

PACIFIC

Commonwealth of Learning's work by region



AUSTRALIA

FIJI

KIRIBATI

NAURU

NEW ZEALAND

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

SAMOA

SOLOMON ISLANDS

TONGA

TUVALU

VANUATU

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

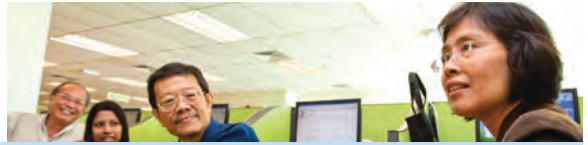




Recent COL Initiatives/Activities



COL helps developing nations improve access to quality education and training using distance education and appropriate technologies. As a region comprised largely of small island states, the Commonwealth South Pacific faces distinct challenges. Most countries have limited resources to sustain a large education and training infrastructure. While the University of the South Pacific reaches a wide range of learners through open and distance learning (ODL), there remains a pressing need to increase economic productivity and literacy levels throughout the region. Through partnerships with institutions in the region, COL is applying its expertise in ODL and information and communication technology (ICT) to help address needs in the Pacific.



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.

- The University of the South Pacific (USP) School of Education, in collaboration with COL, is leading a three-phase Pacific Island Open Schooling project. The first phase, a desk study report, explored open schooling as a strategy for “second-chance education” in 11 Pacific Island countries. The second phase involved the establishment of new open schools in Kiribati and Tonga in 2011. The final phase is focusing on region-wide expansion of open

schools. COL's Forum on Open Schooling in the Pacific held in Tonga in November 2011 brought together USP and Ministry of Education representatives from nine Pacific countries.

- Four Pacific countries (Australia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Tonga) 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.
- Open schools in the Pacific have access to quality learning materials through COL's *OER for Open Schools* initiative. Master Teachers in six developing Commonwealth countries developed 20 new secondary-level courses that can be freely downloaded, adapted and re-used as open educational resources (OER).

www.col.org/OpenSchooling





Recent COL Initiatives/Activities



TEACHER EDUCATION: COL is working with institutions in the Pacific to strengthen teacher development programmes. Samoa and Solomon Islands are among five Commonwealth countries taking part in a capacity building programme on Multigrade Teaching for Teachers. This initiative is using ODL to enhance the professional skills of teachers who are teaching multiple grade levels. COL's *Quality Assurance Toolkit for Teacher Education* was introduced to Pacific educators at a workshop in Papua New Guinea and is freely available on COL's website.

www.col.org/TeacherEducation

HIGHER EDUCATION: COL is working to improve access to quality higher education in the Pacific by working closely with the University of the South Pacific (USP), the primary provider of off-campus tertiary education in the region. USP offers COL's Graduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting, which

builds capacity in planning and writing laws and policies. The University of Papua New Guinea is 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. 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.

www.col.org/HigherEducation

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH: Eight Pacific countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) 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 Samoa. Numerous educators from the Pacific have taken part in VUSSC boot camps and online courses.

The National University of Samoa (NUS) has started to use the Diploma in Agriculture programme developed at a VUSSC workshop in March 2010. After appropriate contextualisation, NUS has integrated elements of this programme into its Diploma in Teacher Education and is offering it to learners who want to become agricultural teachers.

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

www.vussc.org

LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: Low levels of literacy and numeracy are a major drawback for young Pacific islanders who want to train in skills for livelihoods. Working with language experts at the National University of Samoa, COL supported the development of a course in *Literacy for Basic Trades* as a companion course to existing ODL courses in *Small Business, Small Engine Maintenance, Working with Concrete* and *Tourism as a Business*. Authored by writers from seven Pacific countries, the courses are specific to





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the regional context but are also proving to be applicable in Africa and the Caribbean.

Small island states such as Nauru suffer from an acute lack of skills training opportunities for unemployed youth. Working with the Department of Education and with co-funding from the New Zealand Aid Programme, COL supported the Nauruan writers of the literacy course in implementing the basic trade course, *Working with Concrete*. More than 200 young people from across the country participated in the course

COL facilitated the establishment of the Pacific Association for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) and continues to work with PATVET members to increase access to skills training in the Pacific through distance and flexible approaches.

COL commissioned a study about ODL and use of ICT in TVET in the Pacific. Conducted

by The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, the study examined opportunities for flexible learning approaches to TVET in nine Commonwealth Pacific countries and makes recommendations for future activities in the region.

COL is working with the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) to adapt a Certificate in Community Development Programme to distance delivery. The Community Education & Training Centre has been providing skills training to 30 Pacific women each year through a seven-month full-time programme. The new distance programme benefits from the use of appropriate educational technology and will be accessible to many more people, including male learners. The potential impact on community development throughout the Pacific is substantial.

www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment



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 Papua New Guinea in partnership with the National Agricultural Research Institute. This powerful partnership of farmers, educational institutions, banks and ICT providers promotes learning for sustained improvement of livelihoods.

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 spearheaded a community learning initiative in Isabel Province, Solomon Islands that brought together community partners, including a network of small radio broadcasters, to provide training and develop community learning programmes about local health and related development issues.



PHOTO: DAVID LEEMING



PHOTO: CLAIRE VARLEY



Recent COL Initiatives/Activities

PHOTO: CLAIRE VARLEY



- COL led the development of a community learning programme in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea that combines educational media content and face-to-face interactions. Community radio programmes about women's health and development have been broadcast weekly since October 2010, supported by grassroots women's networks.
- A COL workshop in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea provided training on how to use mobiles to support community learning programmes.
- COL provided training to a new FM radio station on the remote island of Nuiatoputapu, Tonga to help local residents plan, create and broadcast radio programmes about important local issues such as tsunami recovery and preventing disease outbreaks.
- COL sponsored workshops on educational programme development skills (Bangalore, 2010; Bangkok, 2011) for community media representatives from the Pacific through the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

www.col.org/HealthyCommunities

PHOTO: DAVID LEEING



INTEGRATING eLEARNING: In addition to its OER work, COL leads other initiatives to help countries and institutions to understand and implement eLearning. 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.

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 Inter-American Development Bank, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 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



Recent COL Initiatives/Activities

REGIONAL PRESENCE

COL maintains strong relationships with many stakeholders in the Pacific, including member governments, partner institutions, donors and individuals. Four of COL's Honorary Advisors, a network of eminent ODL professionals, are from the Pacific. 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 Pacific Focal Points Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand in November 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 Pacific. COL presents its Excellence in Distance Education Awards and confers Honorary Fellowships at each Forum. A number of people from the Pacific 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.

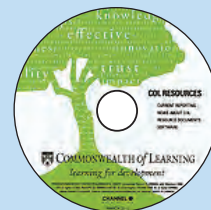
COL's Information Resource Centre maintains an extensive online library of documents about ODL and international development from quality-assessed external sources. More than one million documents are freely available through COL's Knowledge Finder search facilities.

www.col.org

www.col.org/connections

www.col.org/kf

www.col.org/blog



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

1055 West Hastings Street, Suite 1200, Vancouver, BC V6E 2E9 CANADA

PH: +1-604-775-8200 | FAX: +1-604-775-8210 | WEB: www.col.org | EMAIL: info@col.org

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.