

Addressing Health MDGs with ODL

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Abstract

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underpin COL's past three year plan (2003-2006) and current (2006-2009) with three of the Goals focused on health (reduction of infant mortality, improvement of maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). COL's partnership with the World Health Organization has identified key players, mainly in-country non-governmental organisations who are addressing the health concerns of disadvantaged groups. COL's has worked with these organizations by providing audio and video production digital technology and accompanying training, towards creating content to reach greater numbers of people with appropriate health information in the linguistic and cultural context of the targeted group(s). Delivery of training has been in the form of radio, television and village cinema events (projector, screen, generator and DVDs that the NGO has created in the form of skits).

COL's health activities have been implemented in Sri Lanka, South Africa, Swaziland, The Gambia, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands Guyana and Barbados.

This is one effort of many that are taking place in different countries that have been severely affected by HIV/AIDS across all sectors of society. The session will discuss examples of how health training has addressed the MDGs.

Panel members:

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Commonwealth of Learning Media Empowerment - Delivering Health-Based Training and Information to Address the Millennium Development Goals

Figure 1: *The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC) Staff Member Producing a Video about HIV/AIDS Prevention and Stigma in Swaziland*

Overview

This paper will survey the activities undertaken by the Commonwealth of Learning in different regions of the Commonwealth to address health issues related to the Millennium Development Goals, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS. The work in health by COL is part of a larger Programme called the Commonwealth of Learning Media Empowerment (COLME).

Section 1 - COL Media Empowerment

COLME Introduction

The COLME programme has centred on utilising radio, television, video and audio production, as the focus in the formal and non-formal sectors of education. The programme's impact has been to address the MDGs by empowering local communities,

organisations and institutions with appropriate skills sets that can be transferred to other sectors or citizens of the given country. One of the underlying themes of COLME activities has been a focus on capacity building and the development of new skills sets. The activities are aimed at training of individuals to be able to contribute to the development of their organisations, governments or country. COLME capacity building activities allow institutions to move from being a receiver of training to a provider of skills to others. COL looks upon these trainees as contact points for media training for other sectors in country activities. General activities in agriculture, teacher education, environment, agriculture, non-formal, basic, secondary, and post secondary education have all benefited through the activities in all regions of the Commonwealth. Information on COLME activities can be found at www.col.org/colme.

Institutions such as the National Teachers Institute of Nigeria, National Open University of Nigeria, the University of Dschang, (Cameroon), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (India), University of New Delhi (India), National Open Schools (India), Ministries of Education in Maldives, Barbados, Mozambique and Bahamas are examples of work undertaken over the years by COL through the COLME Programme.

COLME in the Caribbean

The COLME activities in the Caribbean have addressed agribusiness opportunities and environmental sustainability issues by employing ODL delivery of training and information from scientist to extension officer to farmer. Countries and key players within each Ministry were selected in consultation with the regional office of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). This focus in agribusiness opportunities and environment has been to aid Governments in the region in their efforts to move towards crop diversification (i.e. away from single crop dependency such as bananas in Dominica or sugar in St Kitts and Nevis) among small plot farmers (e.g. Jamaica) who have been sidelined by mass-produced food products from developed countries. This imbalance in the traditionally agrarian economies has resulted in increased inflation, high unemployment and crime among the youth, as agriculture has become an unattractive option as a career path. COL has added value to agricultural/environmental training by employing ODL techniques using video and audio productions distributed via radio, television, workshops and field days to reach extension officers and farmers. Extension officers have been taught camera and production skills at the rural extension units. This in turn allows content to be localised in consideration of the conditions of the Parish or region of the island.

COLME in the Pacific

In the Pacific the COLME activities are part of a regional technical vocational initiative undertaken by COL and sanctioned by the Pacific Ministers of Education in institutional capacity development with in-country Polytechnics and Technical Institutes. The activities have added value to the course development work at the Polytechnics and have enabled the institutions to advocate technical vocational training as a career choice among young people or those wishing to upgrade skill sets. Activities have been undertaken in Samoa, Kiribati, Vanuatu, and Fiji.

COLME Development of Community Radio

The COLME Programme has been very active in the promotion and implementation of community radio stations throughout the Commonwealth. The programme has pioneered the development of low powered FM radio station technology that numerous intergovernmental and in-country organisations have benefited from. Activities have been implemented with the objective of demonstrating the effectiveness of education, gender, health-based information transmitted on a low-cost suitcase FM radio at the rural community level. The main thrust of the radio-based activities is to target rural disadvantaged groups addressing issues related to health, basic education and gender. The activities are also a vehicle to serve the role for advocacy of rural community radio as an effective means of addressing Education for All targets of 2015. Besides the technical aspects of operating and maintaining the technology, business skills were also taught that would aid in long-term sustainability of the rural FM stations. The FM stations are a means for governments and funders to consider first hand the

effectiveness of community radio in a low-cost sustainable model. It is also an opportunity for policy makers within the government to observe within the cultural, linguistic and infrastructural issues of the rural areas of their countries, the opportunities that community radio could present for a nation. COL has been active in developing and promoting community radio in Papua New Guinea, Uganda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Cameroon. COL, working in partnership Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), has allowed secondary schools to develop an awareness of the importance of community radio and education. The station has been used in a number of schools in the south of the country where students get first-hand knowledge of programme development and broadcasting. In Papua New Guinea (PNG), COL working with the Ministry of Education, implemented a solar-powered FM station in the remote mountain community of Mountain Brown where educational programming can be broadcast to communities in their local language. PNG has hundreds of languages and some communities are virtually cut off from the outside world. Community radio has allowed communities to broadcast in their own language with local content and messages relevant to the community.

Section 2 - COLME Health Initiatives

Overview of COL Media Empowerment Activities in the Health Sector

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underpin COL's current Three Year Plan (2006-2009) with three of the Goals focused on health (reduction of infant mortality, improvement of maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). COL's discussions with the World Health Organization (WHO) Geneva in 2001 resulted in a partnership in which COL has liaised with WHO country offices in identifying key players, mainly in-country non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who are addressing the health concerns of disadvantaged groups. COL's role has been to work with these organizations by providing audio and video production digital technology and accompanying training, towards creating content to reach greater numbers of people with appropriate health information in the linguistic and cultural context of the targeted group(s). Delivery of training has been in the form of radio, television and village cinema events (projector, screen, generator and DVDs that the NGO has created concerning health issues in the form of skits and dramas). The work has served to strengthen the WHO/Ministry of Health to NGO link by having the WHO provide health information from their vast resources to the NGOs to be then produced for the targeted groups and delivered during health media events. The COL/WHO activities have also aided organisations in addressing donors with qualitative case study models, utilising digital images, audio and video describing work they are undertaking within their region/country.

During COL's past Three Year Plan (2003-2006) and now its current Plan (2006-2009), the organisation has liaised with the WHO in Sri Lanka, South Africa, Swaziland, The Gambia, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) in Guyana and Barbados. A summary and description of the activities are outlined below.

COLME Health Activities

This section details the initiatives that COL has undertaken with a description of the outputs of the activities.

Initiative Descriptions

South Africa - COL/WHO HIV Stigma Training in South Africa (Implemented 2002)

In its current three year plan COL highlighted applying ODL to health in recognition of its relevance to the MDGs. The framework for COL's activities in health has been to align our efforts to WHO's priorities, specifically communicable diseases with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS. COL's expertise in ODL and training has brought a valuable element to WHO by reaching greater numbers of disadvantaged groups with health-based information and training. An example of this collaboration was an activity in KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa that addressed the issue of HIV/AIDS stigma.

WHO headquarter in Geneva and COL partnered with an NGO called the Valley Trust (VT) in KwaZulu Natal to develop VT's capacity to adapt and create effective training and delivery of information to groups located in rural areas. VT is now able to create cost effective video-based information addressing a host of health issues and also effectively reach greater populations with HIV/AIDS stigma information that traditional face-to-face mode of delivery of training cannot.

Figure 2: Starlight Cinema - Village Health Cinema Event in The Gambia

The Gambia - Peer Health Education - Addressing Health and HIV/AIDS Stigma/Prevention Issues (Implemented 2001)

COL's has worked with the staff of the Nova Scotia Gambia Association (NSGA), an NGO based in both Canada and The Gambia. COL aided NSGA with both the technology and training to document NSGA's work in peer health education in The Gambia. NSGA is now utilizing both radio and video to reach villages throughout the country. With a gas generator and a data projector, video productions produced locally by NSGA are taken upriver and shown in villages in the evening. Organised health events have large audiences view videos of skits and dramas on HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma produced by the NSGA in The Gambia. In many cases the videos are created in the regions where the shown during village cinema events. Since 2003 village cinema events have reached over half a million people. Due to the success of the NSGA work, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has provided funding to replicate the peer health education project in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone - Peer Health Education (Implemented 2004)

The work with the NSGA in The Gambia (see above) has resulted in a highly successful peer health education model that has reached the entire secondary school sector in The Gambia. CIDA, in 2004, funded the NSGA to implement the model throughout Sierra Leone. The health project in Sierra Leone is called the Nova Scotia Sierra Leone Programme (NSSLP). The NSSLP will include peer health training to all districts of the country in addition to training of truck drivers concerning HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma and the utilisation of professional footballers as role models for young Sierra Leoneans. COL has partnered with the NSSLP to aid in reaching greater numbers of people throughout the country using the models established with the NSGA in The Gambia.

- *Swaziland - Health Media Addressing HIV/AIDS (Implemented 2004)*
- The activity with a Swaziland-based NGO, The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC), was a result of a dialogue between COL and WHO Swaziland office. Swaziland is at the top of the list of countries in critical need of support due to its high incidence of HIV/AIDS. The first phase of the project has been completed (November 2004). TASC has delivered health information to the national television broadcaster and developed case studies for use in its training of community care workers.
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Tanzania - The Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC) (Implemented 2005)

COL worked with WHO Tanzania office and CSSC which is an ecumenical body representing the interests of about 15 member Churches and 10 Church related Organizations in Tanzania. CSSC is a strong voice of its members over 600 and 400 Church-owned Health and Education Institutions respectively in the country. Its main role is facilitation of delivery of social services, Education and Health. The activity with WHO and CSSC will focus on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention.

Sri Lanka - Sarvodaya -Addressing Issues of Malaria and Health (Implemented 2003)

In Sri Lanka, COL worked with the WHO Sri Lanka office and Sarvodaya a local NGO to address issues concerning communicable diseases. COL employed its ODL expertise to aid Sarvodaya's capacity to create malaria-based information through the creation of a Health Media Unit. The information created by Sarvodaya has been delivered via radio, television and mobile units travelling with projector and generator to the villages. This model has proven to be especially effective given the events of the December 2004 tsunami. Since the tsunami Sarvodaya has liaised with the WHO to delivery water and food safe information to the affected eastern shore including Tamil held territory.

- *India - Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) (Implemented 2003)*
- The work with TNAU Media Unit was originally focused on agricultural methods and training with farmers in Tamil Nadu. Since the issues of HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma in the rural areas of India is a growing problem, COL has worked with the Media Unit to update their technology and expertise to deliver health training to targeted groups. Videos produced in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu State are currently being delivered to audiences in the villages.
- *Solomon Islands - Health Media Addressing HIV/AIDS and Malaria (Implemented 2005)*
- COL, working in partnership with the WHO Solomons Islands office and the Pacific Regional Office in Suva, Fiji, has centred a health-based activity with a local NGO called Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT). The activity has focused on health issues in the rural areas of the Solomon Islands. Rates of malaria in the Solomons are some the highest in the world. The project has delivered health information to isolated groups utilizing village cinema with video productions completed by SIDT.

Kiribati - Enhancing the work of Kiribati Video (Implemented 2004)

COL has been activity working with the technical vocational education sector in the Pacific in the last five years. One of the projects was centred at the Tarawa Technical Institute in North Tarawa, Kiribati. It was through this work that COL felt that a small media organization called Kiribati Video (KV), whose high quality video productions in cultural issues in Kiribati could be utilized as a trainer and producer of high quality health media. COL has enhanced KV's video production facilities (December 2004) as a first phase and will look to KV as a valuable resource for health based video productions for the Pacific region in the future.

Papua New Guinea - Addressing HIV/AIDS Among Youth (Implemented 2006)

The activity with Anglicare STOPAIDS has a focus on reaching the remote rugged interior of the country. Anglicare's headquarters are in Port Moresby but they maintain centres in two other regions of the country. The increase of HIV infections in PNG is alarming. The activity will utilise Anglicare's ability to reach the remote and linguistically diverse parts of the country with customised health-based information. The drama troupe at Anglicare, which produces skits and dramas for presentation at roadsides and village events, has been trained in media production. Their work concerning HIV stigma and prevention have been produced onto video and used at village cinema events in remotes parts of the country.

Guyana - Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) (Implemented 2006)

COL worked with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the GRPA to reach both coastal and remote communities with health information with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. GPRPA provides laboratory services to complement the clinical services (testing for HIV, random blood sugar, pap smear, etc). GRPA facilitates programmes for health professionals who function at maternal and child health clinics. They also have a Youth Services Centre in Georgetown where peer health and awareness sessions are undertaken. The activity with the GRPA established a health media unit to enhance the organisation's reach across the country.

Barbados - Comfort, Assist, Reach-Out, Educate (C.A.R.E.) (Implemented 2006)

COL worked with PAHO and C.A.R.E. to address issues in the country and region concerning HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. C.A.R.E. is committed to being the voice of the HIV/AIDS community by education, rehabilitating, motivating and networking with PLWHA, thus ensuring an better quality of life, making a valuable contribution to society and minimising the impact of HIV/AIDS on the wider community. The COL activity with C.A.R.E. has given the organisation both the tools and training to tailor their message through television, radio and on-going field events in the communities.

Conclusion

COL will continue to focus on health training with the work undertaken through the COLME programme. Evaluation and lessons learned from the COLME health activities is on-going with reports being mounted in the COL www site. Organisations have benefited with cost effective creative use of modern media techniques and have been able to address greater numbers of people with localised information that is relevant to their daily lives.

For further information concerning the COL health activities, please contact::

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Figure 3: *David Walker of COL with Primary Students, Kartoung Basic Cycle School, Kartoung, The Gambia*

6

Figures

Figure 1: The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC) Staff Member Producing a Video



Figure 2: Starlight Cinema - Village Health Cinema Event in The Gambia



Figure 3: David Walker of COL with Primary Students, Kartoung Basic Cycle School, Kartoung, The Gambia



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