Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Lack of coordination of programmes/projects among ministries/sectors e.g. education, health, and livelihoods to avoid duplication of initiatives, and more efficient use of resources
- Lack of expertise in the conversion of face to face programmes to ODL
- Lack of funds to sustain projects/initiatives

Status of ODE/ e-learning in Jamaica

Status of e-learning

In 2005 *The e-Learning Jamaica Company Ltd* (eLJam) was established under the Ministry of Industry Commerce and Technology as a limited liability company to implement e-learning projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE). Using money from the Universal Access Fund, a project targeting high schools was implemented to utilise Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to contribute to improvement in the quality of education, to enhance the learning experience and to improve the level of passes in the school-leaving CXC CSEC examinations. Several components were targeted and some of the achievements are listed below.

A. **Instructional Materials Component**
  - Teachers’ and Students’ Instructional Materials for English, Mathematics, Biology, Information Technology (IT), Building Technology, Physics were developed and are being used in High schools. Chemistry and Spanish materials are still at the pilot stage.
  - 40 video lectures produced, 10 each for English, Biology, Mathematics and IT, were made available to schools on the e-LJam web-site, DVDs and broadcast by PBCJ since February 2010. Contracts have been signed with producers for the other subjects.
Over 12,000 items (test questions) covering all 11 subjects and grades 7-11 were made available to project schools on DVDs and on e-LJam web-site. The Item Bank was used by students to revise for June 2009 and 2010 examinations.

B. Technology Infrastructure Component
- Audiovisual equipment delivered to 166 public High Schools, 16 Independent High Schools, 8 Teachers Colleges, 5 Community Colleges and 6 Special Schools (students with learning and physical disabilities)
- Computer equipment and networks installed in 162 public High Schools and 8 Teachers’ Colleges
- Interim repository established on e-LJam web-site, technical specifications for the Central Repository for Educational Materials (CREM) has been finalised for hosting by the MOE, equipment has been delivered. The building and electrical infrastructure is being finalised by MOE

C. Teacher Training Component
- HEART Trust/NTA provided training and certification in ICT skills to more than 11,000 of 11,400 teachers; lecturers and MOE Education Officers were trained. More than 7,500 were certified to NCTVET NVQ-J level 1 & 2 standard. Four hundred and twenty five systems administrators have been trained in network management and 194 teachers were trained as trainers in ICT skills. An online programme in place for continued training.
- Through Mico University College Foundation training in the integration of technology in instructional delivery was provided to in excess of 2500 teachers and 376 trainers of trainers. An online programme being evaluated.

Teacher Education

- In collaboration with the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) the e-learning project provided scholarships to 15 lecturers from the Teachers’ Colleges to pursue an on-line Masters Degree in Education Technology with British Columbia University. Eight persons graduated in November 2010, and will become the Instructional Technology Officer at their College and be responsible for ongoing training. Another seven are in training.
Higher Education

- While there is no set policy for ODL in Jamaica, individual universities e.g. University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of Technology have created their own guidelines for ODL and have been offering courses online for a number of years. The latest initiative is the UWI Open Campus Academic Programming and Delivery Division which is viewed as a fourth campus.
- In 2010, the UWI Open Campus in collaboration with the Virtual University for Small States in the Commonwealth (VUSSC – COL) offered a five week course entitled “Managing and Facilitating Online Instruction”. Participants were from numerous countries across the world and included three Jamaicans. The programme provided a great opportunity for participants to cross national, geographic and cultural barriers as they interacted and shared their individual experiences.

Quality Assurance

- In late 2009 the COL fully funded a four days workshop entitled *Using the COL Toolkit for Quality Assurance in Teacher Education* which was an initiative of the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE). Professor Badri Koul was the resource person and the workshop was attended by senior personnel from Teachers’ Colleges, the Ministry of Education and the Jamaica Teaching Council. Some colleges have tailored the framework to meet their needs and have established Quality Assurance Departments in their institutions.
- COL sponsored Dr. Jeanette Bartley Bryan from The University of Technology to attend the Asia Pacific Network conference on “Quality Assurance in Dual Mode Universities”, March 1-3, 2011 in Bangalore, India.

Learning and Skills for Livelihoods

As the Caribbean Maritime Institute seeks to use ODL to offer Bachelors degrees in Business and Entrepreneurship, the COL has sponsored the Executive Director, Fritz Pinnock to attend the following workshops /forums:

- The 7th VUSSC COL forum in APIA, Samoa, Nov. 21-Dec 11, 2009
- The 6th Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Kochi, India Nov. 20 – Dec1, 2010
TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2012-2015

1. As Jamaica moves to ensure that all teachers hold at least a Bachelors degree in their area of specialisation there is a thrust to upgrade approximately twelve thousand (12,000) teachers. It is extremely difficult to pull these teachers from their classes. Colleges need assistance to convert courses from face to face modality to ODL/mixed mode and prepare modules, to train college lecturers to deliver and assess these courses.

2. Develop the capacity and skills of teachers’ college staff through short courses to offer the content at the Bachelors level. While most college lecturers hold a Masters and even Doctoral degrees these are often not in the subject areas being taught.

3. Developing the capacity and skills of teachers to competently use ICT in the teaching and learning process.

4. Establishment of a Vessel Monitoring System for small-scale fishers in Jamaica
   This will involve the retrofitting of vessels/boats with transceivers that maintain Global Positioning System (GPS) logs automatically which can be used to track vessels. This tracking can have a dual function; (I) to locate vessels in terms of distress and; (II) to monitor fishing patterns of vessels in established Zones to verify if they are involved with Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing practices. Jamaica’s fishing industry is predominantly small-scale in structure (95%) and there is a critical need to stem unsustainable fishing practices by strategic use of technology while looking at safety aspects linked to this high risk group.

5. Establishment, Strengthening and Sustenance of Fisher Organisations through literacy, empowerment and other fundamental social interventions.
   The formation of Fisher Cooperatives in Jamaica has been an area of concern for many decades and need to be seriously addressed. There is a critical need to educate fishers on the importance of establishing unified groups and participating in constructive programmes to build and sustain these groups. The Division strongly believes that socio-cultural interventions are lacking and need to be inculcated among primary stakeholders. There has been an incremental elevation of mistrust among established groups and high levels of fragmentation leading to collapse of many such institutions that were weaned on good intentions and
voluntarism. The high level of illiteracy among small-scale fishers appears to have an underpinning impact on achieving success.