine years.

7.3 CHOGM

During this quarter, the focus was on developing and disseminating the CHOGM Report entitled '*Towards a Commonwealth of Learning: Twenty Years of Progress*'. This captures COL's response to the key issues identified by Heads of Government at the previous ten CHOGMs as articulated in the respective communiqués. In the run-up to the Kampala CHOGM, this Report was sent to all the Commonwealth High Commissioners in Ottawa and London, to the Consular Corps in Vancouver, to all COL Focal Points as well as to all the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers and their Permanent Secretaries. This partially compensated for the fact that it was not available in Kampala as noted earlier. It was also sent to all Board members and is available on COL's website (www.col.org/reporting).

7.4 High Commissioners in Ottawa

The Vice President & Programme Director was invited by the High Commissioner of Zambia to be a guest speaker at the High Commissioners' Luncheon held in Ottawa in October – this was another opportunity to apprise High Commissioners of COL's work in general and the CHOGM report in particular (www.col.org/speeches).

7.5 Member Governments' Support

The funding letters sent to Member States in the previous quarter continue to generate a very positive response. Twelve countries contributed in the second quarter, following the same number in the previous quarter for a total of 24 countries to-date (compared to 38 in total for 2006-2007). These contributions will fund close to 65% of the approved core budget of \$8.2 million (before extrabudgetary) for 2007-2008 with the balance expected in the coming months. India has with its second instalment this quarter, paid in full its increased contribution for this year of \$1,026,500 (2006-2007 – \$620,522). Enhanced contributions have also been received from Botswana and Jamaica.

We welcomed the announcement by Prime Minister Gordon Brown at CHOGM in November that the United Kingdom will be increasing its contribution by 10% to £1.1 million for three years beginning in 2007-2008. Nigeria has also notified us in writing that it is increasing its contribution to \$750,000 this year from its previous level of \$500,000. We are extremely appreciative to all these countries for their continued support and for these increased contributions.

7.6 Focal Point Update

We welcome Ms. Myra Harrison of NZAID (and a former member of the COL Board of Governors representing the United Kingdom), as our first named Focal Point in New Zealand, along with the three new focal points that have been named in other countries to replace former focal points. This network of in-country focal points continues to provide COL with valuable advice on country action plans and assists in co-ordinating COL's work in the respective counties and regions.

7.7 Visits and Meetings

COL continues to update the Vancouver Consular Corps on our activities from time to time. We were delighted to host the new Consul-General of Pakistan, Moin Ul Haque, and Md. Hassan Bal, Consul-General of Malaysia at lunches in October.

His Excellency James Hill, Canadian High Commissioner to Mozambique, also visited COL in October followed by a delegation from St. Lucia in November.

8. Finances

8.1 Revenues

Member Governments' contributions totalled \$5.2 million by December 31 with \$864,726 of this amount received in the second quarter as follows: Bahamas - \$48,355 (second instalment); Belize - \$29,256; Botswana - \$43,884; India - \$384,684 (second instalment); Jamaica - \$45,000; Lesotho - \$41,900; Mozambique- \$48,355; Namibia - \$29,013; Pakistan - \$33,810; St. Kitts & Nevis - \$30,360; Samoa - \$58,512; Swaziland - \$29,256; Tonga - \$33,841; and Uganda - \$8,500.

Receipts from the first and second quarters represent over 60% of forecasted revenues for the 2007-2008 year, as compared to 50% at the same time last year. The UK's increased contribution is expected in full by March 31, 2008, which will provide another 25% of the forecasted revenues. Nigeria's pledge of \$750,000 for this year combined with its arrears from 2006-2007 of \$500,000 will contribute close to 14% of the revenue forecast when received.

COL has set a target of \$2 million in extrabudgetary revenues for 2007-2008 where 67% has been confirmed from the following sources: \$450,000 of the revenue deferred at June 30, 2007, will be recognised in this year towards the target; £250,000 is due from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (second year of a four-year grant for VUSSC); US\$100,000 has been awarded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for a *Learnng4Content* activity; and over US\$300,000 has been awarded in contracts since July 1 for COL's eLearning for International Organisations programme.

8.2 Cash Flow

COL estimates that cash on hand at December 31 is about \$6.5 million (before the cash reserve of \$1.6 million held in accordance with the cash reserve policy). The cash on hand will be used to support operations in the third and fourth quarters where an estimated \$5 million (before extrabudgetary expenditures) will be required based on the approved plan of expenditure.

COL's cash reserve policy also calls for it to have enough cash on hand at the beginning of each fiscal year to meet approximately four months of activity of that year. Any surplus cash remaining at June 30, 2008 will be counted toward this requirement for 2008-2009 where current projections indicate that a minimum of \$4.0 million will be available.

COL continues to hold cash in the form of US dollars, Pounds Sterling and Indian Rupees with over 60% of the cash on hand held in these currencies. 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 continue trading roughly at par from the last quarter. There has been little overall change since September in the movement of the Pound Sterling and the Indian Rupee relative to the Canadian dollar. These minor movements will not cause any significant foreign exchange losses to be booked in this quarter.

8.3 Expenditures

The annual budget for 2007-2008 was approved at a level of \$10.26 million, inclusive of extrabudgetary expenditures of \$2 million. At December 31, approximately \$4.5 million is estimated to have been spent (final December figures in progress) or committed through contractual obligations with 85% of these expenditures attributed to the programme for the year.

9. Human Resources

9.1 Staff Changes

9.1.1 Arrivals

Ms. Anna Lee joined COL in November as Administrative Assistant in the eLearning with International Organisations initiative.

Ms. Pauline Tham joined in December as Accounting Assistant.

Mr. Ian Pringle, Education Specialist – Media, will join COL on January 1, 2008.

9.1.2 Recruitment

No recruitments are under way at present.

9.1.3 Departures

Ms. Prabhashni Sharma, Accounting Assistant, left COL in October to take up a position with the Government of Canada.

Mr. David Walker, Education Specialist – Educational Technology, left COL in December. He had been with COL since its early days and has made a tremendous contribution, right across the Commonwealth, to the use of mass media of video and radio for development purposes, most especially in health and agriculture.

9.2 Performance Management

During this quarter, all staff members met their supervisors individually to finalise work and training plans for the year.

10. Knowledge Management and Information Technology (IT)

The IT infrastructure environment has been stable, we have embarked on the use of Google analytics to monitor website visits and trends, and the IT Manager has successfully facilitated the IT support for two mini-computer laboratories for workshops, including for VUSSC. Changes to infrastructure have also been implemented, such as new equipment that provides faster data throughput to the Internet connection and faster local response time for users' machines.

COL is exploring the use of a Yahoo facility called "Yahoo Pipes" which enables users to filter what is required from the large amount of new information on the internet. Since the process for doing this is beyond the capacity of most users, COL's website will provide a ready-to-use facility on selected topics. Example:
<http://www.col.org/colweb/newsfeeds>.

COL has received one of the "one-laptop-per-child" computers and we are testing it. More broadly, we are also working with *infoDev* (World Bank) which is launching a review of the nearly 40 low-cost computers that are now entering the market. Both Vista and Linux PCs are available in COL's offices so that staff can familiarise themselves with a variety of equipment and software.

11. Publications/Resources

Connections/EdTech News, October 2007 (Vol. 12, No. 3) at www.col.org/connections.

COL's Report to 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Kampala, Uganda, November 2007 at www.col.org/reporting.

Report of the Visitation Committee to the University of Ghana (designed and printed by COL, 127pp) at www.col.org/GhanaVisitation.

COL completed the UNISA trial audit during September-October. The final report will be released to the public and posted on COL's website early in the New Year at www.col.org/consultancies.

The COL-commissioned study on open schooling (NIOS and NAMCOL) – *Open Schooling for Secondary & Higher Secondary Education: Cost and Effectiveness in India and Namibia*, by Greville Rumble and Badri N. Koul, 268pp – is also completed and is available on COL's website at www.col.org/consultancies.

A Study of the Development of State Open Universities in India: Consultant's Report, by T. Rajagopalan, 31pp at www.col.org/consultancies.

Quality Assurance Toolkit for Teacher Education Institutions, published by COL and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India. It includes:

- Quality Assurance in Higher Education: An Introduction (NAAC/COL), 102pp.
- Guidelines (NAAC/COL), 16pp.
- Quality Indicators for Teacher Education (NACC/COL), 94pp.
- An Anthology of "Best Practices" in Teacher Education (NAAC/COL), 174pp.

Training modules for learner support staff and functionaries of India's National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). COL-facilitated development.

An updated *Knowledge Series* catalogue at www.col.org/knowledge.

infoDev has released results from a landmark *Survey of ICT and Education in Africa*, which seeks to gather together in a single resource the most relevant and useful information on ICT in education activities in all 53 countries in Africa. The research team, supported by *infoDev* and co-ordinated by COL, prepared the first consolidated survey at this fast-changing sector and provided preliminary answers to three broad questions:

- How are ICTs currently being used in the education sector in Africa, and what are the strategies and policies related to this use?

- What are the common challenges and constraints faced by African countries in this area?
- What is actually happening on the ground, and to what extent are donors involved?

Volume 1 is the Summary Report. Volume 2 contains the individual country reports, see www.col.org/consultancies.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has launched a new online quarterly magazine, *Commonwealth Quarterly*. We will endeavour to place articles about COL in as many issues as possible. The first one, released in October 2007, contained an article on PCF5 (www.thecommonwealth.org/EZHomePage/171029/) and we are preparing one on L3Farmers for the second issue.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
December 31, 2007*