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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 (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 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)
AFRICA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Botswana | Cameroon | Cyprus (Mediterranean) | The Gambia | Ghana | Kenya | Lesotho | Malawi | Malta (Mediterranean) | Mauritius | Mozambique | Namibia | Nigeria | Rwanda | Seychelles | Sierra Leone | South Africa | Swaziland | Tanzania | Uganda | Zambia
REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth of Learning works with partners in all 21 Commonwealth nations in the Africa/Mediterranean region. While significant progress has been made in this region in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All, major challenges remain. COL is applying its expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technology (ICT) to help advanced learning for development in Africa.

COL works closely with all Commonwealth Africa nations through dozens of initiatives that help expand access to quality education and training using distance education and appropriate technologies.

COL’s work is supported by two regional co-operation agencies in Africa:

- The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), located at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL), is a regional ODL centre for Southern Africa.

- The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), located at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), is a regional ODL centre for West Africa.

Here are some recent regional activities; specific activities in each country are outlined in the individual Country Reports that follow.

EDUCATION

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Eight African countries are members of VUSSC, a collaborative network of 32 small states that is working to develop and share learning materials at the post-secondary level. Mauritius and Seychelles have hosted VUSSC international training and materials development workshops.

The VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) Procedures and Guideline document was officially launched on 28 April 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa and 3 May 2010 in Windhoek, Namibia. The TQF can be downloaded from the VUSSC website.

Open Schooling

COL sponsored a workshop hosted by the National Institute of Distance Education in Maputo, Mozambique in March 2010 to review the components of the Quality Assurance toolkits for open schools. Ten participants from seven countries attended the workshop.
COL initiated and implemented a three-day awareness and training workshop on Monitoring and Evaluation in August at the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). Twenty-eight participants from 12 countries attended the workshop.

Between July and December 2010, SADC-CDE facilitated ODL Policy Sensitisation and Policy Formulation training workshops in Botswana, Mauritius and Swaziland.

SADC-CDE held a five-day research and publications capacity building workshop in Botswana in March 2010. During this period, SADC-CDE enrolled eight faculty members from five SADC countries with the University of Pretoria for the Certificate in Gender.

The SADC-CDE Gender Winter School was held in Pretoria, South Africa in June 2011. Participants from Botswana, Lesotho and Tanzania attended the training.

COL co-facilitated a two-day workshop in Maputo, Mozambique in March 2010 to train educators to draft strategic plans for integrating multimedia in their open schools. The workshop was the first step in supporting Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia to develop digital content over a two-year period.

**Teacher Education**

The Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) and COL signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding in October 2009 to focus on the training of head teachers and principals of schools in The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone and The Gambia. The COL-MUN Workshop for the Development of Materials for the Training of Head Teachers and School Principals was held in Ghana from March 29-April 1, 2010. A training manual for head teachers and principals in the four countries was developed.

Four African nations (The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) are taking part in the UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) project. The objectives are to integrate the CFS model into pre-service and in-service teacher training curricula, training of teachers and other education personnel on CFS at the universities and teacher training institutions, and to strengthen the role of Teacher Resource Centres. This has involved intensive training of “Master Teachers” and numerous in-country workshops.

The annual Partner Advisory Council Meeting of the Teacher Education for Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) consortium was held in Cape Coast in August 2009. The participants reviewed the programmes made in the implementation of TESSA and the Work Plan for 2010 was adopted.

**Higher Education**

COL is working with partners across Africa to improve access to quality higher education.

The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) for effective institutional quality audits has been introduced to educators from 11 African nations.

COL’s Commonwealth Executive Masters of Business Administration (CEMBA) and Masters of Public Administration (CEMPA), which offers working professionals the opportunity to study part-time through ODL, is available through Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The National Open University of Nigeria offers COL’s Graduate Diploma in Legislative drafting, which builds capacity in planning and writing laws and policies.
LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

Skills Development

COL sponsored delegates from Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia to the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) conference on Entrepreneurial Polytechnic which was held in Abuja, Nigeria in April 2010.

COL and UNESCO co-hosted a one-day ICT in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) pre-conference workshop at the eLearning Africa Conference in Zambia in May 2010. COL sponsored several TVET educators to the eLearning Africa Conference.

In partnership with CAPA, COL facilitated a workshop for institutional heads from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in flexible approaches to TVET in June 2010. The workshop was hosted by the Mombasa Technical Training Institute (MMTI). Twenty representatives from technical training institutes attended the workshop.

COL is working with 11 TVET training institutes in Africa as “focal institutions” for flexible development activities. Senior staff members are participating in the online courses for policy makers, institutional managers and managers.

COL engaged Nicholas Kimolo of Futuristic Ltd. Kenya to carry out an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure Assessment on the 10 focal institutions to obtain a better understanding of their short-term and medium-term ICT plans and strategies. The report was submitted in March 2011.

COL co-facilitated a Flexible Skills Development partners meeting in May 2011 in Kampala, Uganda with Principals and Champions of nine key institutions from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia. The participants carried out a partners’ evaluation of activities, outputs and outcomes of mutual collaboration over the past year.

Integrating eLearning

A series of open educational resources (OER) capacity building workshops took place as part of the COL-UNESCO initiative, “Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity”. Three of the workshops were held in Africa: in Cape Town, South Africa in April 2010, in Namibia in May 2010 and in Tanzania in May 2011.

In April 2010, COL, in collaboration with SchoolNet SA, Intel SA and Microsoft SA, hosted a seminar in Cape Town for Deans/Heads of Education from SADC countries on the integration of ICT in teacher pre-service education. It was attended by four representatives from the Department of Education (basic and higher); 18 deans/representatives from South African higher education institutions; 10 from SADC institutions and 14 representing national and international organisations related to the use of ICT in education. Two follow-up workshops were held by SchoolNet SA and Microsoft in August and October 2010.

Healthy Communities

Two 10-week online training courses in scriptwriting skills were supported by COL and developed and run by Farm Radio International in 2009 and 2010. More than 200 broadcasters and rural health and agricultural development workers from across Sub-Saharan Africa completed one of the two courses and submitted a script to the associated competition, which was sponsored by COL, UNESCO, FAO, CTA and other agencies.
The first course focused on agricultural innovation. Eighty-two scripts were received for the African-Wide Scriptwriting Competition on Smallholder Farmer Innovation. The second course was on Healthy Communities. A second script writing competition was held where 128 entries were received. The winning scripts from both competitions were published in French and English and distributed by Farm Radio International to approximately 350 radio and rural development organisations across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Media and Training Centre for Health (MTC) hosted COL’s Healthy Communities Partners’ Workshop in Cape Town in September 2011. Twelve national and regional partner groups from across the Commonwealth participated, developing knowledge and skills concerning the use of ODL for non-formal learning about health and related community development.

COL hosted an international training-of-trainers workshop in Vancouver, Canada in September/October 2009. Key national and regional partners from different Commonwealth regions advanced the three-year plan for COL’s Healthy Communities initiative (also linking it to UNESCO’s work in this area in the upcoming programme biennium, 2010-2011). Partners’ knowledge and skills in developing non-formal ODL programming were increased through a “trainers train themselves” approach. Various approaches were reviewed and analysed, e.g. participatory content creation (India), use of drama (Jamaica, Malawi) and community ODL programmes (Jamaica, Tanzania). Strategies and tools were reviewed and plans made concerning the International Peer Group, Community Media Space on WikiEducator, PCF6.

Learning for Farmers

COL supported a workshop for African partners on integrating linkages between community banks and commercial banks in L3F in India in June 2010. The participants were trained by illiterate and semi-literate women involved in community banking and by officers of banks and financial institutions. They also visited sites and saw the actual community banking in operation and enterprises developed through community banking. Participants identified strategies for similar linkages in their own countries.

REGIONAL PRESENCE

COL maintains strong relationships with many stakeholders in Africa, including member governments, partner institutions, donors and individuals. COL’s Honorary Advisors, a network of eminent ODL professionals, includes two representatives from Africa: Professor Veronica McKay, CEO of Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign in South Africa and Professor Tolly S.A. Mbwette, Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania.

The region is also represented by two COL Chairs (Professor Mbwette and Professor Landson Mhango of Mzuzu University in Malawi) 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 (Africa and the Mediterranean) was held in Mauritius from May 19-21, 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.
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 www.col.org/regional.
LESOTHO

COL Focal Point: Dr. H.M. Lephotso, Institute of Extra-Mural Studies (IEMS), National University of Lesotho (Current)
Dr. Mokopane Moshabesha (2007-2010 [deceased])

BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth with a largely rural population of about two million, Lesotho faces distinct challenges in economic development and education. The country has become a strong COL partner and has contributed to COL’s budget since 2006.

SUMMARY


Sir John Daniel attended the National Day Celebrations in Lesotho on 11 March 2011 and had lunch with His Majesty King Letsie III, The Rt. Honourable Prime Minister and First Lady, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Health and Social Welfare and other Ministers.

Lesotho is an active participant in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and hosted a three-week training and materials development workshop in March 2011. Lesotho is also a member of COMOSA, and COL is working in open schooling, teacher education and skills development with partners in the country.

EDUCATION

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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,
- 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.
Lesotho is one of 32 small states of the Commonwealth who are actively participating in the VUSSC initiative.

The 7th VUSSC training and materials development workshop on Transport and Logistics focusing on Stevedoring was held in Apia, Samoa in November/December 2009. The workshop helped to build the capacity of workshop participants in ICT and content development using open and distance learning (ODL). Letsie Mohatonyane and Dr. Mamolete Mohapi of the National University of Lesotho attended the workshop.

The 8th VUSSC training and materials development workshop was held in Male, Maldives in March 2010, hosted by the Centre for Open Learning, Maldives. The participants developed a diploma programme on Sustainable Agriculture for Small States. The programme is aimed at learners who want to start their own business and those who want to pursue a career in agriculture extension services. Motsoene S. Molapo of the National University of Lesotho, Faculty of Agriculture attended the workshop.

The 9th VUSSC International Training in Materials Development Workshop for the development of Bachelor Degree in Business Entrepreneurship was held in Lesotho in March 7-25. The workshop was organised by the National University of Lesotho and COL. Waynes K. Lofafa, Monica Makara, and K. Hlasa of the National University of Lesotho; Mphanya Tsui of the Lesotho Agricultural College, David Lepho of IEMS, Nkotseng Leanya-Mphutlane of the Lesotho College of Education; Malitheba Metsing of the Lerotholi Polytechnic and Rapelang Sekatle of Limkonkwing University of Creative Technology attended the workshop.

Waynes K. Lofafa and Monica Makara also attended the 9th VUSSC Team Leaders Meeting in Singapore in February 2011, to prepare and train the team leaders for the workshop in Lesotho.

Thabiso Kenneth Saba of the National University of Lesotho signed up for the VUSSC Managing and Facilitating online training course.

VUSSC has launched its own website (www.vussc.org), which includes online courses in 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.

A Management Committee is now directing VUSSC’s activities, supported by COL’s Education Specialist for VUSSC, John Lesperance. The committee includes representatives from small states in all regions of the Commonwealth. Dr. Mamolete Mohapi of Lesotho is a representative for Africa/Mediterranean.

The 2nd VUSSC Management Committee Meeting was held in November 2010 in Kochi, India. The Committee reviewed the progress to-date and drafted the Plan for the next year. The VUSSC Interlocutors Meeting was held from Nov. 22-23, 2010 in Kochi, India. The participants presented their respective countries’ progress to-date, challenges and next steps. A Monitoring and Evaluation training was conducted during the two-day meeting. Dr. Mamolete Mohapi attended both meetings.

**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. Vincent Seutloali of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre was one of 22 partners who signed the COMOSA Constitution.

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. Lesotho was represented by Mankabi Rantekoa and Monaheng Mohale of the Lesotho Distance Teaching College.
The Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open Schools was launched during PCF6 in Kochi in November 2010. The Toolkit will be used in all the countries affiliated to the COMOSA to develop their institutional Quality Assurance frameworks.

The Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre is participating in the Gender Audit on Open Schooling.

Lesotho is one of six countries taking part in COL’s “OER for Open Schools” initiative. Lesotho attended the Steering Committee Meeting in Gaborone in September 2009. The meeting focussed on the progress to date, and made necessary adjustments and forward-looking strategies to ensure that outcomes would be fully achieved on time.

Regular communications with the teams was conducted via Basecamp with consultants providing online support.

The Country Management Committees met on a regular basis. Peter Fenrich was the Lesotho Country Consultant.

The third in-country workshop was held in July 2010. Lesotho’s materials for English, Maths and Science were edited and Science has been uploaded on Moodle.

Sekelekele Heqoa and Mamocheta Makara of Lesotho College of Education attended a 10-day Moodle Workshop in Namibia in October 2010.

The COL workshop on Copyright and OER was held in Delhi in November 2009. Vincent Seutloali of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre and ODL practitioners from more than 20 countries attended the workshop.

The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) Gender Winter School was held in Pretoria, South Africa in June 2011. Participants from Botswana, Lesotho and Tanzania attended the training.

**Teacher Education**

Lesotho is one of the eight countries participating in the UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) initiative. The Contribution Agreement was signed by the Lesotho College of Education (LCE). The CFS Project Point People in Lesotho are:

- Dr. John Oliphant, Rector, LCE
- Dr. Koebu Khalema, Director of Academic Planning, Research and Consultancy, Lesotho College of Education
- Nurbek Teleshaliyev, Education Specialist, UNICEF Lesotho.

The partners in Lesotho include the Ministry of Education and Training, UNICEF Lesotho, Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho.

The following CFS workshops have been held in Lesotho:

- Sensitisation workshop for teacher educators on CFS, June 2010. Fifty-three participants from the LCE, National University of Lesotho and the Ministry of Education and Training Special Education Unit attended the workshop.

- A CFS Workshop was held in Kochi, India in November 2010. Koebu Khalema, Dr. Michael Nkoboti of the Lesotho College of Education and Ms. Lati Makara Lets’ela of UNICEF Lesotho attended the workshop.
- Three Training of Teachers (ToT) workshops for teacher educators were held in February and March 2011; 115 participants were trained.

- One ToT workshop for in-service educators was held in February/March 2011; 21 participants were trained.

- A Curriculum review workshop (23 participants) and a series of meetings were held from March-April 2011.

- Materials Development Workshop, April 2011. Teacher educators at the Lesotho College of Education and the National University of Lesotho (Faculty of Education) attended.

**CFS Materials**

- The Guidelines and Templates for Developing/Adapting Materials and the Final Draft set of Child Friendly Schools – Standards and Indicators for Teachers, which are developed by COL, are currently being used.

- The draft manual for teacher educators (with material/handbook for in-service/inspectors were finalised.

- The materials/manuals development, pilot testing, final revision and production and printing of materials were completed.

**Higher Education**

Malerato Kaimu of the Ministry of Education & Training attended the COL Review and Improvement Method (COL RIM) Debrief Workshop in Abuja in October 2009.

**LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH**

**Skills Development**

COL organised a Flexible Skills Development Workshop in November in Maseru, Lesotho during the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) Conference to provide an opportunity for interested CAPA conference delegates to learn more about the Flexible Skills Development and to discuss the issues involved in introducing flexible and distance learning methodologies into their institutions.

COL co-facilitated a workshop to introduce the COL Flexible Skills Development activity to members of the CAPA membership and advocate for technology-enhanced ODL in skills development in Kampala, Uganda in May 2011. Six participants from Lerotholi Polytechnic attended the workshop.

**Integrating eLearning**

A series of OER capacity building workshops took place as part of the COL-UNESCO initiative, “Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity”. The fifth workshop was held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in May 2011. Vincent S. Seutloali of Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre 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 November 24-28, 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 Prof. M.D. Mohapi of the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies; Koebu Khalema, Michael Nkoboti, Marathabile Khanyane, Dr. Matselane Khaahloe of the Lesotho College of Education; and Bothephana Makhakhane of the National University of Lesotho.

Dr. H.M. Lephotso, Focal Point for Lesotho attended the COL Regional Focal Points Meeting (Africa and the Mediterranean) in Mauritius in May 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.

Four learners from the Central Bank/Ministry of Finance signed up for the July-September 2011 eLearning course on the Commonwealth Secretariat-Debt Record Management System.

LOOKING FORWARD

At the Regional Focal Points meeting in Mauritius, the Lesotho Focal Point identified key priority areas that COL can support in its next Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015. This includes capacity building to develop both print and online materials for practitioners at all levels, as well as capacity building at the technical and vocational level to develop more flexible approaches to skills development. Lesotho seeks to expand use of mobile phones to improve livelihoods in the areas of health, farming and tourism. Another priority area is promoting human resource development in business and entrepreneurship at the tertiary level. The final priority area is research on teacher education capacity building.
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).