

# Connections



*Learning for Development*



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## PARTNERSHIPS, INNOVATION BUILD HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

COL emphasises programmes that are local, collaborative and participatory. Radio and mobile phones are the primary vehicles used, supported by face-to-face discussions and efforts by community partners to encourage participants to adopt healthy practices promoted in the learning programmes.

More than 700 people, almost half of them women, have taken part in COL-sponsored training related to the design and delivery of community learning programmes during the current Three-Year Plan, 2009-2012. The programmes are based on strong partnerships, particularly at the local level. A total of 48 community groups in 10 countries are harnessing the potential of non-formal open and distance learning (ODL) to promote healthy communities.

Most recently, in September 2011, participants from 14 Commonwealth countries took part in a meeting of community learning partners in Cape Town, South Africa. In addition to sharing best practices and mapping out future plans for COL's Healthy Communities initiative, the partners made important connections that are already leading to greater "south-south" co-operation.

The week-long Cape Town meeting focused on the use of media for non-formal learning about community health and development, particularly in resource-poor settings.

Increasingly, COL's Healthy Community partners – national and regional media, health and development groups – are collaborating among themselves, sharing resources and best practices.

- The Kenya Community Media Network, working with Farm Radio International, picked up COL's training module on *Integrating Mobile Telephony* and carried out a workshop for media and community development groups in Nairobi, Kenya in November.
- Staff from the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) in Jamaica worked with the Ministry of Health and local stakeholders to design a community learning programme about maternal health in Dangriga, Belize.

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## ASHA KANWAR APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF COL

Professor Asha Kanwar, one of the world's leading advocates for learning for development, and current Vice President of COL, has been appointed President and Chief Executive Officer. She succeeds Sir John Daniel, whose term as COL's President ends on 31 May.

Dr. Kanwar has over 30 years of experience in teaching, research and administration. In addition to the several books, research papers and articles to her credit, she has made significant contributions to gender studies, especially the impact of distance education on the lives of Asian women.

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## PARTNERSHIPS, INNOVATION BUILD HEALTHY COMMUNITIES CONTINUED FROM COVER

- The Media and Training Centre for Health in South Africa is working with the Health and Social Development Association of Sierra Leone to design a community learning programme about water and sanitation in Kailahun District.
- Maraa, a media and arts collective based in Bangalore, India, and the Regional Media Centre of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community collaborated with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) to run a “training of trainers” workshop on developing participatory learning programme in Bangkok in December.

### COMBINING RADIO AND mLEARNING

Educational broadcasting on local radio has several distinct advantages over face-to-face learning including:

- **Accessibility:** Learners only need access to a radio and don't need to travel to physical learning centres. Audio lessons overcome literacy challenges, and well-produced radio is a hugely popular and engaging medium.
- **Opportunities for participation:** Community groups and individuals can be involved in designing and delivering learning content, which builds capacity and ensures relevance for a local audience.
- **Affordability:** Community radio can communicate with a large number of people at a relatively low cost and build local capacity in communication for development and education.

The growing presence of mobile phones is proving to be a game changer for educational broadcasting and community learning programmes, as it is in other fields, providing increasing alternatives for interactivity and vastly improving marketing and assessment.

### ONLINE COMMUNITY LEARNING TOOLKIT

Delegates at the Cape Town workshop provided input for an Online Community Learning Toolkit, which will help media and community groups develop participatory learning programmes. The Toolkit will walk groups through the steps of the programme development process, outlining best practices from existing programmes.

The beta version of the Online Toolkit was launched at the end of 2011 and will be freely available on COL's website later this year.

COL and its partners are also collaborating with Farm Radio International Canada to develop a distance training course on developing regular farm radio programmes for rural communities. Aimed at radio broadcasters in sub-Saharan Africa, the 10-week course will be open for registration in April with a start date in July 2012.



*Find information about COL's Healthy Communities programmes, reports, articles and other resources at [www.col.org/HealthyCommunities](http://www.col.org/HealthyCommunities) and [www.facebook.com/COL.HealthyCommunities](http://www.facebook.com/COL.HealthyCommunities). The beta version of the Online Community Learning Toolkit is at <http://clptoolkit.pbworks.com>.*

## ASHA KANWAR APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF COL CONTINUED FROM COVER

She is also a recipient of several awards and fellowships, including the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) Prize of Excellence.

“I am delighted by the Board's appointment of Professor Kanwar as President of our organisation,” noted the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Chair of COL's Board of Governors. “With her profound knowledge and rich experience of open and distance learning and her vision for COL in the medium term, I expect that she will take COL to a new level through a process of significant and sustainable evolutionary change. Her personal attributes and her international profile should prove to be valuable assets.”

Professor Kanwar joined COL in 2003 as Education Specialist, Higher Education, and became Vice President in 2006. Her current role includes specific responsibility for stakeholder engagement and programme direction. Earlier, she was Director of the School of Humanities at the Indira Gandhi National Open University (India) and was Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University from 1999 to 2000. Prior to joining COL, she worked in Africa as a consultant in open and distance

learning at UNESCO's Regional Office for Education in Africa (BREDA) in Dakar, Senegal.

“I am very pleased that Asha will succeed me,” said Sir John Daniel. “In her years at COL, as Specialist for Higher Education and, since 2006, as Vice President, she has made an immense contribution, bringing greater focus to our programme and inspiring many more governments to support COL financially. I am delighted that COL will have a woman as president for the first time.”



“COL is a unique organisation which has the ability to respond to the needs of a wide range of stakeholders,” said Professor Kanwar, “from the Batwa community in the forests of Uganda, the rural women in Malawi, goat herders in India, construction workers in Nauru, out of school youth in Jamaica to ministries and tertiary institutions across the Commonwealth. Being

relevant to such a diverse constituency and delivering on results is both a challenge and an opportunity that I look forward to.”

Former Presidents include Tan Sri Dato' Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan (1995–2004) and Professor James Maraj (1989–1995).

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

## AUSTRALIA REJOINS COL

Australia has rejoined COL as a major funding partner. The announcement was made by Australia's then Foreign Minister, the Honourable Kevin Rudd, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth, Australia in October. COL's core funding is provided through contributions from Commonwealth member states. In 2010-2011, 44 of the Commonwealth's 54 countries provided funding to COL, with six countries – Canada, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Kingdom – designated as major funders.

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

## COL RIM SUPPORTS QA IN EIGHT UNIVERSITIES

COL's Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) for effective quality audits in higher education institutions is being used to support quality assurance (QA) in eight Commonwealth universities.

The National Institute of Health and Social Studies, Seychelles completed its COL RIM implementation in November. The University of Guyana and Seychelles Institute of Management have both completed the last phase of the COL RIM process, the final verification visit. The COL RIM implementations in Seychelles and Guyana were funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The COL RIM process has started at two Indian universities: Symbiosis International University and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU).

The University of Lesotho and two state open universities in India (Uttarakhand Open University, Dehradun and Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Kota) are in the planning stages and will start their COL RIM audits in 2012. COL plans to support the introduction of COL RIM at several more Commonwealth universities in 2012.

The COL RIM package, consisting of a conceptual framework and handbook, is freely available from COL.

[www.col.org/COL-RIM](http://www.col.org/COL-RIM)

## FOCAL POINTS MEETINGS CONTRIBUTE TO NEW THREE-YEAR PLAN

COL met with its Focal Points in Asia and the Pacific in September and November 2011 respectively. In addition to sharing details of COL's work in the region and throughout the Commonwealth, the meetings gathered input from Focal Points to help guide COL's next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015.

The Asia Focal Points Meeting took place at Wawasan Open University (WOU) in Penang, Malaysia from 25-27 September. Co-hosted by WOU and the Ministry of Higher Education, the meeting brought together representatives from COL and its regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), with Focal Points from Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The discussions included recognition of CEMCA's contributions in community radio, quality assurance, open schools, higher education and training for people with special needs.

Seven of 10 Pacific countries were represented at the Pacific Focal Points Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand from 1-3 November. The meeting was co-hosted by The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand and the Wellington Institute of Technology. The meeting was enhanced by the participation of COL's Board Chair, the Hon. Burchell Whiteman, the Board member for New Zealand, Dr. Linda Sissons, and two local



COL Honorary Advisors – Dr. Caroline Seelig and Ms. Jenny Williams.

COL held Focal Point meetings in all four regions of focus for the Commonwealth in 2011. These meetings make a valuable contribution to COL's relationships with key individuals in member states while also offering each country the opportunity to identify their needs and priorities in the areas of COL's mission.

A draft Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015 was submitted to COL Board members and Focal Points, and was made available for comment through the COL website, in December and January. Feedback will help craft the final version, which will be approved by COL's Board at its June meeting and presented to Commonwealth Education Ministers at their triennial conference in Mauritius in August.

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

[www.col.org/Draft3YP](http://www.col.org/Draft3YP)

## COMMONWEALTH EXECUTIVE MBA/MPA PROGRAMMES UPDATED

COL's Commonwealth Executive Masters of Business Administration (CEMBA) and Masters of Public Administration (CEMPA) programmes contribute to building the skills of business and government professionals in developing countries. The CEMBA/MPA programmes are offered by nine partner institutions across the Commonwealth.

Several courses in both programmes have been rewritten and updated. In addition, COL is helping to improve learner support. A workshop at Wawasan Open University

in Penang, Malaysia in November brought together 20 tutors from seven countries to focus on teaching using case studies. In addition to familiarising participants with the case method of teaching, the workshop provided training in how to develop effective teaching strategies and using case studies for assessment.

Participants were given workshop materials and encouraged to cascade training to other tutors upon their return home.

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

## FOSTERING GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT FOR OER



THE REGIONAL POLICY FORUM IN BARBADOS IN JANUARY BROUGHT TOGETHER EDUCATORS FROM ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

COL and UNESCO have embarked on a major initiative to encourage more governments to adopt policies that encourage open educational resources (OER). “Fostering Governmental Support for OER Internationally” seeks to increase understanding by governments of the significance of OER and gather support for the principle that the products of publicly funded work should carry open licenses.

This new initiative builds on awareness-raising work in a previous partnership with UNESCO, “Taking OER beyond the OER Community”. Launched in 2010, that effort sought to increase understanding of OER by educational decision makers and quality assurance experts so as to promote their wider use. It focused on higher education institutions – universities located in Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

Current activities related to “Fostering Governmental Support for OER Internationally” include surveying governments worldwide, hosting regional meetings and organising a World OER Congress in June 2012.

Both COL and UNESCO are conducting surveys with their member states that will form the basis of a comprehensive

inventory of government policies and intentions concerning OER and open access. The partners are also hosting six Regional Policy Forums. The first was held in Barbados in January. It was followed by Africa in February and then Latin America in March, Europe, Asia and the Pacific in April and the Arab region in May. The Regional Policy Forums are profiling local institutions and individuals who are using OER to make a difference. Government officials have an opportunity to discuss OER policies and provide input for a joint declaration on OER. The project will culminate in the presentation of that declaration, known as the *Paris Declaration*, at UNESCO’s World OER Congress in June 2012.

Drafting of the Paris Declaration is being guided by an International Advisory and Liaison Group. This group, which held its first meeting in Paris in December 2011, is comprised of representatives from UNESCO’s electoral groups, several non-governmental organisations (including Creative Commons and OER Africa) and intergovernmental organisations (such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

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

[www.col.org/blog156](http://www.col.org/blog156)

A speech about the initiative presented to the Creative Commons Global Summit in Warsaw, Poland by Ms. Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić and COL President Sir John Daniel, September 2011: [www.col.org/speeches11](http://www.col.org/speeches11)



## CEMCA DRIVES COMMUNITY RADIO GROWTH IN INDIA

A national advertising campaign has created renewed interest in community radio in India. COL’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), is responding to hundreds of phone calls and Internet inquiries as a result of ads in more than 40 national and regional newspapers in December and February.

The number of community radio stations in India has risen from 13 in 2007 to 125 in 2011. The Government of India has received more than 900 additional applications, of which some 350 have been approved. But last year there was a sudden drop in the number of applications. Many potential applicants were deterred by the complex licensing process.

As the preferred partner for the Government of India’s Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for its community radio outreach activities since 2007, CEMCA established a Community Radio Facilitation Centre (CCFC) last year. Funded by the Ford Foundation, CCFC acts as a “one-stop shop” for information and resources about navigating the community radio licensing process and establishing a successful community radio station.

CCFC’s goal is to support at least 100 applicants in launching new community radio stations in the next two years while also helping existing community radio stations build a solid infrastructure and develop capacity in radio production skills.

[www.cfcindia.net](http://www.cfcindia.net)

[www.cronlineindia.net](http://www.cronlineindia.net)

[www.mib.nic.in](http://www.mib.nic.in)

[www.cemca.org](http://www.cemca.org)

## NEW COL VIDEOS

Among the increasing number of COL videos available is a new series featuring interviews with international experts conducted during the Asian Association of Open University (AAOU) annual conference 2011 in Penang, Malaysia in September 2011 and a series prepared for Open Education Week, 5–10 March 2012.



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

## EXPANDING TVET IN THE PACIFIC

COL's Skills Development initiative is leading several activities in the Pacific region aimed at expanding technical and vocational education and training (TVET) through the use of flexible learning approaches.

### ACCESSING FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

COL commissioned a study about national policy and implementation of open and distance learning (ODL) and use of information and communication technology (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.

While almost all countries identified TVET as an important part of their education strategies and there are regional policies about open and flexible TVET, there seems to be little activity related to these policies, the study found. The report suggests possible actions COL can take to support flexible TVET in the region, including several initiatives already being implemented in Africa, such as leadership training, assistance with ICT infrastructure and capacity building in ODL course development.

COL is circulating this report among Pacific partners for input before finalising plans to support flexible approaches to TVET in the region. It is also available on the COL website.

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

### ODL BROADENS REACH OF TRAINING FOR WOMEN

The Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) has been providing skills training to 30 Pacific women each year since 1963 through a seven-month full-time Certificate in Community Development programme. COL is working with SPC to convert this to an open and distance learning (ODL) programme, which will expand its reach to more women and to men as well.

Three workshops facilitated by COL in 2011 introduced staff at SPC's Community Education Training Centre (CETC) to ODL principles and practices. CETC staff and partners examined the use of different education media and technology, quality assurance, the use of open educational resources (OER) and developing a pilot programme. Along with their partners from the Vanuatu Rural Development & Training Centres Association (VRDTCA), the CETC team has also been trained in distance learning course writing, assessment and tutor training.

CETC and VRDTCA will launch their pilot ODL programme in two centres in Vanuatu in 2012 to widen access to skills training in community development work. The plan is to roll out the programme to other Pacific nations. National institutions that partner with CETC will also develop capacity in ODL skills training.



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

### CONCRETE RESULTS IN NAURU

Like many Pacific island nations, Nauru has a pressing need for skills training. Only 11 per cent of males and 15 per cent of females complete secondary education. Traditional skills, such as building traditional dwellings, are being lost as the nation focuses on modernisation. A recent Skills Development initiative that implemented two of COL's Basic Trades courses produced dramatic results in Nauru.

The Ministry of Education provided support for the training programme, which included the "Literacy for the Basic Trades" and "Working with Concrete" courses. More than 200 learners between the ages of 16 and 35 enrolled in the programme, which ran from April to June 2011. More than three-quarters of them completed both courses.

As part of their training, learners participated in a number of community projects aimed at alleviating overcrowded housing and inadequate infrastructure on the island. The projects included building:

- A community playground,
- A community water tank base and shower,
- Community bus stands,
- A pig sty,
- A school tuck shop base,
- A church bell hut,
- A barbeque stand for the community hall, and
- A foundation for a community meeting venue.



In addition, several old houses were repaired.

Nauru now has 167 young people who are qualified to work with concrete as a result of this training initiative.

The Ministry of Education has expressed interest in providing another Basic Trades course, "Working with Timber", to expand skills development in Nauru.

## MOBILES IN LEARNING: AVOIDING “WALLED GARDENS”

By Dr. Venkataraman Balaji

Director, Technology & Knowledge Management

There have been some challenges to achieving the full results of the Education for All campaign, not least of which is the recent economic crisis affecting many countries. One promising development, however, is in the fact that there are now over 5.3 billion mobile telephone subscribers in the world, compared to less than one billion six years ago. Mobile telephony is a great opportunity to expand access to education, especially in the developing world. Indeed, mobile learning may alter traditional approaches to education.

UNESCO convened a Mobile Learning week in December 2011 to review developments and possibilities in mobile learning, and to initiate conversations among various stakeholders. Two key events were the expert group meeting and a conference on new advances in mobile learning. The latter event included a marketplace for invited partners to demonstrate their products or platforms for mobile learning.

The expert reviews covered the standard UNESCO regions, based on inputs from questionnaire-based surveys. Mobile technology is dynamic, and several countries are actively pursuing many development goals using this technology so a comprehensive synthesis was not easy to achieve. Unfortunately several large developing countries that have done significant work in the use of mobile technology for both formal and informal education and development did not participate in the survey.

What emerged from the meetings is the importance of weaving the open part of the Web space and the open parts of mobile technology together to develop sustainable and affordable mobile learning solutions. The phenomenal growth in the use of mobile technology has been spearheaded by innovations in the for-profit sector, facilitated by far-sighted public policies in many countries. To harness mobile technology specifically for expanding access to education, however, means that affordability and sustainability should be important criteria in project design. This is why solutions that are not tied to one set of handheld devices (ordinary or smart-phones, tablets or eReaders) or bound to particular carriers are important.

To judge by the UNESCO marketplace, not many developers are coming forward with such solutions. Sir Tim Berners-Lee, writing on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the invention of the web, pointed out that the openness of the web architecture, the key factor in driving its exceptional growth, was coming under threat with many “walled gardens” appearing in the web space, preventing open access unless a user subscribed to a service. His warning also applies to the mobile learning space.

COL was represented at these events and the Learning through Interactive Voice Educational System (LIVES) software was demonstrated, generating much interest. LIVES is a mobile learning software application developed at the University of British Columbia in partnership with COL. It was one of the small number of applications that was built entirely on the open aspect of Web space and the open aspects of mobile technology.

<http://lives.cs.ubc.ca>



“Is Mobile Technology Serving Development Needs?” on COL’s blog: [www.col.org/blog157](http://www.col.org/blog157)

## LEADERSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN SMALL STATES



THE 12-DAY VUSSC WORKSHOP WAS HELD AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (NIE) INTERNATIONAL IN SINGAPORE FROM 17 NOVEMBER TO 2 DECEMBER 2011

Improving educational leadership in higher education institutions in small states of the Commonwealth was the focus of a workshop hosted by COL and the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The workshop is an initiative of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) to build capacity among tertiary education providers in its 33 member states. The Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs has hosted some ten VUSSC-related activities since 2005.

At the Singapore workshop, 23 senior level educators representing 16 small states explored current issues, policies and technologies affecting the management of educational institutions. Their discussions culminated in the creation of a set of educational leadership training materials. The eLearning materials will be published on the VUSSC and COL websites as open educational resources (OER) for use and adaptation by individuals and institutions.

This event marks another first for VUSSC and was one of its most ambitious workshops ever. The educational leadership programme will consist of six courses with two exit points – at the post-graduate certificate level and at the Master’s degree level.

VUSSC is a network of small countries committed to the collaborative development of free content resources for use in an educational context. It is led by a Management Committee with representation from all regions of the Commonwealth, with support from COL. The VUSSC website is a gateway to information that provides access to free online learning materials that have been developed by and for small states of the Commonwealth. The website also features an eLearning platform that provides participating countries and institutions with access to (currently) seven eLearning programmes that they can offer with the support of COL.

The National University of Samoa (NUS) has started to use the VUSSC Diploma in Agriculture programme that was developed in Maldives in March 2010. After some contextualisation, NUS has integrated elements of the programme into its Diploma in Teacher Education for learners who want to become agricultural teachers.

For more information about accessing VUSSC programmes, contact Mr. John Lesperance, COL’s Education Specialist, VUSSC at [jlesperance@col.org](mailto:jlesperance@col.org).

[www.vussc.org](http://www.vussc.org)

## EXTENDING OPEN SCHOOLING ACROSS THE PACIFIC



THE NEW OPEN SCHOOL IN KIRIBATI

COL's Pacific Island Open Schooling Project is supporting the expansion of open schooling in the Pacific region and currently includes the establishment of three new open schools. All three open schools – in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga – are focusing on providing “second-chance” education for school dropouts and unemployed youth. Local University of the South Pacific (USP) campuses are leading implementation of the new open schools.

The Kiribati Open School officially opened in September 2011 and operates through two centres. There are currently 68 students working towards their Kiribati National Certificate.

The Tonga Open School is providing Maths and English courses. The 26 students enrolled in the open school include current students and students sitting for examinations, employed young people who want to improve their qualifications and unemployed young people. The Tonga Open School operates out of Tonga College.

Planning is also underway for a new open school in Solomon Islands to serve out-of-school youths. Training for school managers and enrolment of students is commencing in 2012.

The new open schools are phase two of COL's three-phase Pacific Island Open Schooling Project. The first phase, a study on “Open Schooling as a Strategy for Second-Chance Education in the Pacific”, explored the need and potential of open schooling in 11 Pacific nations. The third phase, region-wide expansion of open schools, moved forward with a regional open schooling forum in November. Representatives from USP and Ministries of Education in nine Pacific countries took part in the forum at the USP Campus in Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga.

Participants learned about the experiences of establishing open schools in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga, with additional input from COL about other experiences in the Commonwealth.

Each country took part in exercises in objective setting, identifying activities for each objective, costing the activities and determining monitoring strategies. Participants confirmed their commitment to open schooling as an essential investment to provide “second chance” education to students who have dropped out of formal schooling – either to gain secondary school qualifications or to learn skills that will lead to employment.

“Our partners in the South Pacific compared establishing open schools to making a tapa cloth,” said Ms. Frances Ferreira, COL Education Specialist, Open Schooling. “It is a long and arduous process that involves pounding the inner bark of the mulberry tree until it becomes flat, before being joined together. When the islanders thong (beat) the tapa mallet, the sound of beating mallets creates a concert. Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Tonga have started the open schooling rhythm and we are confident that the beat will be heard across the region.”

The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is also helping to provide guidance for the expansion of the open schooling initiatives.

“The support and leadership of USP in the project is appreciated,” explained Mr. Filipe Jitoko, Social Policy Advisor, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. “The partnership with COL brings international standing to the initiative and support for capacity building at country levels. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat will continue to provide the linkages and ensure that the outcomes support the education and social goals of countries and its overall impact on regional efforts.”

## OPEN SCHOOLING EXPANDS IN THE CARIBBEAN

COL is continuing its support of the National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago (NOSTT), which it helped to launch in 2007. Ms. Frances Ferreira, COL Education Specialist, Open Schooling conducted a monitoring and evaluation workshop for NOSTT staff members in September 2011. Participants learned about further integrating technology in their work and were introduced to the OpenSchoolingConnect online platform. They developed monitoring and evaluation frameworks for different sections of NOSTT using a results-based management framework.

Faculty members from the University of Belize also attended the workshop in Port of Spain. The University is developing a proposal to establish an open school in Belize and COL has committed to providing ongoing support.

COL is also assisting with a new open school in The Bahamas. Ms. Ferreira conducted an open schooling workshop in September that included representatives from the Ministry of Education and The College of The Bahamas, school princi-



OPEN SCHOOLING WORKSHOP AT NOSTT IN PORT OF SPAIN

pals and district officers. Workshop participants refined the draft proposal and developed an action plan for establishing an open school.



## MEASURING THE IMPACT OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS

COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) programme was introduced in India in 2004 and has since been launched in communities in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. COL recently commissioned a longitudinal study about the impact of an L3 Farmers initiative in Tamil Nadu, India. That study, summarised below, reveals how L3 Farmers has dramatically improved livelihoods while also altering attitudes, social relationships and household dynamics.

### EXPANDING LEARNING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

A large scale expansion of learning is required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. However, conventional face-to-face learning cannot address the massive learning needs that exist. There are not enough schools or teachers to meet the growing demand for learning – and there probably never will be.

One solution is the use of open and distance learning (ODL) to expand learning. Increasingly, information and communication technology (ICT) is being used to “reach the unreached” and facilitate learning among farmers, landless labourers and marginalised individuals, regardless of literacy levels.

L3 Farmers is based on a web of partnerships that brings together farmers, research/educational institutions, ICT providers and banks. The various stakeholders are active participants in a “win-win” situation. Knowledge empowerment leads to livelihood security. This is truly “Learning for Development”.

### THE VIDİYAL EXPERIENCE

COL began working with VIDİYAL, a non-governmental organisation in the southern part of India, in 2008. VIDİYAL has worked with a federation of women's self-help groups called Vidivelli for more than 20 years.

In response to interest from Vidivelli members, VIDİYAL launched a L3 Farmers programme around goat and sheep husbandry. Some 300 women joined the initiative. An initial study revealed that this group represented “the poorest of the poor”.

- Literacy levels are low: many participants have no school education and illiteracy is prevalent even among those who attended primary school.
- Incomes are low: the mean family income is far below the World Bank recommended level of \$US 1.25 per day per person.
- Women in this district are disempowered: limited access to property and employment opportunities, and domestic violence hinder the status of women.

While there was strong traditional knowledge of goat rearing, modern methods were largely unknown in the district. Vidivelli members expressed interest in learning about rearing techniques, as well as how to run a profitable business enterprise.

VIDİYAL works with three key partners in this L3 Farmers initiative. The Indian Overseas Bank, a major public sector bank in India, agreed to support enterprise loans to the self-help group members. Iffco Kisan Sanchar Ltd. (IKSL) is a mobile phone service provider that serves farming communities.

Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (TANUVAS) is a source of up-to-date information about goat rearing.

### mLEARNING AND GOAT REARING

This L3 Farmers initiative was launched in the Theni district in 2009. In common with most L3 Farmers programmes, it involved a heavy emphasis on participation, self-directed learning and use of technology – in this case, the mobile phone. The following activities were undertaken:

- Needs assessment: VIDİYAL conducted a Learning Needs Analysis and discovered the women wanted to understand the business skills in goat rearing.
- Training: VIDİYAL developed multimedia materials in local languages to provide training in how to conduct a value chain analysis and develop a business proposal for goat-rearing enterprises.
- Business planning: Over the course of a year, the women conducted market feasibility studies and business and credit plans.
- Obtaining loans: The Indian Overseas Bank granted Vidivelli's proposal for loans totalling Rs. 12 million (about \$US 270,000) for 300 women. The credit was used to buy nine female goats, one buck and one mobile phone for each member. The credit and legal ownership of the assets are in the names of the women; the management and marketing decisions are made jointly through monthly Vidivelli meetings. Now, more than \$US 1 million in loans from commercial banks and



## L3 FARMERS AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

COL is expanding the reach and impact of L3 Farmers in every region of the Commonwealth. The focus is on establishing programmes that can be self-sustaining.

- **Sri Lanka:** Introduced in 2008, L3 Farmers in Sri Lanka has a slightly different model: national universities implement L3 Farmers in villages of their choice. Learning programmes about tissue culture, banana cultivation and mushroom farming are helping farmers move beyond traditional farming methods to improve their livelihoods.
- **Jamaica:** The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' extension agency, the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), has introduced mobile learning. Farmers receive text messages that provide weather advisories and other useful information.
- **Kenya:** L3 Farmers partners in Kenya include a self-help farming organisation, a community banking cooperative and a community resource centre. After receiving training in savings and loans, poultry keeping and management, women farmers apply for loans and establish profitable poultry enterprises.
- **Uganda:** L3 Farmers is supporting 1,000 people in the country's southwest who are involved in potato and sorghum farming. L3 Farmers has also attracted the interest of people in the Batwa community who live in the forest and collect honey there. Farmers have access to information on obtaining credit, loan management, pest control, market development and farming practices through radio programmes, mobile phones and a website.
- **Mauritius:** Lifelong Learning for Farmers in Mauritius focuses on strengthening women's empowerment and farmers' access to markets. Partners are developing learning materials on legal literacy and business planning. Learning involves different media, including DVDs and text messages. Courses such as Good Agricultural Practice have been developed to address the issue of sustainable agriculture.

\$US 1.68 million worth of savings and credit within the self-help groups support agricultural enterprises.

- **mLearning:** VIDİYAL entered into an agreement with IKSL to send regular audio messages to the women on their mobile phones. The audio messages, each lasting about 60 seconds, were developed in consultation with Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University.
- **Sharing of experiences:** Individual learning is augmented by monthly meetings where Vividelli members discuss enterprise issues. Thus, L3 Farmers involves both horizontal and vertical transfer of knowledge, with a focus on self-directed learning.

### IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS

Participation in L3 Farmers has resulted in improvements in the quality of the goats being reared and has improved incomes significantly. L3 Farmers participants had an average income per flock that was 80 per cent more than non-L3 Farmers farmers due to factors such as shorter kidding intervals, a greater number of kids born, more goats sold and lower mortality rates.

The first group of 320 women repaid 90 percent of their five-year loans, with interest, within three years. Most of them have purchased a small piece of land, often in the woman's name. In a patriarchal society where land titling is strongly oriented towards males, this is a notable trend. The purchase of household infrastructure such as gas stoves has enabled women to spend less time on tasks such as gathering wood for fuel and more time managing their business.

Learning has also led to empowerment. One woman's questioning spirit was an inspiration for the L3 Farmers participants in the Theni district. A bank official reported that a woman challenged him about the difference between the prescribed interest rate from the Reserve Bank of India and the rates offered by local banks. He was

surprised that a poor, illiterate woman could talk knowledgeably about such issues.

The incident triggered a debate about empowerment. Since the mobile phones were being purchased by women, programme organisers decided to explore control of these mobile phones at the household level. The process of empowerment and the impact of L3 Farmers on the quality of goats were both evaluated in the longitudinal study.

The illiterate and semi-illiterate women taking part in L3 Farmers are challenging existing social traditions. VIDİYAL was originally concerned that mobile phones could be commandeered by other family members, in accordance with habitual gender inequities. In fact, a substantial number of women keep the phone in their custody. Their husbands and other male family members seek permission from the women before using the phone.

### ANYWHERE, ANY TIME LEARNING

The women find mobile phone-based training to be accessible and helpful. Said one participant, Ms. Peria Jakkamal, "Whether I am in the kitchen or managing the grazing goats in the pastureland, I am able to listen to the messages, which are very useful." Most family members support this learning, and the women share the content with their husbands and others in the household.

The women receive three to five audio messages a day. Their growing empowerment is also reflected in delivery of these messages. The lessons were originally voiced by male staff at VIDİYAL. During a monthly Vividelli meeting, participants argued that the voice of women should be used. And now they are.

In addition to goat rearing, the women have been learning about governance and legal rights. Now, when villagers are taken to the police station, family members have started to approach the Vividelli members to discuss their legal rights.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

## “TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY FOR INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS”



LEADERS FROM SOUTHERN AFRICAN TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED THE WORKSHOP AT THE SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION CENTRE IN NEWTOWN JOHANNESBURG

“Teaching with Technology for Institutional Leaders” is a new COL initiative that helps teacher education institutions to understand and apply the compelling advantages of using technology in the classroom and throughout their organisation. The first activity was a two-day workshop for teacher education institutional leaders on the use of information

and communication technology (ICT) for teaching and learning held in Johannesburg, South Africa in October 2011. Ten Deans of Education or their representatives from teacher education institutions from Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa attended.

The purpose of the workshop was to develop an understanding among leaders of teacher education institutions of the role of technology in the lives of teachers and learners, the consequences this has for teacher preparation, and the range of existing materials and resources that assist with this objective. Delegates learned how to establish a shared vision within each institution and how to create professional development plans for both staff and students. The workshop has built

stronger stakeholder relationships that might help sustain development where needed.

The workshop revealed a need for considerable work to be conducted among education faculties in Southern African teacher education institutions. The next activities will take place within faculties of education for these institutions according to institutional plans they created. This will include:

- Establishing a shared vision for the faculty/institution,
- Building professional development plans for all staff and students,
- Developing a greater understanding of the role of technology in education, and
- Building strong stakeholder relationships to sustain development.

COL will continue to host institutional workshops and support individual teacher education institutions in their efforts to integrate ICT into teaching and learning.

## COMMONWEALTH CONNECTS PORTAL FEATURES OER DIRECTORY

COL has contributed an OER Directory to the Commonwealth Connects Portal (C2P), a Commonwealth Secretariat initiative that helps individuals and communities make connections and discuss issues related to governance, development and youth. C2P was launched by Commonwealth Secretary-General Mr. Kamallesh Sharma during the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, Australia. The online portal includes a directory service developed by COL for open educational resources (OER) at the post-secondary level.

The value of an OER depends on its educational relevance. Aspiring users want to know how an OER might fit the curriculum requirement in a given context. The COL directory service addresses this interest. Based on expert advice through an international consultation held in

August 2011, COL developed a collection of educational terms called EduTags. The EduTags describe the curricular value of an OER more closely and accurately. This set of terms was derived from standard educational practices across Commonwealth educational institutions. Currently comprised of 27 terms, the EduTags set can be refined and expanded.

COL's OER directory service for C2P currently describes more than 1,200 full courses mostly at the college/university level. The courses are from different institutions across the Commonwealth. Non-Commonwealth sources will be added in 2012. The principal sources are:

- Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), India,
- the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN),

- the National Programme on Technology Enhance Learning (NPTEL), India, and
- the UK Open University.

The topics mainly relate to engineering and technology, physical sciences, management studies and the English language, with a small number of courses in agriculture, veterinary sciences and medicine. The directory can be searched (using EduTags) for specific educational values such as “assignments”, “junior UG” etc. It can also be searched for specific topics or using names of countries or institutions. It is built on DSpace, a popular open source repository software that is in use in over 800 universities globally.

[www.commonwealthconnects.org](http://www.commonwealthconnects.org)

<http://doer.col.org>

[www.col.org/blog158](http://www.col.org/blog158)

## MEASURING THE IMPACT OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

### THE CHALLENGE OF SELF-REPLICATION

The experience in the Theni district shows how L3 Farmers can enable illiterate, marginalised women to acquire credit, manage an enterprise, make profit and accumulate assets in their own name. At present, 7,000

borrowers – mostly women – linked to eight banks have become lifelong learners.

One of COL's objectives for L3 Farmers is self-replication – where stakeholders (banks, mobile phone companies and educational institutions) are motivated to

promote the programme in other communities. While there has been some success, COL's study finds that these organisations need to enhance their investments in mobilising communities and are hesitant to make investments in this area.

[www.col.org/ProgEvals\\_09-12](http://www.col.org/ProgEvals_09-12)

## FLEXIBLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

COL's Flexible Skills Development programme is helping African institutions expand the reach and effectiveness of technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Recent activities include building capacity in multimedia content development and supporting reform objectives in the TVET system.

### NEW MEDIA IN MASSAILAND

A workshop held at Maasai Technical Training Institute in Kenya brought together 25 TVET educators from The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia to develop skills and create audio and video learning materials on subjects from electrical engineering to the bird-life of Maasailand using freely available software. Workshop participants learned how to identify existing audio and video open educational resources (OER) to incorporate into their own materials. The participants started their discussions electronically before attending the workshop in a special learning resource on the COL Moodle platform, which also continues to provide them with training resources to cascade their new skills to colleagues in their own institution.

At the end of the workshop, the participants held an award ceremony where Mr. Anthony Macharia of Coast Institute of Technology (Kenya) was recognised for creating the most creative and innovative video. The best audio recording was jointly awarded to Ms. Ya Awa Njie of The Gambia Technical Training Institute for her audio on electricity conductivity and Ms. Freda Murugi of Maasai Technical Training Institute who created a video on table laying for hospitality management. The award for the best overall video went to Mr. Ebenezer Kofouie from Koforidua Polytechnic (Ghana) for his video on thermodynamics.

The workshop was supported by Kenya's Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. Professor Crispus M. Kiamba, Permanent Secretary, officiated at the opening and Professor Harry Kaane, Permanent Secretary, presented the awards at the closing.

As well as sharing their new skills with colleagues in their own institutions, workshop participants are continuing to practice their skills and provide feedback to each other through the Flexible Skills Development online Community Learning Network in a special group for people interested in audio and video.

"Special thanks to COL for organising the workshop on audio- and video-based TVET learning materials, which has transformed our teaching standards," said workshop participant Ms. Ya Awa Njie. "This group will help us greatly to interact and exchange experiences on what we learned during the workshop."

"I feel this is the way for TVET institutions," said Ms. Rose Kiiru of Thika Teacher Training Institute in Kenya. "The goal of producing our own locally generated audio and video clips is achievable to all, but it calls for commitment and dedication in transforming our traditional way of delivering TVET teaching and learning materials. We must embrace the use of ICT".

<http://flexibleskillsdevelopment.ning.com>

### COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN KENYA

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology in Kenya recently requested support for TVET stakeholders in competency-based education and training (CBET). CBET focuses on what students can do (their competency) as a result of learning, which is important for jobs linked to TVET. This important reform is supported by COL's Flexible Skills Development programme.

Thirty stakeholders including curriculum developers, National Examinations Council, quality assurance officers, industry associations and institutional heads met at the Kenya Institute of Education in Nairobi in December to develop an understanding of the issues involved in introducing CBET and how this will impact the national TVET system. The report can be viewed at [www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment](http://www.col.org/SkillsDevelopment)

### OER FOR TVET TEACHER TRAINING



TVET benefits from a multimedia approach because of the need to develop psychomotor skills alongside cognitive and affective learning. COL's partners in TVET teacher education for Flexible Skills Development are collaborating to develop new training resources to help teachers make use of educational media and technology.

The team met at a workshop hosted at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) in Gaborone in December. In addition to moving forward with their writing and peer review of learning materials, the teacher educators benefited from the excellent ODL library facilities at the college. The new teacher training materials will be available as self-instructional OER in 2012.



## A U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM UNESCO WOULD HURT HIGHER EDUCATION

By Sir John Daniel

On September 12, 2002, speaking at the United Nations to mark the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, U.S. President George W. Bush announced that the United States would rejoin the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The United States had quit UNESCO in 1984 to protest the restrictions on press freedom inherent in the controversial New World Information and Communication Order. That issue, however, had disappeared with the Berlin Wall and a return to the cultural and educational organisation was overdue. I was then serving as UNESCO's assistant director-general for education and we were delighted.

Today I am dismayed that the United States has now stopped its financial contributions to UNESCO again – and believe it could hamper American universities' ability to interact with their counterparts overseas. U.S. lawmakers are angered with the UNESCO vote to admit Palestine, and unless there is a change of heart in Washington, the United States will have to withdraw fully from UNESCO after a two-year grace period.

Both the United States and UNESCO lose by this second divorce. It again breaks the silver thread that links the founding ideals of the United States with those of the United Nations. Just as Eleanor Roosevelt helped to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so the American poet and Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, contributed the most lapidary sentence to UNESCO's constitution: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

The first American withdrawal from UNESCO in 1984 took place in a different world. Economic and cultural power is now more dispersed and the pace of change has increased, notably in higher education, where the United States is a powerhouse of innovation. It would be tragic for the country to be absent from key discussions of the new dynamics of the global knowledge society, some of which will take place at UNESCO. As soft power grows in importance, UNESCO, for all its frustrating inertia, remains a vital forum for most of the world's states.

Read the full article by COL President Sir John Daniel, which was published as a guest blog by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* <http://tinyurl.com/Chronicle-withdrawal>



## OER ASIA WEBSITE LAUNCHED

Wawasan Open University's Institute of Research and Innovation has launched a new website dedicated to the use of open educational resources in Asia. OER Asia serves as a forum for the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and resources about OER

in the Asian region. The site currently offers an OER Training Toolkit to support self-directed learning about how OER can support teaching and learning, and an OER Asia Survey.

<http://oerasia.org>

## OERu PIONEERS MEET IN NEW ZEALAND

By Wayne Mackintosh, Director, OER Foundation

Twenty-two senior education leaders and decision-makers from the OERu anchor partners and representatives from UNESCO and COL, representing six countries and four continents, convened face-to-face in Dunedin, New Zealand in November for the inaugural OERu (Open Educational Resources University) planning meeting. Responding to an open invitation, an additional 148 individuals from 41 countries registered as virtual participants to assist the meeting in charting more affordable and sustainable post-secondary education alternatives.

The Dunedin meeting brought together representatives from 12 founding anchor partner institutions comprising colleges, polytechnics and universities from Africa, Asia, North America and the Pacific. The founding partners will be recorded in history as the pioneers contributing to opening education to provide free learning opportunities for all students worldwide using courses based solely on OER combined with pathways for OER learners to achieve credible credentials in the formal post-secondary sector.

The OERu partners are motivated by a clear commitment to providing more affordable education to those learners currently excluded from the formal education system in a financially sustainable way. Drawing on the depth of collective experience in open learning, technology-mediated pedagogies and recognition of prior learning within the OERu network, the participants were able to cover considerable ground in achieving their planning objectives. The partners have now agreed on the inaugural credential and commenced planning for the prototype course(s) to be trialed in 2012.

The OERu anchor partners have affirmed that the model is a low cost, low risk but high impact innovation partnership because: partner institutions do not need to invest new money; recurrent costs for providing assessment and credentialing services will be recouped on a fee-for-service basis (or alternate revenue sources); and partners will reduce the capital costs of course development by reusing existing OER.

Five things you should know about the OER university network plan: <http://tinyurl.com/OERu-5things>

UNESCO-COL Chair in OER, Dr. Rory McGreal discusses plans for OERu: <http://tinyurl.com/McGreal-OERu>



## STAFF NEWS



**COL President Sir John Daniel** has been elected Chair of the United World Colleges (UWC) International Council and International Board. UWC ([www.uwc.com](http://www.uwc.com)) is known for its early leadership in developing the International Baccalaureate programme. Sir John will succeed Mr. Tim Toyne Sewell as Chair in January 2013 and will serve on the UWC Council during 2012.

Sir John has also been appointed Chair of the Advisory Board for CIBT Education Group Inc., an education management company whose subsidiaries include Sprott-Shaw Community College, Sprott-Shaw Degree College, CIBT School of Business China and King George International College. He has been named Education Master with the Beijing DeTao Masters Academy and has also been appointed to the Advisory Boards of Taylor's University, Malaysia and Hamdan bin Mohammed eUniversity, Dubai.

Sir John will complete his term as COL President and CEO on 31 May 2012.

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



**Dr. Nutan Bharati** has been appointed Programme Officer – Education at the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi. Dr. Bharati started her career as a research scientist with the Consortium for Educational Communication and later joined the Faculty of Education, University of Delhi as a lecturer. In the recent years, she has been working as an Assistant Professor with the School of Distance Learning at the NMIMS University and as an Expert with MKCL, Pune. Most recently, Dr. Bharati was Associate Professor with NIIT Ltd., New Delhi.

## THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: DUAL-MODE INSTITUTIONS

Part of COL's work in the higher education sector involves supporting institutions in making the transition to "dual mode" – providing both face-to-face and distance learning.

The National Law University in Jodhpur, India seeks to meet growing demand by offering law courses through open and distance learning (ODL). COL hosted a workshop at the National Law University in November to build capacity in ODL and support their efforts to adopt dual-mode programme delivery. Faculty members and course writers attended the four-day workshop, which provided an introduction to ODL including instructional design, learner support and relevant technologies. Participants developed a model unit of self-instructional materials including learning objectives, activities and assessment.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### Critical Women: Women as Agents of Change through Higher Education

Co-organised by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

6–8 March 2012, Cinnamon Grand Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka

[www.acu.ac.uk/conferences/gender\\_2012](http://www.acu.ac.uk/conferences/gender_2012)

#### 2012 Distance Education Association of New Zealand Conference

*Shift Happens – Resilience, Relevance and Reform*

11–13 April 2012, Wellington, New Zealand

<http://tinyurl.com/deanz2012>

#### Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)

November 2013, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja

Co-hosted by COL and the Federal Ministry of Education

[www.col.org/PCF7](http://www.col.org/PCF7)

## INTEGRATING ICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COL is collaborating with SNTD Women's University Mumbai, India to train teachers on the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in higher education. The training programme has two phases. In the first phase, 400 Master Trainers from across India were trained at workshops in Juhu, Mumbai and Pune.

The objectives of this first phase were to:

- Train mentors/trainers who will train teachers in integrating ICT in teaching, learning and evaluation processes,
- Disseminate skills on the use of collaborative and co-operative teaching learning strategies,
- Engender co-operative and collaborative learning processes through the use of ICT tools among faculty members, and

- Enable faculty members to create and disseminate learning resources.

The Master Trainers learned how to create and share learning resources, create a learning community of ICT users and prepare a plan of action for integrating ICT in their teaching activities.

The second phase of the programme, which began in January 2012, will see the Master Trainers providing training to 4,400 teachers, vastly expand-

ing the ability of post-secondary teachers to harness the potential of ICT in teaching and learning.



## MULTIMEDIA FOR OPEN SCHOOLS

COL helps open schools enhance learning by introducing multimedia learning materials. The use of video can add value to existing print-based materials and increase learner engagement. A multimedia content development workshop hosted by COL in Tanzania in October launched the creation of 12 multimedia learning resources in five subjects. Workshop participants learned how to create effective learning materials in audio and video formats.

Supported by a COL consultant from Namibia, participants are writing scripts and producing videos and radio programmes that incorporate story telling about subjects such as the solar system for a geography course and calculating measurements used in building furniture for a math course.



The Tanzania initiative builds on experience gained from a multimedia content development project at the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) in 2008-2009. This resulted in the creation of 16 video lessons that were made available on national television, in learning centres across Namibia, at NAMCOL bookshops and online. Those videos and a manual about the NAMCOL experience, “Implementing a Multimedia Content Development Strategy in Open Schooling” are freely available on COL’s website.

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

## OPEN UNIVERSITIES ARE TRANSFORMING ASIA



Open universities are flourishing in Asia. In countries such as Malaysia, up to half of working adults are involved in open and distance learning. Transforming Asia through ODL” was the theme of the 25th annual conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) in September 2011. Hosted by Wawasan Open University in Penang, Malaysia, the AAOU conference drew 350 delegates from across Asia.

Representatives from COL and its regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), took part in the conference. COL President Sir John Daniel gave the keynote address. Vice President Professor Asha Kanwar and staff members took part in workshop presentations about open educational resources (OER), quality assurance and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

## SHARING LEADERSHIP WISDOM

Enhancing the leadership skills of university leaders was the focus of a three-day workshop at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Kozhikode, India. Seventeen heads of universities took part in the leadership workshop, which covered themes such as sources of power and influence for institutional leaders, emotional intelligence and leadership styles.

“Higher education institutions today are faced with a daunting challenge emerging from burgeoning demand and diminishing

resources,” said COL Education Specialist, Higher Education, Professor Madhulika Kaushik. “Academic leaders are expected to create visions, inspire commitment and transform ways of thinking while managing academic values and operational efficiencies – it’s a tall order indeed.”

The leadership workshop was the first step in developing an online programme on Leadership in Higher Education Institutions in the Commonwealth.

## IMPROVING SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN WEST AFRICA

COL has provided professional development training to more than 150 head teachers and principals in West Africa through a partnership with teacher training institutions in The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The programme will enhance head teachers’ professional skills and effectiveness by:

- Disseminating innovative knowledge and skills on school management,
- Providing a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences of managing primary and secondary schools, and
- Providing an opportunity for continuing professional development.

Training has taken place with head teachers and principals through teacher training institutions in each country.

This initiative began with the development of course materials and training of 35 Master Trainers in November 2010. Training workshops are continuing in 2012 in all four countries.

## COL AND THE MDGs



COL has released a revised brochure about its contribution to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, OJ, Chair of COL's Board of Governors, and COL President Sir John Daniel presented *Learning for Development: COL and the Millennium Development Goals* to Foreign Ministers at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth in November 2011, along with an overview of COL's work. The Foreign Ministers also received preliminary versions of COL's Country Reports for 2009-2012, which will be presented to Commonwealth Education Ministers when they meet in Mauritius in August.

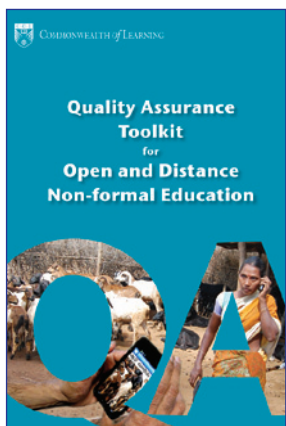
*COL and the MDGs brochure:* [www.col.org/MDG](http://www.col.org/MDG)

*Overview of COL's work for CHOGM:* [www.col.org/chogm11](http://www.col.org/chogm11)

## QA FOR NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

*"A Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open and Distance Non-formal Education"*

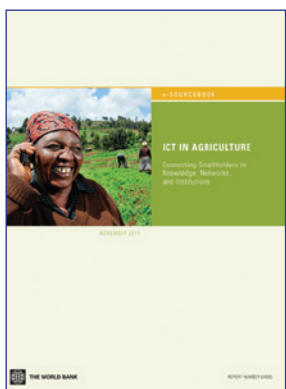
By Colin Latchem



Non-formal education takes place both within and outside educational institutions. It caters to all ages and spans adult literacy, basic education, life skills, work skills and health promotion. This new COL publication explores quality assurance in non-formal education with an emphasis on evaluation programme outcomes, outputs and impacts. It examines approaches to quality assurance that are needed in non-formal education and introduces a rigorous but simple quality assurance framework.

[www.col.org/QAToolkit\\_NF](http://www.col.org/QAToolkit_NF)

## ICT IN AGRICULTURE



The World Bank has released "ICT in Agriculture: Connecting Smallholders to Knowledge, Networks, and Institutions" as an e-Sourcebook. The book's 15 modules explore various aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) in agriculture, ranging from gender equity and governance to infrastructure and innovation. COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme and the Virtual Academy for the Semi-Arid Tropics, which has received support from COL, are profiled in Module 6, "ICTs as Enablers of Agricultural Innovation Systems".

The e-Sourcebook can be downloaded as single PDF or by chapter.

To download the book: <http://tinyurl.com/ICTinAg>

To download individual chapters: [www.ictinagriculture.org/ictinag/node/105](http://www.ictinagriculture.org/ictinag/node/105)



## LONGITUDINAL STUDIES ASSESS COL'S WORK



Ten studies commissioned by COL to assess the impact of its programmes have been completed and are available on COL's website.

The longitudinal studies examine activities in all areas of COL's work and evaluate how well outcomes have been met.

The findings from these studies are included in an external evaluation of the current Three-Year Plan, 2009-2012, which is also available online.

[www.col.org/ProgEvals\\_09-12](http://www.col.org/ProgEvals_09-12)

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

## Connections

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President & CEO: Sir John Daniel

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## TABLETS TRANSFORM eREADER MARKET



The ability to purchase the different versions of tablets and eReaders varies from country to country.

There are four main types of electronic devices for reading:

1. Cheaper: Black and white dedicated eReaders using E-ink, front-lit technology (e.g., Amazon Kindle, Sony Reader Wi-Fi and Kobo Wi-Fi)

2. Slightly more expensive: Colour dedicated eReaders using back-lit LCD screens (e.g., Amazon Kindle Fire and Nook Color)
3. Expensive: Colour dedicated eReaders using E-ink technology (e.g., Ectaco Jetbook)
4. Most expensive: Tablets (e.g., Apple iPad and Samsung Galaxy)

Tablets	eReader
LCD display: brighter, but can be hard on the eyes after longer periods of use	E-ink technology: resembles printed paper, refresh slower and appear in black and white
Back-lit LCD can be difficult to see in bright sunlight	Front-lit displays (black & white) are better for outdoor use
Run other applications	Do not run other applications, other than limited web-access
Use colour	Only some (such as Kindle Fire, Nook Color and Ectaco Jetbook) are available with colour displays
More expensive than dedicated eReaders	Colour eReaders are more expensive than black and white
Usually include camera	Does not include a camera

In the February 2010 issue of *Connections*, we wrote an article about eReaders. A lot has changed since then, not the least being the introduction of the iPad (which we correctly stated would have a dramatic impact on the eReader market).

The biggest impact of the introduction of the iPad tablet was on the cost of dedicated eReaders. The costs of eReaders had to drop significantly in order to compete against the multi-tasking iPad and other tablets that came to market inspired by the popularity of the iPad.

The Nook from Barnes & Noble is still being produced, but it is facing strong competition from the Amazon Kindle (various versions, with the latest being the Kindle Fire) and Apple's iPad. Also, there are rumours that Google will launch a tablet in March or April 2012 that will be aimed at the eReader market and compete with the Kindle. Samsung's Galaxy tab is touted as more of a laptop replacement rather than an eReader, rather like the iPad.

In North America, other dedicated eReaders still available are from Sony and Kobo.

The biggest challenge for users of eReaders is still the availability of content. If you wish to read the latest bestseller or mainstream fiction and non-fiction, you can usually find it – for a price. However, for non-mainstream topics, such as distance education, publications in an eReader format can be difficult to find.

The University of the West Indies Press recently published five e-books for Kindle customers, but they may need to be converted for other eReaders. Other university presses, including Athabasca University Press, are publishing e-books in open source ePub formats, but they may need to be converted for Kindles. As they say, “there’s an app for that”, but you should consider compatibility with e-book formats when choosing an eReader.



A January 2012 report from the Wall Street Journal about competition in the eReader market: <http://tinyurl.com/wsj-B-N>

Which eReader Should You Buy? <http://tinyurl.com/buying-eReader>



## YOUTUBE FOR TEACHERS

The online video sharing website YouTube has introduced a new service for educators. In addition to providing access to tens of thousands of videos with educational

content, YouTube Teachers enables users to customise their own channel, allowing students to view videos or make and upload their own. The site includes lesson plan

suggestions and training on how to create educational videos.

[www.YouTube.com/Teachers](http://www.YouTube.com/Teachers)