

EXCERPTS FROM:

COL in the Commonwealth

2006–2009 Country Reports

FOR: SRI LANKA

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COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

Learning for Development

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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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Daniel', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Sir John Daniel
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning

PAN-COMMONWEALTH INITIATIVES



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 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.
2. Professional Development of Educators, in Singapore in March 2007.
3. Life Skills, hosted in Trinidad & Tobago in June 2007.
4. Disaster Management, in November 2007 in Samoa.
5. The Fishing Industry, in Seychelles in March 2008.
6. The Construction Industry, in The Bahamas in November 2008.

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.

TRANSNATIONAL 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 Machineries, 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

CEMCA 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.



SRI LANKA

COL Focal Point: Mr. S.U. Wijerathne, Ministry of Education (current)

BACKGROUND

Sri Lanka has high literacy rates, a good gender balance in education and an extremely valuable network of very efficient NGOs. COL has an ongoing productive partnership with both the Ministry of Education and institutions in Sri Lanka. A Sri Lankan, Dr. Tara de Mel, represented Asia on the COL Board of Governors from 2002 to June 2008. Sri Lanka is a regular contributor to COL's budget.

SUMMARY

In this triennium, COL worked to support education and development in Sri Lanka through a variety of activities in quality assurance, teacher training, higher education, capacity building in open and distance learning (ODL) and testing new models of community engagement. While much of the focus remained on tertiary level educational institutions, major in-roads in collaboration with NGOs and other agencies resulted in the development of strategic partnerships and networks in the use of ODL and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Some of the outcomes were the establishment of the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) project, the development of materials for teacher training under the Master of Arts in Teacher Education (MATE) programme, quality assurance tools for distance education, and training for Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) staff in developing multimedia course materials.

Distinguished Sri Lankans, including the Honourable Minister of Education, visited COL Headquarters in Vancouver and other prominent visitors came to COL under the Executive Attachment Programme. Sri Lanka also received recognition for its contribution to the promotion of ODL, at the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF5) in 2008.

EDUCATION

Quality assurance

Seven international experts including one from Sri Lanka took part in a workshop to critically review the *Quality Assurance for Teacher Education and Development Toolkit*. The workshop was held in December 2006 in India by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and COL.

A workshop on Performance Indicators for Quality assurance in Distance Higher Education was held in Sri Lanka in August 2007. It was organised by the Distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP) of the Ministry of Education, co-sponsored by COL and supported by the Asian Development Bank. At the end of the workshop, the participants succeeded in drafting quality indicators for distance higher education.

The first COL-NAAC 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 three representatives from Sri Lanka, from the Ministry of Education and DEMP.

A Senior Lecturer from OUSL attended the workshops to develop an *Assessment, Standardisation and Certification of Multimedia Materials Handbook*, held in New Delhi in October 2007, November 2007 and June 2008.

Teacher development

COL engaged a consultant to train the faculty and other staff of OUSL on monitoring and evaluation for the pilot run of the MATE-1 programme and to evaluate its organisation and impact of the programme. The evaluation was completed and the final report received in September 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. A delegate from Sri Lanka attended the workshop which was held in 2007 in Gaborone, Botswana.

Sri Lanka 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 the National Institute of Education 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 ICTs.

In order to strengthen the capacity of open schools, three staff members from Sri Lanka were trained in course development at a Learner Support workshop in India, while two staff members attended the Learner Support workshop in South Africa.

Higher education

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) facilitated the participation of a senior educational administrator from Sri Lanka, a Professor of Political Science and Chairman of the University Grants Commission, at a conference on Higher Education, in India in September 2006. Such support enables ODL practitioners and professionals in higher education from Sri Lanka to attend professional development programmes in the region.

Sri Lanka, through OUSL, is one of the partners in the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme. By 2008, three hundred and twenty-eight students from Sri Lanka had enrolled in the programme.

Participants from Sri Lanka were among 20 from five South Asian countries who received training at a workshop organised by CEMCA on “ODL for differently abled teachers” at Indira Gandhi National Open University in December 2007.

COL, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Sri Lankan Ministry of Higher Education (through DEMP) are cooperating to develop a *Quality Assurance Toolkit for Higher Education*.

E-Learning for education sector development

Sri Lanka hosted the regional expert roundtable organised by CEMCA in collaboration with Centre for Women’s Research in December 2006 in Colombo. The objectives of the meeting were to develop knowledge resources focussing on the contexts and conditions of the use of ICTs for women in the Asian region. Several delegates from Sri Lanka attended the meeting along with other experts from the region.

OUSL and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU), India were the first two ODL institutions to adopt and integrate EasyNow software into their basket of technologies for content creation. CEMCA held two workshops for academics, technical and media staff at OUSL and YCMOU where participants tried out the software to create interesting content in varied formats. A senior lecturer at OUSL represented Sri Lanka at the Quality Assurance, Quality Assessment and Multimedia Learning meeting in November 2007 and again in June 2008 and was also the Resource Person at the training workshop in the Maldives in June 2008. Three representatives from Sri Lanka attended the workshop on EasyNow in September 2008, organised by CEMCA at the Open University of Malaysia.

CEMCA, in collaboration with UNESCO, has undertaken a project to train ODL professionals in multi-mixed media courseware, using an authoring tool, Metamorphosis. Three distance and open universities in the region, including OUSL participated. 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 January 2008, UNESCO funded a 5-day Metamorphosis course for 19 faculty members from OUSL.

As part of the major pan-Commonwealth initiative, Learning4Content (L4C), Sri Lanka hosted a face-to-face workshop in March/April 2008, attended by 28 participants from Sri Lanka. A further five participated in online workshops.

LEARNING FOR LIVELIHOODS

Learning and skills for livelihoods

COL is working with Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries to develop vocational education for youth. Sri Lanka participated in a regional review workshop in July 2006 and presented draft proposals on livelihood activities for consideration.

A number of other activities have taken place in this area. Sri Lanka hosted the workshop on Capacity Building in ICTs for women using NGO networks in December 2006. In addition, three participants from OUSL 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. In addition, the President & CEO of COL gave the inaugural speech at the newly-formed University of Vocational Technology in Sri Lanka in September 2008.

Rural and peri-urban community development

The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) programme was officially launched in Hambantota, Sri Lanka in April 2007. L3F empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning process, organise themselves to solve problems by marketing their products and food security, improve their living conditions and increase their freedom and independence from government support.

Three universities in Sri Lanka are implementing L3F. The pilot phase of L3F in Sri Lanka has been taking place in Weligatta Village, Hambantota District and involves four key partners:

- Farmers.
- A consortium of learning institutions including OUSL, the University of Colombo, Eastern University, the Export Development Board and the Irrigation Department.
- Vidhatha centres, equipped with computers, internet, and other facilities, proposed for 300 villages. The centres will facilitate the transfer of information from scientific and research institutions to rural farmers.
- Rural Cooperative Bank which provides loans to farmers.

The President & CEO of COL visited Hambantota during the launch and was impressed by the impact of L3F and by the quality and the dedication of the Sri Lanka collaborators.

COL organised its first Collaborative Digital Content Development meeting with L3F and Sri Lanka university partners in Colombo in March/April 2008. The aim was to develop exemplary learning materials that reflect farmers' demands and using multimedia of farmers' choice. WikiEducator was used to encourage collaborative content development. The materials were tested with farming communities, revised and shared during PCF5. The feedback is being further discussed with farming communities to make appropriate changes.

The COL President launched L3F to be implemented by the Eastern University with the farmers association in Battiasaloo. The Government of Sri Lanka has recognised that L3F would complement the President's national rural development initiative Gama Neguma Programme.

National/international community development

COL-sponsored participants from Sri Lanka attended the 4th Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa General Assembly and African Agricultural Science Week, held at Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2007. The main theme of the Assembly was “Innovation to transform agriculture for improved livelihoods and development in Africa”. More than 670 delegates representing stakeholders in agriculture in the public and private sectors and the donor community attended the Assembly, including 30 COL-sponsored participants from 11 Commonwealth countries.

Transnational programmes

Seventeen staff members of the International Labour Organization, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and World Bank based in Sri Lanka were trained in Writing Effectively through a tutor-mediated eLearning COL course. Two staff members from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were trained in the online Operational Data Management Learning Programme (ODMLP) in 2008.

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 them for primary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth, beginning in South Asia. In March 2008, COL, along with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and the Commonwealth Foundation convened a roundtable at the Institute of Social and Economic Change in Bangalore, India, with several institutions from South Asia and attended by a representative from Sri Lanka.

Health, welfare and community development

COL, in partnership with the World Health Organization continues to support the efforts of Sarvodaya to reach all regions of the country with health and governance information. COL upgraded the video editing capacity at Sarvodaya in December 2006. An assessment of the activity was also completed at that time.

Good governance

To develop a framework for Women’s Empowerment at the Local Level (WELL), a two-day meeting was held in India with the support of CEMCA in November 2008 to further explore the key characteristics necessary for successful empowerment activities. A representative from Sri Lanka participated in this meeting.

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 two delegates from the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF), Save the Children and OUSL. In addition, COL sponsored six delegates, including several from the Distance Education Partnership Programme (DEPP) and OUSL.

PCF5, held in London in July 2008, was attended by 23 delegates from Sri Lanka, 11 sponsored by COL. Professor Uma Coomaraswamy, Emeritus Professor of Botany and a former Vice-Chancellor, OUSL, was named Honorary Fellow of COL at the Forum. The Master of Arts in Teacher Education, submitted by the Faculty of Education, OUSL, was one of the recipients of the fiercely contested Awards of Excellence for Distance Education Materials - Category A: *print or other "low-end" media materials, such as audio/video tapes or a combination of these.*

Regional Focal Points meeting

The Regional Focal Points meeting for the Asia and Pacific regions, held in October 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was attended by the COL Focal Point for Sri Lanka.

Other events

A Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) workshop was held in Delhi, India, in November/December 2007. The workshop was designed to enable COL and its partner organisations to effectively monitor and evaluate their collaborative programme activities. Participants are now expected to be able to describe how M&E could be incorporated into the COL model of programme planning, develop an exemplary M&E plan for a programme currently being undertaken by COL and a partner organisation and assist colleagues in their own organisations to develop M&E plans. Three participants from Sri Lanka attended the workshop, from the University of Colombo, DEMP and DEPP.

Under the COL Executive Attachment Programme, Dr. Gamini Kulatunga, Coordinator Rural Research Unit, OUSL visited COL from 2 June to 2 July 2008. He undertook a study of a series of initiatives at COL and methods of evaluation carried out in other parts of the world in the Learning for Livelihoods sector.

COL supported the attendance of Professor Nandani de Silva, Vice-Chancellor of OUSL, at the Association of Asian Open Universities Conference 2007 in October/November in Malaysia.

Resources

Sri Lanka is one of the major countries included in the South Asia node of the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet). ODL professionals from Sri Lanka 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 available on the CEMCA website.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next triennium, COL will continue to support work in the areas of quality assurance, access to higher education, teacher education and eLearning in Sri Lanka. COL looks forward to adding initiatives in the areas of Education and Livelihoods and Health in consultation with COL's many partners in the country.