**LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT** is the theme of the Commonwealth of Learning’s Three-Year Plan for 2009-2012. This plan expresses a vision that reaches beyond formal education to embrace areas of learning that are vital for better livelihoods, greater prosperity and a safer environment.

Understanding development as the process of increasing the freedoms that people can enjoy, COL pursues this vision operationally within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the campaign for Education for All and Commonwealth values.

COL’s two programme sectors, *Education* and *Livelihoods & Health*, embrace eight initiatives that will help governments pursue the twin goals of expanding access to learning and using public funds cost-effectively.

[www.col.org/3yp](http://www.col.org/3yp)
Recent COL Initiatives/Activities

COL helps developing nations improve access to quality education and training using distance education and appropriate technologies. As a region largely comprised of small island states, the Commonwealth Caribbean faces significant educational challenges. Most countries have limited resources to sustain a significant education and training infrastructure.

COL provides support to numerous community groups and educational institutions in the Caribbean, notably the University of the West Indies, which provides distance education throughout the region. COL applies its expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technology (ICT) to help address needs in the Caribbean.
EDUCATION

OPEN SCHOOLING: Open/alternative schooling has proven to be a successful and cost-effective means of increasing access to basic and secondary schooling. To meet the growing demand for secondary schooling resulting from the success of the Universal Primary Education campaign, COL supports open schools through several activities.

• COL assisted with the establishment of the National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago (NOSTT) and is working with partners in the Bahamas and Belize to build capacity and launch new open schools in those countries.

• Three Caribbean countries are members of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA), a consortium of open schools working to expand access to quality education through open schools. COL led the establishment of COMOSA and provides ongoing support. NOSTT is taking part in three COMOSA research studies.

• Open schools in the Caribbean have access to quality learning materials through COL’s OER for Open Schools initiative. Master Teachers in six developing Commonwealth countries, including Trinidad & Tobago, developed 20 new secondary-level courses that can be freely downloaded, adapted and re-used as open educational resources (OER).

• COL has conducted training/capacity building in the Caribbean for open schools in monitoring and evaluation, understanding copyright and working with OER.

www.col.org/OpenSchooling

TEACHER EDUCATION: COL is working with institutions in the Caribbean to strengthen teacher development programmes. COL’s Quality Assurance Toolkit for Teacher Education is freely available to teacher training institutions. COL’s Technical Teacher Training Programme was piloted as a Special Diploma at University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech) in The Bahamas and St. Kitts & Nevis. Course materials are now freely available to publicly funded institutions in the region.

Trinidad & Tobago was one of ten countries selected to participate in the UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly School (CFS) project. A consultative meeting was held in February 2011, and an Action Plan was developed. Trinidad & Tobago is no longer participating in CFS.

www.col.org/TeacherEducation
**HIGHER EDUCATION:** COL is working to improve access to quality higher education in the Caribbean by working closely with the University of the West Indies, the primary provider of off-campus tertiary education in the region. Specific initiatives include:

The University College of the Caribbean (Jamaica) and the University of Guyana are part of the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) programme consortium, which offers working professionals the opportunity to study part-time through ODL. Tutors from these two institutions participated in a COL capacity building workshop on case-based pedagogy in ODL held in November 2011 in Penang, Malaysia.

The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) for effective institutional quality audits is freely available to all institutions and provides a cost-effective approach to quality assurance. UTech Jamaica was involved in piloting COL RIM. The University of Guyana has undergone a COL RIM implementation. Dominica State College has undergone planning in anticipation of implementing COL RIM.

[www.col.org/HigherEducation](http://www.col.org/HigherEducation)

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH:** Twelve Caribbean countries are members of a collaborative network of 32 small states that are part of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).
Two VUSSC training workshops, also known as “boot camps”, have been held in the Caribbean – in The Bahamas and Trinidad & Tobago. VUSSC is creating OER for post-secondary, skills-related courses in areas such as disaster management, entrepreneurship, sustainable agriculture and tourism. These non-proprietary, electronically-held course materials are freely available for download, use and adaptation, strengthening the educational capacity and outreach of tertiary education institutions in small states.

Initiated by COL, VUSSC is now directed by an independent Management Committee, supported by COL’s Education Specialist for VUSSC, John Lesperance. The committee includes representatives from small states in all regions of the Commonwealth and includes Dr. Leon Higgs from The Bahamas and Mrs. Karen Rosemin from Trinidad & Tobago representing the Caribbean.

Numerous educators from the Caribbean have taken part in VUSSC boot camps and VUSSC online training courses about LINUX, online learning practices and management practices. www.col.org/VUSSC

LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

**SKILLS DEVELOPMENT:** Lack of basic education qualifications to enter technical and vocational training is an increasing problem in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, COL has partnered with the University of Technology, Jamaica Foundations for Lifelong Learning, HEART NTA and the Ministry of Education to expand access to vocational literacy and skills training through educational technology. COL is working with community members and development agencies in three marginalised communities in Kingston to provide young adults with opportunities to upgrade their basic qualifications and join the mainstream technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system.

TVET teacher training has long been identified as a priority area for the Caribbean. COL is working with the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies at University of Technology, Jamaica to build the capacity of their staff to expand their region-wide, online teacher training programme. In St. Vincent & the Grenadines, the TVET Division of the Community College (SVGCC) has set ambitious strategic objectives to bring their courses online.
Recent COL Initiatives/Activities

COL is supporting SVGCC with staff capacity building in e-learning and educational technology. Access to skills training will be improved through the establishment of four outreach centres in St Vincent.

www.col.org/SkillsDevelopement

LEARNING FOR FARMING: COL helps countries harness the potential of ICT to build capacity in the agricultural sector. COL’s successful Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) programme, launched in India in 2003, is now established in Jamaica in partnership with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA). This powerful partnership of farmers, educational institutions, banks and ICT providers promotes learning for sustained improvement of livelihoods.

RADA is using a learning management system called LIVES (Learning through Interactive Voice Educational Systems). Developed by the University of British Columbia in partnership with COL, LIVES provides communities with a learning tool based on voicemails on mobile phones. RADA has used LIVES to deliver text messages relating to hurricane management, pest management and agronomy to 60,000 farmers in Jamaica. The system includes a feedback mechanism; farmers can provide feedback to RADA through a toll-free number.

Five RADA staff members were trained in ODL-based multimedia. They have prepared a framework for the recertification programme.

Following a meeting with banks, marketing agencies, mobile companies and university personnel to discuss implementing L3 Farmers in Trinidad & Tobago in agriculture and fishery, COL was asked to develop a framework for Trinidad & Tobago. COL has also provided a concept note about implementing L3 Farmers for the Grenada Ministry of Agriculture.

www.col.org/L3Farmers
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: Working collaboratively with community networks, media and technology groups, health and development experts, and public authorities, COL helps build knowledge and skills to use non-formal ODL to address health issues at the community level. Citizens provide their experience with relevant issues, experts provide knowledge; media provide scale and engagement; and community networks provide learner support. COL’s community learning programme approach is low-cost and participatory, and prioritises local ownership and story-based learning.

• COL and the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) facilitated a series of training and programme development workshops in the Toledo and Dangriga districts of Belize. Working with the Ministry of Health and local media, health experts and community development groups, a series of three community health programmes was developed, with a focus on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Participants were trained in key areas of the community learning approach in programme design, story-based approach to learning content, informative and experience-based interview skills, and blended learning strategies.

• The farmers’ association, local schools and regional health authorities in Jeffrey Town, Jamaica have been trained in learning programme design, presentation and production
through a series of workshops and mentoring facilitated by COL and CARIMAC. This resulted in a radio series about healthy environments (covering waste management, organic farming, nutrition and other areas) and two series about maternal and child health, the latest called Me & Mi Baby Too. The programmes air on community radio station Jet FM.

• COL and CARIMAC have also worked with community development groups and broadcasters in the inner cities and outlying areas of Kingston, Jamaica to build skills in designing and developing non-formal learning programmes about health and development.

• COL sponsored community media representatives from the Caribbean to attend workshops on educational programme development skills (Buenos Aires, 2010; Port-au-Prince, 2011) through conferences associated with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

www.col.org/HealthyCommunities

**INTEGRATING eLEARNING:** In October 2010, COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Microsoft signed a collaboration agreement to support the implementation of ICT in education in the Caribbean. Microsoft has agreed to offer to Caribbean countries participating in the Partners in Learning programme discounted software licences on Microsoft products. Learners will be able to
access free e-mail addresses through Microsoft’s Live@edu, a suite of online hosted services designed for and offered to educational institutions at no cost.

Hundreds of teachers in Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas and Trinidad & Tobago are taking part in COL’s Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI), a distance learning programme about integrating ICT into school management, teaching and learning. COL is also working with partners in Guyana on a five-year programme to improve ICT literacy, as well as partners in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

COL commissioned an ICT in Education Survey in the Caribbean. The final survey report will consist of eight country reports and a final summary report with regional trends.

COL facilitated an eGovernment and eBusiness Strategy Development workshop for the Caribbean in March 2011. The workshop was organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in partnership with the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD). Representatives from nine Caribbean countries attended.

www.col.org/eLearning

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER): Increasingly, COL’s work involves the development and promotion of OER – learning resources that can be freely downloaded, adapted and reused.

• Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity is a COL/UNESCO joint initiative that promoted wider use of OER by expanding understanding among educational decision makers and quality assurance experts. The programme involved capacity building workshops in all regions of the Commonwealth, online discussion forums and new OER publications.

• Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources Worldwide is an extension of the COL-UNESCO joint initiative. COL is currently leading this effort to encourage governments worldwide to recognise officially the importance of sharing OER. The objective is to have a statement supporting the principle of open access to educational materials developed with public funds adopted at the UNESCO World OER Conference in June 2012.

• WikiEducator is an online community dedicated to the development of free educational content. Originally launched as a COL programme and still supported, in part, by COL, WikiEducator has provided free training in “wiki” skills for thousands of people in more than 100 countries through its Learning4Content initiative.

• OER University (OERu) is a network that aims to provide more affordable access to post-secondary education for the estimated 100 million learners in the world who are qualified but unable to gain access to tertiary education. COL is a supporter of OERu.

www.col.org/oer
ELEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS: COL’s custom ODL programmes help to build skills and knowledge among staff at international agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Labour Organization, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank and World Health Organization. Headquarters’ staff and field-based workers located throughout the world can access COL’s eLearning for International Organisations programmes in areas such as communications, data management and debt management. COL uses an open source learning management system (www.col-vle.org) for most of its eLearning for International Organisations course delivery. The web-based platform enhances communication, sharing, learning and reporting amongst learners, tutors and administrators.

www.col.org/COLeLIO

REGIONAL PRESENCE

COL maintains strong relationships with many stakeholders in the Caribbean, including member governments, partner institutions, donors and individuals. COL’s Honorary Advisors, a network of eminent ODL professionals, includes a representative from the Caribbean. His Excellency the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, OJ, High Commissioner to London and former Education Minister in Jamaica, has been Chair of COL’s Board of Governors since 2008.

The region is also represented by a network of individuals, selected by member Governments, who liaise directly with COL as Focal Points. COL hosted a Caribbean Focal Points Meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago in March 2011. Held every three years in all four regions of the Commonwealth, these meetings provide an opportunity for Focal Points to share information about the status of ODL in their
countries, receive a report on what COL has done in their country and identify education and training priorities COL can support in the next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015. COL creates specific country action plans and country reports to ensure the region’s needs are addressed.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING:
COL’s Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF) has become one of the world’s top international conferences on learning and global development. Each biennial conference is co-hosted with a partner in a different region of the Commonwealth. PCF7 will be held in Abuja, Nigeria in November 2013, co-hosted by the Federal Ministry of Education. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is the lead partner institution. Previous conferences include PCF6 in India, 2010 and PCF5 in London, 2008.

The five-day programme is designed to address ODL’s role in widening educational access, bridging the digital divide and advancing the social and economic development of communities and nations at large. Thanks to an active sponsorship programme and low registration fees, most participants come from developing countries, including many from the Caribbean. COL presents its Excellence in Distance Education Awards and confers Honorary Fellowships at each Forum. A number of people from the Caribbean are among the past award winners and COL Fellows.

www.col.org/pcf
KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES AND COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA:
COL employs a variety of media to communicate with and provide resources for stakeholders and the wider public. COL’s website, newsletters (Connections/EdTech News and EduComm Asia), blog and electronic resources are among the world’s foremost sources of knowledge on ODL. Most of COL’s recent publications are available on CD-ROM; all are available on the COL website.

COL’s Information Resource Centre maintains an extensive online library of documents about ODL and international development from quality-assessed external sources. More than one million documents are freely available through COL’s Knowledge Finder search facilities.

www.col.org
www.col.org/connections
www.col.org/kf
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