



## **BOARD OF GOVERNORS President's Quarterly Progress Report: October – December 2014**

### **1. Board Matters**

The 30<sup>th</sup> Audit Committee Meeting held via teleconference on November 6, 2014, approved the audited consolidated financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2014. The statements are available at [www.col.org/GovInfo](http://www.col.org/GovInfo). The next Audit Committee Meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2015 via teleconference.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee Meeting was held via teleconference on December 4, 2014 and reviewed the progress of the impact and outcome evaluations and the draft Strategic Plan 2015-2021. The amended Memorandum of Understanding on the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), which increased the maximum number of major donor representation on the Board of Governors from six to nine, was presented at the meeting. The next Executive Committee Meeting is scheduled for February 24, 2015 in London, UK and will be followed by a teleconference with the full Board to finalise the Strategic Plan.

Shri Ashok Thakur, the Board Member representing India, retired in September 2014 and has been succeeded by Shri Satyanarayan Mohanty, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Professor Clement Sankat completed his term on December 31, 2014. His Excellency Hubert J. Charles, Dominica's Ambassador to the United States of America and Permanent Representative to the Organisation of American States, is the new Board member representing the Caribbean region from January 1, 2015.

We are very grateful to Shri Thakur and Professor Sankat for their outstanding and invaluable contributions to COL and look forward to working with Shri Mohanty and His Excellency Hubert Charles.

### **2. General**

COL welcomed 2015 in its new offices. After ten years in very comfortable premises in downtown Vancouver, which saw a 40% increase in rent, we had to find space comparable in terms of affordability, appropriateness and access. A thorough search process led to the location of our new professional home in Burnaby. In many cases there is a huge opportunity cost in moving an entire office, but because COL's relocation was done with

precision planning, and an extraordinary amount of hard work by our dedicated staff during the second half of December, there was minimal disruption.

2014 was a successful and vibrant year for COL, with record contributions from 46 Member States and a very positive rating from DFID. In addition, the preliminary interim reports of the impact and outcome evaluations have been encouraging. The outcome evaluation indicates that of the nine thematic areas in which COL works, the performance targets for four have already been achieved or exceeded in the first two years of the Three-Year Plan. The impact evaluation team which interviewed nearly 500 key stakeholders around the Commonwealth found that COL is regarded highly for its reliability, responsiveness and results-orientation. These reports are still a 'work-in-progress' and continue to be revised and enriched in light of fresh data and feedback. However, the broad conclusions so far, boost staff morale, which continues to remain high.

The preliminary findings have also fed into the next Strategic Plan 2015-2021. The regional meetings of the Focal Points endorsed COL's current direction and encouraged us to stay the course to achieve impact and ensure the sustainability of our interventions. COL will work in two sectors, Education and Skills, both of which are a major priority for Commonwealth governments seeking to skill their young populations for employment and entrepreneurship. COL will deploy its expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and technology-based approaches to help achieve these aspirations with speed and at scale. While the initiatives remain the same, our strapline has changed from 'learning for development' to 'learning for sustainable development'. This is an ambitious shift and one reason why COL has made the transition from a three-year to a six-year plan. The Plan moves from focusing on 'capacity' to 'capability' and a commitment to achieving not just outcomes but also impact. Going forward, distance learning and technology-based approaches will have a more central role in supporting the global community's efforts to achieve sustainable development goals for all by 2030.

Distance learning has been a tried and tested approach to reaching the unreached in a cost-effective manner. During the recent Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, at the request of UNICEF, COL sent its distance learning materials to their office in Freetown. These self-instructional materials are intended for secondary school students to enable them to continue their lessons at home in spite of the disruptions around them.

## **2.1 President's Activities**

The last quarter of each year sees the organisation of more conferences and events than it is possible to attend. However, it is important to support major partners and to present COL's messages at key forums. I gave a keynote on 'How ICT can support teacher training' at the World Teachers' Day celebrations at UNESCO, Paris and facilitated a workshop on the same theme.

'Advancing research in ODL: where are the missing links?' was the title of my address at the annual conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU),

where I received the Meritorious Service Award for 2014. In addition, Hong Kong University had invited me to deliver a public lecture in the wings of this conference.

I travelled to the Open University of Guangdong, Guangzhou to speak on quality assurance. Some former Radio and TV Universities in China are now becoming open universities and there is a tremendous appetite for learning from best practice from around the world. Their emphasis on open university-industry linkages and the focus on skills will enable them to provide quality education that equips their graduates for employment and entrepreneurship. The Chinese model has lessons for other developing Commonwealth countries as they establish new open universities. The Palestine Technical University-Kadoorie invited me to speak at their conference on innovations in education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and conduct a workshop on Open Education Resources (OER) for the staff of various universities in Palestine. COL continues its advocacy for OER and there was a genuine interest in translating available OER into Arabic. Both visits to these non-Commonwealth institutions were funded by the organisers.

I was able to be ‘virtually’ present in two countries on the same day, thanks to video technology! One message was viewed at a conference on Lifelong Learning in Malaysia and the other at the ICDE-UNESCO policy forum in Indonesia. This was possible because of our in-house expertise in video production, which will be further enhanced as we have installed a small recording studio in the new premises.

### **3. Programme**

The impact and outcome evaluation teams visited COL to present their interim reports. The reports were supportive of COL’s work and provided valuable and constructive recommendations. The meetings with programme staff generated lively debates and discussion. Developing the new strategic plan was the main focus during this quarter, together with the implementation of the annual activities in the field.

#### **3.1 Education Sector**

The Education Sector has worked in all four regions of the Commonwealth. The key activities included the development and review of learning materials, capacity building and the supporting national and institutional policies in quality assurance, OER and ODL.

##### *3.1.1 Open Schooling*

OER in seven subjects were launched in Belize and 123 teachers and curriculum developers from primary and secondary schools were trained to develop OER in Seychelles.

A workshop took place in Bangladesh to introduce Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) members to a model (Big Picture) connecting technical and vocational education subjects to the world of work. COMOSA members participated in a Theory of Change workshop and launched their own website <http://www.comosa.net>.

The Education Specialist for Open Schooling facilitated a capacity building workshop for teachers in Trinidad & Tobago and conducted a gender equality policy development workshop for teachers of the Gwen Lizarraga Open School in Belize.

Six quality assurance policies have been completed for Sri Lanka Open School; the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Assam State Open School, Andhra Pradesh State Open School, India; Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan and Bangladesh Open University (BOU).

### *3.1.2 Teacher Education*

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development has approved the COL Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) modules and materials as supplementary English educational materials for use in secondary schools in the country.

COL is partnering with the African Virtual University (AVU) and Wawasan Open University (WOU) to offer two massive open online courses (MOOCs) on 'Using ICTs to enrich Teaching and Learning' and 'Action Research for Teachers'.

### *3.1.3 Higher Education*

COL commissioned a review of the learner support system at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) and has helped develop an ICT strategy to guide the institution as it transitions into an open university. Fourteen COL sponsored students from Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu successfully completed the Legislative Drafting programme at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

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

Members of VUSSC from the African region were trained in gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes. The Developing and Teaching Online Course (DTCO) was delivered to a group of staff of the Police Academy in Trinidad & Tobago. The Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills Training (PREST) was reviewed in Botswana and will be offered at the diploma level.

## **3.2 Livelihoods & Health (L&H) Sector**

Capacity building and programme development continue to feature in the activities of the sector. Key partners are government officers, educational institutions and civil society. There is a strong focus on monitoring and evaluation and the collection and analysis of evidence against performance indicators.

### *3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development*

In Samoa, the charitable trust Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc team was trained in the integration of social media in community development work.

In Africa, 37 TVET teachers were trained in online course design and facilitation in partner institutions in Kenya and Mozambique. A gender mainstreaming workshop was held for 28 women from 13 partner institutions. There are now ten Women in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (WITED) groups working to increase the participation of women in TVET. The Innovation in Vocational Education and Skills Training (INVEST) partners meeting, held in Kenya, welcomed TVET policy advisers from ministries in five countries and focused on monitoring and evaluation, a priority for COL.

### *3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)*

The positive impact of L3F on Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) in Kenya continued to be evident during this quarter. Studies reported a 15% increase in the membership of SACCOs involved in L3F leading to better borrowing and repayment rates. The results of the survey conducted in Uganda showed that L3F participants were able to access multiple sources of problem-solving mechanisms in agriculture compared to the non-L3F participants. In Ghana and Tanzania, L3F reached nearly 10,000 farmers with courses on financial literacy.

The weather station managed by the L3F participants in India received financial support from the Government of India and 323 farmers, predominantly women, completed a course on 'agro-based weather forecasting'. A course on corporate literacy was launched in which 503 participants learnt about the roles and responsibilities of running an enterprise. The purpose of the course is to build the capacity of rural communities in managing group-based enterprises.

### *3.2.3 Healthy Communities*

The focus for this initiative was on deepening the training and mentoring of local health, development and communication groups in the design and delivery of new non-formal ODL programmes.

Groups in community learning programmes (CLP) in 23 sites in Bangladesh, India, Jamaica, Malawi and South Africa continued to be mentored. Eighty representatives from communication and development organisations in 15 countries participated in an intensive six-week blended course on Participatory Learning Design. Guided by trainee CLP developers, over 100 representatives of local health and development groups participated in creating 35 programme design documents. Over a hundred farm radio broadcasters from 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa completed the second edition of Farm Radio International's Farmer Programme eCourse, resulting in new and improved designs for farm radio programmes.

### **3.3 Cross-cutting Themes**

#### *3.3.1 eLearning*

SchoolNet, South Africa completed the revision of Modules 6-9 for the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) materials. The delivery of six modules of the CCTI was completed for 34 educators in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Trinidad & Tobago Police Academy started Module 1 of the programme in November 2014 with 30 participants and 100 teachers in Uganda received an orientation on CCTI.

#### *3.3.2 Gender*

COL commissioned a report on the gender data profiles for each Commonwealth country. Two gender-related professional development events were conducted for COL staff: one, a debate on whether quotas should be implemented to ensure gender balance among university faculty and two, a one-day training session on the integration of gender equality in the programme. A draft checklist for the development of gender-responsive learning materials was developed for VUSSC partners and disseminated at a three-day workshop in Lesotho. The Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for teachers and teacher educators was published.

### **3.4 eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)**

During this quarter, COL was contracted by UNICEF, Council of Europe and the World Bank to deliver the customised 'Writing Effectively' distance learning courses to 216 participants based in headquarters and country offices. eLIO also received a contract of \$37,300 to train 62 ILO employees in effective writing in 2015.

In addition, an evaluation of the initiative is under way to inform its strategic direction for the next six years.

### **3.5 Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)**

CEMCA organised several events in collaboration in both Education and the Livelihoods & Health sectors. One key highlight was the organisation of a panel discussion on 'Services to Distance Learners with Disabilities using inclusive and open solutions: the rights perspective' at an international conference organised by UNESCO in New Delhi.

CEMCA also organised several workshops on OER in India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. A conference on ICT leadership in Higher Education was organised for Vice Chancellors and senior academic leaders in Bangladesh. CEMCA trained 30 teacher educators in India to integrate ICT in teacher education. In partnership with the UNESCO Chair on Community Media at the University of Hyderabad, CEMCA trained 30 peer reviewers on using the Community Radio Continuous Improvement Toolkit to improve the quality of radio programmes.

### **3.6 Regional Centres**

#### *3.6.1 Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL)*

Two workshops on research methods and assessment were conducted for staff of Nigerian universities.

#### *3.6.2 Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE)*

SADC-CDE supported eight faculty members from Namibia to complete an online certificate in project management offered by the International Project Leadership Academy.

#### *3.6.3 Caribbean Regional Learning for Development Activities (CRLADA)*

In partnership with PANOS, COL launched a research project to explore the framework of Learning for Development (L4D) and Communication for Development (C4D) as understood and practiced by different stakeholders in the Caribbean region.

#### *3.6.4 Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD)*

The Director, PACFOLD met with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to develop a template for a regional ODL and OER policy. USP, James Cook University and COL have agreed to launch an online community for stakeholders in the region.

### **3.7 Vice President's Activities**

The Vice President spent much of this quarter consulting with colleagues and preparing the draft Strategic Plan 2015-2021. He continued to monitor the progress of the impact and outcome based evaluations.

In October, Mr. Naidoo presented his paper on 'How technology developments are driving change in higher education' at the University of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia, Canada. In December, his video on 'Drivers for Change in Higher Education' was presented at the ICT Leadership in Higher Education conference in Bangladesh.

The Asian Development Bank approved a research grant on the study of Public-Private Partnership in ICT for Education, under the Vice President's supervision.

### **3.8 Professional Development**

COL provided support to the following conferences:

- 28th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) titled 'Advancing Open and Distance Learning: Research and Practices' held in Hong Kong during October 28-30; and

- 49th Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) Conference titled 'Open and Distance Learning (ODL): Towards sustainable development in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region' held in Mauritius during December 4-7.

## **4. Stakeholder Relations**

### **4.1 Member Governments Support**

So far, during this fiscal year, contributions totalling \$7.4 million have been received from 28 countries (the same number of countries as at the same time in the previous year).

### **4.2 Focal Points**

During this quarter, we welcomed the following Focal Points:

- India – Shri S.P. Goyal, Joint Secretary (TEL), Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- Rwanda – Dr. Evode Mukama, Senior Lecturer, College of Education, University of Rwanda.

### **4.3 Congratulatory Letters**

Nine congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Ministers of Education and Foreign Affairs, Consul Generals and heads of institutions.

## **5. Finances**

### **5.1 Revenue**

COL has received \$7.4 million in voluntary contributions from member governments between July 1 and December 31, 2014.

The following countries have made contributions in the second quarter:

Botswana – \$113,260; Canada – \$2.6 million; Grenada – \$5,500; India – final instalment of \$366,553 for a total contribution of \$1.1 million; New Zealand – \$704,470; Pakistan – \$35,000; Seychelles – \$16,818; and South Africa – \$250,000.

In addition to voluntary contributions from member governments, COL recognised over \$750,000 in revenues from grants and fee-for-service during the period July 1, 2014 to December 31, 2014.

During the quarter, COL signed an agreement with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for USD100,000 for further capacity building activities in OER and with the Asian Development Bank for USD52,000 for a research study.

## **5.2 Cash Flow**

At December 31, 2014, COL held approximately \$10 million in cash and cash equivalents. These resources enable COL to meet operational costs and maintain a positive cash flow until outstanding contributions are received throughout the year.

In addition, COL continues to maintain a restricted cash reserve of \$4.7 million to provide for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding, if needed, along with a term deposit of \$150,000 as banking security.

## **5.3 Expenditures**

By the end of the second quarter, \$5.2 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff and office costs. This amount comprised close to 50% of the annual budget of \$10.6 million approved for 2014-2015.

## **6. Human Resources**

### **6.1 Staff Changes**

#### *6.1.1 Arrivals*

Dr. Sanjaya Mishra joined COL on January 1, 2015 as Education Specialist – eLearning.

Dr. Ramesh Chander Sharma joined CEMCA on January 1, 2015 as Director.

Ms. Alicia Swinamer joined COL on January 2, 2015 as Stakeholder Relations Manager.

#### *6.1.2 Departure*

Mr. Dave Wilson, Communications Manager left COL on October 24, 2014.

Ms. Kalyna Zazelenchuk, Database Assistant (part-time) left COL on October 28, 2014.

Mr. Ian Pringle, Education Specialist – Media left COL on December 31, 2014.

### **6.1.3 Recruitment**

The Education Specialist – Healthy Communities (formerly Media) position has been filled and Ms. Djenana Jalovic will join on March 1, 2015.

## **7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management (IT & KM)**

IT & KM contributed to two important developments: relocation and MOOCs.

COL used the opportunity of the relocation, which was carried out with minimal disruption of internet services, to upgrade the corporate data backup system and provide contemporary and cost-effective technologies relevant to staff needs. Similarly, we used the opportunity to rationalise the collection of documents and books to make this more focused and relevant to COL's mandate and programmes.

We organised two MOOCs with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IITK). The 'MOOC on MOOCs' (September-October 2014) attracted 2,346 registrants from 92 countries, 60% of whom were active. Participants were mostly from institutions of higher education. A total of 306 individuals received certificates of participation. The second was an audio-only MOOC meant for gardeners and subsistence farmers in India. The topic related to good horticultural practices and was offered in Hindi. Learners needed basic cell phones to access audio clips (35-60 seconds long) that covered 22 popular crops. A total of 1,055 people signed up with half of them being active over this five-week course. Certificates were issued to 296 participants. Feedback indicates that many of the farmers believed they learnt some of the practices for the first time. We have been able to try out new platforms and build capacity in formal as well as non-formal learning environments. MOOCs for COL are not branded goods and services. COL's message is that MOOC technologies can be re-engineered to suit the typical audiences that COL and its partners work with.

During this period, we have further upgraded Aptus ('Classroom Without Walls' at [www.col.org/aptus](http://www.col.org/aptus)) and entered into a collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Vanuatu, to deploy Aptus as part of the ICT in education programme.

## **8. Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8)**

PCF8 will be hosted by the Open University of Malaysia at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre during November 27 to December 1, 2016. The committees have been constituted to work with partners to develop the programme and other details.

## **9. Publications/Resources**

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications ([www.col.org/publications](http://www.col.org/publications)):
  - *Connections/EdTech News*, November 2014, Vol. 19, No. 3 at [www.col.org/connections](http://www.col.org/connections)).
  - *Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Teachers and Teacher Educators* by Rosanne Wong (Editor), Sibyl Frei and Sevilla Leowinata (Authors) at [www.col.org/GenderMainstreamingToolkit](http://www.col.org/GenderMainstreamingToolkit).
- Videos at [www.col.org/videos](http://www.col.org/videos).
- Speeches and presentations at [www.col.org/speeches](http://www.col.org/speeches).
- COL blog at [www.col.org/blog](http://www.col.org/blog).

*All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.*

*Professor Asha S. Kanwar  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
January 15, 2015*