

# Connections

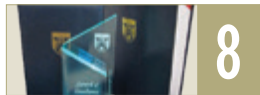


*Learning for Development*



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## ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL PCF

COL's Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7) was held in Abuja, Nigeria from 2–6 December 2013, and from all accounts delegates found PCF7 to be useful and personally rewarding. They rated the keynote presentations highly and appreciated the breakout discussions, the many interactive sessions and the networking opportunities, as well as the Nigerian hospitality. From COL's perspective, every delegate made a contribution to the success of the Forum.

*"The PCF experience was, as always, stimulating, invigorating and fruitful."*

– PCF7 delegate from India

*"I am still amazed at the complexity and depth of knowledge, the information that was shared at the Forum, the eminence of some of the speakers and the humility shown by all."*

– PCF7 delegate from Jamaica

*"My experience at PCF7 was positive and productive. I am already mapping out plans to apply the lessons learned in my organisation."*

– PCF7 delegate from Cameroon

PCF7 was hosted in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Over 600 policy makers and practitioners from 49 countries, including 42 Commonwealth Member States, attended this dynamic event that enabled participation, knowledge sharing, learning and networking.

The Forum addressed "Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation" through five themes: girls' and women's

education; skills development; promoting open educational resources (OER); innovation and technology; and institutional development.

The Asa Briggs Lecture was delivered by Professor Alan Tait of the U.K. Open University, and seven keynotes were presented by eminent experts from around the Commonwealth. Over two hundred papers were presented, in a variety of formats.

Keynote presentations – including a Forum sum-up, "Takeaways, Prospects", by COL President Professor Asha Kanwar, where she also reviewed how the world of education and open and distance learning (ODL) has changed in three years from PCF6 to PCF7, and the road ahead – daily newsletters, social media links, Excellence in Distance Education Award winners and photos are all available online.

*So, at the close of PCF7, let us reflect on what is different this time and how the world has changed from when we met in Kochi three years ago. At that time, MOOCs was still a little-known development in Manitoba and not mentioned even once. Learning Analytics, which was then unknown, has now become a real possibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning. We were talking of OER then, but it is much more mainstream now, with governments adopting policies and institutions investing in open textbooks. The growth of mobile devices in these three years has been nothing short of phenomenal. Twenty-first-century skills were recurring concerns during this PCF, whereas this was not the case in 2010.*

– From PCF7 closing remarks by Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President and C.E.O.

# ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL PCF

CONTINUED FROM COVER

## GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

There were engaging and passionate discussions around this theme, with three significant recommendations. Participants stressed the need to:

- Use ODL for women at the local government level,
- Use information and communication technology (ICT) for women's entrepreneurship, and
- Create a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation framework.

## SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Results for Development Institute (r4d.org) provided support for this theme, as did COL's INVEST Africa partners. Participant conclusions and recommendations included that:

- Many jobs of 2025 do not yet exist;
- TVET institutions need to focus on job creators, not job seekers, and they must involve employers in the development of courses to ensure relevance and quality;
- As the role of teachers is critical, appropriate training is needed; and
- Organisations need to change to adopt flexible and blended approaches.

## PROMOTING OER

Promoting the sharing, use and reuse of OER is an important aspect of COL's work. In her keynote address on this theme, Ms. Jennie Glennie, Director of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), noted that educators must be prepared for a paradigm shift because OER is changing education and ODL is playing a fundamental role in this shift.

This theme attracted much attention, a large number of papers and lively debates. Participants identified the need for:

- Further awareness and research on OER "fair dealing",
- Training in online mentoring for students, and
- Strategies for putting in place the right combination of OER, formal assessment and peer-to-peer learning.

UNESCO contributed to this theme by organising a high-level panel discussion.

During the Forum closing, NOUN Vice Chancellor, Professor Vincent Tenebe, announced that all course materials of his university would henceforward be made available as OER. This is a significant volume of resources.

## INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Professor Tim Unwin, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, cautioned that ICT increases inequalities. "Inequality increases unless we take specific actions to reduce it," he said.

The papers presented under this theme covered both the formal and non-formal sectors. Some of the recommendations include that:

- Local institutions must use radio/mobiles creatively for formal and non-formal learning,
- Innovation lies in placing technology within the context of community learning for empowerment, and
- Technology and innovation need to focus on learning and development outcomes.

## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In defining this theme, NOUN and COL agreed that if open learning is to be a key tenet for development and is to contribute to empowerment and transformation, then systems have to be in place that can ensure sustainability and scalability.

Professor Julius Amioba Okojie, Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission (Nigeria), was the keynote speaker, although circumstances dictated that his speech be delivered on his behalf. He noted that change management is essential, especially to help overcome resistance that can occur in dual-mode institutions.

Discussions under this theme concluded that:

- There should be a balance between academic needs and the needs of the country and national economy,
- Leadership is critical to institutional development, and
- Research-based practice and good governance will raise the quality of ODL institutions.

## COL'S APTUS SYSTEM

COL's Aptus "Classroom Without Walls" system was demonstrated at PCF7 and was also a popular topic ([www.col.org/Aptus](http://www.col.org/Aptus)). See also page 16.



Professor Asha Kanwar, President & C.E.O., Commonwealth of Learning (COL)



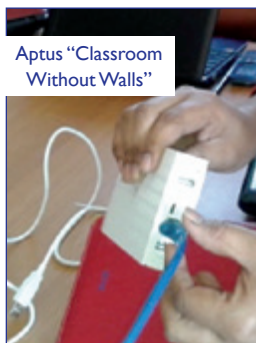
Professor Vincent Ado Tenebe, Vice Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)



Ms. Jennie Glennie, Founding Director of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE); Keynote, Promoting OER



Her Excellency Ambassador Mrs. Mariam Yalwaji Katagum, COL Board member, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO for Nigeria



Aptus "Classroom Without Walls"



Community Radio



EDEA Award Presentation

## INVEST AFRICA AT PCF7

The annual meeting for INVEST Africa partner institution principals was a little more exciting this year. It was held in November 2013, in time to co-ordinate with PCF7, and was generously hosted by Auchi Polytechnic in Edo State, Nigeria. Principals met COL Education Specialist, Dr. Alison Mead Richardson, at Abuja airport and then travelled five hours by bus to Auchi in south-central Nigeria. The focus of the annual meeting is to review progress, report on results and plan for the coming year's activities. It was good to note that there are now six Women in Technical Education and Employment (WIT-ED) chapters in INVEST partner institutions. These teams of dedicated volunteers are working to increase women's and girls' access to technical/vocational education and training, and their

efforts have already resulted in nearly 80 entrants to marine engineering courses at Mombasa Technical Training Institute, in Kenya.

Principals were very interested to visit the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (CEDAP) at Auchi Polytechnic and learn how each student is required to develop income-generating skills alongside their academic qualifications. CEDAP offers a wide range of skills training, including welding, fish farming, poultry keeping, tailoring and hairdressing. The long bus ride back to Abuja took the group to PCF7, where the session on INVEST Africa was chaired by COL President Professor Asha Kanwar. Principals presented the outcomes of their efforts to increase access in their institutions through the application of flexible and blended methodologies.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNITY RADIO

PCF7 generated extensive social media activity among participants and also featured a PCF7 community radio/"participatory media hub".

To integrate innovative communication within the PCF7 programme itself, COL's Healthy Communities initiative worked with Farm Radio International and the Lagos-based Institute for Media and Society to run "radio(inter)active".

A team of 20 Nigerian broadcasters and social media activists (including 10 youths under 30) used a wide range of technologies, bringing PCF7 to a larger audience around the world and at the same time bringing voices from beyond Abuja, both in and outside of Nigeria, into conference spaces.

With a small on-site studio and portable equipment, the team prepared 16 podcasts and shared audio content with three participating campus-based FM stations in Nigeria. Hundreds of Tweets were sent, cross-referenced to a dedicated Facebook page, and 25 blogs were posted.

The team also ran three polls among PCF7 delegates, using the flash-to-vote feature of the new Telerivet technology, which aggregates missed calls as votes. Full-page radio(inter)active spreads were also included in the daily PCF7 newsletter.

Highlights in participants' evaluation of the experience included the untapped potential of social media and mobiles; the combined potential to work with traditional print and radio; the consensus-based and team approach applied to the process; and the education-related value of new technologies across a full spectrum of ages.

## AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Another key feature of all PCFs has been naming new COL Fellows and presenting COL's Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA). At the ceremonies in Abuja, COL recognised nine outstanding individuals and five exemplary institutions. (See "In Focus", page 8.)

## A THANK YOU

In addition to PCF7 co-hosts, the Government of Nigeria and NOUN, and PCF7 participants, COL is grateful to all the other PCF7 sponsors, including UNICEF, Microsoft Africa, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Commonwealth Foundation, the U.K. Open University, the University of London and UNESCO. Sponsorships enabled deserving individuals to participate when they would otherwise have been unable. Delegate feedback is also appreciated. COL is using the several constructive comments to help in designing even better PCFs in the future.

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

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

PCF7 social media:

<http://twitter.com/#pcf7>

<http://www.twitter.com/pcf7radio>

PCF7 Radio (and photos):

<http://bit.ly/pcf7gist>

PCF7 Radio podcasts:

<http://soundcloud.com/pcf7-radio>

[www.facebook.com/PCF7Radio](http://www.facebook.com/PCF7Radio)



Professor Alan Tait, the U.K. Open University; Asa Briggs Lecture



The Honourable Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams; Keynote, Girls' and Women's Education



Professor Tim Unwin, Secretary General, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation; Keynote, Innovation and Technology



Dr. Rory McGreal, UNESCO/COL Chair in OER, Director of the Technology Enhanced Knowledge Research Institute; Keynote, Skills Development



## PCF7 LOOKS AT OUTCOMES-BASED APPROACHES

During the last four decades, the development sector has emphasised tools such as results-based management (RBM) and the logical framework approach (LFA) to achieve desired outcomes and impact. However, such tools are yet to become as popular in the ODL community.

During PCF7 in Abuja, the blending of civil society and ODL practitioners resulted in interesting debates. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* criticises the traditional "banking model" of education, in which learners are treated as empty vessels that are to be filled. Freire points out that "the more students work at storing deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world." He argues that students need to be co-creators of knowledge.

Is ODL different from this banking concept of education or is it old wine in new bottles? Many participants agreed that an education system that includes ODL is still output oriented, emphasising indicators such as number of students, number of courses, etc., with less orientation to outcome and impact indicators such as critical consciousness, empowerment, employability, health, quality of life, etc.

As PCF7 discussions continued, important questions were raised on defining the differences between outputs, outcomes and impact. A matrix (modified from the "Basics of Action

**The logical framework**

Category	Description	Significance
Impact	Benefits to, or achievement by, target group	What they achieve
Outcome	Change in behaviour of or use of new capacities by TD	What they do
Outputs	New capacities	What we achieve
Activities	Specific actions taken	What we do
Inputs	Human and financial resources	What we invest

Modified from [www.powershow.com/view/151311-YTIIY/Basics\\_of\\_Action\\_Planning\\_powerpoint\\_ppt\\_presentation](http://www.powershow.com/view/151311-YTIIY/Basics_of_Action_Planning_powerpoint_ppt_presentation)

Planning" by Margarita F. Guerrero of the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia Pacific) helped many participants to grasp the essence of an outcome-oriented focus.

Such outcomes and impact cannot be achieved through conventional teaching methods, either face-to-face or at a distance. Participants explored the need for ODL to change by moving beyond conventional pedagogy and focusing on new approaches such as andragogy and heutagogy. Is ODL ready for change?

## COL RECEIVES EDUVISION AWARD OF EXCELLENCE



Mr. Gary Campbell, Director of ICT, Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, Jamaica (right) presents EduVision's 2014 Award of Excellence to the Commonwealth of Learning, received by COL's Jamaican Focal Point, Dr. Phylcia Marshall, Assistant Chief Education Officer, Tertiary Unit, Ministry of Education

The Commonwealth of Learning was proud to have the honour of receiving EduVision's 2014 Award of Excellence. The award was presented to COL at EduVision 2014, the sixth biennial International Conference and Exhibition on Technology in Education and Training, on 18 March in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The selection of COL for this award was based on "the recognition of an organisation which has demonstrated excellence in transforming teaching, learning and workforce development through the use of technology". In particular, EduVision commended COL for "its exemplary contribution to the development of small

and developing states through innovative interventions and projects". EduVision is staged by leading educational partners in Jamaica.

Former Education Minister, Mrs. Maxine Henry Wilson, who is now Executive Director of the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission and EduVision 2014 Chair, stated: "EduVision is indeed indebted to COL for its outstanding contribution to local initiatives at the University of Technology (UTech), the Rural Agricultural Development Agency (RADA), the Caribbean Maritime Institute (CMI) and in disaster preparedness for our country."

## GENDER EQUALITY IN COL PROGRAMMES

Among the partner and stakeholder engagement activities that COL organised to maximise the benefits of people gathering for PCF7 in Abuja were workshops that focused on ways to integrate gender equality concerns into programmes and activities. Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Interlocutors and Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) partner institutions from India, Tanzania, Kenya and Sri Lanka discussed the importance and challenges of pursuing gender equality within distance education and learning for development, and within their own institutional structures.

COL is working to build the capacity of partner institutions to improve the capture of gender-related results. Regular

assessment and evaluation of progress against gender-related benchmarks ensures that programmes and activities contribute to the achievement of gender equality goals instead of maintaining existing gender inequalities.

COL and VUSSC Interlocutors collectively reviewed potential gender-related performance indicators. It was agreed that continued discussions will take place between COL and both sets of partner institutions to co-operatively refine these gender-related performance indicators. L3F partners further agreed that they will work with COL to develop a gender strategy for their activities and undertake more systematic discussions of gender issues in programmes and activities in 2014.

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

## COMMUNITY RADIO VIDEO CHALLENGE AWARDS

COL's regional centre, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), in partnership with UNESCO, New Delhi, observed World Radio Day on 13 February by presenting awards for the Community Radio Video Challenge competition and hosting a panel discussion on the theme "Community Radio: Strengthening Freedom of Expression and Empowering Communities".

The awards competition, the first such opportunity for Indian media students, invited video entries on the topic "Why Community Radio Matters", aimed at engaging Indian youth in community radio (CR) initiatives by emphasising its role in communities' self-expression, learning and development.

Fifteen short videos on the theme received awards in various categories. The overall winner, Aaji Kar Radio, produced by a team from the Central University of Jharkhand in Ranchi, brilliantly portrayed the life-changing role that CR can play for villagers by conveying information about government welfare schemes. All the films have been uploaded to YouTube and are available through CEMCA's website.

The awards were presented by Ms. Supriya Shau, Joint Secretary in the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Ms. Shau also spoke about the activities that the Government of India has launched to support and strengthen CR.



Community Radio Video Challenge Award winners: youth in India recognised for their "Why Community Radio Matters" videos, in various categories. CEMCA Director, Sanjaya Mishra (far right), and three other panellists at the event (to his immediate right) congratulate them.

The panel discussion at the event explored five key issues in expanding the benefits of CR in India:

- Allowing CR stations to broadcast news programmes
- Closing existing gaps in efforts to raise awareness, build capacity and drive advocacy
- Promoting gender inclusiveness at CR stations and within communities
- Using CR to strengthen collective awareness about rights and entitlements
- Addressing the training needs of CR practitioners

Speakers on the panel included Professor Vinod Pavarala, UNESCO Chair on Community Media, University of Hyderabad; Mr. Rajiv Tikoo, Director, OneWorld South

Asia, and Head, Community Radio Facilitation Centre; Ms. Pooja Murada, Director (Communications), Institute of Rural Research and Development, Gurgaon; Ms. Venu Arora, Director of Projects, Ideosync Media Combine, Faridabad; and Ms. Archana Kapoor, Station Director, Radio Mewat, Mewat.

CEMCA Director, Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, facilitated the session and concluded that there are "miles to go before we sleep". The panel agreed on the need for (i) more information through community radio, (ii) stronger advocacy and capacity building, (iii) gender sensitisation, (iv) empowerment through people's engagement and (v) ways to make simple CR technology even simpler.

<http://crvc.cemca.org.in>

## BANGLADESH OPEN SCHOOL EMBRACES OER

The Open School of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is enthusiastically adopting OER as the way forward. Professor Sadia Afroze Sultana, Dean of the Open School, who is spearheading the initiative, recognised that the first step is to develop enabling copyright policy.

Through engagement with COL and peers within the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA), Professor Sultana knew that she had resources, support and contacts to help her. Her first step was to organise a workshop on OER and copyright policy at BOU to discuss a draft policy that Professor Sultana and colleagues at BOU had drafted. With support from COL and Dr. Wayne Mackintosh, a director of the OER Foundation and UNESCO/COL Chair in OER at Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand, the workshop was successfully conducted last month.

Workshop participants included senior academics and administrators of BOU, support staff, facilitators and rapporteurs.

"The attendees spontaneously and enthusiastically participated in the events, making the workshop meaningful and fruitful," said Professor Sultana. "The workshop left no doubt about the

imperatives of OER in open and distance learning. It enabled a fair understanding of the benefits of various CC [Creative Commons] licensing options. What is most important is the shaping up of a positive, congruous mindset complementary to the objectives of the workshop. There is a lot of work ahead. It is hoped that BOU, in collaboration with COL, will seamlessly pursue its goals of materialising the adoption of OER and the Copyright Policy."

<http://wikieducator.org/User:Oerba>



BOU OER workshop participants engaged in small group exercise

## PACIFIC TVSD GOES FLEXIBLE



Seven life-skills coach trainers in Samoa gaining their qualifications

COL's technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) partners in the Pacific have been busy since the Pacific technical/vocational education and training (TVET) Forum held in Tonga one year ago, in March 2013. New flexible approaches to skills training are being explored in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Distance and flexible learning is particularly challenging in the island nations of the Pacific – so when TVET stakeholders in Kiribati wanted to develop a strategy for outer-island programme delivery, they called on COL for support. Pacific distance learning expert Mr. Brian Sayer, based in Honiara, Solomon Islands, facilitated a series of workshops bringing together participants from the Kiribati Institute of Technology, the Marine Training College and the Teacher Training College, as well as the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development, to explore how flexible

learning could help meet the needs of people living in all areas of Kiribati. COL is partnering with technical advisers from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Kiribati TVET Sector Strengthening Programme to support these activities. An Outer Islands Development Plan is now in draft and three pilot courses, or case studies, are proposed to test the use of technology to reach more young people.

The newly created Flexible and Open Learning Branch of the TVET wing of the Department of Education in Papua New Guinea brought together participants from six TVET institutions to work with facilitators from Australia's Central Gippsland Institute of Technical and Further Education (GippsTAFE). They are building capacity to establish flexible programme offerings to increase access to skills training in the Port Moresby area. Three institutions are now developing pilot courses.

In Samoa, training for community development life-skills coaches is high on the agenda. Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc. (METI), a charitable trust, has partnered with COL to help build their capacity in training life-skills coaches, especially through preparing self-instructional training materials. An instructional design workshop to develop materials in Permaculture was facilitated by local consultant Gatoloaifa'ana Tilianamua Afamasaga. METI are planning to increase their number of *taiala* (life-skills coaches) from



COL consultants and advisers are an intrepid bunch – as evidenced by COL consultant Brian Sayer (right), who was travelling by small boat with The Honourable Boutu Bateriki, Minister of Labour and Human Resource Development in Kiribati. They were visiting the Principal of Immaculate Heart College, on North Tarawa.

20 to 100, to meet the need for community development in health and livelihoods. In addition, one staff member from METI is on secondment to the local broadcasting company to learn video production skills to enhance METI's training programme.

Ms. Kathy Solomon, Director of the Vanuatu Rural Development and Training Centres Association (VRDTCA), took her inspiration from the Pacific TVET Forum in Tonga and developed a proposal for a course in skills training and income generation for girls in rural Vanuatu. Consultant Terry Marler from New Zealand's Otago Polytechnic worked with VRDTCA colleagues to develop a blueprint for the programme. COL, in collaboration with the New Zealand Aid Programme, will continue to support the team and their objectives.

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

## BANKS FIND L3F PLAYING “PIVOTAL ROLE” IN CREDIT MANAGEMENT

The National Institute of Bank Management (NIBM) in India has published a monograph by Dr. Naveen Kumar and Dr. Anjali Kulkarni that documents studies on the impact of COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative. *Investment by the Commercial Banks in Training of Rural Communities and its Impact: Scope of Open and Distance Learning* was released on 13 December at the NIBM Auditorium, in Pune. Mr. Rajeev Rishi, Chairperson and Managing Director of the Central Bank of India, chaired the function and delivered a keynote address.

Mr. Rishi noted that the L3F system facilitates the enhancement of the credit absorption capacity of the rural community, and he congratulated NIBM and COL for

the interesting study. The monograph confirms that the L3F initiative, using ICT together with ODL, can play a pivotal role in capacity building and improving the quality of life of rural and farming communities.

Dr. Kumar in his presentation explained that while L3F costs six times less than the face-to-face training of farmers by banks, the income earned by the banks from L3F farmers borrowing money for livestock is eight times more than the income from non-L3F borrowers in the same region. The study calculated that for each Indian rupee spent on facilitating L3F, INR 9.9 worth of benefits accrued to the participating communities.

Mr. Allan Pereira, Director of NIBM, suggested that L3F should be replicated by



Rajeev Rishi, Chairperson and Managing Director of the Central Bank of India, at the launch of the L3F impact study

banks in collaboration with NIBM in other states of India. Around 150 participants from banking and financial institutions participated in the function.

[www.col.org/L3F](http://www.col.org/L3F)

## COMMUNITY LEARNING PROGRAMMES REACH OVER 200,000

The desired outcome of COL's Healthy Communities initiative is that more people, particularly women and youth, in more local areas, especially resource-poor communities, use better quality learning opportunities about community health and development.

While the monitoring and evaluation of results and research into programme outputs and outcomes is ongoing, COL engaged consultant Ms. Cathryn Wood to conduct a review of progress that has been made towards the expected outputs and outcomes at the mid-point of COL's current Three-Year Plan, 2012–2015.

Building the capacity of partner organisations to design and deliver quality community learning programmes (CLPs) is a key output of the Healthy Communities initiative. Ms. Wood states that the "initiative has catalysed an impressive number of capacity building activities – from face-to-face CLP design workshops to communications for the development of online distance courses", but adds that "in the next 18 months, more will need to be done to measure changes in the capacity of partner organisations".

The desired impact of the Healthy Communities initiative is to change learning and behaviour outcomes with regard to health. Work is underway to investigate the impact of the initiative on health learning and behaviours, but only interim findings are currently available. Ms. Wood recommends that research projects be undertaken in a number of sites to fully explore the impact of the initiative on health learning and behaviours.

She also recommends more work on calculating and analysing the cost per user for each COL partner site.

Ms. Wood's study substantiates that by mid-term the initiative has:

- Reached an estimated 211,000 users during one quarter year,

- Identified 31,248 users of the CLPs during one quarter,
- Led to the design of 139 hours of learning content (between July and September),
- Resulted in the broadcast/delivery of 208 hours of learning content (between July and September),
- Catalysed over 180 hours of training, and
- Facilitated training sessions that were attended by over 250 people, representing over 163 organisations, and that 214 people have completed these training courses (over 85 per cent).

### CHAHAT CHOWK SHOWS GOOD RESULTS

Other research results from Phase I of *Chahat Chowk* (Crossroads of Desire), a ground-breaking Healthy Communities CLP about reproductive and sexual health (RSH) in Gurgaon, India, were released in early 2014.

The research, led by Ideosync Media Combine, brings together qualitative and quantitative methods to assess learning and social and behavioural change outcomes of the *Chahat Chowk* CLP, which is led by Gurgaon Ki Awaaz, a community radio station in Gurgaon.

The programme targets women in the informal settlement of Mullahera, home to about 100,000 people, 90 per cent of whom are migrant workers. Findings indicate that vital information about women's health constituted the top issues successfully addressed by the *Chahat Chowk* programme. In terms of behavioural outcomes, research shows that women are increasingly speaking

to their husbands and peers about RSH matters – historically taboo subjects. Research findings are at the centre of planning for Phase II of the *Chahat Chowk* CLP.

### CLP DEVELOPER'S CERTIFICATE

*Communication for Development (C4D): Why. How. Now.*, the first course in the new community learning programme (CLP) Developer's Certificate, was jointly conducted during February and March by COL and the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC). There were over 220 participants, from over 30 countries.



Launching the *Chahat Chowk* CLP in Gurgaon, India

The five-week C4D eLearning course is part of an eight-month distance training and mentoring programme offered by COL's Healthy Communities initiative and its partners around the Commonwealth: Transformative Communication Partners, in the Caribbean; Media and Training Centre for Health, in South Africa; the East African Community Media Network; and Maraa, in India.

In this course, participants explored the principles and practices of C4D and how to apply them to health and development needs in their own contexts. Over 85 per cent are planning to develop new C4D programmes through training and mentoring.

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

## VUSSC TQF EXPANDS

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) was developed and endorsed by 26 VUSSC Member States in 2010. Its adoption since then continues to grow.

Several countries, including Botswana, Mauritius, Samoa and Seychelles, have accredited institutions offering programmes developed through VUSSC; as a result, these courses have been registered on national qualifications frameworks.

The TQF has also been referenced against the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), while referencing work is continuing in Botswana,

Mauritius and Seychelles. The TQF is also being referenced against the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS).

In October 2013, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and COL, through VUSSC, hosted a workshop in Saint Lucia where the TQF was used as a reference point in finalising the CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF).

Four qualifications are also being registered on the TQF (Master in Educational Leadership, Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship, Diploma in Agriculture and Bachelor in Environmental Science). A TQF referencing document for VUSSC is being compiled.



## CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN

### HONORARY FELLOWS OF COL



Danny Faure



Olugbemiro Jegede



Carol Kidu



Olabisi Kuboni



Wong Tat Meng



Caroline Seelig



Daniel Tau



James Taylor

### AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR INSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Krishna Kant Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU)

Wawasan Open University (WOU)



OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

All citations available at [www.col.org/ede](http://www.col.org/ede)



AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION MATERIALS

**Athabasca University**  
for the *Collaboration and Mentoring in Educational Environments Course – Master of Education in Distance Education*

**The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ)**  
for the *Get Ahead Skills Course – Certificate in Career and Self Development*

**The University of South Africa (UNISA)**  
for the *Language through an African Lens Course – Bachelor of Arts Programme*

**Wawasan Open University (WOU)**  
for the *ICT in Education Course – Master of Education Programme*



AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FOR AN eLEARNING EXPERIENCE IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

**Dania Al Yamani**  
UNHCR, Syria



## RAPID PRODUCTION OF LOW-COST, FLEXIBLE LEARNING MATERIALS

*Fred Lockwood*

Is it possible to assemble a course proposal – a realistic plan – for a flexible learning course in hours rather than weeks?

Is it possible to realise this plan and assemble a draft of a short, flexible learning course in days rather than months?

The simple answer to these two questions is, of course, yes. There is no shortage of examples where skilled distance educators have come together and, in record time, assembled flexible learning courses. The challenge that my month-long COL Executive Secondment posed was to explore whether a model developed in higher education institutions (HEIs) dedicated to distance learning was applicable in technical/vocational education institutions currently teaching face-to-face but with plans to expand into flexible systems.

The model in question took the form of a “board game” – complete with game board (a sheet of A2 paper) and playing cards (coloured cards similar to conventional playing cards).

The model is based on a number of factors (in the Game, these are called Parameter Cards) dictating the design of a flexible learning course and the method(s) by which it could be assembled. Parameters include Funds Available to design the course, the Course Length – in terms of study time – the Number of Students and so on. There are also Course Characteristic cards that raise issues



Members of the Basic Manicure and Pedicure Skills team from Thika Technical Training Institute, in Kenya, playing the Game

about assessment, student support, cost to the trainees, practical work, etc.

Teams from the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, the Coast Institute of Technology, and the Masai, Mombasa, Rift Valley and Thika Technical Training Institutes played the Game and in days assembled manuscripts for flexible learning courses ranging from Interlocking Stabilised Soil Blocks to Teach Yourself Poultry Keeping, from Basic Manicure and Pedicure Skills to Food Processing Safety and Hygiene. At the time of writing, these multimedia short courses are being refined for presentation.

Playing the Game in Nairobi was a learning experience for all of us –

particularly me. It was clear that a model developed within HEIs dedicated to distance learning did not transfer readily to technical/vocational education institutions, where the structure of face-to-face teaching is demanding. However, the beauty of a model is that it can be changed.

Dr. Alison Mead Richardson, COL Education Specialist for Technical and Vocational Skills Development, and I are currently revising the model so that it is more applicable in training contexts that are exploring the use of flexible learning, rather than in those already dedicated to these methods – i.e., we are targeting vocational and technical training institutions where the funds, support staff and systems enjoyed by many HEIs are not so readily available, but where there is a desire to provide learners with a training opportunity that may not otherwise be available.

Those interested in learning more about the rapid production of low-cost, flexible learning courses and/or COL’s Technical and Vocational Skills Development initiative can visit [www.col.org/tvsd](http://www.col.org/tvsd).

*Fred Lockwood is Emeritus Professor of Learning and Teaching, Manchester Metropolitan University, U.K. He was Series Editor of the Routledge Open and Flexible Learning Series for 20 years.*

## OPEN SCHOOLS BEGIN TWINNING PROGRAMME

Open learning schools in British Columbia (B.C.), Canada are beginning to “twin” with new open schools in other parts of the Commonwealth.

With support from COL, the Fraser Valley Distance Education School (FVDES), in Chilliwack, B.C., partnered with the University of Belize and the Gwen Lizarraga High School (GLHS) in Belize City to assist in developing the first open secondary school in Belize.

FVDES and GLHS have been “twinned” to provide opportunities for staff in both countries to collaborate and share education practices with each other. The goal is better learning for all students, regardless of age, sex or socio-economic status.

As part of the twinning process, FVDES staff shared their knowledge and experiences in teaching and supporting students from a

distance with a group of teachers from Belize, in Central America, as the latter participated in a one-week training session at FVDES in Canada. The visiting teachers from Belize left with the mission of sharing their learning with colleagues at GLHS and starting to deliver their curriculum within an open school model.

Teachers from both schools have also committed to an ongoing mentoring relationship, with the goal of helping GLHS smoothly transition into ODL without the hiccups and stumbling blocks FVDES has already overcome.

“The experience we gain here is definitely going to help our students,” said Dr. Lorna McKay, principal of GLHS. Last August, GLHS launched Belize’s first open school for its night division students – mostly females, young moms, 16 years

and older, struggling with the conventional face-to-face style of learning. “For many of them, attending classes four days a week, on top of their other responsibilities, proved too difficult. But with online learning, education can be broadened beyond the walls of the school.”

FVDES Vice Principal, Sharon Bernard, who visited GLHS earlier last year to help in its preparations for offering online learning, said, “It was great for both groups to learn that the struggles that are faced by teachers in Belize are similar to the struggles of the teachers in Canada.”

With guidance from the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) and COL, additional BC open learning schools will be twinning with open schools in other countries.

## CC 4.0 LICENCES NOW AVAILABLE

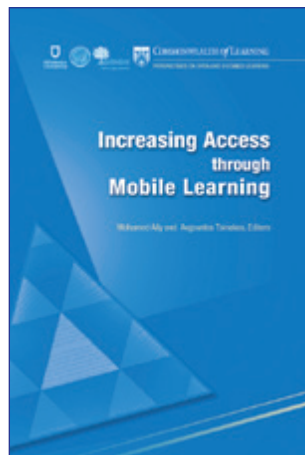


Creative Commons launched its new suite of

open resource licences in December. Creative Commons 4.0, the next generation of CC licences, has been more than two years in the making. The new licences are more user-friendly and more internationally robust than ever before. The licences contain improved terminology that's better understood worldwide, and "porting" has now been established into more than 60 jurisdictions. The wording is now clearer and more readable. CC 4.0 also introduces official translations, so that users of CC-licensed material around the world can read and understand the complete licences in their local languages.

In a blog post, Creative Commons General Counsel, Ms. Diane Peters, said that "the 4.0 versioning process has been a truly collaborative effort between the brilliant and dedicated network of legal and public licensing experts and the active, vocal open community. The 4.0 licences, the public licence development undertaking, and the Creative Commons organisation are stronger because of the steadfast commitment of all participants."

<http://creativecommons.org/Version4>



Available in PDF and ePub formats (CC BY-SA, Commonwealth of Learning)  
[www.col.org/PsmLearning](http://www.col.org/PsmLearning)

## INCREASING ACCESS THROUGH MOBILE LEARNING

*Mohamed Ally and Avgoustos Tsinakos, Eds.*

*Increasing Access through Mobile Learning* contributes to the advancement of the mLearning field by presenting comprehensive, up-to-date information about its current state and emerging potential. This book will help educators and trainers in designing, developing and implementing high-quality mLearning curricula, materials and delivery modes that use the latest mobile applications and technologies. The 16 chapters, written by 30 contributors from around the world, address a wide range of topics, from operational practicalities and best practices to challenges and future opportunities.



## JOURNAL OF LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

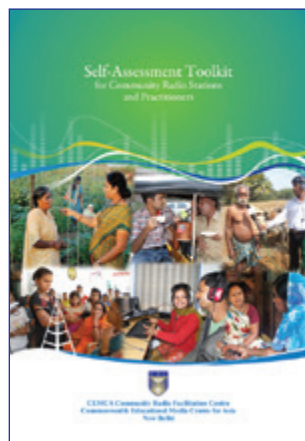
COL has launched the *Journal of Learning for Development (JLAD)*, with an inaugural issue that was published in early 2014. The new open online scholarly journal aims to provide a forum for practitioners and academics working in international development to share knowledge and experience.

The journal gives priority to case studies and applied research with clear practical outputs that can help improve practice in international development. Content focuses on innovation in learning and the use of ODL to enhance social and economic development, including interventions that change social and/or economic relations – especially in terms of improving equity.

An editorial review board made up of accomplished scholars in the field of Learning for Development, from all regions of the world, provides the editorial team with advice and guidance on the editorial direction of the journal. The Chief Editor is Professor Alan Tait of the U.K. Open University, and the Associate Editor is Dr. Mark Bullen of the Commonwealth of Learning.

The inaugural issue includes two research studies, five invited articles and three book reviews. The journal is CC-BY and submissions are welcome.

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



## COMMUNITY RADIO SELF-ASSESSMENT

*by Jayalakshmi Chittoor Parameswaran*

You are operating a community radio station. So, how is your progress? Is there any progress at all? Why is the progress fast or slow? What are the challenges? Where are the solutions? When are you going to achieve your targets? How are you going to proceed further? To help you decide what is best for your operation, you can make use of this Self-Assessment Toolkit, newly published by COL's regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia.

The *Self-Assessment Toolkit for Community Radio Stations and Practitioners*, prepared by Jayalakshmi Chittoor Parameswaran and freely available online, will help practitioners, communities, staff, management committees (with community representatives) and licence holders to evaluate the performance of their radio service.

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



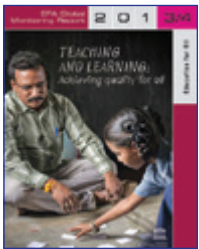
## eLEARNING IN COMMONWEALTH ASIA

*eLearning in Commonwealth Asia 2013* is the result of a study and compilation of eLearning country profiles of Commonwealth Asian countries, prepared by Sanjaya Mishra and S.K. Pulist. It is CC BY-SA.

The findings indicate that the implementation of eLearning in Commonwealth Asian countries is an increasing trend. Though institutions are facing different challenges, the enthusiasm among the faculty and staff is high. Institutions are integrating ICT and online technologies in their programmes.

eLearning programmes are largely offered in blended mode, and completely online programmes are not many. The study is expected to provide an overview for policy makers, planners, implementers and leaders in educational institutions to help them think about the use of eLearning for providing increased access to quality education in a holistic manner through appropriate use of ICT.

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



## THIS YEAR'S EFA GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT

UNESCO has just released its *2013/14 EFA Global Monitoring Report*, which notes that “with the deadline for the Education for All goals less than two years away, it is clear that, despite advances over the past decade, not a single goal will be achieved globally by 2015”.

The report is divided into three parts. Part 1 provides an update on progress towards the six EFA goals. The second part presents clear evidence that progress in education is vital for achieving development goals after 2015. Part 3 puts the spotlight on the importance of implementing strong policies to unlock the potential of teachers so as to support them in overcoming the global learning crisis.

[www.unesco.org/education/efa](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa)



## GLOBAL LIST OF OER INITIATIVES

UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union sponsor a resource and communications OER community site for

public participation through the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). In addition to a wealth of information and news, WSIS Knowledge Communities is now hosting a Global List of OER Initiatives, intended to be a comprehensive collection of details on worldwide OER initiatives. Users can search amongst nearly 400 entries – and can add new OER initiatives – in several categories, including global priorities, target areas and even MOOCs.

[www.wsis-community.org](http://www.wsis-community.org)



## RESOURCE CD-DVD

COL's Resource CD-DVD, updated November 2013.

## CANADA HONOURS JOHN DANIEL

In his New Year's List, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, named former COL President, **Sir John Daniel**, O.C., as an Officer of the Order of Canada, which acknowledges a lifetime of outstanding achievement, dedication to the community and service to the nation.

The appointment recognises “his advancement of open learning and distance education in Canada and around the world”.

Sir John has been bestowed with national honours from three countries: Canada, France and the U.K.

<http://sirjohn.ca>



Sir John Daniel

## COL BOARD

The Honourable **Danny Faure** and **Letuimanu'asina Dr. Emma Kruse Va'ai** have been appointed to COL's Board of Governors as regional representatives for Africa and the Pacific, respectively.

Mr. Faure is Vice President of Seychelles and the Government's Minister of Finance. He is also a former educator and minister in portfolios of education, communications technology and youth. When ministers of education conceived the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) initiative in 2000, Danny Faure, at that time the Minister of Education of Seychelles, was a leading proponent of the concept. He has continued his interest in and support for this initiative through other cabinet posts and now as Vice President. He was named an Honorary Fellow of COL at PCF7 in December.

Dr. Va'ai is Deputy Vice Chancellor of the National University of Samoa. A published writer in poetry and short stories, she also continues to lecture in English at the university. She is a fierce advocate for education among the Samoan community and believes it to be “the key to a well-rounded society and stable economy”.

COL expresses its deep appreciation for the services of the Board's previous Africa and Pacific representatives. Former Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana and Secretary General of the Association of African Universities, Professor Akilagpa Sawyer, and former Minister for Community Development and Leader of the Opposition in Papua New Guinea, The Honourable Dr. Dame Carol Kidu, DBE, completed their terms of office at the end of last year. Dame Carol was also named an Honorary Fellow of COL in December.



The Honourable Danny Faure



Letuimanu'asina Dr. Emma Kruse Va'ai

## COL STAFF

**Dr. Sanjaya Mishra**, Director of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, received the second annual Professor G. Ram Reddy Social Scientist Award. The Professor G. Ram Reddy Memorial Trust conferred the award in recognition of Dr. Mishra's contributions to ODL, particularly for promoting the use of technology in education. The award is given in memory of Professor Reddy, considered the father of distance education in India. He was the first Vice President of COL and the first Vice Chancellor of both Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University and Indira Gandhi National Open University.



Dr. Sanjaya Mishra

**Dr. Godson Gatsha** joins COL in April as Education Specialist, Higher Education. Dr. Gatsha has 30 years' experience in education, including as a teacher and in-service training facilitator, and has been an ODL practitioner and trainer for over 10 years. Prior to joining COL, Dr. Gatsha was Director of the Southern African Development Community's Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) and Executive Secretary of the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa, based in Gaborone, Botswana.



Dr. Godson Gatsha

Also joining COL in April is **Dr. Jessica N. Aguti** as Education Specialist, Teacher Education. Dr. Aguti also has over 30 years' experience as a teacher and teacher educator, having taught in high schools, at teachers' college and at university. Dr. Aguti comes to COL from her long-time attachment to the Department of Open and Distance Learning, School of Distance and Lifelong Learning, Makerere University, Uganda.



Dr. Jessica N. Aguti

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

**Professor Madhulika Kaushik**, our former Education Specialist, Higher Education, left COL at the end of January. During her three-year tenure with COL, Professor Kaushik made significant contributions towards higher education. She was very passionate about her work, and her notable contributions have been the review and revision of the Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programmes. This has resulted in the revision of all 22 courses by the 11 partner institutions; the development of a new Business Ethics course; the revision of the Legislative Drafting programme as OER.



Professor Madhulika Kaushik

Her pleasant personality ensured that she integrated well within the COL family and that she was very supportive as a member of COL's Education sector, not only to me but to all members of the team. Given her background in research and management, she had a great conviction for teamwork.

We often had long discussions, in the corridor or in one of our offices, on research ideas and proposals, one result of which was her convincing me to pursue a doctoral degree. All her colleagues at COL will certainly miss her, and once again we wish her success in all her future endeavours, especially as she now joins Wawasan Open University in Malaysia as Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic).

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

John Lesperance

## 2013 CHOGM



Photo: Seychelles Nation

The Honourable Jean-Paul Adam, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Seychelles (left) with COL Chair, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, and COL President and C.E.O., Professor Asha Kanwar, at the November 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Sri Lanka

COL was represented at the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) by The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, O.J., Chair, Board of Governors; Professor Asha Kanwar, President and C.E.O.; and Mr. Vis Naidoo, Vice President. The meeting took place in November and was hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka.

COL's Chair and President presented a report to Commonwealth Foreign Ministers at their Pre-CHOGM Meeting and also reported specifically on the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) to the Foreign Ministers of Commonwealth Small States meeting.

CHOGM documentation from COL included:

- A 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary brochure, "Celebrating 25 Years of Progress", which shows how COL has responded to governments' expressed needs and contributed to increasing access to education in the Commonwealth over the past 25 years; and
- A brochure that provides a summary of COL's Three-Year Plan, 2012–2015, "Learning for Development".

At the end of CHOGM, Heads of Government included this paragraph in their Communiqué:

*Heads of Government congratulated the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) on its 25th anniversary and noted COL's ongoing support to member states in enhancing access to formal and non-formal education and training through the use of appropriate technologies. They commended COL for evolving to remain relevant to the needs of member states; for its enhanced focus on outcomes and impact, and on delivering value for money. They appreciated COL's 'learning for development' approach, which can effectively address development issues such as poverty, inequity, food security and health. They expressed particular appreciation for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, in which all thirty two Small States are active members. Heads encouraged COL to develop further innovations in educational technologies and models for replication by other countries and stakeholders.*

[www.col.org/chogm13](http://www.col.org/chogm13)

## VUSSC CONSULTATION



VUSSC Interlocutors meet in Abuja

Senior officials from Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Member States, referred to as “Interlocutors”, met with COL staff and an evaluation consultant in Abuja, Nigeria, prior to COL’s Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, to take stock of the VUSSC initiative. These high-level VUSSC meetings take place every two to three years.

The meeting provided an opportunity for Member States to receive feedback on the activities of VUSSC; it also offered a forum for senior officials to meet with COL staff to discuss issues pertaining to VUSSC and their countries. VUSSC formally reports back to senior officials every two to three years, the first meeting having been held in 2006 in Singapore. The meeting usually coincides with the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning.

Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President and C.E.O., noted at the meeting that when VUSSC was conceived, it was agreed that it would:

- Enable small states to be contributors, as well as consumers, by developing a cadre of people with the skills to implement virtual education systems;
- Strengthen existing tertiary institutions, making them more responsive to emerging needs; and
- Permit the delivery of courses in a variety of formats, according to available technologies.

To date, over 21,000 people have been trained through VUSSC activities since 2006. VUSSC has developed courses and programmes, such as a Certificate in Sustainable Tourism and a Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship, that have reached over 600 learners thus far. Nine institutions in eight small states are now offering VUSSC courses and more will be soon.

The Interlocutors were pleased to learn about the progress that VUSSC has made since it started its first activities in 2006, and they prepared a number of recommendations for going forward.

## LECTURES BY COL’S PRESIDENT

COL President Professor Asha Kanwar has recently delivered two high-profile lectures.

The first was the annual Gladwyn Lecture, on 10 December at the House of Lords, in London, sponsored by the Council for Education in the Commonwealth and chaired by Lord Boswell of Aynho. Addressing the Commonwealth’s 2013 theme – Opportunity through Enterprise – Professor Kanwar spoke on “Empowering Entrepreneurs: What opportunities? What enterprise?” advocating that by providing the opportunity, the enterprise will follow rather than the other way round.

The second was this month at the University Council of Jamaica’s “Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education Week”, where Professor Kanwar delivered the biennial Dennis Irvine Lecture, on the topic “Trends in distance and online learning: Can they address development challenges?”. Dr. Dennis Irvine (1926–2005) was a Director of Caribbean Programmes for COL, as well as Director of Materials Acquisition and Development. He was Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana for 13 years, and later UNESCO’s Science Adviser to the Caribbean, an education consultant to the Jamaican Government in the 1980s, and Chairman of the University Council of Jamaica.

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

In her video message for International Women’s Day on 8 March 2014, Professor Kanwar noted that women in Commonwealth countries face three broad challenges: poverty, disempowerment and poor health. But she also related stories of some women who have changed their own lives and inspired others to do likewise.

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

## L3F UNDERWAY IN TANZANIA

COL conducted a training programme in December in Bukoba, Tanzania, on ODL, mobile phone-based distance learning and COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative. This was the launch of L3F activities in Tanzania, thanks to specific additional funding from Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.

Participants included staff of Matumaini Mapya (MM), Kagera Farmers’ Cooperative Bank (KFCB) and the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives (TFC). Ugandan Mr. Daniel Ninsiima, who has extensive experience with L3F in Uganda, assisted in the training.

Hands-on training was given in developing simple ODL courses for semi-literate and illiterate learners, sending bulk audio and text messages and using community radios for L3F to reach large numbers of farmers.



Lifelong Learning for Farmers training in Tanzania

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Fifth International m-Libraries Conference**

27 – 30 May 2014, Hong Kong

Presented by the U.K. Open University in partnership with, and hosted by, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Theme: “m-Libraries: From devices to people”

The m-Libraries Conference brings together an international group of experts working to promote the integration of mobile devices and content suited for mobile devices into libraries and their services.

[www.m-libraries.org](http://www.m-libraries.org)

**Second Regional Symposium on Open Educational Resources**

24 – 27 June 2014, Penang, Malaysia

Hosted by Wawasan Open University

Theme: “Beyond Advocacy, Research and Policy”

The symposium will bring together the OER community in the region to share, exchange, collaborate and promote mutual interests in learning technologies, especially in new innovations such as OER, MOOCs, SOOCs and others. Educators from Commonwealth countries in other regions are very welcome.

[www.oerasia.org/oersymposium2014](http://www.oerasia.org/oersymposium2014)



**Open schooling, Papua New Guinea:** Papua New Guinea's Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) unit in the Department of Education approached COL for assistance in setting a strategy for the use of technology in distance learning. Mindset Network assisted COL in supporting a workshop to help explore how new technologies can be introduced to assist in this context of a highly rural as well as multicultural and multilingual society, where the delivery of formal, traditional educational services is a challenge.



**Open schooling, Vanuatu:** The Ministry of Education in Vanuatu, in collaboration with COL, hosted a one-day consultative workshop in Luganville, on the island of Espiritu Santo, in the South Pacific. Various stakeholders attended the workshop to discuss the expansion of open schooling and the development of a national open schooling policy.

## AGRICULTURE MOOCs IN INDIA

India's National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) is a professional association and academic body that produces neutral policy advice on matters related to applications of scientific research for food security. Its membership is about 400, comprising renowned scientists from India and abroad. Recently, NAAS and COL organised a meeting to consider the viability of MOOCs (massive open online courses) with certification for large-scale capacity building for agricultural extension leaders in India.

India has an agricultural extension workforce of over 100,000 professionals and a research staff of close to 12,000; it also has 70 agricultural universities. Farming households in India number about 100 million.

The meeting was chaired by the President of NAAS, Dr. Ayyappan, who also serves as the Federal Secretary for Agricultural Education and Research. Professor Ram Takwale, an open learning visionary, and

Dr. Ram B. Singh, formerly of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), served as lead discussants, with Dr. V. Balaji of COL serving as the principal resource person. There were 30 invitees from major institutions and funding agencies in India. COL's experience in operating a MOOC on mobiles for development with IIT-Kanpur served as a case study.

The group concluded that “MOOCs-for-Development” should indeed be a movement and that universities and research institutions in agriculture and technology should form alliances and partnerships to offer MOOCs for different stakeholders as well as the general public. Some courses could even be aimed at students in high schools. The group also noted that agricultural universities in India have digitised learning materials for about 400 undergraduate courses in English, covering all aspects of agriculture.

## Connections

MARCH 2014 | VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1

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Chair: The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, o.j.

President & CEO: Professor Asha S. Kanwar

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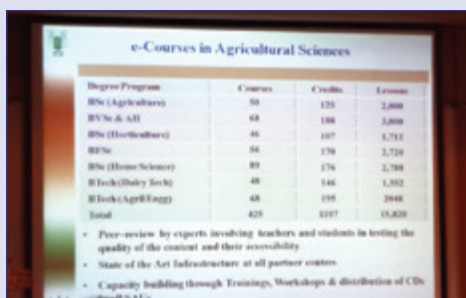
## CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Content Management Systems (CMS) are software applications that allow modification, editing and publication of content files from a single interface. CMS are becoming increasingly relevant in education as tools for publishing blogs or news and to make course materials easily accessible. CMS can be deployed in a campus and can be accessed via the local area network even if access to the Internet is inadequate or unavailable. It can also integrate well with widely deployed authentication systems (such as Microsoft Active Directory) and with email services, thus creating a university- or campus-wide resource for all users.

CMS can enable provision of a truly wide range of online services and can be customised to suit particular organisations or purposes. The software is especially useful in the management of complex websites, such

as those in government or e-commerce. A number of well-known universities have deployed CMS to run their websites.

CMS can be proprietary or open source. Some of the best-known examples of the latter are Drupal, WordPress or Joomla! A famous one is the MediaWiki CMS, which is used to provide Wikipedia in scores of languages.



Degree Program	Courses	Credits	Lessons
BSc (Agriculture)	50	135	2,000
BSc & AI	68	188	2,600
BSc (Horticulture)	66	187	2,712
BSc	56	178	2,728
BSc (Home Science)	89	176	2,788
B Tech (Dairy Tech)	48	146	1,912
B Tech (Appl Egg)	68	195	2848
Total	425	1337	18,828

- Peer-review by experts involving teachers and students in testing the quality of the content and their accessibility
- State of the Art Infrastructure at all partner centres
- Capacity building through Trainings, Workshops & distribution of CDs

run on Drupal. It is considered an extremely complex piece of software, with about 14 million lines of code and almost 30,000 additions that provide specific functionalities. Despite this, it is easy to set up and manage. Basic operations on Drupal can be handled by a webmaster who may not have knowledge of PHP – Drupal’s (and WordPress’s) programming language.

Over the past few years, Drupal has emerged as the most popular CMS. A number of high-profile sites, such as Whitehouse.gov, are

A number of CMS have been developed using other programming languages, such as Java or Perl. Microsoft’s ASP is also used in a few. The web-based Open Directory Project provides a comprehensive list.

A key area for CMS in education is the development of repositories for documents and learning resources. For example, OER repositories can easily be developed using Drupal, and COL has already designed and added content to one.

Most CMS today allow for access from mobile phone interfaces. Drupal, for example, can render web pages well for reading on smartphones or tablets. This is called mobile-theming and is considered an important feature of CMS today.

Specific workflows can be built on CMS, such as quizzes and evaluations. A host of such workflows can be built on a CMS with a reasonable capability in the relevant programming language. A small number of educators are of the view that a CMS with appropriate workflows may fully replace dedicated Learning Management Systems.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content\\_management\\_system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_management_system)

## APTUS TESTING BY WOMEN MASTER TRAINERS

Manndeshi Bank and its Manndeshi Foundation, operating in the State of Maharashtra in Western India, are leaders in nurturing financial inclusion primarily involving women from poor and ultra-poor households, and partners of COL through the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative. The Manndeshi group promotes active linking of learning with poverty reduction and livelihood security.

L3F facilitated the testing of COL’s Aptus device in the field with Manndeshi’s master trainers. Ten of them, led by Ms. Vanita Shinde, worked with COL staff (Dr. V. Balaji, Director, Technology & Knowledge Management) to set up and extensively test COL’s Aptus device, which is a “Classroom Without Walls” that facilitates content sharing and



learning interaction through WiFi, without requiring Internet connections. With twelve simultaneous connections, Aptus functioned well, enabling users to browse content (such as Khan Academy videos, Wikipedia and open textbooks). They also tested setting up new accounts on Moodle using Aptus. The key application for them was OwnCloud, which enabled easy transfer of files within the group. Many tested uploading and sharing of videos and felt that Aptus would be useful in rapidly transferring videos from the field to the bank or to mentors located elsewhere. With COL providing an Aptus device for Manndeshi’s use, an extensive round of further trials is being planned.

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

learning interaction through WiFi, without requiring Internet connections.

With twelve simultaneous connections, Aptus functioned well, enabling users to browse content (such as Khan Acad-

## WIKIPEDIA VIA TEXT

In an attempt to increase the number of people who can use Wikipedia, the Wikimedia Foundation has announced the pilot for Wikipedia Zero, a technology that lets basic-feature phone (or “dumb-phone”) owners look up and consume Wikipedia content via text messaging. The Wikimedia Foundation says the three-month pilot, in partnership with the telecoms company Airtel and the South African mobile technologies non-profit Praekelt Foundation, will open Wikipedia up to at least 70 million new users in Sub-Saharan Africa, beginning in Kenya.

– Salon e-magazine

[http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Wikipedia\\_Zero](http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Zero)