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
Recent COL Initiatives/Activities

COL helps developing nations improve access to quality education and training using distance education and appropriate technologies. Attaining the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All targets are major challenges in South Asia. All Commonwealth countries in the region are faced with limited resources of some kind. While several countries have well developed facilities for distance higher education, there is a need to transfer knowledge, skills and capabilities from the higher education sector to areas such as literacy, elementary and secondary education, teacher training and continuing professional education.

COL applies its expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technology (ICT) to help address Asia’s diverse needs. To meet the enormous information needs related to agriculture, food security and health, the region must use mass education and training strategies. At the same time, quality must not be compromised. COL has introduced several initiatives to support quality improvement in learning for development.

The Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) is COL’s regional agency. CEMCA implements COL’s mandate in the eight countries of Commonwealth Asia. Based in New Delhi, India, CEMCA’s mandate is to promote the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of ICT to serve the educational and training needs of Commonwealth member states in Asia. Working in partnership with COL, other international agencies, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), CEMCA is effectively expanding the use of ODL for development.

www.cemca.org
**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 works closely with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), the apex organisation for open schools in India. COL commissioned a report that provides a plan to create a Department of Capacity Building within NIOS to provide training and support for open schools. COL’s activities also include:

- Establishing the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA), a consortium of open schools that is headquartered at NIOS and includes 13 open schools in South Asia.
- Leading *OER for Open Schools*, a pan-Commonwealth initiative that is improving capacity in materials development among open school teachers and faculty members, and creating a library of open educational resources (OER) that are freely available to teachers and students.
- Supporting improved quality in open schooling through the development of a *Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open Schools*.
- Hosting a capacity building workshop on monitoring and evaluation for the Asia region. Twenty-eight participants from 12 countries attended the workshop, the first of its kind to be held amongst open schools.
- Providing training in copyright and OER through a workshop for representatives from 10 open schools and education agencies in India and participants from more than 20 countries.
- Hosting a workshop in India to develop a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) framework to support the integration of vocational and academic streams in the secondary school curriculum.
- Finalising an implementation plan for a new open school in Pakistan.

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

**TEACHER EDUCATION:** COL is working with institutions in Asia to strengthen teacher development programmes. In partnership with India’s Centre for Environment Education, COL supported development of the one-year Diploma in Environmental Education for teachers and educators. Offered by distance mode, this continuing learning course teaches in-service teachers how to increase learning about environmental issues. COL’s Quality Assurance Toolkit for Teacher Education is freely available to teacher training institutions.

Sri Lanka is one of ten countries selected to participate in the UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly School project. The Child-Friendly Schools model promotes a rights-based concept of quality that goes beyond good teaching methods and learning outcomes to include health, safety and adequacy of school facilities and supplies. The COL project involved integrating the Child-Friendly Schools model into pre-service and in-service teacher training curricula, training of teachers and other education personnel at universities and teacher training institutions, and to strengthen the role of Teacher Resource Centres. This has involved intensive training of Master Teachers and numerous in-country workshops.

In India, COL facilitated training for 400 Master Trainers at Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) Women’s University in the integrated use of ICT in teaching. This partnership will result in the further training of 4,200 teachers in colleges affiliated with the university.

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

**HIGHER EDUCATION:** COL is working to improve access to quality higher education in Asia. Specific initiatives include:

- CEMCA’s quality assurance in multimedia learning materials (QAMLM) framework promotes quality in multimedia-based learning materials.
- Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan), Bangladesh Open University, the Open University of Sri Lanka and Wawasan Open University (Malaysia) 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.

• COL helped develop capacity of tutors for the CEMBA/CEMPA programme through training in case-based teaching in ODL. Tutors from seven countries took part in the workshop in Penang, Malaysia.

• Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) offers COL’s Graduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting, which builds capacity in planning and writing laws and policies through distance learning.

• CEMCA provided technical assistance for IGNOU’s Certificate Programme on Community Radio Management and is sponsoring 100 fellowships for this programme.

• CEMCA is working with IGNOU’s School of Journalism and New Media Studies to develop a Community Media Diploma Programme.

• The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) for effective institutional quality audits provides a cost-effective approach to quality assurance and is freely available. COL RIM has been implemented at the Open University of Sri Lanka and is currently being implemented in three state open universities and one private open learning higher education institution in India.

• COL is using its expertise in ODL to enable conventional universities to go dual mode and create access to larger learner populations. COL supported a workshop for dual mode provision for the National Law University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan to train teachers and course writers in materials development, assessment and learner support.

• In collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode (IIMK), COL is developing online training materials for a course in leadership in higher education. Inputs for the course were collected during a workshop on Leadership for Vice Chancellors organised at IIMK.

• COL supports development of instructional design capabilities by sponsoring candidates for the Master of Instructional Design and Technology programme at Open University Malaysia.

www.col.org/HigherEducation

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH: Brunei Darussalam and Maldives 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 Asian countries – Maldives and Singapore – have hosted VUSSC training workshops, also known as “boot camps”. Numerous educators from Asia have taken part in VUSSC boot camps and online training programmes.
Recent COL Initiatives/Activities

Initiated by COL and now led by an independent Management Committee, 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.

www.col.org/VUSSC

LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: COL helps countries scale up skills development through ODL. CEMCA is working closely with the Government of India to help expand community radio nationwide. CEMCA has hosted 20 consultation workshops where more than 2,000 organisations have learned about the potential of community radio, how successful stations function and how to submit license applications. As a result of these workshops, more than 400 applications have been made and more than 110 community radio stations have been launched.

CEMCA hosted First National Community Radio Sammelam (meeting), bringing together 106 community radio stations in April 2011. The event included speakers, a poster exhibition by 67 community radio stations, CEMCA awards and the release of a compendium of community radio stations. Representatives from UNESCO, UNICEF, Ford Foundation, World Bank, One World Asia and national developmental agencies (e.g. the Ministries of Agriculture, Health, Rural Development, Local Governance, Department of Science and Technology) were introduced to the opportunities that exist through community radio.

CEMCA has launched a Community Radio Facilitation Centre (CCFC) to provide support for community radio stations. CCFC helps applicants navigate the licence application process, develop a solid infrastructure, build capacity and advocate for spectrum allocation.

CEMCA is supporting the expansion of community radio in Bangladesh by providing community radio training workshops, supporting community radio license applicants and facilitating a study tour of community radio in India for a group from Bangladesh.
COL and CEMCA work with institutional partners to design and deliver quality ODL courses, make materials freely available as OER, create needs-based ODL training materials for skills development and foster partnerships among Commonwealth institutions, with a focus on south-south co-operation.

COL is providing support to the State Resource Centre (SRC) Kerala, India to use ODL for non-formal skills development. With capacity building support from COL, SRC Kerala is developing five multimedia courses in Community Development Management which will be offered to 3,000 Preraks (volunteers) through distance learning.

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 was launched in the Tamil Nadu region of India in 2003 and has since been introduced in Gujarat and Maharashtra in India. The partners in the project, VIDIYAL, Arulandar College, Centre for Environment Education (CEE) and Manndeshi Foundation, are working with IFFCO-Kisan Sanchar Ltd (a mobile service company) to provide mobile phone-based learning. Maharashtra Animal and Fisheries Science University has developed ODL materials for veterinary surgeons and farmers.

During 2009-2011, more than 50 workshops and training programmes were conducted for university staff, NGOs, banks and mobile companies in facilitating L3 Farmers.

This powerful partnership of farmers, educational institutions, banks and ICT providers promotes learning for sustained improvement of livelihoods. A recent enhancement is the introduction of the use of mobile phones for learning among farmers.

In collaboration with the University of British Columbia, Canada, COL has developed a learning management system called LIVES (Learning through Interactive Voice Educational Systems). LIVES provides communities with learning through voicemail on mobile phones. More than 1,000 learners can be reached through this system, which can provide automated feedback and can be used to transmit voicemails and audio messages in any language or dialect. The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid-Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad is assessing the potential of LIVES and has developed a framework for conducting large scale field trials covering 20,000 farmers in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.

www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment

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.

CEMCA’s Science for Women’s Health and Nutrition programme provides illiterate women in resource-poor settings with access to learning about important health issues through community radio. The broadcasts are 15-30 minutes in length and reach an estimated 12,000 women daily. In addition to providing valuable health and nutritional information, Science for Women’s Health and Nutrition is creating a repository of audio content that can be re-used and teaches radio production skills to women.

COL provides training in participatory content development to community media groups. In partnership with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), COL hosted workshops in Bangalore and Bangkok that featured facilitators from India, Nepal and the Pacific region – an example of south-south co-operation.

COL has worked with national and district level partners in Bangladesh to build capacities to develop non-formal learning programmes using community radio.

COL/CEMCA supported the development of Internet radio at the Educational Development Centre (EDC) in Maldives and the Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET/ NCERT) in India. The Internet radio services offer online educational programmes at no cost. CEMCA has facilitated the launch of seven Internet radio stations in Bangladesh and India.

In partnership with UNESCO, COL commissioned applied research on the application of mobile devices and mobile-friendly content in Bundelkhand, Madhya Pradesh. Partners include IIT-Delhi, Development Alternatives, Radio Bundelkhand and Swinburne University, Australia. Workshops on participatory content creation for mobiles were run in April and June 2010. Research reports are available on COL’s website.

The Self-Employed Women’s Association, Ahmedabad is the key partner in a CEMCA
initiative to build community capacity in the use of ODL technologies. CEMCA has facilitated workshops on creating programmes to address health issues and setting up a community health programme around occupational health issues. www.col.org/HealthyCommunities

INTEGRATING eLEARNING: In addition to its OER work, COL leads other initiatives to help countries and institutions to understand and implement e-learning. CEMCA’s EasyNow platform enables teachers to create learning materials in a variety of delivery modes from a single electronic source. CEMCA has delivered EasyNow training workshops in India, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

COL’s Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) uses ODL to train teachers in how to integrate ICT into school management, teaching and learning. An Instructional Design tool developed by COL is being used in developing countries to create quality courses and learning materials that use best practices in eLearning. 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.
• At a Vice Chancellor’s conclave hosted by CEMCA in November 2011, 12 Vice Chancellors from India interacted with ICT experts from across Asia and developed a road map for sharing OER and developing capacity in the development and use of OER.

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’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), is a resource for the region that organises training activities and provides ODL expertise and resources using its own staff and local experts.

COL maintains strong relationships with many stakeholders in Asia including member governments, partner institutions, donors and individuals. COL’s Honorary Advisors, a network of eminent ODL professionals, includes a representative from Asia. The region is also represented by a COL Chair and a network of individuals, selected by member Governments, who liaise directly with COL as Focal Points. COL hosted an Asia Focal Points Meeting in Penang, Malaysia in September 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. Indira Gandhi National Open University co-hosted PCF6 in Kochi, Kerala, India in November 2010. 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.

PCF’s 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 Asia. COL presents its Excellence in Distance Education Awards and confers Honorary Fellowships at each Forum. A number of Asians 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, newsletter (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.

CEMCA publishes an annual newsletter, EduComm Asia, and produces knowledge resources on various applications of ICT in education. In partnership with regional and international donor agencies, CEMCA has produced training resources such as Quality Assurance of Multimedia Learning Materials; eLearning: A Guidebook of Principles, Procedures and Practices; Educational Multimedia: A Handbook for Teacher-Developers; and Women’s Literacy and ICT. CEMCA serves as a regional networking and collaborating centre for ODL and technology-enabled learning services.

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
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