

COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

Open and Distance Learning for Development

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is the only international intergovernmental agency that focuses exclusively on using technology to expand the scope and scale of human learning. It operates on the premise that knowledge is the key to individual freedom and to cultural, social and economic development.

COL helps Governments to develop policies that make innovation sustainable and to build systems or applications that expand learning. It works in partnership with other international and bilateral organisations working on the MDGs. These include: the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID), New Zealand's Agency for International Development (NZAID),

the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the African Virtual University (AVU), the regional Development Banks and The World Bank.

www.col.org

www.col.org/MDGs

www.col.org/COLinAfrica

www.developmentgoals.org



The Commonwealth of Learning's support to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa



HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY TO LEARNING

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COLandtheMDGs

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) laid out by world leaders at the United Nations in 2000 aim to transform the condition of humankind in the 21st century. A massive expansion of learning is required for their achievement. Traditional methods of education and training cannot address the scope and scale of the learning challenge but technology can now provide solutions.

As the only international intergovernmental agency devoted exclusively to the application of technology to learning for the purposes of development, COL is uniquely positioned to help. Our core mission is to help countries, institutions and individuals to harness technology to expand, extend and improve learning.

Increasingly, COL is focusing its work on the MDGs. Our initiatives are helping to eradicate poverty, expand primary education, empower women and improve health in developing countries.

COL promotes the use of a wide range of educational technologies ranging from radio to eLearning. We believe that the combination of accessible and adaptable learning management systems for eLearning with learning object repositories that offer a rich array of re-usable learning resources may be a major advance with tremendous potential for the developing world. Already we see African educators taking advantage of these new possibilities with impressive speed and skill.

The development of open educational resources holds out the hope of creating a global intellectual commons that can give worldwide meaning to the concept of the knowledge society. Believing that learning is indeed our common wealth, the Commonwealth of Learning stands ready to help countries and institutions understand, master and harness the technologies that are now available.



John Daniel
Sir John Daniel
President and CEO
Commonwealth of Learning

Africa faces enormous challenges – war, extreme poverty, an epidemic of HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and illiteracy. Of all the areas of the world, this continent of more than 620 million people will benefit most from progress in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

There is a tsunami every month in Africa. But its deadly tide of disease and hunger steals silently and secretly across the continent. It is not dramatic, and it rarely makes the television news. Its victims die quietly, out of sight, hidden in their pitiful homes. But they perish in the same numbers.

The U.K. has taken a leadership position in addressing the African problem with its Commission for Africa's thoughtful recommendations, the focus on HIV/AIDS during its European Union Presidency and the priority put on improving education in the developing world outlined in the recent "Putting the World into World-Class Education" strategy from the Department for Education and Skills.

When the African Ministers of Education met in Dar es Salaam in December 2002, they deliberated on the education challenges facing Africa and noted that Open and Distance Learning should be considered an important strategy in addressing these challenges.

FOCUSonAFRICA

Learning and Development

There is a strong link between learning and development. By and large, the more that citizens of a country have learned, the more developed that country is. People need to learn across a broad front and that includes learning to be, learning to know, learning to do and learning to live together. While the correlation between learning and development is far from perfect, we do know that more educated populations have greater life expectancy and better health than do people in less educated countries.

COMMISSION FOR AFRICA'S REPORT
U.K. DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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WHAT is ODL?

Open learning describes policies and practices that permit entry to learning with as few barriers as possible.

Distance education is the delivery of learning or training to people who are separated, mostly by time and space, from those who are teaching and training. Both are encompassed in the term open and distance learning (ODL).

Some of the advantages of ODL include:

- **FLEXIBILITY.** ODL can be integrated with traditional approaches to education to create flexible learning. It can also operate independently.
- **ADAPTABLE.** ODL employs a range of media and technologies, including radio, teleconferencing, video, audio and computers.
- **REACH.** ODL can reach marginalised and under-represented groups, whether their barriers to education are social, political or geographical.
- **CONSISTENCY.** ODL can be uniformly conducted at scale.

ODL can widen access to education and raise the quality of education at the same time. This explains the powerful potential of ODL for achievement of the MDGs.



COL's CONTRIBUTION to the MDGs in AFRICA

1 ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

- Literacy project in Zambia
- Kitchen gardens and nutrition initiative in Kenya
- Solar cooking project in Nigeria
- Agricultural research and rural radio in Cameroon, Ghana and Uganda
- Community radio in several countries
- Expanding COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme to Southern Africa
- Supporting NGOs engaged in community education

2 ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

- Support for Schoolnets for teacher training
- Open schooling project in Mozambique
- Teacher training in Nigeria, Sub-Saharan Africa
- Southern Africa Teacher Training (STAMP 2000+)
- African schoolnets
- Out-of-school rural youth programme in Mozambique
- Distance delivery enhancement in Namibia
- Educational radio for primary students in South Africa

3 PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

- Media development for women in agro-food processing in Ghana

4 5 6 HEALTH GOALS

- Use of community video to address HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention issues in The Gambia, Swaziland, Sierra Leone and South Africa.
- Use of solar-powered community radio to address health issues in Northern Uganda
- Creation of health promotion radio programmes to be available as open source content for radio stations

7 ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Library of resources and documents on the environment for educators at www.colfinder.org/dev is helping institutions develop specialised environmental ODL courses

8 DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

- Creating partnerships with governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other development agencies
- Contribution to good governance through assistance with developing policy frameworks in several African countries
- COL's Commonwealth Executive Masters Programmes in Public Administration and Business Administration educate public servants in Africa
- Providing skills development courses for NGOs
- COL Knowledge Finder www.col.org/kf provides the most extensive collection of freely available, full-text documents on applying ODL to development

COL IS HELPING COUNTRIES INTRODUCE NEW APPROACHES AND TECHNOLOGIES IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAKE THEM SELF-REPLICATING **LEARNING IS OUR "COMMON WEALTH"**