COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Learning for Sustainable Development

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
July – September 2016

1.   Board Matters

It gives me great pleasure to inform members that the Honourable Danny Faure, the representative for Africa on the Board, will assume the office of the 4th President of the Republic of Seychelles on October 16, 2016.

The next meeting of the Audit Committee is planned for November 10, 2016 to be followed by a meeting of the Executive Committee on November 15, 2016. Both meetings will be held by teleconference.

2.   General

COL began the new financial year on a happy note – the revised human resources framework was implemented, resulting in better emoluments and more contemporary policies for the staff. This was celebrated at the annual 'Meet and Greet' event for families with a boat ride up the Fraser River which was much enjoyed by all. The second cause for celebration was receiving a grant from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to hold six Regional Consultations on Open Educational Resources (OER) that will lead up to the 2nd World OER Congress to be organised by UNESCO, Paris and the Government of Slovenia in September 2017. You will recall that COL had received similar support from Hewlett Foundation to conduct the World OER Congress in 2012 in partnership with UNESCO.

Preparations for PCF8 are well under way. The four online discussions leading to the main Forum, concluded successfully this month with nearly 500 participants from 66 countries. Discussions in these Forums have yielded important insights about the emerging trends and concerns in open distance and flexible learning. We would like to thank the Association of Commonwealth Universities, Commonwealth Foundation, The Open University, UK, University of London and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) for their valuable contributions, which will help us to support participants from developing Commonwealth countries.

2.1   President's Activities

UNESCO invited me for the launch of the joint publication *Making Sense of MOOCs: A Guide for Policy-Makers in Developing Countries* at which many representatives of national delegations were present. The publication is being translated into Arabic and French. During this visit, I was able to sign the joint UNESCO-COL Work Plan for the next three years with the ADGs of Education and Communications and Information Sectors. Our collaboration with UNESCO continues to flourish.

NOUN has instituted an annual Distinguished Lecture series and I was invited to deliver the inaugural speech. While in Abuja, I also attended the Advisory Council meeting of RETRIDOL, our regional centre for West Africa, hosted by NOUN. This trip was an important opportunity to brief the Minister of Education, the Honourable Malam Adamu Adamu and the Minister of State for Education, Professor Anthony Anwukah, about COL and its work. They reiterated Nigeria's commitment to COL and promised to expedite pending payments. Minister Adamu's priority is to bring out-of-school youth into mainstream education. COL is well-positioned to support this agenda through open schooling. From my various interactions with the Honourable Ministers and key stakeholders, it was evident that COL enjoys a great deal of goodwill and respect in Nigeria.

Ghana was my next destination where I had been invited to deliver a public lecture at the University of Education, Winneba. I also visited a long-standing partner Koforidua Polytechnic which has benefited from COL's skills development initiative. Several participants of this programme who now run successful enterprises came to meet me. Partners working on the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) project travelled from the north for discussions and I was reassured to find that even though this project initially had a slow start, it was now taking a firm root in Ghanaian soil. This was also an opportunity to brief the Minister of Education, the Honourable Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, about COL's work. Her priority is skilling women and girls. She is well aware of COL and looks forward to attending PCF8.

The speeches referred above can be found at speeches-and-presentations.

As project director for the Hewlett grant, I convened meetings of the Steering Committee and the Task Team in Vancouver to finalise plans for the six Regional OER Consultations to be led by COL in partnership with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia. Senior officials from UNESCO, Government of Slovenia, Hewlett Foundation, Creative Commons and the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) participated. The theme of the Regional Consultations is 'OER for inclusive and equitable quality education: from commitment to action'. The first Regional Consultation will be held in Malaysia following PCF8. The remaining Regional Consultations will be held in Malta, Doha, Mauritius, Brazil and New Zealand and will be hosted by ministries of education and key national organisations. The recommendations of these Consultations will shape the agenda of the 2nd World OER Congress to be held in Ljubljana. This is a significant development as it gives COL the opportunity to further strengthen its leadership role in OER on the global stage.

The Commonwealth Secretariat invited COL to be on the Steering Committee of the new Unit on Countering Violent Extremism being established with support from the UK and Australia. I participated in the first meeting via teleconference.

All these activities have served to renew our engagement with key partners, raise our international profile and add global value.

3.　　Programme

The second year of the current Six-Year Plan (SYP) began with the refinement of the performance framework for each initiative, as recommended by an external expert. Partners were consulted as they will provide the evidence and data from the field. The new Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan is more sophisticated and systematic than previously, and will not only provide evidence of outcomes and impact but will also contribute to development discourse.

3.1　　Education Sector

During this period, the focus with partners was on capacity building, developing institutional policies and integrating quality assurance. The sector was able to reach a substantial number of girls and women to raise their awareness on social and legal rights.

3.1.1　Open Schooling

Efforts were made to activate the open school activities in places where momentum had flagged. Malawi and Vanuatu are being supported in policy development. In addition, strategies have been identified to integrate Aptus in schools in these countries. An agreement has been signed to develop training videos in TVET subjects for youth in Kenya. A task team has been established to strengthen Commonwealth Open Schooling Association as a community of practice.

3.1.2　Teacher Education

Diagnostic instruments for identification of children with special needs have been drafted and are being piloted in the Caribbean. In East Africa, three institutions are collaboratively developing a post graduate diploma/certificate in information and communications technology (ICT) integration in education by adapting the Commonwealth Certificate in Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) materials. The review of the Guidelines for online assessment for teachers and educators is complete. A report on *Digital Learning: Reforming Teacher Education to Promote Access, Equity and Quality in Sub-Saharan Africa* has been finalised.

3.1.3   Higher Education

University governance structures and systems for the new Botswana Open University were finalised. The institutional Quality Assurance policy and qualification framework were completed for Busitema University (Uganda), Buea University in Cameroon and Lesotho Council of Higher Education. The open and distance learning policies and implementation plans for Kibungu University (Rwanda), University of Rwanda and Busitema University (Uganda) were also completed. The COL Review and Improvement Model verification for the University of Mauritius was successfully concluded. A learner support workshop was attended by participants from ten Commonwealth universities in Africa. The annual Advisory Board Meeting for RETRIDOL, the regional centre for West Africa, was held and the work plan for 2016-2017 approved.

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

COL supported the Barbados Community College to build the capacity of instructors from the Hospitality Institute to design and develop online courses in tourism. Educators in Belize enrolled in a ten-week VUSSC online course 'Developing and Teaching Online and Blended Courses'. Forty staff from the National University of Lesotho attended a workshop on instructional design facilitated by the University of Swaziland.

3.1.5.   GIRLS Inspire (Special project supported by the Governments of Canada and Australia)

Training was conducted for 1,933 women and girls to increase their awareness about health, social rights and the consequences of child, early and forced marriage. Similarly, 2,102 girls completed vocational skills training in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania. Over 20 community awareness-raising events for stakeholders, community leaders, parents, men and boys took place in various communities. Through the use of technology, nine capacity building sessions helped to enhance the capacity of staff of partner organisations to improve the design and delivery of quality learning programmes.

3.2   Skills Sector

OER course development has been the major focus along with capacity building of partners in monitoring and evaluation. Increased engagement with local and national government agencies is proving to be an important strategy in scaling up new learning approaches. The models established in one country are becoming a reference for other countries to emulate and replicate.

3.2.1   Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

To strengthen delivery of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ), COL is working with national agencies in the region, through the Caribbean Association of National

Training Authorities, to develop online training and the first set of Assessors from Barbados, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago have been trained.

In the Pacific, Tuvalu teachers have developed four OER courses for skills training on Nanumaga Island in collaboration with COL, the Department of Education and the Island Council. In Samoa, new OER materials for the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc (METI) community training programme have been developed in healthy living and life skills coaching. Tracer studies are becoming increasingly important for partners to understand the impact of their training. Twenty partner institutions have engaged in an online course and community of practice to plan tracer studies and prepare data collection tools.

The scaled-up INVEST Africa model relies on greater involvement of national agencies and peer-to-peer capacity building. In Ghana, a team from Koforidua Polytechnic has held training sessions with new partners Takoradi Polytechnic and College of Education, Kumasi. In Kenya, three new institutional partners have made study visits to different existing partners to learn from their experience. Two partners in Tanzania and Kenya have delivered new short course programmes in construction and customer relations.

3.2.2   Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)

New macro-level partnerships were created for scaling up L3F. Ministries of Agriculture in Antigua and Barbuda and Rwanda along with a county government in Kenya have requested COL to help build the capacity of their agricultural extension staff in the L3F model. An L3F Community of Practice for Africa has been established. The National Executive Council of Ghana's General Agricultural Workers' Union has recommended that they integrate and strengthen L3F activities.

In India, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development agreed to fund an impact evaluation study of L3F initiatives implemented by Mann Deshi Cooperative Bank to be conducted by The Institute of Rural Management, one of the premier management institutes in India.

3.2.3   Technology-Enabled Learning

The Open University of Tanzania, Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan), Open University of Sri Lanka and the National Open University of Nigeria were supported to complete the development of advanced ICT skills courses.

Antigua and Barbuda's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology completed the development of a course on 'Entrepreneurship Theory' for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations. A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on 'Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning' in collaboration with Athabasca University has been finalised and will be offered in January 2017 (see www.telmooc.org/).

One publication on open textbooks was completed and one issue of the *Journal of Learning for Development* was published.

3.2.4   OER for Skills Development (Special project supported by Hewlett Foundation)

Seven skills courses were developed by Graphic Era Hill University (India) and the TVET Unit of the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development of Saint Lucia. These courses are now available at skills. The courses have a significant video component to supplement the text. In addition to advocacy for OER in Sri Lanka, nine provincial OER policy drafts were completed.

3.3   Cross-cutting Theme

3.3.1   Gender

A draft gender policy was developed by VUSSC partner institution, Seychelles Institute of Art and Design. The Institutional Gender Scorecard, a self-administered gender audit tool was pilot-tested by Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning. It showed that there is a scope for substantial improvement. The study also reflected the need for strengthening the human resource framework and the introduction of a gender policy.

3.4   eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)

In September, eLIO started its continuing education programme for international organisations. At the invitation of the Caribbean Development Bank, four modules of VUSSC's Quality Assurance in Higher Education certificate were adapted and offered for the professional development of staff at the National Accreditation Council of Guyana.

eLIO continued its work in customised programmes with the development of the 'Reading Effectively' course and the first learners began their studies in August. Cohorts of learners from the International Labour Organization and the Council of Europe were also supported in their 'Writing Effectively' courses.

3.5   Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

CEMCA has received a major grant from the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, to lead a project on Women and Health through the use of Community Radio. CEMCA organised a community radio contest in India to encourage community radio stations to do more innovative programmes on skill development. A workshop on the theme 'Children and Media' for urban slum dwellers was conducted to produce radio programmes on disaster risk reduction and urban resilience.

CEMCA supported three open universities in Bangladesh and India to develop and implement OER policies. It built the capacities of 35 academic leaders and 90 ODL professionals in using and creating OER materials. Bangladesh Open University has agreed to repurpose its online repository under an open licence. Twenty content writers and editors

received training to develop materials using available OER materials for a professional development course, titled 'Inclusive Education'. CEMCA is assisting Telangana state, to implement the ICT@School initiative of the Government of India. As part of this, a secondary level ICT course and content outline for a teacher handbook on ICT was finalised.

3.6 Vice President's Activities

As a follow-up to the direction of the Board for strengthening activities in the Pacific, the Vice President travelled to the region.

Dr. Bala accepted an invitation to speak at the 11th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting, held in Apia, Samoa on 'Empowerment of Women and Profit: The Role of Coevolution Partnership'. The presentation is available at speeches-and-presentations. Some senior officials requested COL to facilitate capacity building in measuring social impact. COL will publish a toolkit for measuring empowerment shortly for distribution to the Ministries of Women Affairs in the Commonwealth. He met the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Rt. Honourable Patricia Scotland QC, who complimented COL for sending a male to a women's meeting and suggested that COL develop a financial literacy template for women to support financial inclusion. He also met the Ministers from Bangladesh, Cameroon and Samoa and discussed the scope of COL adding value to their endeavours. The meeting opened up new avenues for COL's work in gender and raised its profile in the region.

Dr. Bala's discussions with the National University of Samoa and Samoa's Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture helped to identify their needs in the areas of teacher education and technology-enabled learning. He reviewed the activities of METI, an NGO supported by COL for skills development.

The Vice President's visit to Tonga and the accompanying discussions with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Agriculture identified activities with clear timelines in the areas of OER, teacher education, skills development and L3F. A meeting with the Governor of the National Reserve Bank of Tonga led to a discussion on the possibilities of a partnership with COL for promoting financial literacy and financial inclusion.

The Vice President also made a presentation on 'A Win-Win Model for Small Farmers, Business and Financial Institutions: Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and its Relevance to the Pacific' at the University of New England (UNE), Australia, which resulted in UNE expressing an interest in playing a facilitating role for L3F in the Pacific.

The Vice President is spearheading research across the organisation. A study on the impact of women's empowerment on poultry enterprises in Kenya was completed which indicates that every 1% increase in empowerment leads to a 2.3% increase in profit. Three additional studies were launched: comparing the environmental and opportunity costs of learners in VUSCC courses and face-to-face courses in Botswana; the outcomes and impact

of the L3F programme in Tanzania; and the status of Open Universities in the Commonwealth. These studies will support the development of robust models that will influence policy, scale and sustainability.

3.7 Professional Development

COL provided support for the following conferences:

- Assisted applicants from Guyana's Ministry of Education to attend the 60th World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) organised by the University of the West Indies, Mona, in partnership with the Teachers Colleges of Jamaica in July 2016.

- The Namibian Open Learning Network Trust Open Distance Learning Conference to be held from October 18 to 20, 2016.

- The 30th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities titled 'Open Education in Asia: Changing Perspectives' to be hosted by University of the Philippines Open University from October 26 to 29, 2016.

- The Distance Education and Teachers' Training in Africa Conference 2017, which will take place at the University of Rwanda, College of Education from August 1 to 4, 2017.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments Support

COL is forecasting contributions of over $10.5 million from member countries in 2016-2017. In 2015-2016, $9.96 million was received from 44 countries. Invoicing and requests for 2016-2017 contributions were sent out to all Commonwealth Member States during this quarter.

So far during this fiscal year, contributions have been received from 13 countries (the same number as in the previous year during the first quarter). A complete listing is provided at Revenue 5.1.

4.2 Focal Points

We welcomed the following Focal Points:

- Kiribati – Mrs. Kaaro Neeti, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education.
- Pakistan – Mr. Muhammad Raza Chohan, Director General (Academics), Higher Education Commission.
- Swaziland – Mr. Earnest Simelane, Acting Chief Inspector, Tertiary Education, Ministry of Education and Training.

4.3   Congratulatory Letters

Eight congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Heads of Government, Ministers of Education and Foreign Affairs, and Heads of Institutions.

5.   Finances

5.1   Revenue

COL has received $4.2 million in voluntary contributions from member governments towards the budget for 2016-2017 (compared to $3.26 million at the quarter ended September 30, 2015).

The 13 countries are:

Australia – $984,966; Bahamas – $78,654; Belize – $39,327; Canada – $2.6 million; Grenada – $7,112; Guyana – $19,664; Malta – $19,664; Mauritius – $60,000; Mozambique – $64,710; Saint Lucia – $23,784; Solomon Islands – $6,555; South Africa – $250,000; and Tuvalu – $13,109.

In addition to contributions from member governments, COL is forecasting additional contributions from grants of $2 million and from fee-for-service activities of $730,000.

Towards meeting these additional contribution targets, COL recognised close to $600,000 in revenues from grants and fee-for-services during the period July 1, 2016 to September 30, 2016. Deferred revenue in excess of $3 million is also available for recognition over the fiscal year as activities complete in accordance with the corresponding funding agreements where funding was provided in a previous financial year.

A new one-year grant of $520,000 for six Regional Consultations on OER has been received from the Hewlett Foundation.

5.2   Cash Flow

At June 30, 2016, COL held over $9 million in cash and cash equivalents. This level of cash and cash equivalents enables COL to meet operational costs and maintain a positive cash flow until outstanding contributions are received throughout the year.

COL also held an internally restricted cash reserve of $9.1 million to provide a source of funds for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding if needed. The cash reserve provision represents twelve months of operating costs.

5.3   Expenditures

In the first quarter, approximately $3.5 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff costs and office expenses. This amount comprised 29% of the annual budget of $12 million approved for 2016-2017 as compared to expenditures of 20.5% of the annual budget approved for 2015-2016 during the same period.

6.   Knowledge Management & Technology

A structured trial was conducted on Aptus at the National University of Samoa (NUS) by a team mentored by Dr. Emma Kruse Va'ai and led by Dr. Ioana Chan Mow. The questions students considered related to user perceptions (such as the ease of use of Aptus) and the value of Aptus as a library of electronic resources and services. The teachers were trained first and 220 students participated in the trials. Both teachers and students responded positively. This research showed that there was no variation in user perceptions because of gender or age. NUS funded the research.

COL hosted a MOOC offered by our partner, NOUN, which was their first-ever MOOC. COL facilitated collaboration between NOUN and the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur which managed the platform. All the learning materials offered have been published as OER.

Cybersecurity is increasingly a matter of concern for medium-sized organisations across the globe. COL's internal information technology systems are stable and frequently checked for vulnerabilities with remedial measures applied as needed.

7.   Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8)

Preparations for PCF8, jointly organised with the Open University of Malaysia (OUM), have made significant progress. All the keynote speakers were confirmed. A plenary panel that links ODL and flexible learning to sustainable development is a new feature. We have approximately 1,150 sign ups; 525 abstracts were received and 267 have been approved by a committee of expert reviewers for development as papers or posters. Review of these submissions is now in progress. OUM has created a custom-built online system to manage registration as well as submissions and reviews of papers, which is a valuable contribution to this PCF. A Market Exchange will allow interested groups to organise informal meetings on services, models and products relevant to stakeholders.

At the conclusion of this PCF, COL will issue a Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ODL and Flexible Learning for Sustainable Development which will provide us, as well as the ODL community, with a roadmap and an agenda for action going forward.

8.   Communications

During this quarter, media monitoring shows that COL is now being associated with OER on social media. Previously, OER did not appear in the top trending themes associated with COL. Both Facebook and Twitter channels saw significant increases in engagement: Facebook experienced an increase of over 80% in the average weekly engaged user number and Twitter's engagement increased by 70%. A detailed action plan for COL's social media activities is being finalised and we expect to see even further engagement in the coming months.

COL has been mentioned in at least 48 media stories with a wide reach. The top three countries where COL had media exposure were Nigeria, the United States and India. COL was also covered in *University World News*, which has a global audience.

The COL website has been regularly updated with news and content and an audit of the site is currently being finalised, which will help inform further development of both content and design.

9.   Visitors to COL

Some of the recent visitors to COL include:

- Dr. Indrajit Banerjee, Director; Ms. Zeynep Varoglu, Programme Specialist; and Mr. Joe Hironaka, Programme Specialist, Knowledge Societies Division, Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO.

- Dr. David Atchoarena, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, Education Sector, UNESCO.

- Mr. Gasper Hrastelj, Deputy Secretary-General, Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO.

- Ms. Barbara Chow, Program Director and Dr. TJ Bliss, Program Officer, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

- Mr. Davor Orlic, UNESCO Chair Team on Open Technologies for OER and Open Learning (Slovenia).

- Dr. Cable Green, Director of Open Education, Creative Commons Global.

- Dr. David Porter, Associate Vice President, Education Support and Innovation, BCIT.

- Dr. George Imbenzi, Trinity Western University (Canada).

10.   Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications/Resources (oasis.col.org):
  - *Connections*, July 2016, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Newsletter).
  - *Journal of Learning for Development*, July 2016, Vol. 3, No. 2 ([JL4D](JL4D)).
  - *Quality in MOOCs: Surveying the Terrain (*hdl.handle.net/11599/2352).
  - *Technology-Enabled Learning Implementation Handbook* (hdl.handle.net/11599/2363).
  - *Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of MOOCs* (hdl.handle.net/11599/2362).
  - *Institutional OER Policy – Template* (hdl.handle.net/11599/2361).
  - *OER Policy – Provincial Ministries of Education Sri Lanka* (hdl.handle.net/11599/2360).
  - *Guide to Developing Open Textbooks* (hdl.handle.net/11599/2390).
- Speeches and presentations at www.col.org/news/speeches-and-presentations.
- COL Blog at www.col.org/blog.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President & Chief Executive Officer
October 14, 2016