Some ODL APPLICATIONS initiatives: 2003-2006

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS/ALLIANCES/NETWORKING
COL has developed strategic initiatives, and added value through ODL, by partnering with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) institutions. For example, COL has assisted the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) on conceptualising and developing ICRISAT’s Virtual Academy for Semi-Arid Tropics (VASAT). COL is also collaborating with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on developing a working model for delivering agriculture degree programmes through its Global Open Agriculture and Food University (GO-AFU).

DEVELOPING MODELS/MATERIALS/INNOVATIVE PROPOSALS
Providing expertise and modest start-up funding through its Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education, Innovation and Networks programme (COL-PROTEIN) [www.col.org/protein]. COL supports qualified, innovative, grassroots level education and development projects and, through this, helps to develop innovative ODL models. COL helped Shidhulai Swarajtar Sangstha (SSS) in Bangladesh to develop its “Mobile Internet Educational Units on Boats: Integrated Environmental Support to the Farmers of Atrai River Watershed Project” that has now received wide international recognition. Other initiatives include a print-based ODL agricultural extension programme for officials in Sub-Saharan Africa and developing a basic skills training programme for small island states.

TEACHER TRAINING AND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLING
Training and leadership development for heads of institutions to better equip them to implement and/or enhance ODL offerings. Hosting management development institutes for teacher education administrators from Sub-Saharan Africa. Providing training workshops and ODL systems-building expertise to the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI), Nigeria; the Centre for Environment Education (CEE), India; and Mico College, Jamaica. Providing ODL support materials and media to train staff of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), India, stationed in remote areas.

HEALTH AND GOOD GOVERNANCE
Joining global efforts to combat diseases through education. Providing ODL-based training on communicable diseases in Malawi, the Solomon Islands, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Partnering with the World Health Organization and The Valley Trust NGO to deliver HIV/AIDS training and information to rural villages in in KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa, through instructional videos. Exploring how ODL can help foster good governance practices, such as training election observers and providing basic civic rights information.
APPLYING ODL Effectively

ODL may be a useful way to educate and to train, but how can you apply its concepts and programmes most effectively?

COL’s pan-Commonwealth ODL Applications programme emphasises using ODL methods and information and communications technologies (ICTs) to help developing countries achieve Millennium Development Goals. These include eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and developing global partnerships. In addition, COL addresses Commonwealth priorities, such as good governance and the needs of small states.

COL collaborates with governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to develop working models and to provide education and training to policy makers, administrators and practitioners, galvanising and empowering them to implement appropriate development plans and programmes; to use ODL in gender and culturally-sensitive ways; and to address educational and training priorities.

Specific focus areas include poverty reduction programmes addressing communities at risk, rural development, environmental sustainability and food security; basic education initiatives such as teacher training and alternative schooling methods; health initiatives on HIV/AIDS, communicable diseases, nutrition, public health and hygiene; and good governance initiatives such as public administration programmes.

Building capacity responsively

COL is committed to building the reach and influence of its programming and focuses its work through an action-oriented Three-year Plan, revised triennially in consultation with Commonwealth governments, funding and development organisations and education institutions.

The Three-year Plan 2003-2006: Building Capacity in Open and Distance Learning goes further than any previous framework to define how COL focuses and manages its human, knowledge and technology resources. It defines COL’s role and responsibilities in the broader international education and training environment and expands the programme to include specific development goals, methods and outcomes.

www.col.org/programmes/reporting/3year_plan.htm

Better business, as usual

With the Results Based Management approach, COL responds to development needs and issues more cohesively. It can more efficiently evaluate proposed and ongoing programmes, and can more effectively harmonise its work with international development goals. COL’s knowledge management systems, including databases, information sharing and communications efforts, are increasingly co-ordinated with specific initiatives — enabling a more targeted response to building programme and project awareness, providing information and promoting activities.

www.col.org/programmes/reporting/eval02.htm

www.thecommonwealth.org