COL in the Commonwealth
2009–2012 Country Reports

FOR: SIERRA LEONE
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The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is proud of its strong country focus. While COL works in two programme sectors Education and Livelihoods and Health which cover 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 three years (2009-2012) and captures what we have done in each country.

Following wide consultations with partners, a Country Action Plan was developed at the beginning of the 2009-2012 triennium 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. Earlier versions of these reports were presented to the foreign ministers at the CHOGM 2011 held in Perth in October 2011.

Education 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 2009-2012.

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 2009-2012 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.

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President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning
PAN-COMMONWEALTH INITIATIVES

BACKGROUND

As a Commonwealth inter-governmental organisation, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has the mandate to operate in all 54 Member States, with a particular emphasis on 47 developing countries across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

COL’s Three-Year Plan is 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 goals, within the context of its own mission and mandate.

COL’s vision of “Access to Learning is the Key to Development” informs its work as it helps Member States accelerate progress towards achieving development goals. 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 are presented as Country Reports, which document COL’s work in each country, to the Commonwealth Education Ministers, when they meet at the triennial CCEMs.

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

Open Schooling

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 were officially launched in March 2012 and are 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.

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 Schools Association (COMOSA), which involves partners from every region of the Commonwealth. Twenty-two partners 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.

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.

Forty-one people from 23 COMOSA member countries the COMOSA attended annual general meeting (AGM) in Seychelles in February 2012. Prior to the AGM, an eLearning Maturity Model (eMM) workshop was held for COMOSA members. Participants learned about organisational eLearning capacity and how to use the eMM tool. COL organised an OER and Copyright Policy workshop for Open Schools in Seychelles on 1-2 March 2012. Participants drafted a “COMOSA OER and Copyright Policy” at the workshop. The COMOSA Steering Committee meeting was also held in Seychelles on 1 March 2012 and a launch of the OER for Open School materials was held on 2 March 2012. All member countries have committed to implement the OER policy.

Teacher Education

The UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) initiative mainstreamed “child first” concepts, principles and models into the pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula in eight Commonwealth countries (Botswana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka Swaziland and Zambia). COL worked with partner teacher training institutions to develop CFS learning materials and to provide capacity building workshops.

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.

Higher Education

COL provides leadership in quality in ODL. COL’s quality microsite (www.col.org/qualityMS) 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, teacher education and non-formal 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.

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.

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 in Vanuatu and Athabasca University in Canada. Indira Gandhi National Open University, India and the University of Derby, UK have been licensed to offer the programme.

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 VUSSC can be adapted into recognised courses that students can take for credit through educational institutions in small states. The TQF was formally launched in South Africa and 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

Learning for Farmers

COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) 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 information and communication technology (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.

**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.

The Flexible Skills Development Online Community Learning Network is a forum for TVET practitioners to discuss the implementation of flexible and blended approaches to TVET delivery. Using social networking software, managers, educators and policy makers can interact and collaborate both regionally and with international experts. Members from Ghana, Kenya, Jamaica, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Zambia are part of the network.

**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 helped community learning programmes adjust and continue to grow.

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

In September 2011, COL hosted a meeting of Healthy Communities partners from 14 Commonwealth countries in Cape Town, South Africa. In addition to sharing best practices and mapping out future plans for COL’s Healthy Communities initiative, the partners made important connections that are already leading to greater “south-south” co-operation. The week-long Cape Town meeting focused on the use of media for non-formal learning about community health and development, particularly in resource-poor settings.

**Integrating eLearning**

“Taking OER beyond the OER Community: Policy and Capacity” was 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.

COL and UNESCO, with financial support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, conducted “Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources Internationally” to raise awareness of OER beyond the communities of practice that had already developed around them. The project involved a survey of governments worldwide and six Regional Policy Forums. This resulted in a 2012 World OER Congress in June 2012 at which the Paris Declaration on OER was adopted by the international community. The Paris Declaration is a commitment to making educational resources developed with public funds freely available for re-use and re-purposing under open licences.

The Commonwealth Computer Navigators Certificate (CCNC) is an 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 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.

COL’s gender microsite (www.col.org/genderMS) provides a single convenient online access point to gender resources in ODL.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**eLearning 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 50 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. COL, the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria and the National Open University of Nigeria will co-host the Seventh Pan Commonwealth Forum (PCF7) in Abuja, Nigeria in November 2013.

**Pan-Commonwealth Partnerships**

COL’s work is supported by networks of Focal Points, Chairs and 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)
• 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 has activities with partners in all 21 Commonwealth nations in the Africa/Mediterranean region. While significant progress has been made in sub-Saharan Africa in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All Goals, major challenges remain. COL is applying its expertise in open and distance learning (ODL) and information and communication technology (ICT) to help advance 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.

COL’s regional work in Africa includes the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), open schooling, teacher education, quality assurance for higher education institutions, the Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA programme, flexible skills development, community learning programmes, open educational resources (OER) and gender equality. 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 also co-facilitated a two-day workshop in Maputo 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.

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). It was the first workshop of its kind to be held for open schools in Africa. 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 organised the Commonwealth Open Schools Association (COMOSA) Annual General Meeting in Seychelles in February 2012. In conjunction with the COMOSA AGM, COL hosted an eLearning Maturity Model (eMM) workshop and an OER and Copyright Policy workshop for Open Schools where a draft “COMOSA OER and Copyright Policy” was prepared.

The “OER for Open Schools” Steering Committee meeting was held in Seychelles on 1 March 2012. All member countries have committed to implement the OER policy. The launch of the “OER for Open Schools” materials was held on 2 March 2012. As a celebration of the achievement of countries, representatives from several participating African countries gave presentations on specific topics at the launch.

Teacher Education

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 of TESSA and a 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, are 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.

RETRIDOL, in collaboration with the Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS) and NOUN, conducted a Regional Workshop on Research Methodologies in Open and Distance Learning for Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions in Winneba, Ghana in November 2011.

RETRIDOL, with support from COL, organised a leadership training workshop for Female Academics and Staff in Higher Education in Nigeria in May 2012.

LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

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.

Skills Development

COL sponsored delegates from Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland and Zambia to the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA) conference 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 and institutional managers.

COL engaged Nicholas Kimolo of Futuristic Ltd. Kenya to carry out an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure Assessment on the 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.

COL organised a five-day workshop at the Masai Technical Training Institute, Kenya in November 2011 for TVET institutions from six African countries in the development of audio and video learning materials for TVET.

The Flexible Skills Development Online Community Learning Network is a forum for TVET practitioners to discuss the implementation of flexible and blended approaches to TVET delivery. Using social networking software, managers, educators and policy makers can interact and collaborate both regionally and with international experts. Members from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia are in the Network.

COL facilitated a three-day Flexible Skills Development Partners Meeting in May 2012 to review the activities of 2011/2012, present outputs and outcomes, and plan for the coming year, 2012/2013.

COL sponsored TVET practitioners from the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia to the CAPA conference in Kenya in April 2012.

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. The workshop brought together 14 partners from around the Commonwealth to further develop the models and approaches that guide COL’s work with non-formal learning using media/mobiles, share experiences of community learning and train each other in the use of useful tools and approaches, and refine strategies and plans for Healthy Communities initiatives in the next Three-Year Plan.

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).
**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”. 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.

Educators from a number of higher education institutions in Africa attended COL’s OER workshop in Mozambique in August 2011.

COL and UNESCO, with financial support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, implemented a project “Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources Internationally” to raise awareness of OER beyond the communities of practice that had already developed around them. The Regional Policy Forum for Africa OER and Government Policy was held in Pretoria, South Africa in February 2012.

**GENDER**

Gender equality is a cross-cutting corporate goal for COL. The advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment are central to COL’s agenda of *Learning for Development*. COL is working to ensure it is a model organisation that mainstreams gender in all its processes and at all levels. COL’s Gender micro-site provides Commonwealth countries with a one-stop, comprehensive platform to access print and electronic resources on gender and ODL with a special emphasis on ICT.

COL is leading several gender initiatives in Africa:

- COL led the development of the Gender-Class Empowerment Index, which is based on political, economic, psychological and entrepreneurial characteristic. Studies are being conducted with this Index in Kenya and Uganda to assess levels of empowerment.
- COL conducted a women and technology workshop for the Southern African Development Community.
- A study on women’s participation in ODL was commissioned by COL in partnership with teacher training institutions in Nigeria and Sierra Leone.
- A gender group has been established in COL’s online Community Learning Network, which supports flexible approaches to TVET in Africa.

**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 of UNISA and Professor Tolly S.A. Mbwette, Vice Chancellor of the Open University of Tanzania.

The region is also represented by three COL Chairs (Professor Mbwette, Professor Vincent Tenebe, Vice Chancellor of NOUN, Nigeria and Dr. Fred Msiska 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 10-21 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. The key issues identified at the Africa and the Mediterranean Focal Points Meeting were:

- Quality assurance,
- National policies,
- Promoting indigenous knowledge, and
- Women’s rights.

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.
BACKGROUND

With a population of about five million, Sierra Leone does not qualify as a “small state”; however, it was invited to participate in the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) at the request of then Minister of Education, the Honourable Dr. Alpha T. Wurie. There has been a proliferation of open and distance learning (ODL) programmes in Sierra Leone in recent years, particularly in the area of teacher development, resulting in an urgent need for the Ministry of Education to develop appropriate policies and guidelines to ensure quality assurance. Sierra Leone contributed to COL’s budget in 2010/2011.

SUMMARY

COL has worked closely with Freetown Teachers’ College (FTC) for a number of years. Sierra Leone is involved with VUSSC and is also participating in COL’s healthy community initiatives.

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 (ICT),
- create and share learning materials at the post-secondary level, and
- establish a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) that would enable the transfer of credits and qualifications.

Sierra Leone is one of 33 members of the Commonwealth, actively participating in the VUSSC initiative.

The VUSSC Team Leaders’ meeting, in preparation for the Apia workshop, was held in Vancouver in October 2009. Five team leaders attended the meeting including Josephus Choe Mamie Jr. from Sierra Leone. The Team leaders drafted and agreed on a framework for the workshop.

The 8th VUSSC training and materials development workshop was held in Male, Maldives in March 2010, and hosted by the Centre for Open Learning, Maldives. The main purpose of the workshop was to develop a diploma programme on Sustainable Agriculture for Small States. The programme was aimed at learners who would want to start their own business and or pursue a career in agriculture extension services.
Peter Dennis Musa of the Department of Horticulture, School of Forestry and Horticulture, Njala University attended the workshop.

The 9th VUSSC materials development workshop for the development of a Bachelor’s Degree in Business and Entrepreneurship was held in Lesotho in March 2011. James L.S. Kollie of the University of Sierra Leone attended the workshop.

The Team Leaders Meeting was held in Singapore in November 2011, to prepare and train the Team leaders for the 10th VUSSC training and materials development meeting in Educational Leadership. The workshop was also held in Singapore, from 17 November-2 December 2011. Professor Abdullah Mansaray (Team Leader from Sierra Leone) attended both meetings. Blanche O.O. Macauley participated in the International Training and Materials Development Meeting.

Josephine Scott-Manga of University of Sierra Leone attended the materials development and training workshop at the University of Seychelles in March 2012.

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.

The VUSSC Interlocutors’ Meeting was held in November 2010 in Kochi, India. The participants presented their respective countries’ progress reports, challenges and next steps. Training in Monitoring and Evaluation was conducted during the two-day meeting. S.P. Sorrie from Sierra Leone attended the meeting.

**Teacher Education**

COL organised a workshop on Instructional Design in Freetown, Sierra Leone in March 2010. Thirty course writers from the Freetown Teachers’ College (FTC), University of Sierra Leone and other teacher training colleges were trained on instructional design.

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. 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. H.A. Thorpe and K.H.S. Lansane of Freetown Teachers’ College and Stephen S. Bockarie of the Milton Margai College of Education, Science and Technology attended the workshop. A training manual for head teachers and principals in the four countries was developed.

The training of the Master Trainers from The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone was held in Banjul from 29 November-3 December 2010.

Thirty (30) teachers and head teachers from Sierra Leone were trained in “Innovative School Management Strategies and Techniques”, at a specially organised workshop for head teachers and principals of schools, which was held in Freetown Teachers College in October 2011.

COL conducted a study on “Women’s participation in ODL programmes: A study of NTI Kaduna and FTC Sierra Leone”. COL administered questionnaires to 70 selected female students and held focus group discussions in late March 2010 with 22 selected students from the Teacher’s Certificate and HTC courses. The data collected will be part of COL’s Study on Gender.

COL supported Freetown Teachers’ College to build the capacity of its academic staff on ODL and to develop modules for the Higher Teachers’ Certificate (Primary) course. A writers’ workshop on the development of modules for Years 2 and 3 was held in Sierra Leone in May 2011. Thirty-five writers and editors from Freetown Teachers College, Milton Margai College of Education and Njala University were
trained by COL. The Year 1 and Year 2 modules for Higher Teachers Certificate (Primary) courses have been completed. The development of the Year 3 course modules has also been completed. The editing of the Year 3 modules is in progress.

The training of Master trainers for the implementation of the Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) project in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Gambia was held in Banjul in July 2012. Five (5) teacher educators from Sierra Leone were trained in how to adapt and use the ORELT modules.

Higher Education

The Research and Training Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), was supported by COL to organise a three-day workshop on eLearning initiatives and sustainability. The workshop was held at the University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, in June 2011. Twenty-one participants from the Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone and other educational institutions attended the workshop.

RETRIDOL, in collaboration with CENDLOS, Ghana and NOUN, Nigeria, conducted a regional workshop on Research Methodologies in Open and Distance Learning for Academic Staff in Higher Education Institutions in the West African Sub-region. It was held in Winneba, Ghana in November 2011. Ezekel Duramany-Laklah of Sierra Leone attended the workshop.

RETRIDOL, with support from COL, organised a leadership training workshop for Female Academics and Staff in Higher Education in West Africa Sub-Region in Nigeria in May 2012. One participant from Sierra Leone attended the workshop.

LIVELIHOODS & HEALTH

Healthy Communities

Salis Gbandia from Sierra Leone completed the Healthy Communities Course, one of the online training courses 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.

Representatives of media, health and development stakeholders in Sierra Leone were introduced to COL’s community learning programme approach at a workshop in Freetown, Sierra Leone in August 2011. The workshop was organised by the Health and Social Development Association (HASDA) of Sierra Leone.

Emmanuel Konjoh of HASDA attended COL’s Healthy Communities’ Partners workshop in Cape Town in September 2011. The workshop brought together 14 partners from around the Commonwealth to further develop the models and approaches that guide COL’s work with non-formal learning using media/mobiles, share experiences of community learning, train each other in the use of useful tools and approaches, and refine strategies and plans for Healthy Communities initiatives in the next Three-Year Plan.

COL engaged Emmanuel Konjoh as a trainer-facilitator for a workshop to introduce participatory programme development to community media groups in Nigeria in March 2012.

COL supported a programme development process in Kailahun District which started in January 2012. A one-week design workshop was facilitated by the Media and Training Centre for Health (MTC, South Africa) and led locally by HASDA of Sierra Leone. The workshop provided training for 15 local community development, media and health workers (8 women, 10 youth). Participants created a design document for Munde Mia, a programme concerned with health issues related to water and sanitation. The face-to-face workshop was followed by a distance mentoring programme run by MTC and HASDA.
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 S.P. Sorrie of the Freetown Teachers College.

Musu Gorvie, Focal Point for Sierra Leone, 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.

- One learner from the Central Bank/Ministry of Finance took the eLearning course on the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Record Management System (CSDRMS) in 2010,
- Two learners took the World Health Organization Effective Writing course in 2011,
- Four learners took the World Bank Effective Writing course in 2011, and
- One learner took the World Health Organization Effective Writing course in 2011.

LOOKING FORWARD

COL develops Action Plans for each country, based on national priorities and its own mission and mandate. This is done through a consultative process. One such opportunity is the triennial Focal Points meeting at which the COL Focal Point is requested to consult with in-country partners and identify the key priorities that COL can support over a three-year period. The areas identified by Sierra Leone for 2012-2015 are:

- Reviewing and finalise the existing draft national policy on ODL,
- Developing a national qualifications framework that would take into consideration the various levels and types of ODL programs,
- Creating a national coordinating Unit or Centre for ODL,
- Training personnel on the use of ICT in ODL programs – produce audio and DVD/CDs on existing modules, and
- Training teachers in life skills/livelihood skills and reproductive health including support for study tours to share best practices.
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).