Learning for Development

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

Vision:
Access to learning is the key to development

Mission:
To help governments and institutions expand the scope, scale and quality of learning by using new approaches and technologies, especially those subsumed under the general term of open and distance learning (ODL).

Programme sectors and initiatives:

Education:
Open schooling
Teacher education
Higher education
Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

Livelihoods & Health:
Skills development
Learning for farming
Healthy communities
Integrating eLearning

Key aims:
Increase the number of trained teachers
Open up access to secondary school to larger numbers of pupils
Assist in the development of tertiary education
Support skills development to improve the livelihoods of communities

Strategies:
Partnerships
Models
Policies
Capacity
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FOREWORD

COL in the Commonwealth is a companion text to Learning for Development, the Commonwealth of Learning’s Three-Year Plan for 2009-2012. This compendium reviews COL’s work over the last three years (2006-2009) country by country. Together these two documents are the springboard for the Country Action Plans that will guide COL’s future activities in each country over the 2009-2012 triennium and ensure that they are consistent with the national priorities of governments.

Ministers were enthusiastic about the previous issue of COL in the Commonwealth that was presented to 16CCEM in Cape Town in 2006. That report covered only developing countries whereas this one, at the request of Ministers, covers all members of the Commonwealth, showing also what COL has done in relation to the international development priorities of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. These country reviews are grouped under four regions: Africa (and the Mediterranean), Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

COL tries to create synergy within regions and across the Commonwealth by bringing countries and institutions together in common endeavours. For this reason each grouping of countries begins with a short account of the regional activities which COL has promoted in 2006-2009.

Member States also greatly value COL’s Pan-Commonwealth work, which benefits from the unifying characteristics of the Commonwealth such as a common language, similar constitutional and legal frameworks, and a shared commitment to the values of peace, democracy, equality and good government. Some of the Pan-Commonwealth activities and facilities that underpin COL’s work in the regions and countries are listed in the next section.

The production of COL in the Commonwealth 2006-2009 has been an intense collective effort. COL’s advanced knowledge management systems have enabled us to exploit fully the information contained in the numerous event reports prepared by staff as they work and travel. I express particular gratitude to Jasmine Lee, for diligently updating the country profiles that provided the raw material for these reviews, and to Judith Mosley, who brought this volume together in an impressively efficient and expeditious manner.

Sir John Daniel
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning
BACKGROUND

As a Commonwealth inter-governmental organisation, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has the mandate to operate in all 53 member states. Its work focuses particularly on 46 developing countries across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. COL also seeks to align its activities with the education and training priorities and the countries of particular concern for major donor agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID).

COL has developed Action Plans in consultation with Focal Points and country partners in the 46 member states, with activities specific to the individual needs of each country. However, several activities have a regional or pan-Commonwealth nature. This section looks at pan-Commonwealth activities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

COL provides material and capacity building support for assuring quality in higher education and teacher education in the Commonwealth. A toolkit called the Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit includes Quality Indicators for Teacher Education and Best Practices in Teacher Education, was launched in December 2007 to be used by Ministries of Education and teacher education institutions.

COL is also developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools. As a first step towards this, staff members from 14 countries across all Commonwealth regions have been trained in the Quality Assurance of Open Schools. A Quality Assurance Toolkit for Higher Education is nearing completion.

OPEN SCHOOLS

COL encourages the application of open and distance learning (ODL) to increase access to primary and secondary schooling. In support of this, two publications, Perspective Series on Open Schools - Open Schools for the 21st Century.
Century and Handbook for Managers of Open Schools have been completed with contributions from chapter authors across the Commonwealth. Both publications will be distributed as a resource to policymakers. Other resources which have been developed include the Evaluation Study on Open Schools and the Cost and Financing of Open Schools as well as a Learner Support Guide for Open Schools.

In addressing the need for quality educational resources, COL has initiated the development of Open Educational Resources for Open Schools (OER4OS) in 20 subjects involving six countries. The open educational resources (OERs) will be available to all Commonwealth countries.

ELEARNING FOR EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

COL has two major and related pan-Commonwealth initiatives in this area: WikiEducator and Learning4Content (L4C).

COL’s WikiEducator (www.col.org/WikiEducator) provides an online service to support online educational communities. Use of WikiEducator has grown rapidly during the past year with the number of registered users passing the 9,020 mark and number of hits per day now exceeding 247,653. A wiki is a website on which any user can edit and update pages. The best known is the Wikipedia, the biggest encyclopaedia ever produced. Wikis are a part of the emerging “Web 2.0” environment that includes user-contributed works such as YouTube and MySpace.

COL’s WikiEducator creates online communities whose members participate from remote locations to create educational content collaboratively and to plan conferences and other events. It is one of the tools used by the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). WikiEducator is reaching 79% of countries around the world and COL is now supporting the installation of a French language version.

The L4C initiative aims to build capacity among educators in using WikiEducator to develop free content for education. Training is free and educators “pay” for their training by donating time to develop one free content lesson of their choice. L4C workshops have already been held in 28 Commonwealth countries and at least one face-to-face workshop will be held in each member state. In addition, 26 online workshops have been held and others are scheduled. Commonwealth teachers and educators are thus becoming WikiEducators themselves, developing and donating one free content resource back to the WikiEducator community.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation approved a grant of USD 100,000 to COL over one year as core support for this initiative.

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

VUSSC is a collaborative network of small states that create and share materials for livelihood-related post-secondary programmes. Activities during this planning period have included capacity building and the creation, customisation and reuse of OERs. Quality assurance and cross-accreditation of learning programmes has also been an area of focus.

The VUSSC is a creation of the participating countries and their existing tertiary institutions. It is a collective mechanism for people to develop expertise in online collaboration, eLearning and information and communication technologies (ICTs). It also provides an opportunity for them to produce, adapt and deploy courses and learning materials on selected subjects identified by country Interlocutors and stakeholders.
The model that has emerged is a three-week training and course development workshop at which subject specialists from a subset of the participating states strengthen their information technology (IT) skills and begin to develop course material collaboratively online. Six workshops were held during this planning period:

1. Entrepreneurship and Tourism, hosted in Mauritius in August 2006.
3. Life Skills, hosted in Trinidad & Tobago in June 2007.

Orientations for the selected team leaders in preparation for the workshops took place in Vancouver six weeks before each workshop.

Senior officials from VUSSC countries met in Singapore in February 2008 to consider, refine and agree mechanisms of a transnational qualifications framework (TQF), the first of its kind. This will allow the 30 participating small states to transfer course materials, qualifications and qualified learners between countries. The South African Qualifications Authority, an organisation of the South African Government with more than twelve years experience in establishing frameworks in South and Southern Africa, helped to prepare a concept document and facilitate the proceedings.

The Ministry Interlocutors for VUSSC met in London in July 2008 to discuss the implementation of the TQF, the establishment of a management committee, the logo and branding of VUSSC, monitoring and evaluation, and copyright issues.

TRANSACTIONAL PROGRAMMES

COL designs, develops and delivers distance and technology mediated learning programmes for international organisations with a global workforce. During this planning period, COL has developed and delivered a number of new programmes including: Writing Effectively for the International Labour Organization (ILO); World Bank Writing E-mails, Memos and Letters and World Bank Report Writing; and an Operational Data Management Learning Programme for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These eLearning courses are designed to enhance the skill of staff working in field offices and in headquarters.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

COL promotes gender equality in all its programmes. Specific gender-related issues are identified during the work-planning process with country stakeholders and addressed through appropriate research, training and materials development.
COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) are working together to develop ODL training materials aimed at promoting good governance and gender equality in the public sector. The work is based on two workshops hosted by ComSec which concluded that there was limited capacity among the majority of policy makers, senior managers and professionals to mainstream gender equality in their daily work. A critical decision was to explore the role of ICTs and ODL in delivering training on a larger scale and to support research on flexible learning opportunities. A status report on what learning materials for gender mainstreaming are currently available to the public service concluded that while there are some materials available online, the current model for accessing the materials is not adequate.

A two-day meeting was convened in July 2008 to deliberate how best COL and ComSec could develop the required content using ODL tools. Invited participants included members of administrative staff colleges and other institutions involved in training public servants such as National Women's Machinerys, Commonwealth partner agencies and resource people. The focus for piloting this initiative is Africa in the first instance.

**COL-PROTEIN PROGRAMME**

The COL Poverty Reduction Outcomes through Education Innovations and Networks (COL-PROTEIN) programme supports innovative uses of ODL to alleviate poverty in rural areas. In particular, COL-PROTEIN supports initiatives that adapt ODL, ICTs and media to build capacities for community development, for example, in areas such as food security, environmental protection, women’s empowerment, micro-enterprise and good governance. Several projects across the regions have already been recipients of a COL-PROTEIN Award.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUMS**

More than 500 people from 64 countries and various international organisations gathered in Ocho Rios, Jamaica for COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF4) from 30 October to 3 November 2006. In his closing remarks, Sir John Daniel pointed to three key areas of progress since the Third Pan-Commonwealth Forum in Dunedin, New Zealand in 2004:

1. Better research
2. More participation from developing countries
3. Integration of technology.

COL was grateful to the local hosts of the Forum for ensuring the success of the event, in particular the University of the West Indies’ Distance Education Centre, in co-operation with the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning, the Jamaican Association for Distance and Open Learning, the Trinidad & Tobago Distance Learning Association and the Office of Continuing Education and Distance Learning at the University of Technology, Jamaica.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) took place in London, UK, in July 2008, with the theme “Access to Learning for Development”. It was hosted by COL in collaboration with the University of London, as part of the University’s celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of its External Degrees Programme. PCF5 brought together practitioners, researchers, planners and policy makers in the fields of ODL and development to explore the contribution of ODL to international development goals. Over 700 participants from over 70 countries, the majority from the developing Commonwealth, took advantage of opportunities to share experience and expertise, and to contribute to future policy and provision.
COL NEWS SERVICE & NEWSLETTER

COL customises services provided by Google and Yahoo to provide a news service on ODL and specialised topics. The general news service is available from COL’s homepage while the specialised services are available on the appropriate topic pages on the website. The news service is updated approximately every hour.

COL publishes a newsletter, Connections, and a companion publication, EdTech News, three times per year, designed to provide regular news and information to COL’s stakeholders. The publications are distributed in print and electronically directly to 10,000 government officials, ODL and educational technology leaders and practitioners throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. The newsletter offers updates on COL and partner activities; ODL developments, resources and events; and educational technology reviews – all with a “development” focus. It also features an “In Focus” section which highlights a different COL programme in each issue, and periodic editorials as well as “Fair Comment” columns from external sources. It can be found on COL’s website at www.col.org/connections.

COPYRIGHT FOR EDUCATORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

COL has worked extensively in the area of copyright in education. The focus of COL’s attention is on providing information on how learning resources may be made available at low or no cost by applying the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS). In early 2009 COL published a book on copyright for educators and administrators titled Introducing Copyright which is available on the COL website at no cost.
Asia

Bangladesh | Brunei Darussalam | India | Malaysia | Maldives | Pakistan | Singapore | Sri Lanka
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The Asia region comprises eight countries, three in South-East Asia and five in South Asia. Three of them are E-9 countries, that are the most populated in the world: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

Asia has experienced a phenomenal increase in distance education over the last three decades. India alone has 14 open universities and 14 open schools in addition to over 140 dual-mode institutions serving nearly seven million distance learners. This region has become a natural ally of COL in promoting South-South collaborations, sharing best practice and harnessing low-cost technologies to reach the unreached.

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), based in India, plans and implements activities in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Maldives, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam and acts as COL’s regional office in India. CEMCA is COL’s only unit outside of its Vancouver headquarters.

Its basic aim is to develop regional expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as organising capacity building in response to identified needs, including providing support to new and emerging institutions in the region. CEMCA has initiated several activities related to the quality assurance of education, teacher education and multimedia materials, working with countries throughout the region. CEMCA is also facilitating regional activities in teacher development, open schools and higher education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

COL and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), India, co-organised a regional forum on quality assurance in teacher education for policy makers and senior administrators from Ministries of Education responsible for quality in teacher education. Held in Bangalore, India in December 2007, the forum was designed to expose participants to the various quality assurance practices and to the modalities of addressing challenges related to policies and practices for quality assurance in the professional development of teachers.

ICTs FOR WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT

CEMCA hosted a regional expert roundtable on Improving Existing Understanding of Contexts and Conditions in the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Women’s Empowerment. The meeting was
held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006. The publication produced by the meeting is available.

SUPPORTING GENDER FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, which includes indicators and guidance on how to develop them for primary and secondary schools. The initial focus of the activity is South Asia. In March 2008, COL, along with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and the Commonwealth Foundation convened a roundtable in Bangalore, India with several institutions and participants from across South Asia. The result of the workshop was a set of draft indicators for school management committees, parents, schools and students. These indicators were then field tested with groups in both Bangladesh and India. A second workshop was held in November, 2008.

REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The first Regional Focal Points Meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions was co-organised by COL and the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, and was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October 2008. These meetings are planned to take place every three years. At the 2008 meeting, each participant reviewed, on behalf of their country, the progress that had been made so far in COL’s current Three-Year Plan 2006-2009, provided feedback on COL’s planning processes and gave concrete inputs for developing the next Three-Year Plan 2009-2012. The meeting also provided a valuable opportunity for networking, facilitating future inter-country collaboration. As part of the event, the group visited the Open University Malaysia and Universiti Tun Abdul Razak.

REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS

CEM CA regularly highlights best practices and innovative developments in technology for development and ODL in their quarterly publication, EduComm Asia.

COL also has regional brochures which summarise its activities in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth. These can be found on COL’s website at: www.col.org/regional.
BANGLADESH

COL Focal Point:  Mr. M. Haque (2006-2007)
Mr. Md. Nazrul Islam, Directorate of Primary Education (current)

BACKGROUND

COL has worked extensively with Bangladesh for a number of years on the development of open and distance learning (ODL). The Bangladesh Open University (BOU) was established on the basis of a consultancy carried out by COL in the early 1990s and COL has worked with the University since then to provide critical support in capacity building. COL activities in the country support all levels of education. Bangladesh is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and an active participant in local and regional activities.

SUMMARY

During 2006-2009, the major focus of COL’s work has been on capacity building and professional development. The objective has been to widen access to quality secondary education through open schools, scale-up teacher training through ODL to address the deficit in the number of trained teachers and to increase age participation rates in higher education. COL works with public institutions such as BOU as well as with civil society organisations like Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), Rupantar Development Research Network (DNet) and the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). Roundtables, policy dialogues and training workshops were organised in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that ODL and eLearning expertise is built within the country so that quality education can be provided.

Some of the outcomes include the joint development of a skills training package with DAM to empower rural girls to access gainful employment, a Learner Support Guide with BOU, the training of several BOU staff members in different aspects of ODL and the provision of a cost-effective Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration/Masters in Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme in collaboration with BOU to many Bangladeshis who otherwise might not have had the opportunity. This programme continues to be very popular in Bangladesh.

The previous Vice-Chancellor of BOU, Professor Dr. M. Farid Ahmed, received support to visit the Open University of Hong Kong to study an institutional example of best practice in ODL in the region.
EDUCATION

Quality assurance

The first COL-NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India) Joint Forum on Quality Assurance in Teacher Education for policy makers and senior administrators from Commonwealth Asia, held in Bangalore, India, in December 2007 was attended by the Director-General, Directorate of Primary Education and the COL Focal Point.

Teacher development

BOU sent a delegate to the workshop on “ODL for differently abled teachers”, organised by Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, in December 2007.

Open/alternative schooling

In its efforts to develop and promote models which are sustainable, COL identified cost and financing of distance education as a critical element in planning for sustainable open schools. As a result, a workshop was organised to enhance the capacity of Chief Executive Officers of open schools and policymakers. This was the first step in developing an interactive learning resource which is now available on COL’s WikiEducator. Three delegates from Bangladesh attended the workshop which was held in August 2007 in Gaborone, Botswana.

COL sponsored two participants from BOU to a workshop on Developing Digital Content hosted by the Mindset Network in Johannesburg in September 2007.

Bangladesh was one of 11 participating countries from across the Commonwealth to attend a workshop on “How can ICTs enhance the capacity of Women in Leadership?” in Vancouver in November 2008. A participant from BOU attended the workshop which featured presentations, discussions and site visits to educational institutions. The workshop’s recommendations and findings informed the development of self-instructional materials that can be used to help women in leadership positions in open schools to embrace the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Other COL support for open schools have included 20 staff members from Bangladesh receiving training in course development. Twenty staff members were also trained in learner support through two workshops and a Learner Support Guide has been developed for Bangladesh. Staff members from Bangladesh and 13 other countries were also trained in quality assurance in the context of developing a quality assurance toolkit for open schools.

Higher education

CEMCA facilitated the participation of the President, University and Industry Alliance, Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka to a conference on Higher Education in India in September 2006. Such support enables Bangladesh ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education to attend professional development programmes in the region.

Bangladesh is one of the partners in the CEMBA/CEMPA programme. The programme is offered through BOU and registration has grown from 133 students in 2006 to 170 in 2007 and 206 in 2008.
**E L e a r n i n g f o r e d u c a t i o n s e c t o r d e v e l o p m e n t**

Bangladesh was represented at the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with the Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Sri Lanka, to develop knowledge resources focussing on the contexts and conditions of the use of ICTs for women in the Asian region.

CEMCA organised a one-day workshop on Video Production and e-Content in May 2007, which enabled participants from new ODL institutions to have hands-on training in the production of video programmes and their subsequent modification into eLearning material. Two participants from BOU attended the workshop at the EMMRC IIT campus Roorkee, India.

CEMCA in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has undertaken a project to train ODL professionals in quality mixed media courseware, using an authoring tool Metamorphosis. Three distance and open universities in the region, including BOU are participating. As a further value addition, CEMCA has incorporated a two-day orientation to script writing for audio and video formats, to enable ODL course writers/teachers to create audio and video clips to integrate into the authoring tools package. In March 2008, UNESCO funded a 5-day Metamorphosis authoring tools course for 20 faculty members from BOU.

ODL professionals from Bangladesh are listed in the Biographical Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is also available on the CEMCA website.

Bangladesh is one of the countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). CEMCA continues to highlight ODL best practice in Bangladesh through its quarterly publication EduComm Asia. The article Moni, The Mobile Lady: An initiative of DNet, Bangladesh was published in the March issue.

**L E A R N I N G F O R L I V E L I H O O D S**

**L e a r n i n g a n d s k i l l s f o r l i v e l i h o o d s**

CEMCA is supporting capacity building in ICTs for women using NGO networks in DNet. A participant from the region attended the regional roundtable on ICTs for Women held in Sri Lanka in December 2006. Bangladesh also participated in a regional review workshop to assess progress made in the development of ODL courses, resulting in revisions introduced to the curriculum. In April 2007, CEMCA, in participation with DNet Bangladesh, brought together a network of grassroots organisations to develop audio content on livelihoods issues with 50% of the participants being women.

Four participants from BOU, CAMPE and DAM were among those from five countries to attend a review workshop on the Livelihoods Skills Activities of COL in South Asia, held in Chennai in February 2007.

COL is working with DAM for the development of ODL courses for house helpers, as part of Basic and Middle Level Entrepreneurial Education and Training. DAM has completed the activities of the first phase of the project and the Literacy Primer I, II and III, Teachers’ Guide Training Manual and Video Script are available. Netaji Subhash Open University (NSOU), India, is supporting DAM in editing and translating the course materials developed for Home Management for girls and young women.
Rural and peri-urban community development

The Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) and Masjid Council for Community Advancement (MACCA) were recipients of a COL-PROTEIN Award. Working with partners, CUS established a learning centre that uses ICTs to provide education and skills training in one of the least developed areas of Bangladesh. This is one of the first initiatives in the country to use technology-mediated learning for adult literacy. By providing learners, primarily rural girls and women, with functional literacy and skills development, this project helped families generate income, which substantially improved livelihoods. MACCA developed a curriculum and self-instructional training modules using ODL to train religious leaders so they can work as “Faith Ambassadors” to complement ongoing efforts to achieve social development goals and poverty reduction. The project developed the capacity of different religious leaders to support and strengthen development initiatives.

COL is working with a number of countries including Bangladesh in pursuing the concept of Knowledge Infomediaries for the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme. COL commissioned a study, “Characterisation of Knowledge Infomediaries and introduction of ICTs in Bangladesh Agriculture and Rural Development”. The study included the agricultural extension component implemented by the Department of Agricultural Extension, the Agricultural Information Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as NGO initiatives like the Grameen Phone concept supported by the well-known Grameen Bank programme, KATALYST ICTs enabled services, WIN Incorporate initiative and the e-Krishok of the Bangladesh Institute of ICTs in Development (BIID). BIID and COL are developing a proposal to link the e-Krishok programme in partnership with public, private and NGOs with L3F.

The workshop on Capacity Building for Community Based Organisations (CBO) on and Science for Women at Khulna, Bangladesh was held in January 2009.

Transnational programmes

Fifty-three members of the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, UNICEF and UNHCR in Bangladesh were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Gender and development

COL is working with partners to develop a toolkit for Gender Friendly Schools, consisting of indicators including how to develop such schools for the primary and secondary level in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008, a roundtable was held at the Institute of Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore, India, jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), the Commonwealth Foundation and COL. The outcome was a set of draft indicators for school management committees, parents, schools and students. Two participants from Bangladesh, from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education participated in the workshop.

The draft indicators were then field-tested with the user groups in both Bangladesh and India. A follow-up meeting was held at ISEC in November when participants from India and Bangladesh discussed the preliminary findings of the field testing. It was noted that additional time was needed to fully test the indicators and it was anticipated that testing would be complete by Spring 2009. This second meeting included input from the Amandhar School project.
with Concern Worldwide and other experiences from South Asia. Representatives from Shariatpur also attended this meeting.

**Good governance**

COL is working with two NGOs, Action Aid Bangladesh and Rupantar to develop good governance modules for the community level. The work with Action Aid is part of a Commonwealth Education Fund initiative in 16 countries to strengthen the role of civil society in informed public decision-making for matters concerning the local school. Rupantar will develop ODL material to strengthen local level government and will also train up to 300 people in ODL through a Master Trainers programme. For Women’s Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL), it was determined that Bangladesh, India and Pakistan could benefit from sharing ideas leading to the development of a model to strengthen the role of women in decision-making at the local level.

Rupantar has developed four modules incorporating the new Local Government Act, 2008 to strengthen 225 local government clusters and reaching almost 20,000 government officials including committee members. An ODL network has been established, headed by Rupantar, as a clearing house to share ideas and materials and as a resource to train master trainers, discuss new approaches and bring together key organisations to further ODL work in communities.

**Educational use of mass media and ICTs**

CEMCA facilitated the first national workshop to spread awareness of community radio. The workshop was held in March 2008 at the Media Centre at BOU in collaboration with the Bangladesh NGO Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC). The workshop took over 50 participants from various civil society organisations through the concept of community radio, experiences elsewhere, the draft policy in Bangladesh, technical requirements and related issues. By the end of the workshop, participants were prepared to run more than 50 community radio stations.

CEMCA also organised a study tour for a team of three people with different skills: DNet (production), Rupantar (community mobilisation) and BNNRC (technology). The team visited three community radio stations in different parts of India to get a first-hand exposure. They are part of the Master Training Team in Bangladesh.

CEMCA further organised a second workshop, in partnership with Rupantar, for 20 participants of community radio licences in Khulna, Bangladesh in January 2009. This was a hands-on skills development workshop and the Master Trainer Team supported the workshop as Resource People.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Pan-Commonwealth Forum**

COL’s Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006 was attended by five COL-sponsored delegates including three from Bangladesh from BOU and one from Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP), Bangladesh.

The Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 18 COL-sponsored delegates from Bangladesh. Mr. Zamal Uddin Biswas of Grameen Bank was one of the guest speakers at the Forum.
**Regional Focal Points meeting**

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2008 was attended by the Joint Secretary (Secondary), from the Ministry of Education, representing the COL Focal Point for Bangladesh.

**Resources**

Bangladesh is one of the countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from Bangladesh are listed in the Biographic Directory of ODL Professionals in the Asian Commonwealth Countries, compiled by Professor Neela Jagannathan and published by CEMCA in December 2008. The database is also available on the CEMCA website.

**Appointments**

The previous Vice-Chancellor of BOU, Professor Dr. M. Farid Ahmed, accepted COL’s invitation to join the CEMCA Advisory Council and attended the 7th CEMCA Advisory Council Meeting in New Delhi in December 2007. Bangladesh is now represented on the CEMCA Advisory by the new Vice Chancellor, Professor R.I.M. Aminur Rashid.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

COL will continue to build on the significant progress of the past three years during the next triennium and will identify other specific interventions in consultation with in-country partners. In the future, COL hopes to see a greater engagement with Bangladesh as both a source and provider of ODL experience and expertise and as a recipient of support.