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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 (MDG 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 VUSSSC 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)
- Blog: timely news and comment from COL (www.col.org/blog)
- Publications: research, books, toolkits and other publications commissioned by COL (www.col.org/publications)
- Knowledge Finder: an index of documents about ODL and international development from quality-assessed external sources (www.col.org/kf)
- Country information: This online database provides access to information related to ODL from all Commonwealth countries (www.col.org/CountryInfo)
- Videos: reports from events and insight into COL’s work (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)
CARIBBEAN

Antigua & Barbuda | The Bahamas | Barbados | Belize | Dominica | Grenada | Guyana | Jamaica
St. Kitts & Nevis | St. Lucia | St. Vincent & the Grenadines | Trinidad & Tobago
BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth Caribbean consists of 12 small states, of which 10 are island nations. Belize and Guyana, located in Central and South America respectively, are the exceptions. While Jamaica has a population of 2.7 million and Trinidad & Tobago has 1.4 million, the other countries all have a population of less than one million.

While the Caribbean nations are distinct in many ways, they share a number of challenges. There is a huge unmet need for tertiary qualifications. Teacher training is required, particularly related to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. Support is required for the expansion of open schooling. New approaches are required for technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

COL works closely with all Commonwealth Caribbean nations through dozens of initiatives that help expand access to quality education and training using distance education and appropriate technologies. Here are some recent regional activities; specific activities in each country are outlined in the individual Country Reports that follow.

INTEGRATING E-LEARNING

Educators across the Caribbean are rapidly developing their skills and knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT), with the support of COL.

In October 2010, COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Microsoft signed a collaboration agreement to support the implementation of ICT in Education in the Caribbean. Microsoft has agreed to offer to Caribbean countries (including Trinidad & Tobago) participating in the “Partners in Learning” programme discounted software licences on Microsoft products. Learners will be able to access free e-mail addresses through Microsoft’s Live@edu, a suite of online hosted services designed for and offered to educational institutions at no cost to the institution. The Focal Points attended the initiative launch in March 2011 at the COL Regional Focal Points Meeting (Caribbean) in Trinidad & Tobago.

An ICT in Education Survey is taking place in the Caribbean. The final survey report consisting of eight country reports and a final summary report with regional trends will be published in 2011.

COL facilitated an eGovernment and eBusiness Strategy Development Workshop for the Caribbean in Antigua and Barbuda in March 2011. The workshop was organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in partnership with the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD). Representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, the CARICAD and the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunications Operators attended the workshop.
**REGIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

COL was one of the sponsors of the Regional Higher Education Conference which was held in St. Lucia from 22-24 March 2010. Over 50 delegates from the region had the opportunity to deliberate on the higher education provision in the Eastern Caribbean States.

**REGIONAL PRESENCE**

COL maintains strong relationships with many stakeholders in the Caribbean, including member governments, partner institutions, donors and individuals. COL’s Honorary Advisors, a network of eminent ODL professionals, includes a representative from the Caribbean. The region is also represented by a UNESCO-COL Chair 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 (Caribbean), organised by COL and co-hosted by the Trinidad & Tobago Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education on 28-30 March 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 www1.col.org/regional.
BARTABADOS

COL Focal Point:  Mr. Laurie King, Ministry of Education & HR Development (Current)
                Dr. Idamay Denny (2006-2010)

Hon. COL Advisor:  Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald, The University of the West Indies

BACKGROUND

Barbados is a small state of the Commonwealth and the most eastern of the Caribbean islands. It has contributed to COL’s budget since 2005 and takes an active role in COL’s regional activities.

SUMMARY

Barbados benefits from its involvement in several key COL programmes including the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), the Microsoft “Partners in Learning” initiative and support for open schooling. Barbados participates in regional training workshops and attended the COL Regional Focal Points meeting in March 2011.

EDUCATION

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Barbados is one of 32 small states actively participating in VUSSC. The main objectives of VUSSC are to:

- develop a collaborative network of Commonwealth small states,
- develop capacity in the use of information and communication technology (ICT),
- create and share learning materials at the post-secondary level, and
- establish a transnational qualifications framework that would enable the transfer of credits and qualifications.

VUSSC has launched its own website (www.vussc.org), which includes online courses in subjects such as disaster management, entrepreneurship, life skills and tourism. Developed by educators from small states of the Commonwealth, the courses are freely available to anyone for adaptation and use.

Marcia Marville of Barbados attended the 8th VUSSC training and materials development workshop which was held in Male, Maldives in March 2010 and hosted by the Centre for Open Learning, Maldives. The
participants developed a diploma programme on Sustainable Agriculture for Small States for learners who want to start their own business and those who want to pursue a career in agriculture extension services.

COL and the Open University Malaysia sponsored the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) Management Committee Meeting and TQF General Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in July 2010. Valda V. Alleyne of the Barbados Accreditation Council (BAC) attended the meeting.

Open Schooling

At the request of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), COL seeks to engage a consultant to work with CXC to conduct a Needs Analysis of the potential for open and distance learning (ODL) in the region. This Needs Analysis will be presented to Ministries of Education and other key stakeholders for endorsement to mobilise the support and resources to establish an open school for secondary education in the region.

COL and CXC signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2010 to identify possible avenues for collaboration. The purpose is to establish a formal basis of cooperation to develop an open and distance learning platform for open schooling for students and for distance learning for the training of teachers in subject specialisations for the teaching of CXC programmes.

Higher Education

COL presented the COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) for effective institutional quality audits to staff of the Barbados Accreditation Council and UWI Open Campus in March 2010. UWI Open Campus has indicated interest in using COL-RIM.

LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

Integrated eLearning

A series of open educational resources (OER) capacity building workshops took place as part of the UNESCO-COL initiative, “Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity”. Valda Alleyne of BAC attended the second workshop in Namibia in May 2010.

On 18 October 2010, COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Microsoft signed a collaboration agreement to support the implementation of ICT in education in the Caribbean. Microsoft has agreed to offer to Caribbean countries (including Barbados) participating in the “Partners in Learning” programme discounted software licences on Microsoft products. Learners will be able to access free e-mail addresses through Microsoft’s Live@edu, a suite of online hosted services designed for and offered to educational institutions at no cost to the institution. Laurie King attended the initiative launch in March 2011 at the COL Regional Focal Points Meeting (Caribbean) in Trinidad & Tobago.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Laurie King, COL Focal Point for Barbados, attended the COL Regional Focal Points Meeting (Caribbean) in Trinidad & Tobago in March 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.

- One learner from WHO in Barbados is taking part in the July-November 2011 course on Writing Effectively.
- Three learners from the Central Bank/Ministry of Finance in Barbados signed up for the July-September 2011 eLearning course on the Commonwealth Secretariat-Debt Record Management System (CSDRMS).

**LOOKING FORWARD**

Barbados has identified five priority areas that COL can support in its next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015. This includes developing and promoting a research culture among teachers and students using generic IT solutions to encourage the development of indigenous materials for use in education, developing course materials that could be suitably adapted for the use of students with special needs, and streamlining and standardising courses to enhance relevance and allow for programme accreditation. Another priority area is developing a renewable cadre of skilled specialists in technology and the corresponding redressing of the digital divide through infrastructural development. The final priority is establishing strategic alliances with other institutions and sectors both locally and internationally for the purposes of information/resource sharing, collaborative course development and delivery, articulation and credit transfer.
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).