COL in the Commonwealth
2009–2011 Country Reports
FOR: BANGLADESH

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FOREWORD

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is proud of its strong country focus. While COL strives to achieve synergy in its programme across the whole Commonwealth, it also considers itself accountable for its work in each Member State. COL in the Commonwealth reviews COL’s work over the last two years (2009-2011) country by country.

At the beginning of the 2009-2012 triennium a Country Action Plan was developed to guide COL’s activities in each country and ensure that they were consistent with the national priorities of the government. These reports describe the implementation of these plans. Final versions of these reports will be presented to the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM) at the end of the triennium in 2012.

Ministers were enthusiastic about the previous issue of COL in the Commonwealth that was submitted to 17CCEM in Kuala Lumpur in 2009. At the request of Ministers these reports cover all Member States of the Commonwealth, showing not only what COL has done in the developing countries but also how its work relates to the international development priorities of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The reviews are grouped under four regions: Africa (and the Mediterranean), Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The reports for each group of countries begin with a short account of the regional activities which COL has promoted in 2009-2011.

Member States also 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 2009-2011 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 Karen Speirs, who brought this volume together in an impressively efficient and expeditious manner.

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) operates in all 54 member states, with a particular emphasis on 47 developing countries across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

COL’s Three-Year Plan was developed after consulting widely in the Commonwealth. It focuses specifically on the expressed needs of Member States and the imperative of progressing the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All, within the context of its own mission and mandate.

COL’s vision of “Access to Learning is the Key to Development” encapsulates both strategy and outcome. For example, COL harnesses the potential of open and distance learning (ODL) to bring lifelong learning for farmers (L3F) in an effort to mitigate the challenge of poverty and food security (MDG 1). As more countries achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE), they seek to provide access to secondary education. Since existing institutions are unable to cater to this massive surge, COL initiated the Open Educational Resources for Open Schools project as a response (MDG 2). COL uses community media to promote mother and child health goals (MDGs 4 and 5) in countries such as India, Kenya and Malawi.

COL also focuses on four Education for All goals – access to primary education, gender equality, quality education, and learning and life skills for young people and adults – through teacher training, gender mainstreaming, quality assurance and skills development respectively.

The approach has been to work within the framework of the COL Logic Model 2009-12 but to also be flexible and responsive enough to cater to new and specific needs as they occur.

COL develops Country Action Plans for Member States based on discussions with country Focal Points and partners. These dynamic documents are updated regularly and incorporate requests from countries over the course of the triennium. They will be presented as Country Reports, which document COL’s work in each country, to the Commonwealth Education Ministers, when they meet in Mauritius in 2012.

A number of COL activities span the Commonwealth. This section outlines these pan-Commonwealth initiatives.

EDUCATION

“OER FOR OPEN SCHOOLS”

COL’s “OER for Open Schools” initiative involved working with partners at open schools in six countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia) to create open educational resources (OER) for 20 secondary level courses. The OER will be freely available for download, adaptation
and use, resulting in a substantial contribution to open schooling globally. COL provided extensive training to “Master Teachers” in each country, helping them build their skills in developing OER in both print and eLearning versions. “OER for Open Schools” was funded in part by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

COMMONWEALTH OPEN SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

COL supports the expansion of ODL to meet the growing need for primary and secondary education, as well as lifelong learning. As part of COL’s initiative to establish and strengthen open schools, COL assisted in the establishment of the Commonwealth Open School Association (COMOSA), which involves partners from every region of the Commonwealth who have signed the COMOSA constitution.

The COMOSA website was launched at the first Annual General Meeting in Delhi in November 2010, and COMOSA’s activities for the next three years were identified as Research, Gender and Vocational and Technical Education. A COMOSA workshop on “Research in Open Schooling” was held in Delhi, India in November 2010, and a Research Agenda with ten areas was adopted.

OPEN SCHOOLING

Representatives from more than 20 countries took part in a COL workshop on copyright and open educational resources (OER) in Delhi in November 2009.

The Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open Schools was launched during the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF6) in Kochi, India in November 2010. The Toolkit will be used in all the countries affiliated with COMOSA to develop their institutional Quality Assurance frameworks. Copies of the Toolkits were made available to the delegates at PCF6.

CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS

The UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly Schools initiative is mainstreaming “child first” concepts, principles and models into the pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula in eight Commonwealth countries. COL is working with partner teacher training institutions to develop Child-Friendly Schools learning materials and to provide capacity building workshops.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN MULTIGRADE TEACHING

A Consultative Meeting, the first phase of the Capacity Building Programme on Multigrade Teaching for Teachers in Selected Commonwealth Countries (Belize, Maldives, Namibia, Samoa and Solomon Islands), was held in Honiara, Solomon Islands in June 2010. The capacity building initiative aims to strengthen the current work of the Commonwealth Secretariat and COL on multigrade teaching through the design and implementation of a programme to support teachers, using ODL strategies.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

COL provides leadership in quality in ODL. COL’s quality microsite (www.col.org/quality) provides a single convenient online access point to quality assurance resources in ODL. This includes access to COL’s Quality Assurance Toolkits for open schools, higher education and teacher education.

The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) provides higher education institutions with a “do-it-yourself” approach to institutional quality audits. COL developed COL RIM as a cost-effective approach that focuses on self-assessment and helps institutions improve internal quality assurance, planning and systematic institutional improvement. The COL RIM package, consisting of a conceptual framework and handbook, is freely available from COL.
COMMONWEALTH EXECUTIVE MBA/MPA

COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration programme is designed for part-time study by busy working professionals, in response to the growing demands for post-graduate level education in business and public administration. The CEMBA/MPA programme is offered at partner institutions in Bangladesh, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka.

LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING PROGRAMME

COL’s Graduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting builds professional skills through ODL. The programme is currently offered by three partner institutions: the National Open University of Nigeria, the University of the South Pacific and Athabasca University in Canada.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

VUSSC is a network of 32 small states of the Commonwealth dedicated to expanding access to tertiary education. VUSSC hosted international training and materials development workshops that develop capacity and initiate the development of new courses that are available as OER. Educators and learners can freely access, adapt and re-use VUSSC learning materials.

Originally led by COL, VUSSC is now governed by a Management Committee with representation from all regions of the Commonwealth.

VUSSC members collaborated to develop the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF), a system of accreditation for VUSSC courses that facilitates the movement of courses and learners among states. Through the TQF, VUSSC aims to ensure all open educational resources (OER) created for VUSSCS can be adapted into recognised courses that students can take for credit through educational institutions in small states. The TQF was formally launched in Namibia in May 2010.

VUSSC’s learning portal, launched in 2011, includes an online Learning Management System for learners and educators to access and contribute to VUSSC courses, as well as free online materials and tips for learning online.

LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS

COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme helps rural communities engage in appropriate technology-based open and distance education to improve their livelihoods. While governments face challenges in funding adequate agricultural extension, globalisation is creating increasing competition for poor rural farmers.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers addresses these issues by enabling vulnerable rural women and their families to embrace learning. The programme brings together four key partners: farmers, learning institutions, mobile phone and ICT companies and banks. As farmers gain relevant knowledge from learning institutions via mobile phones and ICT kiosks, banks provide loans to them with greater assurance.

Introduced in southern India in 2004, Lifelong Learning for Farmers has been adapted and introduced in Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Uganda.
FLEXIBLE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

COL is helping technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in Africa expand flexible and blended delivery approaches. By increasing access to quality skills development for young people and adults, COL’s Flexible Skills Development (FSD) programme aims to alleviate poverty. This programme actively targets course development for people working in the informal economy. Through online training, workshops and an online Community Learning Network, COL is helping 11 key TVET institutions in six countries in strengthening capacity to develop new curriculum content to realise the benefits of educational media and technology.

COL is also working with TVET training institutions in the Pacific to develop training courses in basic trades to help meet the skills needs of small island states. COL has worked with partners in the region to develop courses in Small Business, Small Engine Maintenance, Tourism as a Business, Working with Timber and Working with Concrete, as well as Literacy for Basic Trades, which assists students with varying levels of literacy.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

COL’s Healthy Communities initiative brings together groups working at the local level – media, health agencies, NGOs and community groups – to address health and development challenges through participatory learning programmes. While programmes vary according to local needs, COL’s approach remains consistent:

- Bring together local partners: most often community groups identify health information needs, health agencies provide content and community radio stations broadcast the learning programmes.
- Build capacity: this usually involves radio production skills, which expands the pool of community members who are actively engaged in the programme.
- Provide ongoing support: as programmes mature and partners change, COL will help community learning programmes adjust and continue to grow.

Recent initiatives span the Commonwealth, responding to local health needs.

“TAKING OER BEYOND THE OER COMMUNITY”

“Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity” is a COL/UNESCO joint initiative that promoted the wider use of OER by expanding understanding of OER by educational decision makers and quality assurance experts. The programme involved capacity building workshops in all regions of the Commonwealth, online discussion forums and new OER publications.

COMMONWEALTH COMPUTER NAVIGATORS CERTIFICATE

The Commonwealth Computer Navigators Certificate (CCNC) is an information and communication technology (ICT) literacy course based on the International Computer Driver’s Licence (ICDL) using Open Office on either a Linux or Windows Platform. The high quality training materials are available from COL free of cost.

GENDER

Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme that underpins in all COL’s initiatives. The advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to COL’s agenda of learning for development.
COL looks beyond the arithmetical target of gender parity (equal numbers of males and females in school) to the more challenging goal of gender equality (equality of outcomes). COL’s gender work includes providing gender resources, capacity building in ICT for women and gender research.

**E-LEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

COL customises eLearning solutions to meet the capacity enhancement needs of international organisations around the world. COL develops and delivers effective training solutions in partnership with the UN and other international agencies. This contract work is performed on a fee-for-service basis with full cost recovery. Course subject matter ranges from effective communication and report writing to operational data management and debt management.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING**

COL’s biennial Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF) is one of the world’s leading conferences on learning and global development. It brings together people representing educational institutions, governments and development agencies to explore issues related to ODL and development. More than 600 delegates from 70 countries attended PCF6 in Kerala, India in 2010. COL’s Excellence in Distance Education Awards, honouring individual and institutions contributions to ODL, are presented at PCF.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH PARTNERSHIPS**

COL’s work is supported by networks of advisors across the Commonwealth:

- **Focal Points**: individuals nominated by the Minister of Education in each country to act as COL’s primary contact.
- **Honorary Advisors**: eminent ODL professionals from across the Commonwealth are a valuable resource for consultations about COL’s future plans and for Member States seeking advice on ODL.
- **UNESCO-COL Chairs**: distinguished serving academics who serve in an honorary capacity, complementing the political and administrative role of the Focal Points and Honorary Advisors.

**COL KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES**

COL’s extensive resources, freely available through its website, include:

- **Connections** newsletter: providing news, commentary and insight about COL’s work and the broader field of ODL and development ([www.col.org/connections](http://www.col.org/connections))
- **Blog**: timely news and comment from COL ([www.col.org/blog](http://www.col.org/blog))
- **Publications**: research, books, toolkits and other publications commissioned by COL ([www.col.org/publications](http://www.col.org/publications))
- **Knowledge Finder**: an index of documents about ODL and international development from quality-assessed external sources ([www.col.org/kf](http://www.col.org/kf))
- **Country information**: This online database provides access to information related to ODL from all Commonwealth countries ([www.col.org/CountryInfo](http://www.col.org/CountryInfo))
- **Videos**: reports from events and insight into COL’s work ([www.col.org/videos](http://www.col.org/videos))
- Course materials, gender microsite, quality assurance microsite, speeches and other resources (www.col.org/resources)

- Governance and financial information: including Board minutes, financial statements and the President’s quarterly reports to the Board (www.col.org/GovInfo)
ASIA

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

BACKGROUND

The Asian Commonwealth is comprised of eight countries: three in Southeast Asia and five in South Asia. Three of them (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) are among the most highly populated countries in the world.

Open and distance learning (ODL) has proliferated in Asia in recent years. Several of COL’s most important partners are located in the region, promoting south-south collaboration and harnessing the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) to expand learning for development.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

CEMCA is COL’s regional agency in Asia. Based in New Delhi, India, CEMCA plans and implements activities in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Singapore and Sri Lanka. CEMCA develops regional expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technologies (ICT) in the Asian region and organises capacity building to respond to identified needs. It is COL’s only unit outside of its Vancouver, Canada headquarters.

Here are some recent regional activities facilitated by COL and CEMCA in Asia. Specific activities in each country are outlined in the individual Country Reports that follow.

OPEN SCHOOLING

COL held a workshop on Copyright and open educational resources (OER) in Delhi in November, 2009. Representatives from 10 open schools and education agencies in India attended the workshop, along with participants from more than 20 countries.

A Monitoring and Evaluation workshop was held for Commonwealth Open Schools Association (COMOSA) members in the Asian Region in Nainital in June 2010.

COL initiated and implemented a three-day awareness and training workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation in August 2010 at the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). Twenty-eight participants from 12 countries attended the workshop, the first of its kind to be held amongst open schools.

Higher Education

COL’s Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programme, which provides professional development for working adults, is offered by several open universities in Asia including:

- Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan
- Bangladesh Open University
• Open University of Sri Lanka
• Wawasan Open University (Malaysia)

COL hosted a case method workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh in September/October 2009 for selected faculty members of the CEMBA/MPA to refresh and upgrade their knowledge and skills. Twenty-four people participated in the workshop.

The Academic Board and the Executive Governing Board of CEMBA/MPA both met in August 2010 in Penang, Malaysia.

CEMCA supported a session on Digital Library Quality at the 3rd International Conference on Digital Libraries in Delhi, India in February 2010. CEMCA and one of the Core Group members presented a lead paper on quality assurance in multimedia learning materials (QAMLM) guidelines. The session was attended by about 100 participants and copies of QAMLM guidelines were distributed to them. CEMCA sponsored delegates from India and Pakistan to the conference.

CEMCA conducted a multimedia content development workshop for 40 participants at the Bangladesh Open University from February 5-9, 2011. Participants were trained through all technical aspects of content creation from installing the necessary software to adding multi-media supports to content.

**Integrating eLearning**

In association with the Asian Media Information and Communication (AMIC) Centre Singapore, CEMCA supported the participation of experts from Commonwealth Asian countries in July 2010 at New Delhi.

CEMCA organised the post-conference workshop on Community Media and Convergent Media in association with AMIC Singapore and ABU Malaysia in New Delhi in February 2010. Representatives from Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka were sponsored by CEMCA.

**Healthy Communities**

COL and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) conducted a workshop for community radio and education and development organisations on the sidelines of the AMARC Asia-Pacific Conference in Bangalore, India in February 2010. Participants shared, discussed and applied innovative approaches to developing educational content and programmes. They also learned new awareness of community radio in Asia Pacific and its potential contributions to local development, education, governance, knowledge and skills in using community media as part of disaster management, climate change mitigation, food security, and advocacy for gender equity.

The Bangalore Declaration was passed by the AMARC Asia Pacific general assembly. It is a collective statement of participants’ beliefs and commitments including the use of community radio as a tool for non-formal education and food security.

**REGIONAL PRESENCE**

COL maintains strong relationships with many stakeholders in the Asia, including member governments, partner institutions, donors and individuals. COL’s Honorary Advisors, a network of eminent ODL professionals, includes two representatives from Asia. The region is also represented by a COL Chair, Professor Chandra Gunawardene of the Open University of Sri Lanka, and a network of individuals, selected by member Governments, who liaise directly with COL as Focal Points. COL creates specific country action plans and country reports to ensure the region’s needs are addressed.
REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS MEETING

The COL Regional Focal Points Meeting (Asia) took place in Penang, Malaysia in September 2011. The meeting is held once every three years. Focal Points share information about the status of ODL in their countries, receive the mid-term report of what COL has done in each country, and identify education and training priorities that COL can support in the next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015.

REGIONAL BROCHURES

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

COL Focal Point: r. Md. Nazrul Islam, Office of the Prime Minister (Current)
              r. M. Haque (2006-2007)

BACKGROUND

Bangladesh has a largely rural population of about 162 million. COL has worked with Bangladesh over the years on numerous projects aimed at advancing open and distance learning in the country. The Bangladesh Government has declared “Digital Bangladesh by 2021”, which includes all secondary education institutions being online by 2013 and primary education by 2015. Bangladesh is a regular contributor to COL’s budget and participates in regional activities, many of them led by COL’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).

SUMMARY

Professor Dr. R.I.M. Aminur Rashid, Vice Chancellor of the Bangladesh Open University, is a member of the CEMCA Advisory Council.

A number of COL’s activities in Bangladesh stem from the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with Rupantar in July 2010 to establish a formal basis of cooperation to promote culturally appropriate development, sustainable livelihoods, healthy communities, community-based non-formal education and learning. COL and Rupantar have agreed jointly to explore and co-ordinate activities of mutual interest, including developing workable models and scale-up strategies for seeking additional collaborators and funding that will be implemented in conformity with the regulations and policies of both parties.

EDUCATION

Open Schooling

As part of COL’s initiative to establish and strengthen open schools, COL assisted in the establishment of the Commonwealth Open School Association (COMOSA). The inaugural meeting of COMOSA was held in Delhi in November 2009, and the COMOSA Constitution was signed by 22 partners. Professor Dr. Qazi Mohd. Galib Ahsan of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) was invited to the inaugural meeting.

COMOSA held its first Annual General Meeting in Delhi in November 2010. The COMOSA website at http://comosa.org/wordpress/ was launched. COMOSA’s activities for the next three years would include Research, Gender and Vocational and Technical Education. Professor R.I.M. Aminur Rashid of BOU attended the AGM.
A COMOSA workshop on “Research in Open Schooling” was held in Delhi, India in November 2010. A Research Agenda with 10 areas was adopted and four (Curriculum and Course Development, Integration of the Vocational Education with the academic/general education, Gender and Online Learning) were prioritised for the next two years. Prof. R.I.M. Aminur Rashid of BOU attended the workshop.

The Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open Schools was launched during the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF6) in Kochi, India in November 2010. The Toolkit will be used in all the countries affiliated to COMOSA to develop their institutional Quality Assurance frameworks.

BOU is participating in three open schooling research studies:

- Online Learning Success Variations/Factors
- Integrating Vocational and Academic Education
- Gender Audit on Open Schooling.

COL sponsored a Gender-Sensitive Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy for Open Schooling Workshop in Maputo, Mozambique in July 2011. One of the purposes of the workshop was to promote understanding and discussion around the role of gender and ICT in Open Schools. Meherun Nesa of BOU attended the workshop.

A Monitoring and Evaluation workshop was held for COMOSA members in the Asian Region in Nainital, India in June 2010. Professor Dr. Md. S. Alam and Professor Rafiqul I.M.A. Rashid of BOU attended the workshop.

Md. Anwarul Islam of Bangladesh attended a workshop on Integrating, Vocational and General or Academic Education in Botswana in July 2011.

Higher Education

An international roundtable to showcase COL’s Quality Assurance toolkits was held in Colombo in August 2010. About 30 representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and several non-Commonwealth countries attended the roundtable, including Professor Dr. Md. S. Alam of BOU.

The Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programme is offered by the Bangladesh Open University. A case method workshop was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in September-October 2009 for selected faculty members of the CEMBA/MPA to refresh and upgrade their knowledge and skills. Twenty-four participants attended including representatives of BOU, the University of Dhaka, the University of Chittagong, the Islamic University and Chittagong University.

The Academic Board (AB) and the Executive Governing Board (EGB) of CEMBA/MPA both met in August 2010 in Penang, Malaysia. Professor Dr. A.T.M. Tofazzel Hossain and Professor Rafiqul I.A.M. Rashid of BOU attended the AB and EGB meetings respectively. Professor Hossain is a member of the Academic Board and Professor Dr. R.I.M. Aminur of BOU is a member of the Executive Governing Board for 2010-2012.


CEMCA conducted a multi-media content development workshop for 33 participants from Bangladesh and eight from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries at Bangladesh Open University in February 2011.
LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

Skills Development

Rupantar, Bangladesh is the key partner (nodal agency) that is developing capacity in 15 agencies that are setting up community radio stations.

A four-day workshop was held in Khulna, Bangladesh in December 2009 in partnership with Rupantar. Swapan Guha, CEO Rupantar; Rafiql Islam Khokan, Director of Rupantar; Liaqat Ali, Editor and Publisher of Pubanchal newspaper; Pallabi Dey, CCD Rajshahi; Saifuddin Sobuj, Rupantar; Sabrina Sharmin, RDRS, Rangpur and 16 participants from civil society organisations who have been granted an initial letter of intent for grant of community radio attended the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to develop Rupantar as a key facilitator for community radio stations (CRS) in Bangladesh and to encourage potential CRS owners to develop a content bank in preparation for launching their CRS.

CEMCA co-sponsored a four-day workshop in September 2010 at the Jadavpur University Community Radio Station (JUCR), Kolkata for 14 participants from Bangladesh. They included partners from NGOs and civil society organisations who are in the process of setting up community radio stations. The workshop gave firsthand exposure to practical aspects like studio design, location and orientation of antennae. Participants who obtained clearance for licences are expected to set up their CRS by 2011.

Healthy Communities

COL and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) conducted a workshop for community radio and education and development organisations on the side lines of the AMARC Asia-Pacific Conference (20-23 February 2010, Bangalore, India). Participants shared, discussed and applied innovative approaches to developing educational content and programmes. They also learned new awareness of community radio in Asia-Pacific and its potential contributions to local development, education, governance, knowledge and skills in using community media as part of disaster management, climate change mitigation, food security and advocacy for gender equity.

The Bangalore Declaration was passed by the AMARC Asia-Pacific general assembly at the Conference. It is a collective statement of participants’ beliefs and commitments, including the use of community radio as a tool for non-formal education and food security. COL sponsored Mr. Rafiql Islam Khokan of Rupantar to the workshop and conference.

A training course on Theatre for Community Development was conducted in March 2011 at Rupantar Conference Hall, Khulna. Fourteen executive directors, directors and other decision makers attended on the first day. Twenty-nine participants from 15 organisations participated in the second phase over seven days.

COL facilitated a four-day workshop in programme development skills in December 2010. The workshop was divided in two parts: training of four Rupantar facilitators and training of groups from four communities (Bagerhat, Barguna, Chapainawbguni and Kurigram) in community learning programme development skills, led by the Rupantar facilitators. A guidebook based on the workshop process was produced and distributed to the participants after the workshop. The guidebook will be the basis for the Community Learning Programme toolkit in Bangladesh.

A total of 32 persons, eight from each of the four participating organisations are working to develop community learning programmes on health from four districts: Kurigram, Barguna, Chapainawbguni and Bagerhat. The main theme of the community learning programmes is maternal healthcare. The sub-theme for the first 13 episodes is nutrition for pregnant women. One of the four participating organisations, the Agriculture Information Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, is also developing a community learning programme on Boro (a common paddy) rice farming in saline areas in Bangladesh.
Rupantar participated in the Healthy Community partners’ workshop to review and plan COL’s programming, held immediately prior to the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Opening Learning (PCF6) in Kochi in November 2011, and also participated in the COL-UNESCO Seminar, Learning from Community Media, as well as PCF6’s Community Development theme.

CEMCA is working with the Development Research Network (D.Net) in Bangladesh to help local organisations use open and distance learning (ODL) technologies for health. A four-day introductory workshop on Learning4Content-WikiEducator and CEMCA’s EasyNow platform, organised by D.Net with technical and financial support from CEMCA, was held in Dhaka in December 2009. Fourteen participants were trained in the use of WikiEducator and EasyNow to create content on local health practices and indigenous knowledge. (www.wikieducator.org/L4C_Dhaka)

CEMCA conducted a multimedia content development workshop on health-related issues using indigenous knowledge and practices using Easy Now in December 2010 in Dhaka. Participants created a digital resource on medicinal herbs. http://www.ik.org.bd/?page_id=42

A workshop on Using Internet to Deliver Audio Content was held in June 2011 at Caritas Development Institute, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Representatives from the government, community groups and media attended the workshop.

**Integrating eLearning**

COL and UNESCO hosted two open educational resources (OER) capacity building workshops. These workshops form part of a series organised within a COL-UNESCO initiative, “Taking OER beyond the OER community: Policy and Capacity”. The first workshop was for Heads of Commonwealth Universities on 28 April 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa. The intent of the workshop was to alert university leaders to the potential of OER to facilitate the expansion of quality higher education and to receive feedback from them on policy issues relating to the use of OER in universities. Rafiqul Rashid of BOU attended the workshop.

CEMCA, in collaboration with Wawasan Open University, conducted a four-day “Train the Trainers” workshop on Advanced EasyNow in Penang, Malaysia in June 2010. Farha Sharmin and Naimul Haque Joarder of D.Net, Bangladesh attended the workshop.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

The Sixth Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF6), jointly organised by IGNOU, India and the Commonwealth of Learning, was held in Kochi, India from 24-28 November 2010. The theme of the Forum was “Access and Success in Learning: Global Development Perspectives” with four sub-themes, namely: Social Justice, Community Development, Skills Development and Formal Education. COL organised 18 pre-conference meetings and workshops.

Over 600 delegates from more than 50 countries attended PCF6. COL sponsored over 250 delegates to the Forum including Dr. Zobaido Akhter, Md. Anwarul Islam, Sharker Md. Numan, Rafiqul Islam Rashid and Sabina Yeasmin of BOU; Abu Nasar Md. A. Rahman of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University; Rezaul Haque and Rafiqul Islam Khokan of Rupantar.

Professor Aminul Islam of Bangladesh was awarded the Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning.

Md. Nazrul Islam, Bangladesh’s Focal Point for COL, attended the COL Regional Focal Points Meeting (Asia) in Penang, Malaysia in September 2011. The meeting is held once every three years and provides an opportunity for the Focal Points to share information about the status of ODL in their countries, receive the mid-term report of what COL has done in each country and identify education and training priorities that COL can support in the next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015.
eLearning for International Organisations

COL customises eLearning solutions to meet the capacity enhancement needs of international organisations around the world.

- Three learners from the World Health Organization signed up for the July-November course on Writing Effectively.
- Two learners from UNHCR signed up for the October 2009-March 2010 course on Writing Effectively.
- One learner from the World Bank signed up for the August-December course on Report Writing.
- Seven learners from the International Labour Organization signed up for the April-August 2010 course on Writing Effectively.
- One learner from the World Bank signed up for the August-December 2010 course on Report Writing Distance Learning.
- Two learners from the World Bank signed up for the March-June 2011 course on Report Writing.

LOOKING FORWARD

Bangladesh has identified key priority areas that COL can support in its next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015:

- Develop teachers’ capacity to create subject-based content for use in a multimedia classroom.
- Bring general education under the ODL umbrella.
- Content development under PPP? model.
- Awareness campaign of ICT in education.
- Centralised multimedia content development and online broadcasting.
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).