



BOARD OF GOVERNORS President's Quarterly Progress Report: January – March 2015

1. Board Matters

The 31st Audit Committee meeting was held via teleconference on February 5, 2015 to review progress to December 31, 2014.

The 37th Executive Committee (EXCO) meeting was held in London, UK on February 24, 2015 to approve the draft six-year Strategic Plan 2015-21. A special Board of Governors meeting was held via teleconference on the same day to brief the Board on the progress of the Strategic Plan.

Preparations are underway for the upcoming meetings of the Board of Governors and its Committees which will be held in Nassau, The Bahamas on June 19 and 20, 2015. Board members have been invited to participate in a briefing meeting with ministers on the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) on June 21. The Chair of the Board and I will present a report of COL's work covering the present triennium to senior officials and will also present the Strategic Plan 2015-21 to ministers during the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (19CCEM) that follows from June 22-26.

Thanks to the constructive comments from Board members, the Strategic Plan 'Learning for Sustainable Development' is in the final stages of completion. This will be formally approved by the Board at its June meeting and endorsed by Commonwealth Ministers of Education during the 19CCEM.

2. General

While we were in London for the Executive Committee meeting of the Board, the Canadian High Commissioner, His Excellency Gordon Campbell, organised a reception in honour of COL at which Board members and members of the political, diplomatic and education communities were present. This helped raise COL's profile and enlarge its circle of stakeholders. The following evening, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma, hosted a reception for COL at Marlborough House, where the friends of COL had been invited. Both events provided networking opportunities to share more detailed examples of what COL does. COL needs to pay more attention to increasing its visibility in London, the hub of Commonwealth activities.

During our visit, I signed an MOU with the Director, Commonwealth Foundation (CF) in the presence of our Board members. COL will work with CF on joint projects and share organisational learning. A few weeks later, COL participated in a conference on 'Financing for Development in Small States' organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC) in Barbados. It is important for Commonwealth sister organisations to work together for closer cooperation and enhanced development impact.

COL has been working with partners in Asia and Africa to offer MOOCs for Development (MOOC4D). A MOOC on 'Mobiles for Development', offered in partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, has won the Open Education Consortium's '2015 Open MOOC Award for Excellence' for its outstanding contribution to free and open education. COL's leadership in MOOC4D has been recognised by a global community of educators and advocates for open education.

COL staff have settled into the new offices which have beautiful views and provide a very conducive work environment. The space has been organised to provide more opportunities for informal discussion and debate.

2.1 President's Activities

Raising the profile of COL globally continues to be a key objective. I spoke on 'Advancing research in Commonwealth Africa' at a meeting organised by the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Facility (CTEF) in Malaysia, which was established following the ministerial directive given at the 18th CCEM held in 2012. My co-authors for this presentation were Dr. Godson Gatsha, Mr. John Lesperance and Dr. Sanjaya Mishra. During 'Mobile Learning Week' in Paris, which followed the EXCO meeting in London, I moderated a high-level panel on 'Understanding technology's role in the post-2015 development agenda, particularly with regards to priorities around education and gender' that UNESCO organised jointly with UN Women. I also made a presentation at UNESCO on 'Can mobiles empower women and girls?' prepared jointly with Ms. Alexis Carr and Dr. K Balasubramanian. I believe that these collaborative efforts lead to the strengthening of Team COL and projecting collective thought-leadership.

COMSEC had organised an event to celebrate International Women's Day. I sent a video presentation, drawing lessons from COL's work in gender. The Secretary-General remarked that it provided 'a comprehensive perspective and thought-provoking context...for public policy regarding gender'. One of COL's priority areas during this Three-Year Plan has been to promote Open Educational Resources (OER). My speeches on this subject in Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea (PNG), supported by the Hewlett Foundation, generated a great deal of interest among key stakeholders.

While in Sri Lanka, I met with the two newly-appointed Ministers of Education and Higher Education and apprised them of COL's work. I briefed the Minister of Higher Education in PNG about COL's work and assured support for the new open university that is being established. I then went to Canberra to meet the officials responsible for the UN & Commonwealth Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and made

a presentation on COL's work in the Pacific. There was a great deal of interest in the COL-supported Regional Centre (PACFOLD) hosted by USP, Fiji.

On my way back, I made a trip to Brunei Darussalam and met the Minister of Education and discussed ways in which COL could provide support. These include Quality Assurance (QA), ICT integration for teacher training and MOOCs. The Ministry has offered five scholarships through COL, to enable Commonwealth citizens to study for an 18-month Masters programme at one of the three public universities in Brunei. Five scholarships will continue to be offered annually over the next three years.

3. Programme

Programme activities focused on achieving the outcomes for the current Three-Year Plan and preparing the ground for the new Strategic Plan. The Education Specialists completed the initiative evaluations and these will feed into the finalisation of the external outcome and impact evaluations.

3.1 Education Sector

The Education Sector continues with its activities to strengthen institutional capacity, develop content and promote ODL policies. Increased use of OER is reducing the cost of content development.

3.1.1 Open Schooling

Eight QA policies were developed in Africa and Asia, under the COMOSA umbrella. Workshops took place at the Gwen Lizarra Open School, Belize and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), India to develop gender policies. A draft Strategic Plan was developed for the Big Picture Open School in Matelot, Trinidad & Tobago.

Continuing to contribute to the OER pool, COL supported the capacity building of 124 teachers and curriculum officers in seven Caribbean countries (Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia and Trinidad & Tobago) to develop OER for 11 subjects including Agriculture Science, Entrepreneurship and Mechanical Engineering. Similarly, OER were completed in 14 subjects in Pakistan in the academic and vocational streams.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

In partnership with the African Virtual University (AVU) and the Wawasan Open University (WOU), two MOOCs, 'Using ICT to Enrich Teaching and Learning' and 'Action Research for Teachers' were delivered. The AVU MOOC attracted 1,653 participants while 362 participants enrolled in the WOU MOOC. The MOOCs are being monitored and the evaluation report will provide the lessons learned.

3.1.3 Higher Education

The COL Diploma in Legislative Drafting license has been extended to enable the University of the South Pacific (USP) to continue to offer it until 2020. Fifteen academics from different countries of the Pacific were sponsored to undertake this course. Two academics from Grenada received COL sponsorship to study for the online 'Masters in Instructional Design and Technology' programme at the Open University of Malaysia (OUM). In addition, eight academics from Asia and Africa were sponsored for enrolment in the 'Certificate in Designing and Facilitating Online Learning' offered by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

Fifteen academics from ten partner institutions were hosted by the Open University of Sri Lanka and trained in revising the CEMBA/MPA learning materials using OER. An ODL policy was developed for the Uganda Management Institute.

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

Six VUSSC courses and programmes have now been formally approved by the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) Management Committee for formal registration on the TQF. Twenty-five senior officials from 20 countries met in Malaysia to revise the TQF Procedures and Guidelines for VUSSC and to review and approve the referencing of National Qualifications Frameworks against the TQF. As a result, the TQF has now been aligned against all national and regional Qualifications Frameworks in the small states.

3.2 Livelihoods & Health Sector

The Sector continues to focus on capacity building with partners in all regions whilst balancing completion of monitoring and evaluation for the current Three-Year Plan. More learners are accessing training and there is an increase in the number of institutions offering a range of new courses. There is evidence available to demonstrate how learning has led to empowerment. Cross-cutting activities in gender include the development of gender-responsive learning materials and tools for gender mainstreaming.

3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development(TVSD)

A regional workshop was held in Barbados in collaboration with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) bringing together senior officials from ten countries. A plan was developed for TVSD engagement in the region. Under the COL-HEART TRUST/NTA community training project in Jamaica, the organisation completed the first draft of its flexible learning policy, which provides the framework for 23 member institutions to deliver online TVET courses.

eLearning training for four partner institutions in Africa has been completed. In Sri Lanka, 23 participants from UNIVOTEC were trained in online course development. Dhaka Ahsania Mission reported that over 3,000 people have received skills training in one of the five courses developed with COL support – of these, more than one-third have started small businesses with two-thirds of them being women.

3.2.2 *Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)*

L3F refined its Empowerment Index and a study conducted in Kabale district of Uganda showed that the women involved in the L3F programme had higher empowerment index scores compared to women not involved in the programme. The study also showed that the L3F participants have higher productivity and income from agricultural activities as compared to the non-L3F participants.

The Sri Lankan villages in which L3F has been initiated have shown better labour absorption capacity as well as higher productivity in crops like ginger, turmeric and mushroom. This has been achieved through the active engagement of the Open University of Sri Lanka and the University of Ruhuna.

In India, the L3F partner VIDYAL was chosen by NASSCOM Foundation as the best 'ICT led Social Innovation Project' and received the award from the Minister for Communications and Information Technology.

In Ghana, a gender sensitive financial literacy course has been converted into ODL materials in the local languages of Dagbani and Ewe. Around 48 villagers have been trained as resource persons to facilitate learning in credit and enterprise management.

3.2.3 *Healthy Communities*

Community Learning Programmes (CLPs) in the Asia, Africa and Caribbean regions focused on various community and health issues such as teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS stigma, sustainable agricultural development, child schooling, sanitation and women's health.

Five new CLPs were developed in Bangladesh on sanitation and safe drinking water, infectious disease, reproductive health and waterborne diseases. CLP Developer's Certificate Course on 'Scriptwriting & Episode Production' was completed with 84 registrants and the course on 'Sustainability & Proposal Writing' has attracted 48 participants.

3.3 **Cross-cutting Themes**

3.3.1 *eLearning*

Twenty-five secondary school teachers from 15 schools in Delhi participated in the Educational App Development Workshop using Android-based mobiles. In St. Vincent & the Grenadines, 20 educators completed the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI).

One issue of the *Journal of Learning for Development* (JL4D) has been published comprising six research articles, a case study and a report from the field.

3.3.2 Gender

Gender profiles for 53 Commonwealth countries have been developed and quantitative, sex-disaggregated data on various socio-economic indicators is now available.

Two gender-related professional development events were conducted for all COL staff. Two articles were prepared for COL's Blog on the topics of 'International Women's Day 2015' and 'Gender Successes and Gaps in the Commonwealth'. CEMBA/MPA and Legislative Drafting course materials were reviewed from a gender perspective.

3.4 eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)

During this quarter, eLIO secured a Long-Term Agreement with UNICEF, New York over a three-year period to provide tutoring/online facilitation services. A one-year extension to deliver *Writing Effectively for UNHCR* was received and the 29th offering of the course started in March with 126 participants. eLIO also saw the completion of several learning cohorts during this time: UNHCR's *Advanced Programme Management (PM2)* pilot of 60 learners; World Bank's *Writing Effectively* with 64 participants; and UNHCR's *Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP)* with 66 learners.

3.5 CEMCA

A strategy framework for eContent creation for the Virtual Open Schooling platform was developed in January at NIOS. Sixty teachers were trained in 'ICT Integrated Teacher Education and Community of Practice' in collaboration with the Department of School Education Research and Training, Karnataka, India and in partnership with IT for Change, an NGO.

Two research workshops on 'OER for Development' were conducted to complete an International Development Research Council (IDRC) supported research project. CEMCA's OER-based eLearning Programme was launched at a workshop on OER held at Uttarakhand Open University, India. A MOOC on teacher education was offered with WOU, Malaysia.

World Radio Day 2015 was commemorated in collaboration with UNESCO, New Delhi on February 13, 2015. A national workshop on Web Radio and a consultation on Community Radio (CR) was organised in Sri Lanka, and the first national level consultation on Community Media was organised in collaboration with the Maldives Broadcasting Commission. A research project on the 'Sustainability of Community Radio' on eight CR stations in Bangladesh, India and Nepal has been completed.

3.6 Regional Centres

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

A regional workshop on Quality Assurance in ODL Programmes was conducted by RETRIDOL in Accra, Ghana.

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

An ODL Research Dissemination Forum was organised by the SADC-CDE in March. It was attended by 59 participants and ten research papers were presented. The Centre continued to provide capacity building support and training in Project Management, Quality Assurance and Monitoring and Evaluation.

3.6.3 Caribbean Regional Learning for Development Activities (CRL4DA)

Thirteen journalists from eight Caribbean countries, selected from 30 applicants, successfully completed an online course on Learning for Development (L4D). Based on the course, they have drafted stories and reports for the media. This initiative by PANOS Caribbean is expected to strengthen advocacy for ODL among different stakeholders in the Caribbean.

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

PACFOLD has initiated discussions for developing content for the online community of practice. Discussions have been held with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to plan the development of a regional ODL policy.

3.7 Vice President's Activities

The Vice President spent much of this quarter finalising the draft Strategic Plan 2015-21. He continued to monitor the progress of the impact and outcome based evaluations.

In February, Mr. Naidoo attended the Board meetings in London where he met with colleagues at the Commonwealth Foundation to finalise the work plan with COL and with the COMSEC Education Advisor to discuss COL RIM and other projects. Mr. Naidoo also met with the COL RBM Consultant who supported the development of the Strategic Plan.

3.8 Professional Development

Dr. Rosemary Atieno of the University of Nairobi visited COL during January and helped COL to refine the evaluation methodology and Empowerment Index Framework for Tanzania and Ghana and assisted in identifying the statistical tool to study the outcome and impact of interventions in education and learning.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments Support

So far, during this fiscal year, contributions totalling \$8.9 million have been received from 35 countries (the same number of countries as at the same time in the previous fiscal year).

4.2 Focal Points

We welcomed the following Focal Points:

- Ms. Bethany Wellings, Policy Officer, UN & Commonwealth Section, International Organisations Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia.
- Mrs. Nema Devi Goorah, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Mauritius.

4.3 Congratulatory Letters

Twenty nine congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed Heads of Government, Ministers of Education, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth High Commissioners.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

COL has received \$8.9 million in voluntary contributions from member governments between July 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015.

The following countries have made contributions in the third quarter as follows:

Cyprus – \$16,984; Jamaica – \$56,785; Kenya – \$54,416; Maldives – \$6,310; Rwanda – \$18,928; Sierra Leone – \$56,785; Tanzania – \$34,797; and the United Kingdom – final instalment of \$1,250,405 for a total contribution of \$2,416,310.

In addition to voluntary contributions from member governments, COL recognised close to \$1 million in revenues from grants and fee-for-service during the period July 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

During the quarter, COL signed agreements with: UNICEF for USD250,000 for tutoring and online facilitation services and the British Council for USD122,400 to host a delegation of Vice Chancellors from universities in Pakistan.

5.2 Cash Flow

At March 31, 2015, COL held approximately \$9.8 million in cash and cash equivalents. This level of cash and cash equivalents enables COL to meet operational costs and maintain a positive cash flow until outstanding contributions are received throughout the year.

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

5.3 Expenditures

By the end of the third quarter, over \$7.7 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff and office costs. This amount comprised 73% of the annual budget of \$10.6 million approved for 2014-15.

6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

6.1.1 Arrivals

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

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

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

7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

COL's IT backup system underwent a major upgrade, making it fully aligned to contemporary disaster recovery practices. The online catalogue of information resources at COL was updated and the architecture of the contacts management database has been changed to make it compatible with COL's Intranet.

Process documentation for the innovative 'MOOC for Gardeners' was completed. This course had very different types of learners – small farmers as well as students in universities of agriculture – and all rated the course highly. COL is now an invited partner in a consortium of India-based universities and research institutes called AgMOOCs, which plans to offer 20 MOOCs in English for students and professionals in agricultural education. The first MOOC of this consortium was launched in March with about 1,800 learners. This course is offered on an innovative MOOC platform, mooKIT, to which new functionalities have been added. One of them enables a learner to listen to the audio track of a video lesson over the mobile phone

which is useful for those in bandwidth-limited situations. Aptus was demonstrated during the UNESCO Mobile Learning Week 2015 and received several expressions of interest.

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

The President visited the Open University of Malaysia, host of PCF8, and held discussions with Tan Sri Professor Anuwar Ali, Vice Chancellor, and senior officials of OUM, to finalise various activities associated with organising the Forum. The venue is the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre and PCF8 will be held during November 27 to December 1, 2016.

9. Visitors to COL

During this quarter, COL welcomed:

- Mr. Marc-Andre Ouellette, Chief of Protocol and Executive Director, Office of Protocol, Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat, Office of the Premier, BC, Canada.
- Reverend Jeremy Clark-King, Rector, St. Mary's Kerrisdale, BC, Canada.

10. Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (www.col.org/publications):
 - Connections/EdTech News, March 2015, Vol. 20, No. 1 (www.col.org/connections).
 - *ICT Leadership in Higher Education – Selected Readings* by Dr. Sanjaya Mishra (Editor) at <http://www.col.org/ICTLeadership>.
 - *Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on MOOCs: Course Evaluation* by COL, Kirk Perris (Author) at <http://www.col.org/MOOCOnMOOCEvaluation>.
- Videos at <http://www.col.org/videos>.
- Speeches and presentations at <http://www.col.org/speeches>.
- COL blog at <http://www.col.org/blog>.

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

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