



# CELEBRATING **25 YEARS** OF PROGRESS

COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

**Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)**  
Sri Lanka, November 2013





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I was pleased to visit Vancouver in September of 2013, when I was able to express in person my admiration for the tremendous contribution COL makes to education in the Commonwealth in a variety of ways.

Under the leadership of Professor Asha Kanwar, and building on the foundations laid by Sir John Daniel, the COL team is to be congratulated on the imaginative way in which it continues to develop new ways of utilising advances in ICT to provide access to learning opportunities and vocational training – particularly for members of our Commonwealth family who live in remote locations or would not otherwise have opportunities to study.

The new Charter of the Commonwealth recognises “the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development; delivering savings, efficiencies and growth in our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture.”

COL's work at the cutting edge, finding innovative ways for ICT to be used by Commonwealth citizens in order to access distance and open learning as a tool for promoting Commonwealth values of democracy, development and respect for diversity, is a towering Commonwealth achievement. We also remain immensely grateful for the steadfast host-country support we have received from Canada.

His Excellency Mr. Kamalesh Sharma  
Commonwealth Secretary-General

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Photo: The Ramphal Centre, Credit: Colin Patterson.

Please accept my heartiest congratulations on your Silver Jubilee. It seems only yesterday that representatives of Commonwealth Governments gathered in Lancaster House on 1 September 1988 to sign the Memorandum of Understanding establishing the Commonwealth of Learning, and that we all drank a toast to your future success. Our hopes at this “champagne moment” have been amply fulfilled and you have become one of the most highly esteemed and effective members of the Commonwealth family. We all rejoice in your record of pioneering achievement, nurturing distance-learning institutions and programmes all over the Commonwealth, so ensuring that millions of people, young and old, have had access to learning opportunities of a kind their parents could only have dreamed of. I am proud that your birth took place on my “watch” as Commonwealth Secretary-General and of the part I was able to play in bringing COL into being.

Sir Shridath (Sonny) Ramphal  
Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1975–1990, and a member of COL's Founding Board, 1988–1990

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COL's mission to support and promote learning for development must be welcomed, appreciated and cherished. This small organisation with a modest budget has made an impact across the 53-Member-State Commonwealth very much out of proportion to its size. We use this occasion of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary to give us the encouragement to continue being responsive, innovative, dynamic and effective in our work, and to give substance to the promotion and upholding of Commonwealth values – values which the world respects and which the world needs now more than ever.

The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, OJ  
Chair, COL Board of Governors



I take great pride in the Commonwealth of Learning and in my role in its creation. I follow its activities with unremitting interest and deep concern. Having written the Report on its foundation I have watched it grow and evolve. I have the happiest memories of Vancouver, a city I came to love, and of all the other places in the Commonwealth where we held our meetings. I was a learner at the time as well as a policy maker. I send my warmest congratulations on your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and I wish the new President well for a successful term of office.

The Right Honourable Lord (Asa) Briggs of Lewes  
Chair of the Expert Group on Commonwealth Co-operation in Distance Education and Open Learning, 1986–1987, and first Chair of COL's Board, 1988–1993



I am very honoured and proud to be President of COL as it completes 25 years of operations. It has been a long and eventful journey on which many people from around the Commonwealth have accompanied COL. We salute each one of them for their valuable contributions. Over these years, COL has remained small, with stable staff strength, yet its influence and reputation today have grown far in excess of its small size. What are the reasons for this?

First, COL has always tried to remain relevant to the needs of its stakeholders by maintaining a strong country focus. Second, COL has grown and developed from an outputs-oriented to an outcomes-based organisation. Keeping an eye on the outcomes and impact to be achieved helps COL stay both focused and flexible. Third, COL captures and disseminates the results of what it does. We have been reporting regularly to various stakeholders to assure them that COL is not only efficient and effective but also delivers value for money.

The world has seen unprecedented change in the last 25 years: the phenomenal growth of technology; the shifting of geo-political power; global recession. As a small and nimble organisation, COL has managed to chart a steady course amidst all this turbulence and has demonstrated what it means to be a development organisation for the 21st century.

Professor Asha Kanwar  
President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning



The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is celebrating 25 years of operations this year.

It was created by Commonwealth Heads of Government when they met in Vancouver in 1987 and remains the only intergovernmental organisation that focuses exclusively on enhancing access to education, training and learning through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and open and distance learning (ODL).

COL helps governments expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using appropriate technologies. It assists partners in developing policy, building capacity, refining models, creating materials and nurturing collaborative networks.

*Learning for Development* is the theme of COL's work. Following the ideas of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, COL understands development as freedom which empowers people to be more effective agents of development. In concrete terms, COL uses the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, the Education for All goals and the Commonwealth priorities of peace, democracy, equality and the rule of law as its framework for action.

COL's *impact statement* is: "A substantial and equitable increase in the number of Commonwealth citizens acquiring the knowledge and skills for leading productive and healthy lives, through formal and non-formal open and distance learning opportunities".

COL's *strategic goals* are:

- quality education for all Commonwealth citizens,
- human resource development in the Commonwealth, and
- harnessing ODL and technologies to achieve development goals.

COL reports substantively to Ministers and Senior Officials at the triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM). Eight CCEMs have been held since COL's inception. The following pages highlight some of the directions provided by Ministers at each of those meetings and show how COL has contributed to increasing access to education in the Commonwealth over the past 25 years.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (11CCEM)

Barbados, October 1990

Ministers congratulated [COL] on the commendable progress made since becoming operational in January 1989 and the strides it had made towards widening access to education and raising its quality through distance education ... They noted, too, the important role which COL had to play in advocacy for distance education and for international co-operation in its use. Every effort should be made to strengthen national and regional institutions, and to facilitate the sharing of their expertise.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 28

### ADVOCACY

COL was created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. It is well known for its global advocacy for open and distance learning, the sharing of expertise and, more recently, for open educational resources and the open licensing of educational materials produced with public funds.

*More than two decades since COL's inception, Commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministers of Education recognise that it is in part due to the efforts of COL and a wide international network of partners that distance education is now part of the mainstream of education and training.*

*COL has assisted several Commonwealth Governments in developing national ODL policies.*

*Today, there is at least one distance learning institution or operation in each of the Commonwealth's Member States, including middle- and lower-income countries, and open universities alone account for over five million learners throughout the Commonwealth. When COL began, in 1988, there were only ten open universities in the Commonwealth; there are now 28.*



## 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (12CCEM) Islamabad, Pakistan, November 1994

12<sup>th</sup>

Ministers ... welcomed the role of NGOs and community groups in developing and implementing education programmes at the non-formal level.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 18

### LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

Millions of rural families in developing countries do not have access to learning, and existing agricultural extension systems based on face-to-face training are inadequate to address the challenges. COL's L3F initiative offers a new approach. It mobilises and organises the farming community and links them with banks for financial capital. It then facilitates learning in the community using devices such as mobile phones and radios. The learning takes place vertically (between knowledge institutions and farmers) and horizontally (farmer to farmer). Such a linkage, in which every agricultural borrower is a learner, has led to vibrant entrepreneurial behaviours amongst poorer and marginalised communities.

*L3F has led to increased income, better food security and empowerment amongst 75,000 participants, primarily women, in 11 sites in six countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. L3F offers a win-win framework for financial institutions and ICT companies to invest in and sustain learning within farming communities. This year, the L3F model has expanded further into three additional countries in Africa (Seychelles and, with the help of additional financial partnership from the Government of Canada, Ghana and Tanzania).*



## 13<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (13CCEM) Gaborone, Botswana, July 1997

13<sup>th</sup>

Ministers noted that an increased role of technology in education was inevitable, especially as regards the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) which are now transforming the delivery of education in many countries through distance education. They further noted that technology was opening up new possibilities for increased access and improved quality, as well as better management of education systems ...

Many delegations recorded their gratitude for the assistance COL had given them over recent years, and expressed a desire to see COL play a significant role in their use of technology to enhance access to education for their peoples. Ministers also recognised the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of distance education systems, especially in the fields of teacher training and educational access for girl children and women as well as basic education for all.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraphs 6 and 25

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

ODL is a cost-effective approach to expanding education. Its use has grown rapidly over the 25 years since Commonwealth Heads of Government established COL, and it is featured in all of COL's initiatives. Rapidly increasing access to the Web from mobile devices as well as from desktop computers offers even greater opportunities to increase affordable access to learning.

*Today, thanks to expanding connectivity and new developments in ICT such as social software and open educational resources (OER), ODL applications continue to accelerate.*

*COL provides leadership and advisory support, addressing partner concerns regarding intellectual property/copyright and open licences for digital learning materials. It is at the cutting edge of OER technology.*

*COL has emerged as a leader in innovative applications of ICT. COL conceptualised the use of low-cost tablet computers as learning support tools. Recently, COL has built Aptus, a very low-cost device set that allows learners and teachers to make use of Web-based materials without needing access to the Internet or grid power.*





# COL THROUGH THE YEARS



SELECTED STORIES FROM THE FIELD



## Teacher Education

350,000 teachers and teacher educators trained in 24 countries

## OER 4 Open Schools

Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia

Since 2007, COL has helped launch open schools in Ghana, Kiribati, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago and, most recently, in Pakistan.



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

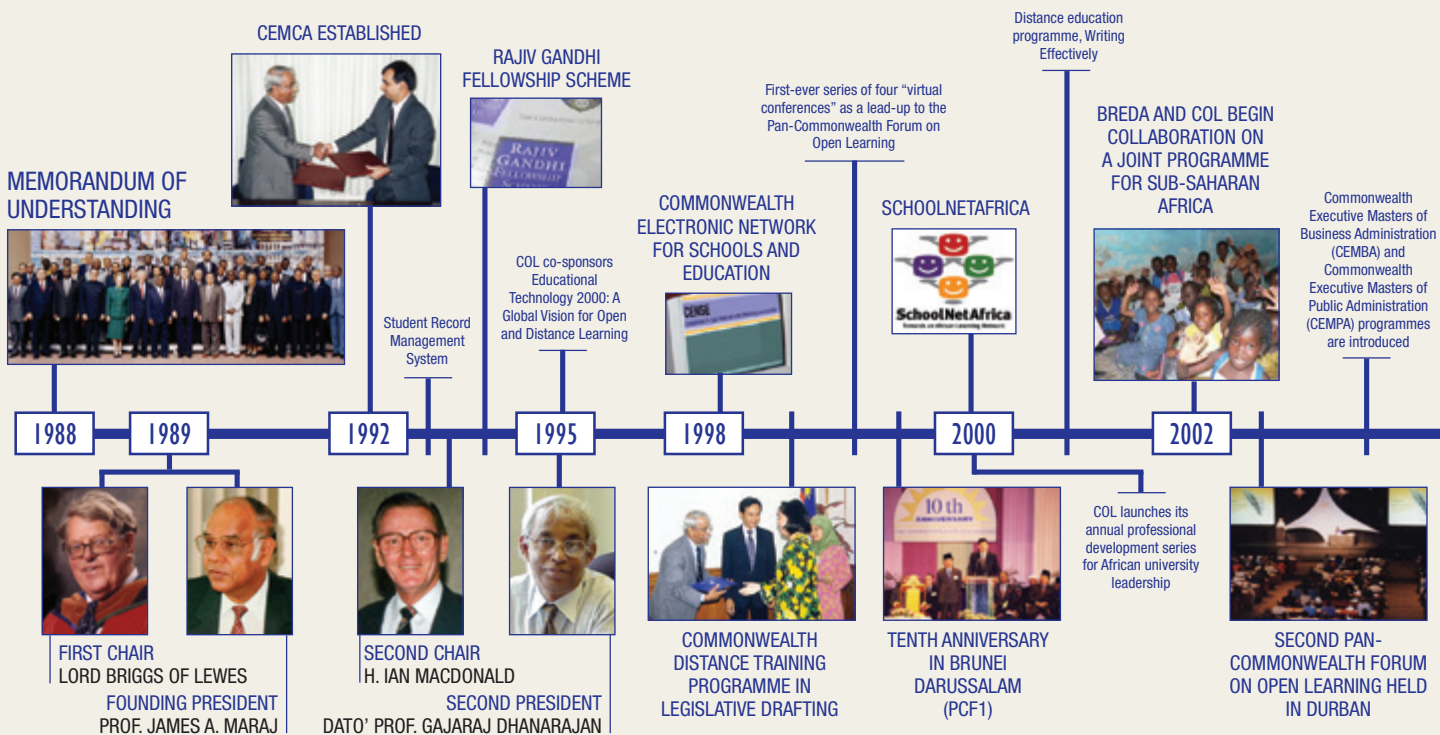
## Higher Education

Since it launched in 2002, the Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programme has enrolled more than 25,000 managers/administrators and awarded nearly 10,000 Executive MBAs and MPAs.

## eLearning for International Organisations

Since 2000, COL eLIO has trained 8,488 learners in 44 countries, 60% women and 40% men, in effective communication, debt management, data management and youth development.

SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS OF COL'S 25 YEARS





### Basic Trades Courses in Vanuatu and Nauru

Over 200 young people trained in literacy and concrete skills in 2011

167 young people with concrete skills building their communities from the ground up



### Maternal & Child Health in Malawi

Over 3,000 women from over 250 village-based groups actively involved in maternal and child health programmes

### Lifelong Learning for Farmers

"The Lifelong Learning initiative of COL has [...] enhanced the self-confidence and learning abilities of illiterate women, which have improved their economic conditions."

— *Dinamalar*, Tamil newspaper in Tamil Nadu, India



COL LAUNCHES LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS



COL'S POVERTY REDUCTION OUTCOMES THROUGH EDUCATION INNOVATIONS AND NETWORKS



FIFTH PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING HELD IN LONDON



THE COMMONWEALTH OPEN SCHOOLING ASSOCIATION (COMOSA) IS LAUNCHED



CEMCA ESTABLISHES COMMUNITY RADIO FACILITATION CENTRE



THIRD PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING HELD IN DUNEDIN



REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING (RETRIDOL) OPENS



COL LAUNCHES WIKIEDUCATOR



LEARNING4CONTENT



Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI) is launched

2003



THIRD CHAIR LEWIS PERINBAM, O.C.



THIRD PRESIDENT SIR JOHN DANIEL



Twenty small states of the Commonwealth accept COL's invitation to participate in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

2005



CARIBBEAN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING (CARADOL) IS LAUNCHED

2006



COMMONWEALTH COMPUTER NAVIGATOR'S CERTIFICATE

2008



FOURTH CHAIR BURCHELL WHITEMAN, O.J.

COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) introduced



FOURTH PRESIDENT PROF. ASHA KANWAR



Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Abuja

2012

## 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (14CCEM) Halifax, Canada, November 2000

Education empowers the poor, safeguards the vulnerable, promotes economic growth and social justice, promotes the values of democracy, human rights, citizenship, good governance, tolerance and pluralism and provides moral and spiritual guidance. Higher education and research are among the important tools through which countries can achieve their development goals. Attention to gender equality, and to the inclusion of the disabled and marginalised, in access and opportunity are essential at all levels of education.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 1

### HIGHER EDUCATION

Because higher education is the strategic heart of education and contributes substantially to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, COL has been consistently active in higher education, even when it dropped off the agenda of most other development agencies. COL supports policy makers, institutions and leaders in higher education to harness the potential of ODL and technology and so enable them to cope with the combination of increasing demand for higher education, rising costs, diminishing public funding and the need to maintain high quality.

*COL has been active in helping several Commonwealth countries to include ODL in their development and educational planning and is assisting with quality assurance programmes at open universities. During the past year, staff at 27 Commonwealth higher education institutions in India, Tanzania and Sri Lanka built capacity in the use and development of open educational resources (OER).*

*Several Commonwealth open universities are also partners in the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA programmes. COL developed these programmes to enable partner institutions to improve the availability of trained managers and administrators in their countries through programmes of international quality and low cost that would otherwise be very difficult to do individually. To date, more than 21,000 have enrolled and nearly 10,000 have graduated. In most institutions, these programmes are offered at one-third the cost of conventional MBA programmes.*



## 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (15CCEM) Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, October 2003

15<sup>th</sup>

Ministers affirmed that education is a crucial means for adapting to and directing change; reducing poverty, ensuring security; improving health and well-being; enhancing economic prosperity and personal security and safety; promoting fairness, justice, and peace; and achieving environmental sustainability.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 9

### HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

COL's Healthy Communities initiative helps local development and communication organisations to create non-formal educational programmes about community health and development. Working with partners, COL has developed a model for local, low-cost, participatory communication programmes that address critical unmet community health and development needs, often through community radio.

*Currently, 85 local organisations in more than 50 communities in 16 countries in three Commonwealth regions are engaged in developing learning programmes about health and development priorities.*

*In Malawi, a COL-supported community health information programme called "The Bag of Life" is active in a district with extremely high rates of maternal and child mortality. Partners include a local health NGO, the district hospital, a local radio station and a network of 15,000 women. Each week, about 3,000 women participate directly in radio listening and discussion groups. Cost is low and learning is very evident.*

Ministers were keen to achieve the UN millennium target date of 2005 to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education. Ministers recognised the importance of women having access to tertiary education so that they can become role models for younger girls and women. They also noted the continued need to encourage girls into non-traditional areas of study such as mathematics and science, and women into leadership levels of education. Moreover, they appreciated the benefits to family welfare from better educated mothers.

– Ministers' Communiqué, annex paragraph 13

### GENDER

One-third of the world's poor live in Commonwealth countries and two-thirds of them are women. COL recognises that the advancement of the goals of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to its agenda of Learning for Development. As a cross-cutting corporate goal for COL, gender equality requires that both women's and men's views, interests and needs shape its programmes. ODL can be especially helpful in enabling women and girls to access educational opportunities while also fulfilling other responsibilities. Deeply engrained social, cultural and economic barriers can prevent young girls from continuing with their education post elementary school.

*Gender mainstreaming is an organisational strategy for COL. A gender equality perspective is taken at all stages of the programme cycle – planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – to ensure that the initiatives offer equal opportunities, benefits and participation to girls/women and boys/men.*

*COL's Open Schooling initiative pays particular attention to creating opportunities for women and girls. COL also maintains a Gender Policy and regularly updates its Gender Action Plan – and a Gender Microsite provides links to resources and research on gender and ODL.*

## 16<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (16CCEM) Cape Town, South Africa, December 2006

16<sup>th</sup>

Ministers reaffirmed the principles enunciated in the Edinburgh Communiqué and agreed ...

- to provide quality training for teachers to meet the needs at all levels of education;
- to train more teachers to meet the needs of UPE [universal primary education], and to devise strategies for increasing the number of young people coming into the teaching profession;
- to ensure continuing professional development of teachers and to develop and implement quality assurance measures; ...
- to give more attention to the issues of school leadership and governance in our efforts to attain quality education ...

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 22

### TEACHER EDUCATION

One of the key obstacles to achieving Education for All is the substantial shortfall in teacher supply in most developing countries. COL provides support to teacher training institutions to strengthen and expand their pre- and in-service programmes through the use of ODL and technology. COL is also active in co-ordinating the supply of OER for teacher training.

*From 2009 to 2012, COL assisted in training over 350,000 teachers in 24 countries, with a primary focus on Africa and marginalised groups such as nomads.*

*COL has developed OER for English language teaching to support school-based training for teachers working in the higher grades of basic education.*

Ministers acknowledged that open and distance learning (ODL) has improved access, and enhanced quality of education and training in many parts of the developing Commonwealth. The implementation of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) is a step in the right direction as it seeks to bridge the digital divide and encourage collaboration.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 15

### VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

VUSSC is using technology to turn the digital divide into digital dividend. The VUSSC partnership has grown to represent 32 small states of the Commonwealth dedicated to expanding access to tertiary education. In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the sharing of educational resources using collaborative and multi-institutional frameworks.

*To date, more than 11,000 people, including educators, policy makers and IT managers, have been trained. Through co-operative programmes and learning materials being developed, 14 courses and programmes are now completed – in skills areas including entrepreneurship, tourism, educational delivery and technology – and being delivered by seven institutions in Commonwealth small states, covering all Commonwealth regions. This year, the first group of VUSSC students graduated with a Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture from the National University of Samoa.*



## 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM)

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 2009

17<sup>th</sup>

Ministers ... affirmed that the achievement of the international goals is dependent on looking forward, while noting the importance of innovative delivery mechanisms in light of resource constraints in this area. Ministers emphasised that the expanse and quality of secondary and higher education not only determine the number and quality of primary school teachers, but are also critical for providing innovative solutions; for enhancing quality and equity in the delivery of education; and for delivering socio-economic development. In this regard, Ministers recognised the importance of delivering ...

- improved access to secondary education ...

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 9

### OPEN SCHOOLING

Open schooling is a powerful way of addressing issues of social justice and equity since it can bring the excluded into the schooling system and give them an opportunity to have a better quality of life. COL's contribution, through open schooling in developing countries, results in more educated children of educated mothers/women taking an economic leadership role in the family and community and reduces the incidence of poverty.

*COL works in 26 countries to expand open schooling and thereby increase learning opportunities for secondary education, particularly for girls, out-of-school youth and people in remote regions. The world's largest open school, in India, provides education to an average of 300,000 students per year at one-tenth the usual cost, while in Namibia, the Open School provides education to 48 per cent of the country's total senior secondary school population.*

*With COL's assistance, open schools have been established in several Commonwealth countries, including Belize, Ghana, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Trinidad & Tobago, Pakistan and Vanuatu. All Commonwealth open schools work collaboratively through the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA).*

Ministers stressed the importance of developing and utilising partnerships with a range of stakeholders in order to maximise effectiveness and optimise the use of resources.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 12

### PARTNERSHIPS

As a small and specialised intergovernmental agency, COL emphasises partnerships in all its activities, collaborating with other Commonwealth bodies, multilateral agencies, NGOs and community-based organisations, as well as Commonwealth Governments, fostering communities of practice and nurturing regional bodies.

*UNICEF and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation have been major funding partners. Among COL's major donors, the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom have also provided additional funding for expanded work and research.*

*COL also has significant working relationships with organisations such as the Commonwealth Secretariat; the Commonwealth Foundation; UNESCO; Farm Radio International; ministries of education, agriculture and health; educational institutions; regional associations and farmer associations; as well as private sector organisations, including commercial and agricultural banks, telecommunications companies and IT enterprises.*

*COL's work is supported by networks of advisors across the Commonwealth:*

- *Focal Points: individuals nominated by the Minister of Education in each country to act as COL's primary contact.*
- *Honorary Advisors: eminent ODL professionals from across the Commonwealth who are valuable resources for consultations about COL's future plans and for Member States seeking advice on ODL.*
- *UNESCO-COL and COL Chairs: distinguished academics who serve in an honorary capacity, complementing the political and administrative roles of the Focal Points and Honorary Advisors.*

## 18<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM) Mauritius, August 2012

Ministers noted the need to focus on teacher professional standards and school leadership in their efforts to improve quality education, while observing that the post-2015 development framework should include knowledge and skills that enable young people to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements ...

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 14

### TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

INVEST Africa is COL's flagship TVSD initiative. Through INVEST (Innovation in Vocational Education and Skills Training) Africa, COL works with 12 partner institutions in six countries, building the capacity of formal post-secondary institutions to offer new, flexible courses for people – especially women – working in the formal and informal sector. Working with a team of Champions, colleges are strengthening their ICT infrastructure, establishing new centres for ODL, creating new strategic objectives and building the capacity of their teachers to integrate ICT into teaching and learning. In most cases, young adults who left school with a poor secondary education get a chance to gain livelihood skills.

*COL has always recognised the need for skills training, especially for out-of-school youth. Skills training figures prominently in VUSSC and open schooling initiatives, as well as specifically with INVEST Africa and similar programmes in other regions. In recent months, 14 new flexible courses have been offered in the informal sector in Africa, which will enable thousands of women to participate in new skills training opportunities.*

*In India, a certificate in community development has been piloted with 300 field workers. NGOs are offering new skills training courses in Bangladesh and St. Vincent & the Grenadines Community College has converted courses to online delivery.*



Ministers stressed that ICT was vital to increasing access at all levels, hence improving the efficiency of the education system, but that technology should be driven by educational needs. They noted that while there was a plethora of initiatives for the development of open education resources (OER), such as scientific publications, eBooks and journals, there was a need to set up a common platform for OER materials for harmonisation and ease of access.

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 16

## OER/eLEARNING

OER and eLearning are central in all of COL's initiatives, in both formal and non-formal sectors. COL continues to be a global leader in these fields, having advocated and implemented both concepts even before the terms were coined.

*COL is recognised for its development of innovative eLearning solutions and for its support for the re-use of materials through open licences.*

*Following extensive international consultation, COL and UNESCO received approval for the Paris Declaration on OER, at UNESCO's World OER Congress in June 2012. COL is continuing its global advocacy for OER, actively working to implement the Declaration's ten recommendations, with a focus on awareness and advocacy, policy development, capacity building, research and sharing.*

*COL's online OER directory service is built on DSpace and has been expanded from a focus on higher education to also cover teacher education, open schooling and skills development. To date, 2,900 full-course OER have been catalogued. Developing countries of the Commonwealth continue to lead developed countries in placing OER on the Web. <http://doer.col.org>*



COL is results oriented and applies results-based management (RBM) to all its work. During its second decade, COL became increasingly adept at embracing the principles of RBM – and that process continues. As part of RBM, COL is also committed to a strong monitoring and evaluation framework to provide evidence of outcomes and impact, along with lessons learned.

Although achieving sustainable and self-replicating development goals takes time, most of the initiatives COL has pursued over the past 25 years are now showing demonstrably positive results – from expanding and improving education and training opportunities to building healthier communities, contributing to skills development and generally helping rural people achieve greater prosperity.

Development depends on the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge by everyone – and technology can greatly facilitate these processes. The techniques of ODL give farmers the know-how to improve their livelihoods. Community learning programmes provide women with the knowledge to raise a healthy family. Open schooling increases access to education. Distance learning enables teachers to upgrade their skills. OER expand availability of quality learning materials.

Although it is a small intergovernmental body, not a donor agency, COL has helped Commonwealth countries give millions of people new opportunities to learn over the two and a half decades of its existence. The secret of its success is to empower governments, institutions and individuals to develop learning systems themselves without having to rely on donors.

COL is an effective partner in combining knowledge and technology to advance development. Commonwealth Ministers of Education:

*... commended COL on its growing impact since 17CCEM, especially in relation to its needs-based work in each Member State. Ministers were pleased with the leadership of COL in developing innovations in technology to enhance access to education in both the formal and non-formal sectors. Ministers endorsed the three-year plan for 2012-15 'Learning for Development'. They emphasised the need for strengthening the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and for the development and use of OER in providing quality teaching and learning for all.*

– Ministers' Communiqué, paragraph 19  
18<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM)  
Mauritius, August 2012



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

**Contact:**

Commonwealth of Learning,  
1055 West Hastings Street, Suite 1200,  
Vancouver, BC V6E 2E9 CANADA  
PH: +1.604.775.8200 | FAX: +1.604.775.8210 | E-MAIL: [info@col.org](mailto:info@col.org) | WEB: [www.col.org](http://www.col.org)