



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

President's Quarterly Progress Report: October – December 2016

1. Board Matters

At the 36th Audit Committee Meeting, held on November 10, 2016 the audited consolidated financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2016 were approved and these can be viewed on [OAsis](#). The next meeting of the Audit Committee, to be held by teleconference, is planned for February 16, 2017.

The 41st Executive Committee was held via teleconference on November 15, 2016, where an updated risk management matrix was approved, the fundraising strategy further refined and the topic of COL's competitive advantage in a highly risk-prone environment, discussed.

I would like to place on record COL's gratitude to Professor Atta-ur-Rahman, Asia Representative, and the Honourable Danny Faure, Africa Representative, whose terms concluded at the end of December 31, 2016. We appreciate their outstanding contributions and look forward to our continued engagement.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Lord David Puttnam as the new Board member appointed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

2. General

2016 has been a very successful year for COL. DFID awarded COL an A++ for substantially exceeding expectations in outputs and outcomes. COL received more contributions from Member States than ever before in its history, as well as additional contributions for skills development for girls and for promoting the use of open educational resources (OER) globally. COL is seen as 'more effective than it was three years ago' (Stakeholder Survey, November 2016) and continues to enjoy a robust reputation across the Commonwealth.

The COL brand was further strengthened by the successful Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8), organised in partnership with the Open University Malaysia from November 27 to 30, 2016. The forum was inaugurated by the Malaysian Minister of Higher Education, Honourable Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh. The theme 'Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development' linked closely

with COL's Strategic Plan 2015-2021 and the priorities of Member States. The success of PCF8 was largely due to i) ownership by COL staff; ii) a very experienced, generous and open-minded partner; iii) excellent venue and logistics; iv) outstanding keynotes; and v) ministerial presence. Presentations are available on [OAsis](#).

One of the highlights of the forum was the Ministerial Roundtable chaired by Honourable Dr. Unity Dow of Botswana and attended by our Board Chair Dr. Linda Sissons and Deputy Chair HE Mariam Katagum. Ministers discussed how open, distance and flexible learning could be harnessed for achieving better access, equity and quality in education. Another highlight was the adoption of the [Kuala Lumpur Declaration](#) at the Valedictory Session. The KL Declaration provides a clear roadmap of how distance and technology-based learning can be deployed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4.

During PCF8, COL organised a joint session with UN Women at which the Executive Director Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and I signed an MOU to collaborate on promoting gender equality in education and ensuring that women and girls acquire relevant skills for economic empowerment. This will complement COL's current work in gender which includes skills development for girls, community radio for women's health and nutrition, and empowerment of women farmers.

Immediately following PCF8, COL held the first regional consultation on OER, in collaboration with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia, with support from the Hewlett Foundation. The two-day regional consultation, hosted by Asia e University, deliberated on the theme of 'OER for inclusive and equitable quality education: from commitment to action' and attracted 48 participants from 24 countries, including several non-Commonwealth nations such as Bhutan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal and Uzbekistan. The Malaysian Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Honourable Datuk Dr. Mary Yap Kain Ching, gave the valedictory address.

2.1 President's Activities

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation organise an annual induction meeting for London diplomats where COL is invited. This is always a welcome opportunity to brief high commissioners about COL's work, since they have overall responsibility for the Commonwealth. High commissioners commented favourably on COL's capacity to evolve and respond to the needs of Member States, be accountable to its stakeholders and work with partners for leveraging impact.

This was also an opportunity to convene a stakeholder consultation to discuss the feasibility of COL organising an Education Forum in the wings of future CHOGMs. While there was a consensus that COL would be best placed to convene such a Forum, opinion was divided on the value and relevance of such an event. The final report will be shared with the Commonwealth Secretary-General HE Patricia Scotland for a decision. I had meetings with the Secretary-General and the Australian High Commissioner to the UK, Honourable Alexander Downer, both of whom expressed confidence in COL's ability to deliver.

The University of the Philippines Open University invited me to deliver a keynote at the Asian Association of Open Universities conference on 'Opening Education in Asia: Changing Perspectives,' held in Manila. I gave another keynote on 'Leadership and Innovation for the Future of ODL' at the invitation of Shanghai Open University. Both trips were covered by the organisers.

PCF8 provided me with the additional opportunity to connect with a wide array of partners at the six pre-conference workshops and to reinforce COL's message that creative and innovative uses of technology can scale up learning for sustainable development. Partnerships are fundamental to everything that we do and are crucial to achieving impact in the field.

After PCF8, I chaired the annual Advisory Council meeting of CEMCA in New Delhi. This was also an opportunity to call on the new Minister of Human Resources Development, Honourable Mr. Prakash Javadekar, and to thank the Secretary Mr. V.S. Oberoi (our Board member) and Joint Secretary Mr. S.P. Goyal for their support in enhancing India's contribution to COL.

While in India, I visited the community radio project for women's health and nutrition. I also visited boat schools in a remote region of Bangladesh where I saw first-hand the work of our partners who are training girls for livelihoods. At another site, girls received training in computers and fashion design and were linked with potential employers for secure jobs. There was great deal of enthusiasm and confidence among these young girls who, through their street plays and dances, raised awareness about preventing early or forced marriage for girls in their communities. These life-changing interventions have been made possible through additional contributions from the governments of Australia, Canada and India.

The University of Swaziland conferred an honorary doctorate on me and I had the privilege to meet His Majesty King Mswati III (the Chancellor of the university), Honourable Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini and Minister of Education Phineas Magagula at the convocation. I received another honorary doctorate from Wawasan Open University in Malaysia just prior to PCF8. It was an honour to be invited to address the fifth Convocation of Bangladesh Open University and to meet the President of the Republic, HE Abdul Hamid and Minister of Education, Honourable Nurul Islam Nahid.

While we rely on technology to reach out to our dispersed stakeholders around the Commonwealth, we cannot underestimate the power of these face-to-face interactions that leave a lasting impression about COL.

3. Programme

PCF8 provided an excellent platform for consulting partners and developing monitoring and evaluation (M & E) strategies for our various initiatives. The Pacific region

was an area of focus and will continue to remain a priority. COL's new eLogframe system, developed internally, was launched and will serve to further strengthen M & E processes.

3.1 Education Sector

3.1.1 Open Schooling

The Graduate Diploma in Open Schooling, developed by COL, was officially launched in November and will be offered by NAMCOL, Namibia. Vanuatu has approved a strategy for converting existing school curriculum into an eLearning format and as OER for teacher training. This will not only benefit open schools but also the 535 mainstream schools in the country.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

OER for English Language Teaching is being increasingly used in East Africa, reaching 300 teachers, 714 students in Kenya and 2,400 students in Uganda. Pilot testing of the diagnostic instruments for identifying school children with special needs in the Caribbean is continuing.

3.1.3 Higher Education

ODL policy formulation workshops were conducted for the University of Malawi and Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique. In Sri Lanka, a workshop was conducted for the University of Jaffna which resulted in the development of 13 quality enhancement tools. Two OER courses on principles of micro- and macro-economics were developed by a COL Chair. Five staff at the University of Papua New Guinea have received COL scholarships for enrolment in the eLearning certificate offered by the Open Polytechnic New Zealand.

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

Sixty-seven academics from the National University of Lesotho participated in a five-day capacity building workshop for developing learning materials for four diploma and degree programmes. In partnership with the Commonwealth Youth Affairs Division and the University of the West Indies (UWI), VUSSC has started to migrate the Bachelor of Youth Development Work courses onto its learning management platform Moodle. A six-week online course on blended learning was completed by 26 staff from various post-secondary institutions and ministries in Barbados, Belize and Namibia. The National University of Samoa has taken steps to align its courses with the Transnational Qualifications Framework.

3.1.5 GIRLS Inspire

Two new safe learning environments, which ensure safety and appropriate facilities for girls, were established in institutions in India and Mozambique. In Pakistan,

540 women and girls were enrolled in safe learning environments. Two exhibitions were held to introduce the girls and their products to the market. More than 1,500 girls completed skills training during this quarter. Community radio was used to raise awareness in financial literacy, health and hygiene in Mhaswad, India. Workshops were conducted for more than 500 participants in the use of mobile phones for learning in the same region.

3.2 Skills Sector

3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

COL and Ghana's Takoradi Technical University are partnering with Getenergy to pilot the 'Field Ready' programme for training young people for employment in the oil and gas industry. An ICT Review was carried out in Kenya for 19 new partner institutions. The flexible skills development online course was offered to 54 participants from Nigeria who achieved a 90 percent completion rate. Eighteen people in Tuvalu have started a horticulture course. COL is supporting Vanuatu's Ministry of Education & Training to adapt and contextualise a COL OER course in small engine maintenance as an accredited programme.

3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)

COL formalised its partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs to initiate L3F. L3F partner Rural Agricultural Development Authority, Jamaica, developed two modules on Irish potato farming and converted them to short messages (SMS) to be delivered through a mobile-based learning platform. The SMS are sent out daily to 500 farmers, followed by bi-weekly, face-to-face learning sessions. An online course module for agricultural extension officers was developed in collaboration with Mona School of Business at UWI. Agricultural Innovation Systems Brokerage Association, Uganda, hosted a three-day workshop, bringing together L3F partners from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to build a community of practice. Theni Women Goat Rearing Company, formed by goat farmers through COL's L3F, received an Equity Grant of \$18,000 from Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium, a society sponsored by Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, India. COL is working with the National Reserve Bank of Tonga to promote financial literacy among financially-excluded communities.

3.2.3 Technology-Enabled Learning

A national consultation on developing OER policy for Bangladesh was held at the Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with Bangladesh Open University. Two workshops were held in India: one on course development for a diploma in animation and multimedia at Odisha State Open University and another on the development of media-related courses at Centurion University of Technology and Management. A consultation on an OER policy was held in collaboration with University Sains Islam Malaysia.

3.2.4 OER for Skills Development

OER implementation guidelines were developed in Cameroon according to the specific needs of the two education ministries and the ten regions in the country. Nearly 400 policy makers and teachers were trained in the systematic implementation of OER using these guidelines. A five-day workshop on course development and OER was conducted for 11 vocational and technical trainers in Kenya to develop a 100-hour certificate course on solar photovoltaic technology. The 'Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016' research report was published and launched during PCF8. Discussions were held with Tonga's Ministry of Education to strengthen OER and eLearning.

3.3 Cross-cutting Theme

3.3.1 Gender

The Institutional Gender Scorecard was pilot-tested at the University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka. According to the pilot, gender mainstreaming is still a new concept for the majority of the staff who need gender sensitisation programmes before launching gender mainstreaming activities. A new model for addressing the learning needs of at-risk boys was developed and shared with partner institutions in three Caribbean countries. Review and feedback was provided for the draft institutional gender policy of a partner institution in Tanzania.

3.4 eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)

eLIO commenced six programmes with UNHCR, UNICEF Geneva, World Bank, Council of Europe and the National Accreditation Council of Guyana, involving 52 cohorts and 238 learners. A new quality assurance course was offered in Guyana and proposals made to the World Bank for delivering six new courses were successful.

3.5 Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

In Bangladesh, CEMCA is working with five community radio stations on establishing web radio to strengthen skills development in rural communities. In India, CEMCA assisted Telangana State to develop an OER policy, which has been submitted to the state government for final approval. Similarly, the Central University of Himachal Pradesh officially adopted an OER policy, developed with the help of CEMCA. Eight workshops were conducted to promote activity-based learning for 24 vocational trainers and skills development for 700 youth. A partnership with the Green Jobs Sector Council to work on skills development in solar energy was finalised. With the support of India's Department of Science and Technology, a baseline survey of women on issues relating to health and nutrition was conducted in nine marginalised communities. Capacity was built for nine community radio stations to produce 90 radio programmes related to women's health and nutrition.

3.6 Regional Centres

3.6.1 Southern African Development Community - Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE)

SADC-CDE has been engaged in various capacity building activities, including an online project management course and an MED course through the Open University of Tanzania.

3.6.2 Research and Training Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL)

An ODL policy formulation workshop for ten public dual-mode universities in Nigeria was conducted, resulting in draft policies.

3.6.3 Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD)

During PCF8, stakeholders from the Pacific region discussed strategies to strengthen the role of PACFOLD in achieving learning for sustainable development. The support of the University of the South Pacific in staffing the centre will help fast track activities.

3.7 Vice President's Activities

The Vice President was invited by the Tertiary Education Commission and the Ministry of Education to speak at the EduVision ICT in Education Conference in Jamaica. Dr. Bala's presentation recommended that open schooling could be used to address the challenge of declining secondary school enrolments in the country.

A toolkit for measuring empowerment was published for distribution to Ministries of Women's Affairs in the Commonwealth.

During PCF8, Dr. Bala met the senior officials of Alliance for Financial Inclusion to discuss a joint programme on financial literacy. He was responsible for directing the various pre-conference activities, the Honorary COL Fellows presentation and the Excellence in Distance Education Awards. He headed the committee which developed the KL Declaration.

The Vice President met the Chief General Manager of the National Bank for Rural and Agricultural Development to discuss the strategy for scaling up L3F in India. He participated in a meeting organised by L3F stakeholders and attended the CEMCA Advisory Council meeting. While in India, he also visited a community radio station to review the progress of CEMCA's Women and Science project.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments

During this quarter, contributions have been received from 18 countries bringing the total number of countries contributing by the end of December 31, 2016 to 31 (compared to 25 countries in the same quarter in the previous year). Details are provided under '5.1 Revenue'.

India confirmed that it would increase its contribution to COL by 33 percent from the previous year's level of INR 60,000,000.

4.2 Focal Points

COL welcomed the following Focal Points:

- Namibia – Ms. Veno Kauaria, Director, National Libraries and Archive Services, Acting Deputy Permanent Secretary, Department of Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.
- Pakistan – Professor Dr. Arshad Ali, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission.
- Belize – Dr. Yvonne Palma, Education Officer, Employment Training & Education Services, Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture.

4.3 Congratulatory Letters

Congratulatory letters were sent to one newly appointed Head of Government and three Ministers of Education.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

COL received over \$7.2 million in revenues between July 1 and December 31, 2016. Voluntary contributions from member governments made up \$5.9 million of this total.

Eighteen countries have made contributions totalling more than \$1.7 million in this quarter as follows: Antigua & Barbuda – \$6,626; Bangladesh – \$39,987; Barbados \$60,471; Cyprus – \$16,678; Dominica – \$6,594; India – \$1.2 million; Jamaica – \$41,821; Lesotho – \$93,429; Malawi – \$40,314; Malaysia – \$49,121; Namibia – \$26,502; Nauru – \$6,626; Papua New Guinea – \$39,987; Rwanda – \$39,869; Saint Kitts & Nevis – \$39,987; Seychelles – \$19,876; Swaziland – \$6,744; and Tonga – \$26,502.

Additional contributions of \$1.3 million in the form of grants and fee for services were also received during the period July 1 – December 31, 2016, inclusive of deferred revenue amounts.

5.2 Cash Flow

At December 31, 2016, COL held approximately \$10 million in cash to meet operating activities and \$9.5 million in the form of a restricted reserve to provide for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding.

5.3 Expenditures

By the end of the quarter, over \$5.9 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff and office costs. This amount represents approximately 50 percent of the annual budget of \$12 million approved for 2016-2017.

6. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

Aptus and MOOCs for Development continue to generate interest among participants from a number of Commonwealth countries. COL assisted the Government of Samoa in configuring Aptus hardware and sourcing devices which will be deployed in the new academic year. COL supported a MOOC on physics for high school students, which attracted over 50,000 learners from around the world. An additional 1,000 OER, mostly full courses, have been catalogued in the Directory of OER (<http://doer.col.org>). The KM team assisted with the in-house design and development of eLogframes for use by Education Specialists.

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

PCF8 attracted over 500 participants from 59 countries (49 Commonwealth nations). The Asa Briggs Lecture, which is a special highlight of all PCFs, was delivered by former COL President Sir John Daniel, OC. Tan Sri Raj Dhanarajan, another former COL President, gave the inaugural address. The keynote speakers were COL Board Member Mr. Martin Bean, CBE; Professor Dato' Mansor Fadzil; Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Dr. David Wiley. Ministerial participation from the host country, Malaysia and from Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Seychelles and Swaziland added a strong intergovernmental dimension to the forum. A total of 144 papers were presented in the technical sessions (<http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/2433>). The Market Exchange session, a regular feature of PCF, enabled participants to discuss and share key innovations and services informally.

Seven eminent experts from around the Commonwealth were conferred the title of Honorary COL Fellow: Mr. Martin Bean (Australia), Professor Rajesh Chandra (Fiji), Dr. Luz Marina Longworth (Barbados), Professor Naveed Akhtar Malik (Pakistan),

Professor Tolly Salvator Augustin Mbwette (Tanzania), Honourable Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang (Ghana) and Ms. Chetna Vijay Sinha (India). Excellence in Distance Education Awards were presented to: National Institute of Open Schooling, India, Open University Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Mr. Elvis Amenya, Kenya and Mr. Clement Ndahani, Tanzania.

The KL Declaration was an important outcome of PCF8. It was drafted by a multi-disciplinary group of experts who sought and received daily inputs from the participants. We are grateful to Professor Dato' Dr. Mansor Fadzil, President of OUM, and his dedicated team for the excellent hospitality, arrangements and support. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, we were able to sponsor developing country delegates to participate in the forum. Our gratitude is due to: Association of Commonwealth Universities; Commonwealth Foundation; National Open University of Nigeria; National Institute of Open Schooling, India; Open University, UK and the University of London.

News of various events at PCF8 was communicated regularly and frequently via the COL [website and social media platforms](#). All plenary speeches were streamed live via [YouTube](#) and a daily *Connections* newsletter was shared with PCF8 attendees.

8. Communications

Both Facebook and Twitter channels as well as the COL website saw significant activity, particularly during and after PCF8. Referrals from social media played a significant role in the increase in visits to the website. Social media shares associated with the COL-UN Women MOU placed COL in front of new audiences. COL was mentioned in over 75 media stories during the quarter, with a wide reach in the Commonwealth. The top four countries were Bangladesh, India, Jamaica and Malaysia.

9. Visitors to COL

Some of the recent visitors to COL include:

- His Excellency Mr. Tony Negus, Australian High Commissioner to Canada, and Mr. Kevin Lamb, Honorary Consul and Trade Commissioner, Consulate of Australia, Vancouver.
- Mr. Neil Ford, Director, Communications Division, Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Ms. Nicole Davison, Consul General, British Consulate-General, Vancouver.

10. Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (<http://oasis.col.org>):
 - *Connections*, November 2016, Vol. 21, No. 3 ([Newsletter](#)).
 - *Journal of Learning for Development*, Vol. 3, No. 3 ([JLAD](#)).
 - *Digital Learning: Reforming Teacher Education to Promote Access, Equity and Quality in Sub-Saharan Africa* (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2443>).
 - Curriculum for Digital Education Leadership: A Concept Paper (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2442>).
 - *Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016* (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2441>).
 - Value for Money Review and Social Return on Investment Analysis (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2440>).
 - *Guidelines for Online Assessment for Educators* (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2446>).
 - *Kavya: Inspired by Stories, Stories to Inspire* (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2451>).
 - *Measuring Empowerment Toolkit: Using the Commonwealth of Learning's Three-Dimensional Empowerment Framework* (<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2468>).
- Speeches and presentations at <https://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
January 13, 2017*