

New tools for new skills

The Commonwealth of Learning's contribution
to continuity and renewal in the 21ST

Century Commonwealth

human rights
gender equity
basic needs literacy
human development
economic development
good governance
better health
literacy

2001 REPORT OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

TO THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT



The Commonwealth of Learning Board of Governors

(as at September 2001)

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executive summary



Access to education and training is one of the imperatives of our time. The world's citizens must be equipped to meet their social, economic and personal needs in the new global economy. Commonwealth Governments are accepting increasingly that traditional models for providing education and training for skills are no longer adequate to meet this challenge. They must explore new approaches that have been created by open and distance learning (ODL) that capitalise on the potential offered by information and communications technologies (ICTs).

It is in this context, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is playing a critical role. It possesses, or has access to, the experience and expertise to support Commonwealth governments to meet this new situation and the challenges they face. COL's influence and impact are manifest in the growing use of ODL in Commonwealth countries from basic education, such as the National Open school in India, to university level courses, as exemplified by the Open University of Tanzania. Leaders seeking to close the "digital divide" look to COL to assist countries to adapt technologies for the design, development, delivery and administration of education and training and as well as for training their citizens in ICTs.

At the 1999 CHOGM, COL presented and received endorsement for its *Three-year Plan 2000-2003* that positioned it to exploit recent technological advances to develop the Commonwealth's human capital and outlined its resources requirement. It was later refined and considered by Commonwealth Education Ministers in November 2000.

In their final Communiqué, Education Ministers commended COL on its achievements, approved COL's *Three-year Plan 2000-2003* and endorsed the decision of Heads of Governments to establish COL's core budget at CDN\$9 million annually. Britain led the way by announcing that it would triple its contribution to COL to £1 million annually over the next three years in addition

to support for specific projects; India increased its contribution significantly and Nigeria pledged to resume its role as a major contributor to COL's revenue. As a result, the CDN\$9 million (annual) target was nearly met.

The *Three-year Plan* positions the Commonwealth to embrace flexible learning options to address its educational needs and outlines COL's efforts to diversify and increase its financial resources. It focuses not only on formal educational requirements such as teacher training and information technology at the post-secondary level but also on the expanding demands for non-formal education, notably in literacy, numeracy, public health and hygiene, HIV/AIDS, life-long learning, labour market training and the plight of refugees and children at risk. COL International, a COL affiliate, plays a major role in this strategy through contracts with international development agencies and others.

The theme of the 2001 CHOGM has inspired the title of this Report. It manifests the vision of Heads of Government when they created COL that it should be in the vanguard in adapting technological change to the vast and growing needs of education and training.

The Report draws extensively from COL's submission to the Commonwealth High Level Review Group, which was prepared in consultation with a group of experts from Commonwealth countries and was endorsed by Education Ministers at their meeting in Halifax in November 2000. That submission noted *inter alia* that:

- education and training are assuming fresh importance in the enabling governments to face formidable challenges and seize new opportunities for their advancement;
- cost constraints, demographic trends and expanding needs are outstripping the ability of conventional approaches to meet the demand;
- new technologies offer increasingly attractive alternatives to address these needs and these technologies,

integrated with the methodologies of open and distance learning, offer practical and cost effective solutions; and

- the Commonwealth has in COL an effective instrument to assist its members to fashion their education systems to take advantage of new techniques and technologies.

An appendix to this Report lists the financial commitments to COL by member Governments, which at the end of the financial year stood at CDN\$6.17 million in core funding. Their confidence in COL is evidenced in the increased level of their voluntary contributions, which were supplemented in many instances by their support for specific projects which totalled in excess of CDN\$1.3 million. In turn, COL further generates at least two dollars of programming for every dollar spent, through partner and in-kind contributions. It has also diversified its funding sources through contracts and licensing agreements largely through the efforts of COL International.

This Report highlights recent initiatives by COL under the four core roles that form the strategic focus of its *Three-year Plan*.

AS A CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION, COL mobilises the experience, talent and resources available for the Commonwealth's benefit including:

- designing and developing teacher training materials among eight Southern African members states that has resulted in some 43 modules of study that are now ready for testing;
- administering the Canada-Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme on behalf of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (the first 22 graduates, all working teachers in Dominica and St. Vincent & the Grenadines and the majority being women, completed their Bachelor of Education at the end of 2000);
- designing, developing and delivering a distance learning course on Effective Communication for UNHCR staff — 520 UNHCR staff from about 60 countries are currently being trained; and
- working with Pacific Island member states on a joint “skills for development” training initiative.

AS A RESOURCE FOR TRAINING, COL focuses on developing national capabilities in distance and open learning. These initiatives include:

- the re-design and re-development of the Commonwealth Masters Degree in Distance Education for a second presentation;
- training workshops in the application of ICTs in Asia through the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, COL's regional centre in New Delhi;
- professional development workshops in *Change Management* for African university leaders in partnership with the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the University of Abertay Dundee in Scotland;
- internship attachments for young Canadians; and
- regional institutes as well as sponsored study visits for practitioners.

AS A PARTNER IN CAPACITY BUILDING, COL is assisting countries to mobilise distance and open learning to build capacity in other areas, such as teacher training, public health, skills training, food security, governmental reform and sustainable development. Examples in this area include:

- updating environmental workers in Dominica and Trinidad & Tobago;
- retraining rice farmers in Bangladesh and India;
- reskilling agricultural and forestry extension workers in nine Commonwealth countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific; and
- training literacy workers on the application of ICTs in India and Zambia.

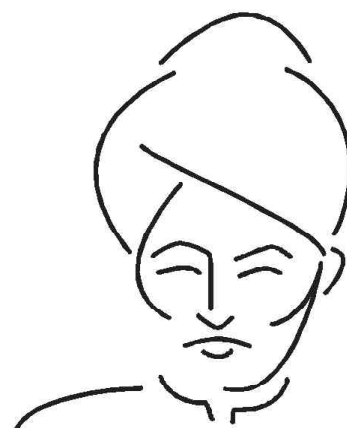
AS AN INFORMATIONAL/KNOWLEDGE PROVIDER, COL is enhancing its ability to gather, store and disseminate information and co-ordinate a new Commonwealth-wide network of knowledge providers in distance and open learning. This report describes COL's work:

- in generating new knowledge on virtual education through two studies published in 1999 and 2001;
- in publishing several reports and new titles under the *Knowledge Series*, *COL Perspectives* series and, with an academic publisher, the annual *World Review in Distance Education and Open Learning*; and
- in creating a dynamic web site comprising of over 1000 pages of information and documents.

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recommendations

The Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning requests Commonwealth Heads of Government to:



RECEIVE the Report of The Commonwealth of Learning and note that Ministers of Education at their 2000 Halifax meeting endorsed COL's Three-year Plan, the outline of which had been approved by the 1999 CHOGM in Durban.

RECOGNISE the progress made in achieving the goal of CDN\$9 million annual core funding approved by the Durban CHOGM and, in this respect, commend Britain (DFID) for tripling its funding, India for the generous increase in its contribution, Nigeria for the resumption of its funding with a significant contribution and the small states of the Commonwealth for their growing support; and express appreciation to the other governments for their continuing support.

ENCOURAGE those member states that have not yet pledged core support for The Commonwealth of Learning to do so, while also recognising that a number of states provide in-kind and project support not reflected in the list of contributions to the core budget.

URGE COL to intensify its efforts to encourage and assist member Governments to apply the methodologies and practice of open, distance and technology-mediated learning to maximum effect on major international development objectives, notably poverty alleviation, the achievement of the Dakar targets for Education for All and in closing the "digital divide".

SUPPORT COL in its efforts to collaborate with bilateral development agencies on discrete initiatives where its expertise is appropriate.

ENCOURAGE COL to respond to the request by Ministers of Education to pursue the establishment of a Commonwealth Virtual University to serve especially the small states and to report back to the next CHOGM on developments.





report

Mission statement

Recognising KNOWLEDGE as key to cultural, social and economic development, The Commonwealth of Learning is committed to assisting Commonwealth member governments to take full advantage of open, distance and technology-mediated learning strategies to provide increased and equitable access to education and training for all their citizens.

Overview

WE RE-AFFIRM the vision of the *World Declaration on Education for All* (Jomtien 1990), supported by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, that every child, youth and adult has the human rights to benefit from an education that will meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. It is an education geared to tapping each person's talents and potential, and developing learners' personalities, so that they can improve their lives and transform their societies.

Excerpted from: *The Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All*, "Meeting our Collective Commitments", adopted by 181 countries represented at the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, April 2000

THE "DIGITAL DIVIDE" is threatening to exacerbate the existing social and economic inequalities between countries and communities, so the potential costs of inaction are greater than ever before.

Harnessing the power of information and communication technologies (ICT) can contribute substantially to realising every one of [the international development] goals; either directly (e.g., through greater availability of health and reproductive information, training of medical personnel and teachers, giving opportunity and voice to women, expanding access to education and training) or indirectly (through creating new economic opportunities that lift individuals, communities and nations out of poverty.) Creating digital opportunities is not something that happens after addressing the "core" development challenges; it is a key component of addressing those challenges in the 21st century.

Excerpts from: *The Final Report of the Digital Opportunity Task Force* ("DOT Force", created by the G8 Heads of State at their Kyushu-Okinawa Summit in July 2000) May 2001

WORLD LEADERS RECOGNISE that all citizens must have access to education and training if they are to be equipped to shape their own destiny and meet the social, economic and personal challenges of the global knowledge-based economy. To achieve this, governments recognise the need to look beyond conventional models for providing education. They are therefore seeking to draw on the opportunities afforded by open and distance learning (ODL), which in turn is capitalising on the potential offered by information and communications technologies (ICTs).

These instruments can provide enormous flexibility in delivering both formal and non-formal education and training and can economically extend access to quality education, even to the remotest regions.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is located at the point of convergence between the demands of a global knowledge-based economy, the pertinence of open and distance learning, and the opportunities afforded by ICTs. It has the experience and knowledge that enables it to provide valuable services for member governments as it is in-touch with their needs and can respond quickly.

Through advocacy, advisories, training, the provision of information, institutional strengthening, model building, consultation, conferences, professional development, policy support, partnership brokering and networking, COL has promoted, supported, advanced and enriched the practice of distance and open learning throughout the Commonwealth.

Its influence and impact is manifest in a variety of ways including the shifting of the practice of ODL from the periphery of educational delivery to the centre. More importantly, COL has helped Commonwealth Governments and international agencies appreciate the value of, and to incorporate, distance, open and technology-mediated learning in basic education, open schooling, teacher training, technical/vocational education and training, continuing professional education, literacy and values education, as well as the tertiary sector and non-formal situations.

The agency has also been at the forefront in helping countries draw on technological developments to strengthen their education systems. It directly trains educators in the use of these technologies as tools to advance their education and training needs in both the formal and non-formal sectors, supports courses and makes materials available that provide information technology training and uses the latest in ICTs for its training, knowledge sharing and information service programmes. As such, COL is recognised by world leaders as an important Commonwealth asset that has been at the vanguard of the effort to close the “digital divide”.

COL has been able to achieve so much with so little because it has succeeded in doing what a Commonwealth agency should do — tapping into the rich talent-pool of the Commonwealth in order to assist the Commonwealth.

From Durban to Halifax

COL presented to Commonwealth Heads of Government, at their last summit in Durban (November 1999), ideas on how it can best serve the Commonwealth in the future. It reviewed the basis for a new and modestly ambitious plan for the next three years (2000 – 2003) which shifts the agency’s focus somewhat and in so doing positions it to exploit recent technological advancements to add value to the Commonwealth’s aspirations to develop its human capital. Funding requirements were also outlined.

The Plan’s strategic focus, endorsed by Heads of Government, is on four core roles for COL:

AS A CATALYST FOR COLLABORATION, COL seeks to marshal the wealth of experience, talent and resources available for the Commonwealth’s benefit.

AS A RESOURCE FOR TRAINING, COL will focus on developing national capabilities in distance and open learning.

AS A PARTNER IN CAPACITY BUILDING, COL will assist countries to capitalise on distance and open learning to build capacity in other areas, such as teacher training, public health, skills training, food security, governmental reform and sustainable development.

AS AN INFORMATION/KNOWLEDGE PROVIDER, COL will enhance its ability to gather, store and disseminate information and co-ordinate a new Commonwealth-wide network of knowledge providers in distance and open learning.

Each of these themes builds upon COL’s work over the past ten years. Equally, each responds to new global challenges. Planned initiatives during the *Three-year Plan* will make COL an even greater Commonwealth asset for the decades ahead.

The Plan positions the Commonwealth to embrace flexible learning options to address formal educational requirements and the expanding needs for non-formal education in areas such as literacy, numeracy, public health and hygiene, HIV/AIDS, life-long learning, labour-market training, and the plight of children at risk: orphans, refugees and those living in the streets. It also outlines COL's efforts to diversify and increase funding sources. COL International plays a major role in this strategy as it secures contracts from international development agencies and with countries outside of the Commonwealth.

This vision was endorsed by CHOGM's Committee of the Whole, which noted that COL is an "ideal instrument through which the Commonwealth can extend access to education and training to meet its human resource development needs and to prepare Commonwealth citizens for the challenges of a global knowledge-based society". It encouraged Commonwealth Ministers of Education to make pledges sufficient to provide COL with a minimum of CDN\$9 million annually to carry out its proposed three-year plan for 2000 – 2003, which it also endorsed.

In their final Communiqué, Commonwealth Heads of Government also recognised the contribution that COL is making on their behalf:

Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to education and training as essential foundations of human development and emphasised their central importance in equipping people with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of development and to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalisation. They recognised the contribution of the Commonwealth of Learning in supporting the efforts of Commonwealth developing countries to benefit fully from the new information

and communication technologies in developing their human potential through distance education.

Encouraged by the directions given and decisions taken at the last Heads of Government Meeting, COL was able to develop and refine the plan further. The *Three-year Plan, 2000 – 2003* that was presented to Ministers of Education last year in Halifax benefited from wide consultation throughout the Commonwealth over a period of 18 months. Government ministries, non-government organisations, educational institutions and individuals all contributed.

The 14th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEEM, Halifax, November 1999) gave COL a renewed mandate and pledges of increased funding over the next three years.

Ministers and ministerial representatives from 26 of the 45 participating Commonwealth countries spoke in support of COL. Many pledged significantly increased funding with Britain leading the way: it announced that it would triple its contribution to £1 million annually over the next three years while continuing to provide additional support to COL for discrete projects, specifically mentioning support for community radio broadcasting in Africa.

Increased levels of and new funding commitments were also made by small countries such as Cameroon, Dominica, Samoa and Tonga, while significant pledges were received from large developing countries like India (80% increase) and Nigeria – the latter returning as a major funding partner after ten years. In all, the modestly ambitious CDN\$9 million (annual) target was largely met and COL accepted the responsibility to ensure that its work continues to merit the confidence that was expressed.

In their final Communiqué, Ministers commended COL on its achievements over the last three years. They also endorsed COL's *Three-year Plan 2000-2003* and "confirmed their desire to give effect to the decision of Heads of Government to endorse an annual core budget of CDN\$9 million."

The Communiqué also noted that:

Many delegations recorded their gratitude for the assistance provided them by COL and encouraged COL to be bold in its interpretation of its mandate in the face of the rapid transformation in education and training as a consequence of the information and communications revolution. They expressed appreciation for the analysis COL had provided of the trends in virtual education and encouraged it to look for innovative ways in which it could help local institutions strengthen their presence in this environment, perhaps by responding more positively to appeals for COL to become directly engaged in the process for accreditation and credit recognitions as well as quality assurance. Ministers recognised the efficacy of distance education systems, and re-iterated their keen desire to see these deployed in the interests of teacher training, basic education for all, skills development and improved access, especially for girl children and women.

In their *Halifax Statement on Education in the Commonwealth*, Ministers of Education specifically request COL to pursue the establishment of a virtual university to serve small states. COL is commissioning a study to look into the purpose, design and economics of establishing a Commonwealth Virtual University. The findings of the study will be presented to Ministers of Education when they next meet in 2003.

Education Ministers also "strongly endorsed" COL's submission to the Commonwealth's High Level Review Group that is looking at the future of the Commonwealth. The submission was informed by the wisdom of a notable group of experts from around the Commonwealth. Through that endorsement, Ministers concurred with the submission's analysis that education and training are assuming greater rather than lesser importance in the new millennium; that cost constraints, demographic trends, and rapidly expanding requirements from formal education to professional upgrading, skills development and life-long learning outstrip the capacity of conventional approaches to respond; that the technological and communications revolution is affording increasingly attractive alternatives to address these needs; that these technologies integrated with the methodologies of open and distance learning can offer practical and cost effective solutions; and finally that the Commonwealth has in COL an ideal instrument to help members re-engineer their education systems to take full advantage of these new opportunities. The following sections of this report draw extensively from this submission.

Education: An investment in people and a Commonwealth priority

Education has figured prominently on the agenda of Commonwealth leaders since 1959 when, at their first Conference in Oxford, Commonwealth Education Ministers agreed with Canada's proposal to create the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), now one of the most prestigious scholarship schemes in the world. Each new current in education, whether positive or negative, has brought

a Commonwealth response: higher foreign student tuition rates led to a renewed focus on student mobility in the 1970s and early 1980s, while new developments in open, distance and technology-mediated learning led Heads of Government to decide in 1987 to create The Commonwealth of Learning so that the new agency could help member states improve their systems for taking education to the learner.

The Commonwealth aptitude for innovation has applied equally to established programmes like the CSFP, where Canada is piloting an approach using distance education to upgrade the skills and professional qualifications of those already in the workforce, and where Britain has equally decided to incorporate a distance education component into its programming. COL has been happy to play a role in those developments and looks forward to continuing to do so.

The focus on education and training has been a reflection of leaders' sense of responsibility towards new generations of Commonwealth citizens. If anything, that sense is now more acute than ever, in recognition both of the added expectations for formal education that the knowledge-based economies place on people and of the challenges the Commonwealth still faces simply to provide universal access to even basic and primary education.

Leaders have recognised that an investment in education and training is an investment in people — a nation's most important asset. It is the means to empower them to shape their own destiny, respond to the social, economic and personal challenges of the global village and contribute to their countries' development. How the Commonwealth nurtures this human capital will largely determine whether citizens in the new century will succeed or merely survive, have equal access to opportunities and equity or be obliged to acquiesce to disparity, enjoy wealth or be doomed to poverty, maintain wellness or suffer misery.

Commonwealth performance and challenges

Entering the 21st century, the Commonwealth is home to the world's largest proportion of out-of-school children (135 million), illiterates (990 million young people and adults), untrained and under-trained teachers (in excess of 15 – 20 million), and the lowest rates of participation in post-secondary education (under 3% of the age cohort). Commonwealth citizens are uncertain if they will be offered life-long learning, training and retraining, vital to their economic and social well-being. HIV/AIDS is decimating skilled labour and professional classes, aggravating further an already tenuous situation. Significantly increased access to education and training is essential to sustain even the minimum development gains of the last ten years.

Re-engineering education to provide 21ST century skills

Scarce talent and financial resources necessitate a re-engineering of education sectors, including the adoption of open, distance and technology-mediated learning capable of providing services quickly, flexibly, comprehensively and economically. To the extent that countries are successful in this respect, they will be better placed to meet burgeoning demand for education thereby helping to ensure the vitality of their democracies, the strength of their economies and the dignity and well-being of their peoples. Initiatives in open, distance and technology-mediated learning are essential if the Commonwealth is to educate its citizens for the 21st Century, a century that will place

a premium on skills like: the ability to frame problems when facing unfamiliar situations, in recognition that the ability to frame a problem is central to its resolution; the ability to communicate, especially with people from other cultures, in recognition that without certain common values and shared insights, political and social life becomes impossible, and conflict and human waste on a grand scale result; the ability to work in, form and lead teams and coalitions, in recognition that as interdependence increases, collaboration will become even more universally important; and the ability to identify what needs to be learned, and then efficiently learn it.

Pressing needs on all fronts

The priority is more pressing for a Commonwealth composed mostly of the young and those in the economically productive age bracket. Their social and work environments will see massive transformations in the wake of technological change necessitating the rapid development of new skills accompanied by strategies for retraining or re-skilling labour. Education and training must be designed to serve multiple purposes — from up-skilling illiterate or semi-literate agricultural workers facing the implications of biotechnology to upgrading health professionals confronting parallel developments in medical technologies. The Commonwealth can employ COL to address these needs and with them questions of equity, access, quality, the costing of education and the appropriateness of delivery mechanisms.

Commonwealth's response:

The Commonwealth of Learning

COL was created as a stand alone, autonomous agency, funded on a voluntary basis, in response to concerns about “supply” in the higher

education sector although it increasingly responds to needs in all sectors of education and training. Its mission: to provide know-how and insights on the then little known practice of open and distance learning by providing leading-edge information, knowledge, training, networking and model building. On the Commonwealth's behalf, it has delivered about 650 projects valued at about CDN\$50 million. These projects have influenced the creation or enhanced capacities of open universities in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, as well as the Universities of the West Indies and South Pacific — with approximately 1.3 million enrolled students in total. COL has also assisted staff development, training, policy formulation, collaborative materials development, technology applications, knowledge sharing and the implementation of student support systems in:

- non-formal education;
- basic and post-basic education;
- teacher training;
- continuing technical and professional education;
- skills for development or technical/vocational education; and
- higher education

It has trained directly some 1,700 individuals in the art and practice of open and distance learning, who in turn have trained scores of others. In the process, it has engaged over 600 short-term consultants from 40 Commonwealth countries and has effectively become the centre of a Commonwealth-wide network of knowledge and skills in open learning.

COL reports directly to Commonwealth Education Ministers and Heads of Government through its Board of Governors, comprised of appointees possessing considerable stature and generally drawn from the Government or academic communities to represent major donors and all Commonwealth

regions (appointed on the advice of Education Ministers). The Commonwealth Secretary-General is also a member of the Board and appoints another representative to it. This helps ensure greater co-operation and coherence between the Secretariat and COL in education-related matters. COL's President and Chief Executive Officer also serves on the Board in an ex-officio capacity.

The autonomous, independent and self-governing nature of COL has been instrumental in enabling it to respond swiftly, effectively and imaginatively to the needs and aspirations of Commonwealth member states.

COL: Global source of knowledge and experience

COL is not only a Commonwealth asset, but also a global repository of experience and knowledge in distance education and its:

- effective use in diverse situations;
- ability to reach a variety of clientele (girls and women, marginalised males, rural and remote populations, and those at the bottom end of the socio-economic ladder); and
- capacity to address key issues like HIV/AIDS with its associated health, social and economic impacts.

COL has contributed to activities of the World Bank, regional development banks, the UN and other agencies. The Commonwealth can take just pride in its work. A Progress Review in 1993 determined that *“COL has succeeded ... in delivering services which are valued by clients across the Commonwealth. COL has become progressively capable of meeting the increasing expectations of clients and should be encouraged to do so.”*

COL's resourcing

Governments' confidence in COL is demonstrated by the increased level of their voluntary contributions, supplemented by support for discrete projects to address key issues. The impact of these funds is magnified thanks to the significant in-kind contributions from donor and recipient Governments, agencies, institutions and non-governmental bodies. COL leverages its funding with at least two dollars of programming generated for each dollar of programme expenditure. It has also diversified its funding sources through licensing agreements and contracts, the latter now on the increase because of the efforts of COL International, a not-for-profit affiliate, that is able to bid for contracts from development agencies and international financial institutions.

COL is appreciative of all funding that it receives from Commonwealth member Governments. The Government of the United Kingdom has become the largest single contributor (including both budgetary funding and project funding). Together, the Governments of Canada and the Province of British Columbia have also contributed significantly to the viability and growth of the organisation over the years and have hosted COL's international headquarters since it was established in Vancouver in 1989. Australia, New Zealand and India are also major funders. When Nigeria fulfils its current pledge it will again become a major funder. It is important to register the support of a number of small countries that also give substantial levels of funding in relation to their size.

In the *Three-year Plan 2000-2003*, an overall target of CDN\$27 million was endorsed by Heads of Government in Durban and pledges toward this target were made at last year's Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. Here six

countries pledged increased levels of support over their previous pledges. In the first year of this plan, total revenues accounted for 30% of this target with 25 countries providing core support. The core funding component represents a 38% increase over the average annual funding received during 1997-2000, where 35 countries provided support. COL is confident it will meet the modestly ambitious target set.

Meeting the challenges of globalisation

Education and training will need to respond to profound changes spearheaded by globalisation. Pressures to cede sovereign national powers to multinational groupings or to multilateral organisations like the WTO continue to increase. Simultaneously, previously centralised powers related to education may also be devolved to others, affecting areas related to quality standards, accreditation, financing and governance. Its unique experience in dealing with these issues positions COL to help government agencies and institutions navigate these changes by:

- showing how they can utilise open learning to retool their own staffs;
- acquainting them with lessons learned in areas of credit recognition and the portability of diplomas and qualifications;
- helping education leaders manage change;
- identifying ways to modify the regulatory/policy environment governing education and training so that its financing and institutional governance can incorporate innovative and cost-effective solutions; and
- helping to increase technological literacy, including its use to improve the management and delivery of education.

COL could go further by assisting the formation of consortia of Commonwealth higher education institutions so that the Commonwealth education space continues to offer curricula developed locally, in contrast to that provided by external online providers. Likewise, it could respond more positively to requests by institutions to provide certification of programmes developed jointly and even to award joint degrees, in order to enhance both the prestige of programmes and mobility within the Commonwealth, or could establish a virtual university for small states as envisioned by Commonwealth Education Ministers. Such steps would be in keeping with both the vision that inspired COL's creation and the encouragement by Commonwealth Education Ministers for COL to be "*bold in its interpretation of its mandate in the face of the rapid transformation in education and training as a consequence of the information and communications revolution*".

Menu of support to governments, their institutions and individuals

Shortages of trained people, knowledge products and modern appliances hinder Commonwealth countries' ability to exploit emerging opportunities. COL adds value in all aspects of this challenge by capitalising on its experience and knowledge. It has kept pace with phenomenal developments in learning technologies and has helped Commonwealth academics and individuals access the opportunities they afford through:

- publications, seminars, workshops, conferences and web pages;
- the use of low-cost communications tools to

speed responses to queries from all of the Commonwealth;

- the development of Commonwealth-wide degree programmes enriching the affordable range of education options;
- helping institutions create their own Internet sites;
- establishing community radio stations to serve education and information needs of remote and rural populations;
- the development of courses and evaluation of products; and
- the encouragement of professional and institutional networks at the regional and pan-Commonwealth level.

Together these initiatives help countries meet the daunting challenge of educating all Commonwealth citizens for the 21st Century.

The way ahead: Mission necessary and achievable

Commonwealth Governments set up COL in response to concerns about education and training. COL has proved its capacity to innovate and change directions quickly in the fulfilment of its original mission: to help extend access to education and training to all Commonwealth peoples by exploiting open, distance and technology-mediated learning. Transformations to the environment in which education and training must be delivered, rather than inhibit COL's role, can empower and enable it to bring greater purpose to its mission. By partnering with government,

non-government and private enterprise, and drawing on the Commonwealth's unique tradition of sharing knowledge, experience and skills, that mission becomes achievable. Rapid continuous change and the challenges of the 21st Century make it necessary.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT EXHIBIT IN DELEGATE'S LOUNGE

Several supporting documents and knowledge resource publications will be available at COL's display desk in the CHOGM Delegate's Lounge. Most are also available online or upon request and many have been previously sent to the offices of Heads of Government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Included in the supply are:

- Extra copies of COL's Report to CHOGM 2001
- COL's *Three-year Plan 2000 – 2003*
- *Expanding Learning Horizons*, COL's Summary Report 1998 – 2000
- Regional brochures: *COL in Africa*, *COL in the Caribbean*, *COL in the Pacific* and *COL in South and Southeast Asia*
- *Connections* and *EdTech News* newsletters
- *Telecentres: Case Studies and Key Issues* (Perspectives on Distance Education)
- *The Development of Virtual Education: A global perspective* and *The Changing Faces of Virtual Education*
- *Basic Education at a Distance (World review of distance education and open learning)*, limited copies
- *Knowledge Series*
- Further details on some of COL's major projects

recent programme highlights



COL as a catalyst for collaboration

In its *Three-year Plan 2000 – 2003* COL's first role is set out as that of a *Catalyst for Collaboration*, in recognition that significant dividends accrue when parties work together in a complementary and synergistic manner, and that needs far exceed the resources, talents and capabilities of any one organisation. COL is engaged in:

- NEARING THE COMPLETION of the five-year STAMP 2000+ programme. Teachers constitute perhaps the most critical component of any strategy to meet the Education for All targets agreed to in Dakar. Yet shortages of trained teachers have been a chronic problem in much of the developing world, especially in Africa, and that problem is deepening with the decimation of the ranks of teachers by HIV/AIDS. Recognising that new methods must be tried, and that they could not afford the luxury of temporarily taking untrained teachers from classrooms for professional upgrading, Ministers of Education from eight Southern African countries (Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) collaborated with COL to develop distance education training materials to upgrade teachers of upper primary and junior secondary science, technology and mathematics and general education. Eighteen modules on general education courses are now available and the remaining 27 modules on science, technology and mathematics will be completed by the end of this year. Other countries will be encouraged to make use of these materials for their own teacher training needs.
- ADMINISTERING the Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) on behalf of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The innovative five-year pilot programme commenced in 1998 as a new dimension to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme. It provides scholarships for Caribbean students to study “at a distance” through Canadian post-secondary institutions through the use of new information and communications technologies. Scholarships are provided for Caribbean citizens in areas of skill shortages including tourism, teacher training, and computer literacy. CCDESP is offered in Dominica, Jamaica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, Athabasca University, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Mount Saint Vincent University. The first 22 graduates, all working teachers in Dominica and St. Vincent & the Grenadines and the majority being women, completed their Bachelor of Education at the end of 2000. Information technology students in Jamaica finished their degrees in September 2001. While the scholarship's per capita cost will vary by programme, the average cost is approximately CDN\$6,338 per enrolled student per year, which speaks to the cost-effectiveness of this programme versus an approximate cost of CDN\$26,000 per year for students participating in the traditional Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. The relevancy of the CCDESP model increases in light of rising tuition and related fees. CCDESP participants also remain economically productive and socially active in their own country as they continue to work while completing their studies. This is a model that

other Commonwealth countries might like to emulate.

- THE JOINT DELIVERY of a Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration programme, being developed and piloted by a COL-led consortium of open universities in South Asia before being offered on a pan-Commonwealth basis. It will be available to students in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka commencing in January 2002 and the initial intake is projected to be 1,700 students. The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) has provided some funding assistance. This initiative was taken in recognition of the importance of private sector development (CEMBA) and good governance (CEMPA), as well as appreciation of the fact that many in small and medium-sized enterprises could not begin to pay the somewhat daunting fees of current executive MBA programs offered at a distance. Once the programme has been successfully piloted in South Asia, it will be made available to other regions of the Commonwealth.
- THE COMMONWEALTH ELECTRONIC NETWORK FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION (CENSE), which is an initiative of The Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Secretariat and COMNET-IT to facilitate contact between national learning grids, schools and institutions throughout the Commonwealth. COL hosts the CENSE web site which provides support to teachers, learners and education administrators and promotes the awareness and practice of local cultures. With its potential to reach any school in the world or government policy maker with a connection to the Internet, CENSE can make a substantial contribution to those seeking to introduce national school networks.
- CO-ORDINATING COLLABORATION amongst Pacific island member states on two regional vocational skills training projects. With an eye on the need for poverty alleviation and economic development, one project will create learning materials to support skills development in key areas of economic expansion. The second will focus on policies and procedures to facilitate credit transfer across institutional, national and even regional boundaries. Together, these initiatives will make it easier for people, particularly in small island states, to acquire a suite of accredited skills that will enable them to secure gainful employment and contribute to the national economy. Also in the Pacific, COL is initiating and co-ordinating efforts to establish electronic networking of schools throughout the region to support students, teachers and administrators in communications and provide access to training resources. The first phase commenced with a study of the opportunities to develop electronic networking of schools, focussing on Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Nauru, Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu and Tonga, expected to be finished by October 2001.
- UNDER CONTRACT to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), COL developed and is now delivering by distance a professional development course on written communications skills for UNHCR employees throughout the world. The current contract will see 520 UNHCR staff members, including refugee workers and field staff in about 60 countries, trained through the course by June 2002. The course is being translated and adapted into French and will be available to UNHCR's French-speaking employees later this year.
- CREATING, with the Canadian Association for Community Education (CACE), FuturEd Consulting Education Futurists and other partners, a set of quality standards for online learning products and services to diminish risks for consumers of e-learning. While a Canadian

initiative, COL's involvement promises to bring many benefits to the wider Commonwealth. This initiative responds to the need identified by Commonwealth Education Ministers during their Halifax meeting for better standards in offering online and off-shore education, noting the need to "protect our citizens against malpractices".

In addition to partnerships with donor and recipient Governments and agencies, COL works co-operatively with several national and international development agencies and banks, including not only Commonwealth agencies but also members of the UN System (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNDP and the World Bank), national and regional distance education associations and industry.

COL as a resource for training

COL's second role as a *Resource for Training* in the policies, methodology and practice of open, distance and technology-mediated learning, responds to countries' desires to develop and/or strengthen national capabilities in this area. Current initiatives include:

- CARRYING OUT AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY comprised of workshops, seminars, study visits, interchanges, web-based tools, support for enrolment in formal distance education courses, the development of print-based training materials from the more basic through to the more sophisticated and other support. Priority has been accorded to training those responsible for the training of others. During the last fiscal year, COL supported over 30 seminars and workshops involving over 500 participants. Previously it organised discrete training initiatives for over 1,200 individuals who in turn have trained scores of others. To this number must be added the countless individuals that have been assisted in their training through the other means of support that COL has provided – including the training that is inherent in initiatives like STAMP 2000+, an important by-product of which was the training of some 250 individuals responsible for different aspects of the project.
- DEVELOPING AN ONLINE COURSE for distance education policy makers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), designed to deepen the knowledge and skills of education managers responsible for open and distance learning. The course comprises web-based or CD ROM-based training, augmented by a face-to-face workshop. Participants are from South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Swaziland and Seychelles.
- ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT of a Commonwealth Masters Degree in Distance Education as an outgrowth of COL's Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, which supports Ministry-sponsored officials in developing Commonwealth countries seeking to obtain a post-graduate certification or degree from Indira Gandhi National Open University (India). Fellowships were initially awarded in 1996, enabling students from 15 Commonwealth developing countries to participate. Sixty of the original 100 enrollees graduated in 1998. The scheme is now being offered for a second time.
- ORGANISING REGIONAL INSTITUTES. The first of these, the annual *Managing Change – Leadership and Strategic Change in Higher Education* conference, is designed to equip heads of African academic institutions to meet the demands of providing effective leadership through times of rapid change. The University of Abertay Dundee, the Association of Commonwealth Universities, the Association of African Universities and COL collaborate in this particular series. Over five years at least one academic/administrative

leader from each Sub-Saharan Commonwealth University is expected to have the opportunity to participate in the *Managing Change* conference. The first two, limited to twenty participants each, were held in Scotland in August 2000 and 2001. A similar professional development opportunity for Directors and CEOs of teacher training institutes in Sub-Saharan Africa is being finalised, thanks to the generous collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Singapore and the National Institute of Education in Singapore. This institute focuses on teacher training in recognition of its central importance to achieving the “Education for All” goal.

- PREPARING TRAINING “TOOLKITS” covering all the key elements of distance education. These provide comprehensive manuals for trainers of distance educators and were developed in collaboration with the International Extension College (UK). Most were produced under contract to the Asian Development Bank. COL is now developing an online, interactive learning system based on the toolkits, expected to be available on COL’s web site by the beginning of next year.
- OFFERING SEVERAL INTERNSHIP and attachment programmes, including programmes involving volunteers/retired experts, professional attachments of senior Commonwealth education officials to COL, and international placements of 18 young Canadians over the past two years with partner agencies under the Government of Canada’s Youth Employment Strategy (with funds provided by Canada’s Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade). COL would be delighted to play a similar role for other Commonwealth countries, helping to equip their youth for the demands of globalisation.
- SUPPORTING the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), established by COL and hosted by the Indira Gandhi National Open

University in India, which provides valuable training and media library services for the Asia region. Apart from managing a database of over 10,000 educational radio and television programmes available for use by institutions and broadcasters throughout Asia, CEMCA also conducts training workshops on applying educational media.

COL as a capacity builder

Adding value to human *Capacity Building* is COL’s third role, demonstrating how the application of the methodologies of open, distance and technology-mediated learning can benefit a wide range of socio-economic priorities. It develops programmes in this area and also creates and tests models designed to incorporate different technologies and learning media to meet specific challenges. In collaboration with international partners and local associates, and in accordance with the *Three-year Plan*, COL is focussing on these areas:

- MANAGEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, sustainable development and the enhancement of food security, including educating rice farmers in India through the use of HAM radio and in Bangladesh through print, training over 100 agricultural and forestry extension workers in nine Commonwealth countries in new technologies such as low-cost video applications and updating environmental workers with the latest management, impact and policy studies.
- EDUCATION AND TRAINING, including using distance education methods to address the significant need for training and upgrading of teachers (with the HIV/AIDS pandemic adding urgency to this challenge), literacy workers and vocational and technical skills training systems. The British Department for International Development (DFID) is providing funding for two major COL initiatives

in this area. The first is a five-year project in Mozambique where over one million children completing basic education have no access to secondary education. Through the creation and production of self-learning materials for grades 8-10, the project also provides training in open and distance learning to local practitioners. These materials will be piloted with up to 1,000 students and delivered through learning centres in five remote areas in the Northern province of Nampula. The second project explores the use of community learning centres and communications technologies to improve adult literacy programmes in selected Commonwealth countries – initially, India and Zambia. In the course of its work it will evaluate the support that community learning centres can offer to literacy workers attempting to provide training programmes not only in reading and numeracy, but also in the use and operation of information and communication tools. The Indira Gandhi National Open University and the University of Zambia are local partners in executing the project.

- GOVERNANCE AND GOVERNMENT REFORM and the professional development of health workers are two areas where COL stands ready to provide assistance to Commonwealth member governments. With respect to the latter, in recognition that good governance requires good laws, good laws require good drafting, and good drafting requires good drafters, COL is adapting the COL/Commonwealth Secretariat Distance Training Programme for Legislative Drafters for web-based and CD-ROM delivery. Eight students have now completed the pilot course, and a further 129 have enrolled throughout Southern Africa and the South Pacific.
- PROGRAMMES designed to improve capabilities in the use of distance education and information and communications technologies in community-based non-formal education – in areas such as

health, education, community development and the promotion of gender equality – through such methods as new low-cost community radio systems and flexible learning options in training material that could be used by NGOs in working with street children. COL was looking forward to working with the Department for International Development (DFID) to give effect to Britain's interest in significantly extending the use of community radio expressed at the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Halifax. Regrettably, however, despite best efforts and good will on all sides, it was not possible to reach agreement on a plan to carry this forward.

- POLICY DIALOGUES, such as the *Pan-African Policy Dialogue on In-Service Teacher Training, using Open and Distance Learning*, which was convened and sponsored by COL in July 2001 and hosted by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, Namibia. Permanent Secretaries of Education and senior officials responsible for teacher training from African Commonwealth countries examined issues involving the accreditation of teachers, quality and standards, systems management and regional collaboration and co-operation. They also developed co-operative methods to move forward in implementing new strategies. DFID, the Centre for British Teachers and other agencies provided funding assistance, in recognition of the impact that favourable policies could have on the training of teachers and therefore the ability to reach the EFA targets.
- REGIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETINGS, such as the four convened by COL to identify barriers to ICTs in education based on gender differences, held from 1998 – 2001. The symposiums have been held in India, Barbados, Tanzania and New Zealand and relate to the discussions around the “digital divide”, which have identified a particular need to address the implications of the ICT revolution for women, especially if they are not to be deprived of the

opportunity to participate fully in the emerging economy likely to shape the 21st century. Funding assistance for the Asian meeting was provided by the British Council, for the African meeting by Canada's International Development Research Centre through its Acacia Initiative, and for the Pacific meeting by the New Zealand Official Development Assistance (Development Cooperation Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade). A summary meeting is planned for early 2002, to be held in Canada in conjunction with a conference on the subject. The four regional meeting reports will be synthesised at this time and participants will propose strategies and activities to help overcome the identified barriers.

- SYSTEMS to improve credit mobility and quality assurance within the Commonwealth and beyond. Through a workshop organised jointly by COL and the A.P. State Council for Higher Education (APSCHE) in Hyderabad, India (May 2001), COL played a catalytic role in the formation of the Andhra Pradesh Consortium on Distance Education.
- FACILITATING ACCESS to affordable, high-quality open and distance learning materials and assisting with their adaptation for local situations. To give only a few examples, COL is collaborating with the Commonwealth Secretariat and recipient institutions and agencies, such as the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa, on a programme to adapt course materials for training laboratory technicians. It is also collaborating with the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Hamilton Bailey Memorial Trust, the Pan African Association of Surgeons, the British Council and ten recipient medical schools around the Commonwealth, to offer a training programme for young surgeons by distance education. As a final example, in co-operation with Grant MacEwan College and the Northern Alberta

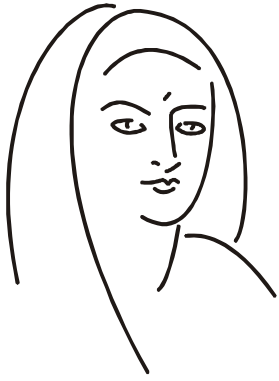
Institute of Technology in Canada, nine self-instructional modules from their *Educational Technology Professional Development Program* for training teachers in post-secondary institutions, are available from COL as print masters for use by publicly funded educational institutions in developing Commonwealth countries.

COL as an information/knowledge provider

Overarching all other roles is COL as a *Source of Knowledge and Information*, in recognition of the centrality of up-to-date and comprehensive information and knowledge to any successful endeavour, especially one in a state of rapid and continuous change. COL's services include:

- ENHANCED KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES AND DATABASES, including online services such as COL's information resource centre, the Commonwealth Electronic Network for Schools and Education (CENSE), the gender training resources database (in collaboration with UNDP, UNIFEM, UNICEF and the Commonwealth Secretariat), the World Bank-funded Global Distance Education Network (research documentation service) and the development of a Commonwealth Open Learning Interactive Network for Knowledge Sharing (COLINKS). In August 2001, COL's staff was enriched by the addition of an Education Specialist specifically tasked with Knowledge Management.
- COMPLETELY REVAMPING and enhancing the look and functionality of COL's web site during 2001 and significantly expanding COL's electronic publishing programme. COL's web site records thousands of visits per week and contains over 1000 pages of information and documents.

- PUBLISHING COL's *Knowledge Series*, start-up guides for practitioners on different aspects of open and distance education. Five popular titles were published in late 2000 and six more are being published this year (over 500 of each distributed in print, as well as several hundred through the web and electronically). Other resources to introduce distance education and technology-mediated learning to conventional educators and trainers and operational guides for practitioners are also available on COL's web site.
- PREPARING A COMPREHENSIVE REFERENCE on community- and information technology-based telecentres in support of education and socio-economic development as a part of COL's *Perspectives on Distance Education Series*. Published earlier this year both in print and online, *Telecentres: Case Studies and Key Issues* provides insights on management, operations, applications and evaluation of such centres and is the first book to be published providing such a global outlook on this important topic. It will help to inform global discussions on bridging the "digital divide" that have taken a particular interest in the potential of community telecentres. The next title in the *Perspectives* series, *Distance Education for Economic Production* (technical/vocational education and training), is currently in production and is expected to be helpful to those looking to use distance education to develop the skills necessary for economic development and poverty eradication.
- IN ASSOCIATION with Taylor & Francis/Routledge, publishing an annual *World review of distance education and open learning*. The second volume in the series, *Basic Education at a Distance*, was launched in Halifax at last year's Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. The third volume, *Policy for Open and Distance Learning*, will be published later this year.
- CONDUCTING A STUDY on *The Changing Faces of Virtual Education* as a follow-up on COL's landmark study on current trends in "virtual" delivery of higher education (*The Development of Virtual Education: A global perspective*, 1999). Released in July 2001, the new research focuses on several emerging trends likely to change radically the concepts of campus, curriculum, courses, teaching/learning processes, credentials/awards and the way that information and communications technologies can be used to enable and support learning. The British Department for International Development funded both studies.
- DISSEMINATING NEWS about COL's work and other developments throughout the world to over 8,500 government and education leaders through two newsletters, *Connections* and *EdTech News*. COL also issues regular electronic bulletins to about 3,000 individuals.
- ORGANISING pan-Commonwealth, regional and virtual conferences with local partners to share experience, knowledge and new developments. "Open Learning: Transforming Education for Development" is the theme of the second *Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning* that will be held in Durban, South Africa, from 29 July to 2 August 2002. It is being jointly hosted by COL, the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA) and the South African Department of Education. COL will also present its *Excellence in Distance Education Programme* awards at the Forum.
- SEEKING THE SUPPORT of member Governments for the creation of a fund to provide for the purchase of copyright and distribution rights to quality distance education materials.



Member governments cumulative funding received

Core funding from member governments

For the years ended June 30, 1997 to June 30, 2000 and for the year ended June 30, 2001

CANADIAN DOLLARS (\$)	THREE-YEAR PLAN 1997-2000	YEAR ONE OF THREE-YEAR PLAN 2000-2003	CANADIAN DOLLARS (\$)	THREE-YEAR PLAN 1997-2000	YEAR ONE OF THREE-YEAR PLAN 2000-2003
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA	\$ -	\$ -	MAURITIUS	\$ 150,000	\$ 50,000
AUSTRALIA	1,122,669	383,193	MOZAMBIQUE	15,193	\$ -
BAHAMAS	88,461	37,803	NAMIBIA	111,289	38,045
BANGLADESH	-	-	NAURU	-	-
BARBADOS	18,658	43,823	NEW ZEALAND	685,153	230,621
BELIZE	-	-	NIGERIA	-	-
BOTSWANA	23,684	9,845	PAKISTAN	-	-
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM	-	-	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	9,879	45,096
CAMEROON	12,500	-	ST. KITTS & NEVIS	11,818	-
CANADA			ST. LUCIA	-	-
- CIDA	3,300,000	1,100,000	ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES	5,000	-
- PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA	2,990,219	1,000,000	SAMOA	75,421	76,120
- PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK	20,000	-	SEYCHELLES	34,061	-
CYPRUS	11,626	3,591	SIERRA LEONE	-	-
DOMINICA	35,738	23,646	SINGAPORE	-	-
FIJI	-	-	SOLOMON ISLANDS	-	-
THE GAMBIA	-	-	SOUTH AFRICA	229,200	67,725
GHANA	13,905	5,642	SRI LANKA	28,224	-
GRENADA	-	-	SWAZILAND	26,762	56,090
GUYANA	26,445	14,596	TANZANIA	6,864	-
INDIA	1,263,543	388,965	TONGA	13,860	17,640
JAMAICA	70,299	12,013	TRINIDAD & TOBAGO	159,749	54,769
KENYA	18,261	74,887	TUVALU	-	-
KIRIBATI	-	-	UGANDA	14,653	13,489
LESOTHO	43,803	-	UNITED KINGDOM	2,409,147	2,249,400
MALAWI	-	-	VANUATU	-	-
MALAYSIA	162,400	58,621	ZAMBIA	-	-
MALDIVES	22,057	-	ZIMBABWE	87,932	103,775
MALTA	38,599	18,858		\$ 13,357,072	\$ 6,178,253

NOTE: 1997-2000 funding indicated above does not include non-core funding of CDN\$4.975 million and non-cash (in-kind) services valued at CDN\$11 million. Year one of the *Three-Year Plan 2000-2003* figures do not include CDN\$1.3 million in project funding and significant partner and in-kind contributions.

EXCERPTED FROM the *Memorandum of Understanding on The Commonwealth of Learning*
as agreed by Commonwealth Governments on 1 September 1988
and as amended, 31 October 1995

II. PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS

- The purpose of COL is to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, by promoting co-operation between universities, colleges and other educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education. COL's activities will aim to strengthen member countries' capacities to develop the human resources required for their economic and social development, and will give priority to those developmental needs to which Commonwealth co-operation can be applied. COL will work in a flexible manner and be capable of responding effectively to changing needs. It will serve the interests of Commonwealth member countries and of the Commonwealth itself, working in co-operation with Governments and other Commonwealth agencies and educational institutions and doing so in a way that is consistent with the principles that have guided the Commonwealth. In performing its functions COL will seek to ensure the appropriateness of programmes and of distance-education techniques and technologies to the particular requirements of member countries.
- Within this broad framework, the functions and objectives of COL will include:
 - (a) assisting the creation and development of institutional capacity in distance education in member countries;
 - (b) facilitating the channelling of resources to projects and programmes in distance education;
 - (c) providing information and consultancy services on any aspect of distance education including the selection of appropriate technology;
 - (d) undertaking and supporting staff training in the techniques and management of distance education;
 - (e) facilitating inter-institutional communication links;
 - (f) undertaking and supporting evaluation and applied research in distance education;
 - (g) assisting the acquisition and delivery of teaching materials and more generally facilitating access to them;
 - (h) commissioning, and promoting the adaptation and development of teaching materials;
 - (i) establishing and maintaining procedures for the recognition of academic credit;
 - (j) assisting in the development of local support services to students;
 - (k) analysing and reflecting on educational issues in order to implement more effectively the activities of COL;
 - (l) stimulating and supporting any other activities that fall within COL's areas of interest by such means as may be approved by the Board of Governors.
- COL will operate through its headquarters, such units in other regions of the Commonwealth as may be set up, and networks of co-operating institutions such as those involved in teaching, information and research.
- In carrying out its functions COL will respect the integrity and interests of co-operating agencies and institutions, as well as their right to work together independently of COL.

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