

AN EVALUATION
OF THE
LIFE LONG LEARNING for FARMERS
(L3F)
IN
TAMIL NADU, INDIA
BY
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List of Acronyms

AAC	Arul Anandar College
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
DVD	Digital Video Device
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technolgy for Development
IOB	Indian Overseas Bank
IT	Information Technology
L3F	Life long learning for Farmers
LoW	Light on the Wall
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MKU	Madurai Kamaraj University
MSSRF	M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
ODL	Open Distance Learning
RBM	Results Based Management
SHGs	Self Help Groups
TANUVAS	Tamil Nadu University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences
TechMODE	Technology Mediated Open Distance Education

About the author of the review – Jana Janakiram

The review of the L3F projects in Tamil Nadu, India was an experience that the author cherished and had many memorable moments. The visits to the field and the discussions with the self help group women, staff of Vidiyal, independent entrepreneurs, students and staff of AAC were stimulating and encouraging, specially because I spoke tamil and I could identify myself with the beneficiaries and they with me. The women in particular were anxious to tell me their stories and how they feel now. I was struck by this openness and boldness. In fact what I saw and experienced opened my eyes and I realized what could be achieved if there is cognitive social capital, life long learning, careful action research, bank involvement and the appropriate partners before and after the projects are designed.

In writing this report, I have tried to capture some of the features that excited me as a development practitioner and I thought it may be useful for the reader to understand from where I am coming. After all learning is about understanding each other and hence I thought it maybe useful for the reader to know my background and experiences as well.

I was born in Sri Lanka. Due to lack of opportunities for studying further in Sri Lanka I proceeded to India for my BSc and MSc. I worked in Sierra Leone for a period of six years as a rice agronomist. Later, I pursued my PhD studies in Australia. After my graduate studies, I joined the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, Ibadan, Nigeria as a Principal Scientist and worked in Cameroon and other parts of West Africa. After about 14 years combined experience in West Africa, I migrated to Canada and joined the Department of Rural Extension Studies, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

For the last 19 years, apart from the regular teaching and research in rural extension, I have developed, obtained funding and managed distance learning projects in agriculture and related fields in Cameroon, India, Russia and Egypt. I have been informed that the projects, now programs within the institutions, have a life of their own in these countries and have progressed. I retired from teaching and research in 2006.

After about 35 years of working in the field, it gives me great pleasure to write this report as I have seen and experienced the enthusiasm, learning and empowerment the beneficiaries of these L3F projects have obtained. This L3F project is well designed, managed and implemented and I hope similar projects can be promoted in other parts of the world as well.

Jana Janakiram

LIFE LONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS
OF RASINGAPURAM and
NEAR BY ARUL ANANDAR COLLEGE (AAC)

1. Executive Summary

“Life Long Learning for Farmers (L3F)” initiative of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada, is facilitated through the use of information and communication technology-mediated open and distance education (Tech-MODE), for reaching resource-poor agricultural communities. The L3F projects have created awareness among the concerned government departments, commercial and non-governmental organizations as well as private enterprises. The projects have also indicated that if these organizations could provide learning opportunities and input services to farmers and assist them to gain new knowledge, skills and become more productive, they too could reap substantial benefits. This new approach of L3F is gaining momentum in India and in other developing countries.

COL developed the L3F based on extensive consultations that led to a report on “The L3 Farmers Project” (Latchem, Maru and Alluri, 2003). It was followed by action research involving evaluation of several ICT4D projects, and field work in partnership with its partners. In particular, collaborative work with the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), an internationally reputed non-government organization in Chennai, India, enabled COL and its partners to recognize the importance of ensuring farmers and marginalized persons have cognitive social capital. Coupled with this, the importance of providing continuous access to quality learning, markets and financial capital, became evident.

COL through such learning by doing, discussions with partners and collaborative action research consolidated this L3F concept in India. In keeping with the MDGs and its own motto of “Learning for Development” COL proposed the present L3F project in Theni district, Tamil Nadu. COL was imaginative and bold and chose the appropriate partners and context by working with Vidiyal, an NGO which had cognitive social capital amongst its constituents and AAC an educational institution with a focus on rural development. The project was implemented on a trial basis. Though this project was limited by its short duration the results obtained by this project to date are impressive.

The evaluation covered the activities of two L3F lead partners, Vidiyal and AAC. The sections on Vidiyal and AAC are presented separately for clarity, detail and definition. However, it is recognized that it is one L3F project with the two institutions sharing the work in a complementary manner. As such this executive summary is integrated into one.

Intended outputs/outcomes for the Activity

The intended outputs/outcomes of the project were: 1) Strong entrepreneurship qualities amongst Vidiyal’s women members 2) Life long Learning (L3) with various ICT and conventional tools with reference to goat rearing enterprises 3) Self-directed personal strategic learning for members 4) Formal training through computers, internet and mobile phones 5) Invest resources for goat rearing through life long learning 6) Bank realization that investment in L3F is a good business strategy 7) trained staff and students in L3F and TechMODE at AAC 8) a

demonstration centre established on ICT based L3F with the help of the ‘Light on the Wall’ concept. This concept is essentially a self-directed learning tool which is a “touch screen” with ODL materials 9) students trained in various aspects of L3F such as conducting a situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, writing project proposals for banks, networking, etc 10) assessment of the effectiveness of L3F and TechMODE in the curriculum of AAC and its integration into its courses 11) L3F in the project supported with multi-media generated learning materials from AAC.

M & E purposes

A key enabling condition for effective evaluation is the early establishment of monitoring and evaluation framework in the project planning phase. This appears to have been accomplished with the RBM based model and the results chain. It also had clear indicators to track progress and the external factors that would influence the project which were backed with evidence. To cross check the evidence triangulation has been used by checking the documents, physical verification and speaking with individuals and groups of stakeholders.

The purpose of this M & E review is to provide stakeholders with feedback on the project performance in relation to the set objectives and expected results. The early establishment of the M & E framework in the planning phase with the RBM based model and performance indicators to track the progress of the project was helpful. Emphasis is also placed on forward looking recommendations that would help to improve project design and implementation effectiveness in Phase II of the project.

Findings – expected and unexpected

The expected findings were 1) Partners were well experienced and were in this collaborative effort for mutual benefit. 2) Management and implementation of activities of the project at Vidiyal were directed by a unit called project management group (PMG). At AAC, it was more directive, in keeping with educational institutions and context but may change once the farmers are more active 3) At Vidiyal, women had strong entrepreneurship qualities because of their strong cognitive social capital 4) Bank credit not distributed at the time of evaluation (I am informed it has been distributed at the time of writing this report), though approved and hence goat rearing enterprise not started, mobile phones not purchased and household incomes not increased 5) 13 Innovative and multi-media ODL materials produced by both Vidiyal and AAC 6) Women attending formal training 7) Self-directed learning recognized and practiced 8) Vidiyal continuing to strengthen ICT4D in villages 9) Banks have expressed an interest to consider L3F as a business strategy 10) selected staff and students trained in L3F and TechMODE, so that they may become trainers of future staff, students and farmers. 10) AAC has established one “Light on the Wall touch screen”. The others are proposed to be established after funding is obtained and villages selected.11) concept of L3F has not been integrated into the curriculum as yet 12) AAC has begun the process of sensitizing the university and market re the relevance of L3F and TechMODE. This process may take time.

The unexpected findings were 1) Banks considering the establishment of L3F kiosks for life long learning 2) Two private life long learning kiosk owners interested in COL’s support to further life long learning opportunities with value addition.3) Independent L3F learners and SHGs have established small scale enterprises 4) Transformational changes in the lives of women 5)

advocacy groups formed and issues that matter to them are challenged 6) technology is not a problem with the members of the SHGs 7) new opportunities for AAC to place students in villages 8) additional competencies for staff and students 9) AAC understands skills and competencies required by banks 10) bank officials familiar with AAC students for recruitment purposes 11) information centres in villages allow students to develop business skills 12) practical skills being developed 13) benefits of internationalization and mutual understanding.

Conclusions

- Loans not distributed though approved and hence all related activities were delayed.
- Project duration too short, and needs to be longer.
- Bank officials need to be sensitized to appropriate timings of loan distribution
- Members held together because of strong cognitive social capital
- Project staff provide strong motivation for being together
- ODL materials provide strong motivation for coming together of women members
- Formal training and self directed learning continue through innovative ODL
- Transformational changes seem to be taking place within the women
- The concept of integrating L3F and TechMODE in the curriculum of relevant courses at AAC as an outcome, and the steps taken to achieve it are most appropriate, though there may be a delay.
- The objectives of establishing field based L3F centres with “Light on the Wall touch screens” are relevant.
- AAC should pursue to advocate for L3F and TechMODE curriculum at AAC and MKU.
- the project context is appropriate
- Roles and responsibilities of all partners are appropriate and complementary
- The quality of the management and implementation of the activities seem to have been positive.
- COL’s direct and indirect contributions to the project have been very effective.
- COL’s investment in these projects could be increased considering the impact it makes and could make in the future.
- COL’s partnership with the institutions and personnel in developing countries should be re-examined for a “just partnership”.
- The appointment of a COL consultant in Chennai is effective strategy.

Recommendations

1. Phase two of the project at Vidiyal and AAC should be continued, with greater thrust towards policy-advocacy strategy (as being done in Sri Lanka) so that the L3FF gets integrated with national and institutional systems more effectively.
2. Allowances for delays in the inputs from the partners, for which COL or partners have no control, should be recognized in the design of Phase 2 and iteratively the timelines should be adjusted.
3. The project coordination office of Vidiyal should be strengthened to service the project stakeholders effectively. This should include capacity to undertake and support partners in the monitoring, reporting and documentation of the project work.
4. Vidiyal and AAC’s field centres should be encouraged to explore self sustaining and cost recovery systems so that they may become sustainable and not dependent on its members.

5. COL assists AAC to negotiate with Madurai Kamaraj University to obtain the necessary approvals on courses and course curriculum.
6. COL assists AAC to obtain multi-media visual production facilities and the “Light on the Wall touch screens” in each of the identified villages.
7. A joint and comprehensive review should be conducted of L3F projects in India, Sri Lanka and in other countries. The purpose is to identify strategies for strengthening and promoting such initiatives in different countries, as pilot and demonstration projects, recognizing that individual places may have specific needs.
8. COL should increase its investment in such L3F projects through longer durations so that they may be more comprehensive and achieve them with just and equitable benefits to partners.
9. COL should keep its focus on Life long Learning and ICTs.
10. COL should consider the promotion of private L3F kiosks with touch screens and ODL materials with value addition to their services.
11. COL should develop training programs on negotiation and mediation so that the staff of Vidiyal, SHGs, AAC and other organizations learn these skills and apply them in overcoming their challenges
12. COL should share its experiences of the L3F projects with major donors and development practitioners.
13. COL should document its L3F activities in video or DVD formats and develops other promotional materials based on actual experiences of L3F members. This would serve as a guide for developing such programmes in English, French, Tamil and possibly other local languages as the need arises.
14. COL should recognize its own worldwide networks in agriculture, and maintain and build on them as a key strategy. COL should also look within major donor countries to explore whether they can partner with development professionals to extend their work with creative linkages.
15. COL’s strategic use of limited resources, its status, image and high profile visits have all contributed to the leveraging of partnerships, high level of investments and collective buy-in. It may be useful to examine and consider whether a similar approach could be utilized across the organization and others on governance, health, gender etc.

Limitations

1. The duration of the project was ambitious in that the expectations were dependent on the banks sanctioning loans and the AAC and MKU approving the courses as expected.
2. The loans did not materialize till the very day the reviewer arrived on site. This made it difficult for the reviewer to accurately ascertain the contribution of the banks towards the overall achievement of the project.
3. The extent to which the SHGs have expanded and the large number of women and beneficiaries involved had not been anticipated by both the reviewer and COL.
4. The review needed more time in the field to reach the unanticipated areas of impact and to do justice in the writing of the review report through reflection.

COGNITIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL AND LIFE LONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F) OF RASINGAPURAM

1. Executive Summary

Vidiyal is a Non Governmental Organization, working in Chinnamanur and Bodi blocks of Theni District, Tamil Nadu, India. As per the very literary meaning of the Tamil word ‘Vidiyal’, the organization has been working for the real dawn or outbreak of their target groups from their socio-economic darkness. Vidiyal works with people at a grass roots level by organizing them through Self Help Groups (SHGs), motivating them to recognize their own conditions and facilitating them to help themselves for their own development. Vidiyal works with 250 Self Help Groups, who now have savings and credits worth Rs.50 million per annum. One of the main strengths of Vidiyal is that it facilitates a conducive environment for the Self Help Groups to plan for their progress and achieve them.

While Vidiyal has a strong network of mobilized women self help groups, there are no organized economic activities which could generate income and strengthen the livelihoods of the women. Most of the activities of the women members are confined to backyard and household economic activities and do not yield substantial returns. Lack of information, knowledge management and an inadequate scale of activities have led to poor productivity in agriculture and animal husbandry, which are their main activities.

Recognizing this limitation, Vidiyal approached the Commonwealth of Learning, Arul Anandar College and the Indian Overseas Bank and formulated the Life Long Learning for Farmers (L3F) project with the objective of “Strengthening Cognitive Social Capital and L3F in Rasingapuram of Theni District, Tamil Nadu.

Intended outputs/outcomes for the Activity

The intended outputs/outcomes of the project were: 1) Strong entrepreneurship qualities amongst its women members, recognizing the fact that they already have cognitive social capital and savings 2) Life long Learning with various ICT and conventional tools with reference to goat rearing enterprises 3) Self-directed personal strategic learning for the members 4) Formal training through computers, internet and mobile phones 5) Invest resources for goat rearing through life long learning 6) Bank realization that investment in L3F is a good business strategy for strengthening the credit management and expanding the umbrella of credit

M & E purposes

A key enabling condition for effective evaluation is the early establishment of a monitoring and evaluation framework in the project planning phase. This appears to have been accomplished with the RBM based model and the results chain. It also had clear indicators to track progress and the external factors that would influence the project were backed with evidence. To cross check the evidence, triangulation has been used by checking the documents, physical verification and speaking with individuals and groups of stakeholders.

The purpose of this M & E review was to provide stakeholders with feedback on the project performance in relation to the set objectives and expected results. The early establishment of the M & E framework in the planning phase with the RBM based model and performance indicators to track the progress of the project is helpful. Emphasis is also placed on forward looking recommendations that would help to improve project design and implementation effectiveness in Phase II of the project.

Findings – expected and unexpected

The expected findings were 1) Partners were well experienced and were in this collaborative effort for mutual benefit. 2) Management and implementation of activities of the project were directed by a unit called project management group (PMG). 3) Women had strong entrepreneurship qualities because of their strong cognitive social capital 4) Goat rearing enterprise not started 5) Credit not distributed, though approved. 6) Banks have expressed an interest to consider L3F as a business strategy 7) Improved breeds not purchased 8) Household incomes not increased 9) Mobile phones not purchased, hence no innovative quality learning conversations 10) Innovative ODL materials produced 11) Women attending formal training 12) Self-directed learning recognized and practiced 13) Vidiyal continuing to strengthen ICT4D in villages

The unexpected findings were 1) Banks considering the establishment of L3F kiosks for life long learning 2) Two private life long learning kiosk owners interested in COL's support to further life long learning opportunities with value addition 3) Independent L3F learners and SHGs have established small scale enterprises 4) Strong bonds and trust with Vidiyal 5) Transformational changes in the lives of women 6) advocacy groups formed and issues that matter to them are sometimes challenged 7) technology is not a problem with the members of the SHGs

Conclusions

- Loans not distributed though approved and hence the goat rearing activity did not take place
- Project duration too short for the above process; duration needs to be extended
- Bank officials need to be sensitized to appropriate timings of loan distribution
- Members held together because of strong cognitive social capital
- Project staff provide strong motivation for being together
- Entrepreneur skills of women enhanced even though goat project not in place
- Formal training and self directed learning continue through innovative ODL
- Women members ask questions and are not afraid to do so when it matters to them
- Transformational changes seem to be taking place among the women
- the project context is appropriate
- Activities are focused on life long learning and TechMODE
- Roles and responsibilities of all partners are appropriate and complementary
- The quality of the management and implementation of the activities seem to have been positive
- COL's direct and indirect contributions to the project have been very effective
- COL's investment in these projects could be increased considering the impact it makes and could make in the future

- COL's partnership with the institutions and personnel in developing countries should be re-examined for a "just partnership"
- The COL consultant in Chennai played an effective role in this project

Recommendations

- 1: Phase two of the project should be continued.
- 2: Allowances for delays in the inputs, where there is no control by the project, should be recognized in the design of Phase 2.
- 3: The project coordination office of Vidiyal should be strengthened to service the project stakeholders effectively. This should include capacity to undertake and support partners in the monitoring, reporting and documentation of the project work.
- 4: A joint and comprehensive review should be conducted of L3F projects. The purpose is to identify strategies for strengthening and promoting such initiatives in different countries, as pilot and demonstration projects, recognizing that individual places may have specific needs.
- 5: COL should increase its investment in such L3F projects through longer durations so that they may be more comprehensive and achieve them with just and equitable benefits to partners.
- 6: Vidiyal should be encouraged to explore self sustaining and cost recovery systems so that the organization may be sustainable.
- 7: COL should keep its focus on Life long Learning and ICTs.
- 8: COL should consider the promotion of private L3F kiosks with touch screens and ODL materials with value addition to their services.
- 9: COL should develop training programs on negotiation and mediation so that the staff of Vidiyal, SHGs and other organizations learn these very important skills and apply them in overcoming their challenges.
- 10: COL should share its experiences of the L3F projects with major donors and development practitioners.
- 11: COL should document its L3F activities in video or DVD formats. This would serve as a guide for developing such programmes in English, French, Tamil and possibly other local languages as the need arises.
- 12: COL should recognize its own networks, maintain and build on them as a key strategy. COL should also look within major donor countries to explore whether they can partner with development professionals to extend their work with creative linkages.
- 13: COL's strategic use of limited resources, its status, image and high profile visits have all contributed to the leveraging of partnerships, high level of investments and collective buy-in. It may be useful to examine and consider whether a similar approach could be utilized across the organization.

Limitations

1. The project at VIDİYAL was ambitious in that the expectations were dependent on the banks sanctioning loans as expected.
2. The loans did not materialize till the very day the reviewer arrived on site. This made it difficult for the reviewer to accurately ascertain the contribution of the banks towards the overall achievement of the project.
3. The extent to which the SHGs have expanded and the large number of women and beneficiaries involved had not been anticipated by both the reviewer and COL.

4. The review needed more time in the field to reach the unanticipated areas of impact and to do justice in the review report through reflection.

2. Background to the Present Project

Commonwealth of Learning (COL) initiated extensive participatory dialogue with a network of international partners for over 18 months when COL wanted to explore agricultural programmes in 1999. Such electronic communications coupled with select strategic planning meetings led COL to develop theoretical framework and core concepts on “The L3 Farmers Project” (Latchem, Maru and Alluri, 2003). In early 2000, COL also initiated several interesting action research projects, with an intention to gain practical experience in agriculture, using ‘learning by doing’ approach. A significant milestone for COL was its partnership with M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) which had facilitated the formation of a farmer’s association called Reddiarchatram Seed Growers Association (RSGA) and a Self-Help Group federation called Kulumai in Dindigul district, Tamil Nadu. MSSRF had introduced modern ICT among these grass-root institutions. COL supported MSSRF in launching a project which focused on strengthening the role of RSGA and Kulumai in ICT based capacity building and extension. The project brought out some important insights in issues such as horizontal transfer of knowledge and role of knowledge mediators in converting generic information into local specific knowledge. The lessons from such projects progressively led COL to conceptualise the Life long Learning for Farmers (L3F) in the present form.

During 2004, COL initiated an L3F project in the neighboring Theni district and Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu. In order to focus on a self-sustaining capacity building process, COL focused on institutions such as banks, rural internet service providers like n-Logue Pvt Ltd and local private internet kiosk operators. It felt that these three institutions could play a major role in ICT-based L3F among the rural poor. It blended the L3F approach with rural credit of the banks and proposed the following:

If rural agricultural credit is blended with appropriate capacity building the performance of rural credit would be much better vis-à-vis productivity, returns and non-performing asset (NPA) levels.

Capacity building would enlarge the market for bank credit among small and marginal farmers and among other marginalized section of the rural poor.

The modern ICT through structures such as rural internet kiosks, rural telecentres etc can facilitate the capacity building process of the targeted population.

Thus the project offered a win-win situation for every stakeholder involved in the project and COL determined that such a situation would help to evolve a self-sustaining, self-replicating, self-generating capacity building and extension process. The experiences of this project at the two different sites highlighted the following issues:

1. Facilitating self-directed personal strategic learning could enhance the quality of extension and promote a demand-based development process.

2. Technology-Mediated Open and Distance Education and Learning (Tech MODE) could play a major role in self-directed learning.
3. L3F assumed that mobilization and building cognitive social capital were the essential precondition for promoting self-directed learning.
4. Modern ICT and mobilization could integrate vertical and horizontal transfer of knowledge.
5. Such extension activities should occur in the context of the entire social and economic value chain. Various stakeholders such as financial institutions, marketing agencies, industries and research institutions should come together on a win-win framework. This would help to move away from perpetual donor-supported programmes to self-sustainable, self-replicating, self-generative extension processes.
6. The demand from rural communities towards a package of information to facilitate local knowledge management necessitates a consortium approach among the knowledge creating institutions for providing local-specific holistic information.

The project at Theni seemed to have more of a self sustaining process than the one in Sivaganga and this was largely due to the fact that the former had focused more on building cognitive social capital than the latter. This indicated that social capital, particularly cognitive social capital was an essential pre-condition for a viable L3F process. It is to be noted that even after the withdrawal of COL during 2006, L3F activities in the kiosks in Theni are still going on and the stakeholders such as banks, internet kiosk operators and research institutions are still actively involved.

Since social capital requires time and investment, COL looked for a platform where social capital particularly cognitive social capital had already evolved. It found VIDIYAL, which works with 250 Self Help Groups of mainly women at a grass roots level, as one such organization. Hence this project was started at Vidiyal. In this project, an emphasis is being made to structure the horizontal transfer of knowledge within the context of social capital for strengthening their social learning capital. *Social Learning Capital is the meshing of social capital and lifelong learning that reaches its potential through quality learning conversations.*

Thus the evolution of the L3F concept in Tamil Nadu could be presented as follows:

Stage	Institutions/Project	Focus	Learnt
I	COL & a range of partners	Participatory dialogue with a network of international partners through electronic communications coupled with select strategic planning meetings	A theoretical framework and core concepts for L3F
II	Multiple exploratory field based projects	Action Research to review theoretical considerations and practical applications of Tech-MODE for agriculture	Strengthening of key parameters for L3F
III	MSSRF/RSGA	Grassroots institution	Horizontal Transfer of

		(farmers association) using ICT involved in capacity building	Knowledge is an important element of extension.
IV	n-Logue-State Bank of India- Local Kiosk Operators in L3F	Multi-stakeholder project with a scope of win-win situation –Learning built around credit and emphasis on self-sustaining, self-replicating processes.	Social capital particularly cognitive social capital is a pre-condition for L3F. Self-directed learning is an important component of extension.
V	L3F projects in other Commonwealth countries	Introduction and adaptation of L3FF framework to suit different contexts in Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritius, Jamaica and Papua New Guinea	Confirmation of the value of core framework and the need to make adjustments to suit local contexts
VI	L3F project with Vidiyal and AAC	Building L3F activities around social capital and linking with credit	Structuring and systematizing horizontal transfer of knowledge and self-directed learning through Social Learning Capital

2.0 Project Context

A) DESCRIPTION OF INTENDED OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES AND RELATED SUCCESS INDICATORS

The lessons from the experiences in L3F in India and elsewhere as well as from COL's experiences in the monitoring and evaluation research helped develop a results based management log frame for this phase of the L3F. Please see table 1 for description of outputs/outcomes and indicators

Table 1. Outputs, Outcomes, and Indicators

Objectives	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	Risks and Assumptions	Milestones in the Roadmap by July 2008
Outcome 1: Building a strong Entrepreneurship among women in Bodinayakkanur and Chinnamanur blocks	600 women starting enterprises	Preliminary survey (Dec 2007)	Post-Project Survey December 2008	Household survey Bank record SHG and Federation record	1. Socio-Political climate remaining stable 2. Banking Policies remaining stable	1. Preliminary survey completed 2. Bank loans approved but not distributed as yet
Output 1 Organizing Goat rearing Enterprise among SHG members	300 women starting 300 units with 3000 goats	Preliminary survey (Dec 2007)	June 2008 Mid-term review	Federation records Dec 2008 & Bank records Dec 2008	1. No major fluctuations in the goat and sheep market in the region. 2. No major outbreak of diseases for goats and sheep in the region.	Loans not distributed
Output 2 Facilitating Credit Linkages among SHG members for goat enterprise	300 women applying for credit from Indian Overseas Bank and the bank sanctioning the credit	Bank Records, Federation Records SHG Records April 2008	Post Project Dec 2008	Bank Records Dec 2008 Federation Record. Dec 2008	1. No changes in the banking policies.	Loans not distributed
Output 3 Better management of breeds	1. 10% increase in weight of goats compared to non project goats 2. 25% less investment in disease	Preliminary survey January-April 2008	Post Project Survey Dec 2008 Bank records, PMG reports	Baseline survey(PRA), post project survey, federation record, individual records	1. No major disease outbreak in the region 2. No major drought outbreak in the region	Bank loans not distributed as yet

	management					
<u>Output 4</u> Income of the participant households increased.	The net annual income of participant households increasing by Rs. 15,000	December 2007	December 2008	Baseline survey(PRA), post project survey, federation record, individual records	1. No major disease outbreak in the region 2. No major drought out break in the region 3. No major change in the banking policy. 4. The prices of goats remaining stable in the local market.	Bank loans not distributed for goats to be purchased
<u>Outcome 2</u> Lifelong Learning enhancing the entrepreneurship qualities among women	1. The profit of L3F members higher than non-L3F members 2. Repayment of bank loans regularly 3. Increase in the investment for learning among members. 4. Increasing investment in enterprises	Base line survey (Dec 2007)	Post Project Survey (Dec 2008)	Post Project Survey, Bank Records, Federation records	1. Access to all sources of learning. 2. Trade and commerce in the local region remaining stable	Life long Learning has begun and members have shown keen interest
<u>Output 1</u> Innovative Quality Learning Conversation (QLC) using mobile phones as a tool for horizontal transfer of knowledge	1. Development and Training of Five-Dialect Framework for strengthening the QLC. 2. Training the 300 women participants in QLC for structuring the QLC. 3. The 300 women participant using the mobile phones conversing with QLC framework for a total period of 6000 QLC hours.	June 2008	December 2008	Mobile Phone Service Providers records during June 2008. Mobile Phone Service Providers records during December 2008. PMG meeting Record.	1. Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) agreeing to give mobile phones as part of the credit package.	Loans not distributed as yet to purchase mobile phones
<u>Output 2</u> Innovative ODL materials	1. 600 minutes of voice mail	May-June 2008	December 2008	PMG records, physical	1. AAC providing the	20 voice mail materials have

	2. 6 VCD based learning materials			verification, Arul Anandar College's progress reports	learning materials as per schedule. 2. IOB agreeing to provide mobile phones as part of the credit packages	been prepared 9 VCD based ODL materials prepared
<u>Output 3</u> More Self-Directed Learning among women	1. Increasing number of women visiting extension centre by 20% 2. Increasing number of women listening to radio and TV programmes on agriculture and animal husbandry by 20% 3. Number of women reading agricultural & animal husbandry journals increasing. Journals by 10%	Baseline survey of December 2007	Post Project Survey of December 2008	1. Baseline and Post-project surveys PMG records 2. Records of extension centres 3. Records of visitors to Vicinal library	1. Local extension centres responding to the learning needs of women.	
<u>Output 4</u> Women attending formal training programmes of VIDYAL	1. 7200 women hours of formal learning 2. Three Learning materials in Tamil prepared. 3. 200 person hours of VIDYAL staff trained in L3F.	May 2008	December 2008	1. PMG records 2. Physical verifications	1. IOB approving the credit plans.	7259 hours of learning in total
<u>Output 5</u> Vidiyal strengthening ICT4D in its villages	1. Establishment of five Village Knowledge Centres in Rasingapuram	May 2008	December 2008	PMG records Physical verification	1. Vidiyal getting external support for setting up the Village Knowledge Centres	VKCs not established as yet

**B) ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED TO ACHIEVE OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES:
Dec 2007 – July 2008.**

1. Vidiyal had mobilized its community and has enabled them to develop business plans for goat rearing enterprises.

2. The loan applications for the goat rearing scheme have been accepted by the Indian Overseas Bank and it has approved a total loan amount of Rs.12.29 million for 300 applicants.
3. Vidiyal has formed a Project Management Group and has successfully conducted 5 PMG meetings.
4. Vidiyal has completed the following in terms of ODL for L3F.
 - 7259 person hrs of formal learning (According to records obtained from Vidiyal, from 6th January 2008 to 30th July 2008, 35 meetings have been conducted for learning, 1841 people participated in total at an average of 3.5 to 4.5 hours per person
 - 12 multi-media based learning materials
 - 20 Voicemail Materials
5. During the period of December 2007 to July 2008, the project has addressed the following learning needs of the rural participants through various multi media materials. :
 - Preparing business plans for banks
 - Knowledge about various breeds and breeding practices
 - Disease and health management including first aid (based on Ayurvedic and Allopathic science)
 - Insurance management
 - Using ICT for information and knowledge
 - Multi-Media content creation- using mobile phones for FAQs
6. In addition, it has also formulated a proposal for Village Level Pure Drinking Water Scheme. Vidiyal has received an approval from a private funding agency called ANNERDA to support 50% of the cost. Vidivelli- The federation of SHGs has agreed to bear the remaining cost.

C) PARTNERS INVOLVED

Vidiyal

Vidiyal is a Non Governmental Organisation, working in Chinnamanur and Bodi blocks of Theni District, Tamil Nadu, India. As per the very literary meaning of the tamil word 'Vidiyal', the organization has been working for the real dawn or outbreak of their target groups from their socio-economic darkness. Vidiyal works with grass roots level people and organizes them through Self Help Groups (SHGs) and motivates them to recognize their own conditions and facilitates them to help themselves for their own development. Vidiyal works with 250 Self Help Groups, who now have savings and credits worth Rs.50 million per annum. One of the main strengths of Vidiyal is that it facilitates a conducive environment for the Self Help Groups to plan for their progress and achieve them. Most of Vidiyal's members are involved in animal husbandry and raise animals for their living.

Vidivelli

Vidiyal has over the years built strong cognitive social capital among 3500 women. The sense of belonging and identity are clearly evident among the group members, particularly in addressing

social issues. The organization of women SHGs is in the form of a federation called “VIDIVELLI” and is run by representatives of the federation. VIDİYAL has not received any major funding from any donor agency and is run with the contribution from its 3500 members. The staff of Vidiyal are paid and managed by the villagers. The decisions are made by the women members of the SHGs through the federation and the staff of Vidiyal help to execute them. Since the staff and administration of VIDİYAL help to transact a business turn over of Rs.50 million every year for VIDIVELLI in an efficient manner, the federation contributes Rs.300,000 per year for Vidiyal’s expenses.

Arul Anandar College (AAC)

AAC is one of the few recognized colleges in India which offers Graduate and Post Graduate and Research programmes in Rural Development. It offers IT integrated graduate programmes and also professional computer courses at post graduate level. In the past few years, AAC has collaborated with various development agencies to implement grass-roots level development projects in the villages surrounding the campus.

During the last two years AAC has participated in many programmes organized by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). In particular, it is actively involved in developing the framework of L3F for farmers. AAC has realized that if L3 for farmers concepts have to be strengthened they should be integrated into the curriculum of universities and teaching institutions. Concepts like Open Source Learning, E-learning, Learning Management System, etc. are still not part of the conventional IT curriculum in many institutions. Therefore AAC is interested in developing the process oriented approach for integrating L3F and TechMODE in its rural development and IT programmes for students.

Indian Overseas Bank

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) is a major bank in India with about 1400 branches spread all over India. The Government of India has mandated the banks to offer rural credit to organized groups which present viable and sustainable agricultural projects. Rasingapuram has an IOB branch and with the facilitation of COL and Vidiyal, the SHGs have now obtained loans for their goat rearing enterprise.

Commonwealth of Learning

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada, is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training and one of its programmes is aimed at contributing to poverty reduction.

The focus for the poverty reduction programme at COL is through food security and environment sustainability. COL firmly believes that modern information and communication technology (ICT) that has given a new dimension to open and distance learning can help in

reaching the un-reached and facilitate a self-directed learning among farmers, landless labourers and marginalised sections of the rural and urban communities.

Since India is also focusing on “ICT enabled rural development”, COL explored the possibility of integrating ICT and open and distance learning (ODL) for agricultural education, extension and training of farmers, landless labourers and extension officials. Accordingly, COL and its partners decided to find ways to use ICT to promote Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and thus contribute to rural poverty reduction (K.Balasubramaniam et al 2005).

D) LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

The reviewer was faced with methodological challenges with regard to performance measures for relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project that is influenced by many actors and external factors. The project at VIDİYAL was ambitious in that the expectations were dependent on the banks sanctioning loans. The loans did not materialize till the very day the reviewer arrived on site (I am informed it has been distributed at the time of writing this report). This made it difficult for the reviewer to accurately ascertain the contribution of the banks towards the overall achievement of the project.

The time allocated for the review exercise of this project was underestimated. The extent to which the SHGs have expanded and the large number of women and beneficiaries involved had not been anticipated by both the reviewer and COL. This was later compounded by the internal activities at AAC and the deadlines set by COL. This became clear after the review exercise commenced. The review needed more time in the field to reach the unanticipated areas of impact and to do justice to the project in the review report.

Due to the time constraint, this review could only focus on independent views of the project staff and group views of the beneficiaries who were directly involved in the project.

E) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review would not have been possible if the organizations visited in Tamil Nadu and the individuals who worked there did not share their thoughts and aspirations candidly. They were all very helpful, open and frank with their views and comments. This provided the insight and the understanding on the issues, which were humane and affected their livelihoods deeply.

The reviewer is grateful for the advice, assistance, logistical arrangements and the sharing of relevant documents and reports to the following organizations and individuals without whom this review could not have been accomplished.

Commonwealth of Learning
Vidiyal
Arul Anandar College
Dr Krishna Alluri
Dr K. Balasubramaniam
Mr Kamaraj

Ms Kanmani
Ms Arasakumari
Ms Jakamma
Fr Thomas
Fr Pusparaj
Dr John Joseph

3. Monitoring and Evaluation Purposes

A key enabling condition for effective evaluation is the early establishment of monitoring and evaluation framework in the project planning phase. This appears to have been accomplished with the RBM based model and the results chain. It also had clear indicators to track progress and the external factors that would influence the project which were backed with evidence. To cross check the evidence triangulation has been used by checking the documents, physical verification and speaking with individuals and groups of stakeholders.

The purpose of this review is to provide stakeholders with feedback on the project performance in relation to the set objectives and expected results with emphasis on forward looking recommendations that would help improve project design and implementation effectiveness in Phase II of the project which would hopefully start in September 2008. The 6 month phase 1 project which started in December 2007 ended in July 2008. Before starting the next phase, COL, in collaboration with the project partners commissioned this review, so that they may jointly enhance the next phase.

In order to determine the performance of the project over the six month period, the review has looked at the relevance, validity and appropriateness of project design. It has also reviewed the achievement in implementation and monitoring of the planned project activities and outputs against actual result. Also examined are institutional arrangements and issues of sustainability. As far as possible, project outcomes have been highlighted. Key lessons learned from and challenges encountered in project implementation have been noted and recommendations made.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation Design and Implementation

Data Collection strategies

This review is an independent assessment which was conducted by one consultant with able facilitation offered by COL through its Consultant for L3F in India, Dr K. Balasubramaniam and the staff of VIDYAL and AAC. The methodology adopted was designed to meet the requirements and expectations set out in the terms of reference for this evaluation. The approach is considered credible to identify outcomes attributed to the project.

4.1 The Review Plan

The Consultant and the COL consultant for L3F synthesized the review methodology, identified the issues to be addressed, developed guiding questions and identified sources of information on

all aspects of project planning and implementation. This resulted into a review work plan and methodology which was discussed at the meetings with stakeholders and helped them to understand the review exercise.

4.2 Document Review

A review was done of project documents including, but not limited to, relevant project documents, outputs, monitoring progress reports; project development /initiation materials; specific products developed for the project by implementing/ collaborating partners such as workshop reports, training materials, policies, strategic plans, technical reports and data bases.

4.3 Key Informants Interviews.

Discussions were conducted with individuals and in groups at VIDIYAL and affiliated village groups. Structured and unstructured guiding questions, based on expected achievements and defined roles were used as the tool for interacting with individual officers/key informants to get information on the various aspects of project implementation process, achievements and challenges.

4.4 Field Visits

Field Visits to project sites were conducted to view the activities and assess the outcomes and impact of the project. It also provided opportunities for meetings with beneficiaries, facilitators and interested stakeholders. The sites visited included VIDIYAL at Rasingapuram, Self Help Groups at Ramakrishnapuram, Pudukottai, and Sinnapatti, Kannivadi and Mullai Nagar; Information Kiosks at Uppukottai and Govindanagaram.

4.5 Stakeholder Involvement

The project review has been conducted using a participatory approach whereby the consultant worked with the COL consultant for logistical and administrative support for the smooth conduct of the review. The review consultant also had close interactions with the various stakeholders involved in project implementation which facilitated direct discussions with them for independent views on the project performance. The information on project performance has, therefore, been derived from both primary and secondary sources. Findings on project performance and final recommendations for the evaluation are based on analysis made of information collected through three main methods; review of project documents; interviews with key stakeholders and project staff as well as through field visits.

5. Findings

5.1 Management and Implementation of activities

For practical purposes management and implementation activities adopted by the L3F project can be viewed at different levels.

1. The self help groups in the villages
2. The federation, Vidivelli
3. The NGO, Vidiyal
4. The L3F project management group
5. The COL consultant for L3F in Chennai
6. The COL resource person and the team in Vancouver.

It is only when all these stakeholders who are responsible for different activities and duties communicate and work together that the project succeeds.

Vidiyal had over the years worked with the self help groups and Vidivelli members in the villages and built social capital. There was trust and cohesiveness and in fact it is the federation members who have about Rs 50 million turn-over in savings and loans. Since Vidiyal facilitates and assists the members of the federation in their enterprises, the federation pays Vidiyal staff an amount of Rs 300,000 per year. The decision makers and employers are the federation members and the executing staff persons are from Vidiyal.

Another important factor is that Vidiyal is well known in that area and not only does it facilitate the federation's business, it also works on social issues and advocates the rights and dues of the marginalized people in that area. This has given Vidiyal the credibility and respect it deserves and placed its staff in high esteem. This credibility and status allows Vidiyal to negotiate with government, civil and bank officials on an equal footing.

It is with these credentials that Vidiyal sought COL and negotiated the L3F project. COL in its wisdom, through the COL consultant based in Chennai and the COL specialist was able to recognize that the partner Vidiyal is a credible partner and has the necessary stakeholders to make the project work. This ability to recognize and evaluate the proposed partners is an important aspect of project design and management in any development project.

This is a project where the stakeholders are all credible and experienced. The project is designed to take into account that the stakeholders are involved in a number of other activities and forms a management group for only the L3F project. The Project Management Group (PMG) is formed which represents the different stakeholders in the L3F project.

As outlined above, the partners of the L3F project have been thoughtfully selected and the management team has been carefully chosen. During the project period of 6 months the PMG had met 5 times and discussed the affairs of the project. Overall, it appears the management of the project has been in safe hands where the PMG makes the decisions and Vidiyal carries out the decisions.

It is interesting to note that COL or its local consultant in Chennai is not required to participate in the PMG meetings. Though they do interact and visit with the management and key persons, the project is run by local stakeholders and the decisions are also made by them through a participatory approach. This reinforces the concepts of independency, participation, capacity

building and sustainable development. COL needs to be congratulated for enabling and empowering the stakeholders to manage and implement the project successfully.

5.2 Achievement of Intended Project Outputs and Outcomes

The intended outputs and outcomes of the L3F project in Vidiyal were as follows:

Outcome 1:

Strong Entrepreneurship qualities among women in Bodinayakkanur and Chinnamanur blocks

Output 1

Goat rearing Enterprise among SHG members

Output 2

Credit Linkages among SHG members for goat enterprise

Output 3

Better management of breeds

Output 4

Income of the participant households increased

The first outcome and the corresponding outputs in the plan of the L3F project are stated above. The entire outcome and outputs had been based on the goat rearing enterprise. Unfortunately, at the time of review the goat enterprise had not even begun because the loans had not been distributed though it had been approved.

It was at the time of the review, Vidiyal and the stakeholders learned that the loans had been approved and signed. It is expected that the loans would be distributed in the next few weeks and the purchase of goats by the SHGs is expected to take place soon.

Though the goats had not been purchased and the subsequent outputs have not materialized, it appears Vidiyal and the SHG members have built entrepreneurship qualities through writing bank loan proposals and learning about goats and enterprises from ODL materials. Apart from this the women interviewed individually and collectively showed a remarkable sense of confidence and self esteem together with leadership qualities.

It is my opinion, that these women have been mobilized well and would be able to take on the goat rearing enterprise in a meaningful and profitable manner once the loans are distributed.

Outcome 2

Life long Learning enhancing the entrepreneurship qualities among women

Output 1

Innovative Quality Learning Conversation (QLC) using mobile phones as a tool for horizontal transfer of knowledge

Output 2

Innovative ODL materials

Output 3

More Self-Directed Learning among women

Output 4

Women attending formal training programmes of VIDIYAL

Output 5

Vidiyal strengthening ICT4D in its villages

The second outcome and the outputs intended for it are stated above and the following observations were made on this outcome during the review:

- Life long learning as a concept has been embraced by the women and it appears that they have learned from the different formats.
- Women have learned that it does not matter when, what and how they learn, as long as they learn something which they did not know earlier.
- The concept of using ODL materials which has been prepared by themselves intrigues the women.
- They also seem to realize that they too know and their knowledge is valid and others are willing to learn them.
- With regards to L3F activities, the women seem to enjoy coming out of their villages to meet fellow members.
- It appears the women from each village come in groups, which is a mark of comradeship and practicing safety procedures.
- The women, who are mostly “non - schooled” coming out together for L3F activities appear to see themselves as doing something worthwhile which gives them self-esteem and pride.
- The women seem to recognize that they are worthy and are able to validate themselves and each other. Not only in L3F activities but in their personal lives, within their families and the community. It appears there is transformational change in most of the women participating in this program.
- They also seem to feel a sense of responsibility and awakening for themselves and their community in their “new” status.
- The interaction with women from other villages gives them an opportunity to share their stories and lives in a non-threatening atmosphere.
- It appears some of the women have visited each other in their different villages and learned how different communities operate socially, economically and politically.
- Women seem excited about the learning opportunities presented by involving themselves in L3F activities.

With regards to output 1, the loans from the banks have not been distributed as yet and hence the women have not bought their mobile phones and the quality learning conversations have not taken place. At the time of writing this report, I have learned that the loans will be distributed on August 15, 2008.

As for output 5, Vidiyal has sensitized the villagers on the use of computers and women have been trained but due to lack of funding has not purchased computers and set up Village Knowledge Centres. Vidiyal has the capability to promote ICT4D in the villages but what holds them back is the funding.

5.3 Unexpected Outputs and Outcomes

Though the project was termed Life long Learning Project, in its short term of six months, it has been able to achieve a number of unexpected outputs and outcomes.

- Repayment of loans by the SHGs has encouraged the banking sectors to support L3F as a business strategy. The banks are now in the process of considering the establishment of L3F kiosks as a learning tool for prospective rural clients.
- It appears there is considerable interest from two private Life long Learning and ICT kiosk owners that they would like to be part of the L3F project. One is based in Uppukkotai and the other in Govindanagaram. Both seem to have had previous experiences with L3F and practice ODL and lifelong learning for clients. They both are enterprising and capable generating income to make a living with these kiosks. But the question is whether they can make an adequate living for themselves and their families? It appears they can do this only if they add value to their kiosks through additional commercial or service products. This is where these private entrepreneurs need help and assistance to make the kiosks more lucrative. In my view, private kiosks may be the future for L3F, where private kiosks deliver ODL materials and promote ICTech MODE together with commercial or service products. If these models develop and sustain themselves, roadside kiosks would become the norm and private enterprises will take over this concept and flourish. COL may wish to assist these two enterprises by probably working with them and perhaps learn how private kiosks work. There may be mutual benefits.
- This could be an appropriate moment to relate the experiences of a woman called Ms Arasakumari, who benefited from an earlier L3F project and now interacts with a kiosk owner named Mr Gnanakulandhai in Uppukkotai. (Please see Page 27)
- Another unintended output of the L3F experience seems to be the independent enterprises the SHGs have now established outside the present projects. One is the paper making factory of a SHG where the marginalized women have leveraged a loan and now doing a sustainable business of supplying paper and paper products manufactured from banana stems and leaves. The other is another SHG getting together to make bio-fertilizers with *Pseudomonas* bacteria. Here women with grade 4 and 6 education use autoclaves and lamina flow instruments to culture bacteria in a 2 room rented house. It blows ones mind that this is possible!! The success of both enterprises is that the COL consultant in Chennai had a hand in the negotiations and assisted them in the marketing of their products on a buy back basis. Success stories indeed!
- From the various discussions and interactions with the women, it appears the women have a strong bond with the staff of Vidiyal and trust them implicitly.
- The women also seem to be very confident in themselves, assertive in their actions and respond with a positive attitude by looking at the brighter side.
- The group cohesion seems to be strong as they are willing to discuss even if they differ in their opinions. The very fact that each member of the SHG is willing to support a defaulting member and come to her rescue speaks volumes for trust and group dynamics.
- Due to the self esteem and confidence the women have developed they organize local functions and take up local issues with various governmental and non-governmental agencies. In short they are involved in advocacy. They also seem to be confident about

speaking to anyone in the district e.g. President of the Panchayat, bank officials, government officials etc

- The computers, mobile phones etc do not seem to worry them and the women realize that they are able to operate them and benefit from their use. They also do not seem to be fazed by the learning materials as they can hear and understand what is being said in the modules.
- Use of TVs and DVDs are familiar to women as a few of them use these instruments to watch films. So learning through them is not very new. Women are able to upload ODL materials into their local cable systems in a village called “Sulapuram” in Theni District.



Lifelong Learning

for Farmers

Experiences of Arasakumari

Arasakumari stopped her middle school education and worked as an agricultural labourer to support her family in the village of Uppukottai, in the Theni district, Tamil Nadu. Later she got married to a landless agricultural labourer in the same village. Murugan used to work as a labourer in a sugarcane field. They have a boy and a girl.

During 2005, COL supported Mr. Gnanakulandai, the local internet kiosk operator to develop Lifelong Learning for farmers (L3F) project in the village. Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Mr. Gnanakulandai helped nearly 30 women to learn about various livelihood opportunities, in particular backyard dairy management. The COL project also helped the women with linkages to the banks for credit and the market for buying -back the products. Arasakumari was one among the many women. Through bank credit, she bought two cows. Using the learning from the L3F project, she managed the animals in an improved manner and obtained a yield of about 15 to 20 litres of milk/day/ cow, whereas the average productivity in the village was 10 litres/day per animal.

By 2006, COL withdrew from Uppukottai after the completion of the project. Then tragedy struck Uppukottai as well as Arasakumari's family. A peculiar disease hit the cows. In spite of vaccinations, the animal productivity declined drastically. The village community using ICT facilities contacted veterinary experts, bankers and insurance agencies. The milk productivity declined to 2 litres per animal per day. The insurance company argued that they would not be able to pay any insurance unless the cow becomes dry completely. So there was Arasakumari trying to cope with the loss of milk when tragedy struck again. This time it was Murugan, her husband who lost both his legs in an accident in the agricultural field.

Though shocked, dejected and sad, the undaunted Arasakumari, with the support of fellow learners planned for improving the backyard dairy. The villagers including Arasakumari approached the bank for help.

They used ICT facilities to communicate with the bank. The bank waived her loan under a Government of India programme. She sold the animals at a very low price. The local community and the self-help group women gave her a loan with low interest rate to buy two new cows. With the knowledge of learning from the L3F project she identified and bought two healthy cows. She consulted the veterinary experts using emails and telephones and developed a balanced feed and disease management plan for raising the cows.

Today, Ararasukamri manages to get an average yield of about 15 to 20 litres per cow. According to her she has a net income of about Rs. 2500 to Rs. 3000 per month from backyard dairy alone which is much higher than what she received as a labourer, working in the field the whole day. She now spends her time with her family and the back yard dairy. She is now able to care for her children and send them to school, so that they may have an education and a bright future. She assists her husband, who cannot work in the field, but now helps her with the children, cows and the home. She attributes the higher income, children's care, new opportunities and time with her husband to the learning and confidence she obtained from the L3F project.

Arasakumari goes to the internet kiosk of Mr Gnanakulandhai regularly to talk to veterinary experts by email or mobile phone. She meets her friends in the village and learns about new developments in the local dairy scenario. In her own context, her quality of life has improved.

Her lifelong learning continues!

6. Conclusions:

A) APPROPRIATENESS OF THE INTENDED OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

Outcome 1

- The L3F project with Vidiyal is a 6 month duration effort with limited funds obtained from COL. To achieve the outputs and outcomes, a major proportion of funds were to be obtained from the IOB as loans. The loans from IOB were not distributed till the review had taken place.
- This clearly means that the output of rearing goats and related outputs were not achieved.
- The above is purely due to the lack of funds at the appropriate time and this is understandable considering the established procedures of donors and banks and the manner in which they both operate.
- Funding agencies need to pay attention to the timing of funds distribution especially if the project is of short duration. Financial officers whether in the donor agency or the bank need to be sensitized about the timing of operations in the field and the project's duration so that they understand the mere disbursement of money does not help the project to achieve its objectives but it is the appropriateness of the disbursement that makes the difference whether a project is a success or not.
- In short, the project needs to make allowances for such shortcomings and if meaningful outputs are to be obtained appropriate durations should be negotiated at the project design stage so that the project is a success.
- Vidiyal and Vidivelli members should be congratulated for being patient and maintaining their enthusiasm and excitement even though the funds from the bank had not arrived.
- It appears that the strong cognitive social capital within members, group cohesion and the love of life long learning seems to have held the members together.
- The project staff in Canada and India are to be congratulated for their leadership and motivating efforts.
- Though the outputs of outcome 1 were not realized by practical enterprises, it is interesting to note that entrepreneur qualities of the women have been enhanced through the mere fact that individuals come together for the learning and take part in mutually benefiting activities.

Outcome 2

- The entrepreneurship qualities such as leadership, self-confidence, self-esteem, motivation, persistence, negotiation and motivation are clearly seen in the women from different SHGs in different villages.
- Life long learning has been initiated through formats such as formal training and innovative ODL materials, including self directed learning. Women now realize that to learn one does not need to go to formal classes but learning can be accomplished in different methods, such as experiences, discussions, sharing, television, radio, observation and listening. This recognition and realization of self-directed learning is another positive outcome of this project.

- Some women from these SHGs have learned to ask questions not only of themselves and family members but from government and bank officials. This is a giant leap for women who come from backgrounds where they are culturally tuned to follow and do what they are told. This is awakening!
- The 7200 hours of formal learning conducted by Vidiyal and the determination of the women to leave their families, household work and attend and learn through this process is an indication of the benefits this process has for women. In some cases, the women have been ostracized by their community for learning and yet they have come forward. This speaks volumes and cannot be captured in words!
- The benefits of getting together, interacting with each other and partaking in the discussions with mutual respect is a self elevating and transformational change for most of the women and is an indicator that cannot be easily quantified.
- Though the mobile phones were not used (because they were part of the loan package) quality conversations (no intense conflicts as women are from different backgrounds) seem to have taken place on an inter-personal level with mutual respect and the women seem to have benefited.

B) PROJECT CONTEXT, APPROPRIATENESS OF ACTIVITIES, THE ROLE OF THE PARTNERS, THE QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

- The project context has been appropriate as the climate in India for such projects is suitable. The Government of India and Tamil Nadu in particular encourages the use of ICTs. Vidiyal, the NGO chosen seems to be credible and able to deliver the deliverables. Women self help groups are making an impact and the banks have been requested by the Government of India to offer credit for rural enterprises. This together with AAC, which is an educational institution with a focus on rural development makes the context ideal for this kind of project.
- The activities have been appropriate, as they have focused on the outputs and outcomes of Lifelong Learning and TechMODE, which are central in the project.
- Unfortunately the short duration of the project, has not helped because of the lateness of the loans from the bank. This is one aspect which could have been anticipated and if it had been taken into account earlier it would have made a huge difference to the expectations of the women and the project.
- The partners have all assumed their roles and responsibilities fairly well. Vidiyal and Vidivelli have delivered admirably. AAC has supported the SHGs and Vidiyal's efforts. COL has played a catalytic and encouraging role by representing the efforts of the members in different forums and also providing its funds in a timely manner. It is the IOB bank which seems to have delayed. Knowing banks and how they operate in India, this is to be expected, as the branches themselves do not have the authority to approve funds for distribution. It is this factor that needs to be taken into consideration in future projects and adjustments made so that the expectations of the beneficiaries are met in a timely fashion.

- With regard to the partners in India, mainly Vidiyal, this NGO is struggling to maintain itself. In fact, Vidiyal is sustained by Vidivelli, which contributes Rs 300,000 per annum. This is remarkable for a federation of women self help groups. However, Vidiyal staff members do have needs and obligations by family members. It is hard to see how this organization can grow or attract dedicated members when they are not able to pay competitive salaries and benefits. It is hard for any organization to survive and grow on volunteer work when its own members are in need. This is an aspect which needs to be studied and rectified so that Vidiyal can continue to do the work it does or very soon the dedication and commitment may move on to other activities and it will be the communities that will stand to lose.
- The quality of the management and implementation of the activities seem to have been positive. If the interviews with the individuals and group beneficiaries are an indicator, they all seem to support the management of Vidiyal and even seem to pay them annually through their federation Vidivelli. It is to be noted that Vidiyal is employed by the federation of women SHGs, Vidivelli, and they are the decision makers while Vidiyal only executes their wishes. In order not to confuse the management of other enterprises of the federation with that of the project, the project had formed a separate project management group which consisted of different stakeholders and the execution of their wishes were done by Vidiyal. The participatory and open nature of the management of this project is to be appreciated.

C) EFFECTIVENESS OF COL'S DIRECT AND INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROJECT

- The formulation of the project concept through electronic media, the participatory nature of the discussions, the facilitation offered by COL, the discussions at the PCF's, the consensus derivation and the pilot testing in India are all actions which are worthy of a meaningful project being designed.
- The research, time, partner selection and ownership building are all key elements for a successful project and COL has demonstrated this aspect.
- The main goals of COL, namely the promotion of Life long Learning and ICTs has been the focus in all these projects with the consequent reduction of poverty.
- COL's contribution in monetary terms is not very much on this project. But in terms of what it has achieved with that small amount of money is colossal. In today's world of development, according to donor agencies, a successful project is one which disburses large amounts of money and not what results have been obtained!! Unfortunate? yes, but this is the attitude that prevails. It is refreshing to see that COL with its limited funds is able to achieve so much more in outputs and outcomes.

- In short, even if the financial investment was small, in terms of time and energy the investment has been substantial. As for results and impact it has been impressive.
- However, this does not mean that COL should not invest more in such projects. These projects do produce results to reduce poverty, encourage life long learning and promote ICTs, which are some of the goals of COL. If it does meet the mandate and COL is proud of these outcomes, as it should be, the level of investments in such projects should be increased so that the projects will achieve more and the personnel who work in these projects feel comfortable and rewarded in a sustainable manner.
- International agencies who receive funding from donor agencies are able to demonstrate to the donors that they are achieving results, which helps them to receive continued funding. This success is largely due to the work of dedicated partners and people in developing countries who work diligently. No doubt the partners receive benefits but most of it is for the beneficiaries. It is time international agencies considered the personnel in these countries and provided them with reasonable and just benefits so that they too with their families could lead a better quality of life. Partnership is a word that is used freely. It may now be necessary to re-consider its meaning in our own development projects and examine ourselves, whether there is true and equal partnership in our joint activities. For our work we do profess and practice partnership but for benefits is there partnership is the question? Policies on these aspects need to be examined and appropriate action taken to usher in perhaps the “just partnership”.
- The networks and relationships that COL resource persons possess with diverse people in international and national contexts is important. This is one of COL’s strengths and has been an effective facilitator for these projects. COL needs to maintain these networks and encourage them.
- The effectiveness of the COL consultant in Chennai has played a major role in the outcomes of the project. The consultant is knowledgeable, resourceful, enthusiastic, friendly, connected, direct and has very good public relations with the project and other personnel. The consultant has been able to intervene and negotiate on behalf of the project as a COL consultant and this status together with his own abilities gives him credibility. This is a major factor in the effectiveness of the project.
- The COL team is respected in the project area. It appears that many members of COL from Canada have traveled to the sites, listened and encouraged the beneficiaries and project personnel. Canadians and Indians have learned and benefited. These visits and discussions with each other mean a lot to the people in projects. We all feel respected and this gives us and the people in the projects validity within our own households and communities. We together feel reinforced. We feel that we care for each other. We all feel connected. We all feel that there is hope. There is HOPE and a BETTER FUTURE for ALL.

D) LESSONS LEARNED

It appears that during the process of designing the project, its implementation and completion, the partners of this collaborative project may have learned a number of lessons and each of them is briefly described.

Needs: It appears the needs of the communities were well researched through PRAs, then discussed and tested before the project was proposed. As a result it appears the context, partners, objectives and management were appropriately designed.

Participatory Approach to Project Design: From the very beginning of the project, a number of stakeholders were involved in the identification of priorities, methods to be adopted for achieving the objectives and the general implementation of the project. This aspect is to be commended.

Ownership by Stakeholders: All the stakeholders seem to feel that they have ownership of the project. This is a great advantage to the project and this aspect has been dealt with earlier.

Project Leadership: Vidiyal together with the SHGs have taken leadership of the project. As mentioned earlier the relationship between the two is symbiotic and augurs well for the project. With the creation of the project management group, they are also able to keep the management of the project at arms length from the other activities of the organizations.

Shared Understanding: The understanding of a project is different to the designer, implementer, the participant or the administrator. This is due to the fact that the project is perceived differently by each stakeholder. It is for this reason that it is important that time be allocated to obtain a shared understanding of the project so that all involved are able to clear their doubts. It appears in this project, the understanding among all stakeholders is similar and the leadership should be congratulated for spending the time to mobilize and create the necessary awareness to all concerned.

Trust, Mutual Respect: Cognitive social capital is the main objective of this project and from the interviews and discussions it appears the group has achieved this. Trust and mutual respect are paramount if the project is to achieve its goals. These qualities are built over years of getting to know each other and through the actions that we perform. Once achieved it has to be nourished and carefully nurtured so that it is not tarnished in any way. Further, it is paramount that the partners commit to the long term. The more consistent the personnel involved, the more likely the project will be successful.

Relationships and Networks: Relationships and networks play a key role in projects and it appears the resource person at COL and the COL consultant in Chennai had excellent relationships and networks with people which was reflected in the implementation and progress of the project.

True and Equal Partnership: Partnership is a two way process in which each partner trusts and respects the other, often this respect is developed even before the project is conceived. This appears to be partially correct in this project, as most of the partners knew each other and the

context was appropriate. Once the project is developed the power usually shifts to the institution which has greater affiliation and reporting responsibilities to the funding agency. In this project, though COL was the funding agency, it had delegated most of the decision making to the partners on site and allowed the PMG to manage the project. The project design had ensured this and therefore there was a greater degree of partnership in the work of this project, not necessarily a “just partnership”.

Communication: Communication has been critical in moving this project forward.

The establishment of cognitive social capital among the members of the project had far reaching payoffs in communication. Ground rules appear to have been established so that no member of the project was threatened or felt uneasy in expressing his or her views. The members knew that whatever that was said at meetings was for the benefit of the project and thus all views were heard and listened to by all members.

Support of Institutions and Administrators: In Canada, the persons who develop and implement projects have a considerable amount of freedom. Institutional and administrative support is usually a given as long as the organization’s policies are followed. It appears that with COL, the COL consultant in Chennai was supported and given a great amount of autonomy. The specialist in COL was also supported by the senior administrators and in fact they had taken the trouble to visit most of the sites of the project and interact with the beneficiaries. This had a boosting effect on the beneficiaries and on the project.

Turnover of Administrators: As the project was of a very short duration, luckily there was no turnover of administrators. Turnover of administrators or managers is a major factor in the success or failures of projects and should be recognized.

Education, information and on site communication: This project had embodied this aspect in its very core and hence helped to overcome many of the challenges that accrue from them.

Remove Barriers to Participation by Women and Marginalized Groups: The main stakeholders of this project were women and marginalized groups and hence the project design had targeted the appropriate persons and was very relevant as a development project.

Politics: It is important to recognize the role of politics in the development field. However much one wants to keep it away, politics does affect the lives of people and the sooner one recognizes it the better. The policy of the Government of India to encourage banks to offer rural credit to farmers was an important factor in the banks approving loans and being a partner in the project.

Cultural Relativity of Time: The timelines often established during project design are at best guidelines. This is a point that needs to be appreciated by all concerned with projects. The datelines set in the project document hardly coincided with the activities in the field. An example in this project is the approval and distribution of loans by the Indian Overseas Bank and its officials. One needs to understand such delays and make provisions for it in the design of the project and its implementation.

Active listening and flexibility: It appears the project benefited greatly by the active listening and flexibility demonstrated by COL, and the COL consultant in Chennai. It appears they relied on careful listening to recommendations from the counterparts in the field and acted with flexibility. It appears the flexibility and empathy with which the project officers worked and listened to the suggestions of project implementers greatly facilitated project execution.

Sustainability of the Project: Vidiyal and Vidivelli are prepared and organized to continue with the outcomes of the project. The staff of Vidiyal and members of Vidivelli acknowledge improved skills and are prepared to raise their standards of living through enterprises. In fact they have learned how to work together, apply for credit, obtain and repay them. This is a remarkable achievement, which would have enormous consequences for their quality of life.

Structurally, the physical facilities are in place and the clients are sensitized to the benefits of cognitive social capital and life long learning. They have also learned entrepreneurship skills which could be transferred to other enterprises, such as the drinking water project. It is now up to COL to see how Vidiyal could be self sustained so that they are able to work with other groups and contribute to society.

International development projects such as the ones conducted in partnership with institutions in India have been unique. They have been unique because of the commitment of the individuals and institutions in providing expertise and resources to help and assist their own people. COL's role has been mainly that of a facilitator which provided initial funds and designed the project collaboratively and assisted the people to believe in themselves. Through collaborative partnership projects like this, the partners have learned a number of lessons, which at the outset may have looked insignificant, but turned out to be significant. Most challenges are not technical but human and building cognitive social capital is one method through which success can be achieved.

It is our hope that persons working on future projects will benefit from the lessons learned.

7. Recommendations

Based on the review findings, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1: In view of the overall implementation of phase I of the Cognitive Social Capital Life long Learning for Farmers (L3F) Project and lessons learned during this process it is recommended that a Phase 2, be pursued and the project continued. This will allow Vidiyal and the SHGs who have now obtained their bank loans, to develop their entrepreneur skills in a more practical manner, develop markets and popularize life long learning among the communities.

Recommendation 2: Phase II project should have a clear and comprehensive design detailing expected accomplishments, outputs, activities and required inputs. Allowances for delays in the inputs, where there is no control by the project, should be recognized in the design.

Recommendation 3: The project office of Vidiyal is an essential ingredient for successful coordination and management of the L3F project. In view of the increased activity of the SHGs and Vidiyal itself, the project coordination office should be strengthened to service the project stakeholders effectively. This should include capacity to undertake and support partners in the monitoring, reporting and documentation of the project work.

Recommendation 4: In view of the successful model developed where the appropriate partners have been identified, context utilized, bank loans negotiated, it is recommended that a joint and comprehensive review be conducted of L3F projects. The purpose is to identify strategies for strengthening and promoting such initiatives in different countries, as pilot and demonstration projects, recognizing that individual places may have specific needs.

Recommendation 5: COL should increase its investment in such L3F projects through longer durations so that they may be more comprehensive and achieve them with just and equitable benefits to partners. Capacity building efforts for banking and market agencies is a strategy that may be considered to promote life long learning within the marginalized communities.

Recommendation 6: Vidiyal should be encouraged to explore self sustaining and cost recovery systems so that the organization may be sustainable. This would help it to be self reliant and attract the talent most suitable for its work.

Recommendation 7: COL should keep its focus on Life long Learning and ICTs.

Recommendation 8: COL should consider the establishment and promotion of private L3F kiosks with touch screens and ODL materials. In addition to the touch screens, the kiosks should be encouraged to have value addition so that the kiosk may attract farmers, marginalized communities and the general public. The purpose is that the private kiosk owner or facilitator is able to sustain him/herself and at the same time promote L3F.

Recommendation 9: As part of the L3F project, COL should develop training programs on negotiation and mediation so that the staff of Vidiyal, SHGs and other organizations learn these very important skills and apply them in overcoming their challenges.

Recommendation 10: COL should share its experiences of the L3F project with major donors and development practitioners so that they may learn and possibly apply the principles and concepts in their own program.

Recommendation 11: To disseminate and communicate how the L3F model works COL should document its L3F activities in video or DVD formats. This would serve as a guide for developing such programmes in English, French and Tamil and possibly other local languages as the need arises. These audio-visual materials (ODL perhaps!!) will help to sensitize development practitioners and possibly encourage them to visit these projects later on!! Another useful aspect of these materials is that they could be used by educational institutions, across the world, to supplement their lectures and demonstrate success stories in development.

Recommendation 12: COL's strength is its resource persons and the extensive international networks and contacts they bring with them. L3F is a case in point where its development and implementation were facilitated by these networks. COL should recognize these networks, maintain and build on them as a key strategy. COL should also look within major donor countries to explore whether they can partner with development professionals to extend their work with creative linkages.

Recommendation 13: As COL is interested in contributing to the MDGs, it maybe beneficial to explore and study whether the L3F concepts on ODL and ICTs could be modified for programmes in governance, health, gender etc.

Recommendation 14: COL's strategic use of limited resources, its status, image and high profile visits have all contributed to the leveraging of partnerships, high level of investments and collective buy-in. It may be useful to examine and consider whether a similar approach could be utilized across the organization and others.

PROMOTING LIFE LONG LEARNING AMONG SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF ARUL ANANDAR COLLEGE (AAC).

1. Executive Summary

“Life Long Learning for Farmers (L3F)” as a new paradigm for extension in agriculture and food security is slowly gaining momentum in India and in other developing countries. Arul Anandar College has realized that the country needs human resources to support the multi-dimensional activities the new initiatives require. The present agricultural extension courses do not provide the necessary perspectives. In order to provide the necessary courses and integrate the ICT in the curriculum AAC teamed up with Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, Canada and Vidiyal, an NGO based in Rasingapuram, Theni District, Tamil Nadu to develop the project on “Life long Learning among small and marginal farmers in the neighbourhood of Arul Anandar College (AAC)”.

Intended outputs/outcomes for the activity

The outputs and outcomes of the project were 1) trained staff and students in L3 and TechMODE such as e-learning, learning management system, open source learning, etc 2) a demonstration centre established on ICT based L3 with the help of the ‘Light on the Wall’ concept. This concept is essentially a self-directed learning tool which is a “touch screen” with ODL materials. Learners wishing to learn can use the touch screen and bring up the materials for self learning 3) students trained in various aspects of L3 such as conducting a situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, writing project proposals for banks, networking, etc 4) assess the effectiveness of integrating L3 and TechMODE in the curriculum and to define a long term, self sustaining education process in L3 and TechMODE (integrated into the graduate and post graduate courses) 5) the L3 in the project of Vidiyal supported with multi-media generated learning materials from AAC.

M & E purposes

A key enabling condition for effective evaluation is the early establishment of monitoring and evaluation framework in the project planning phase. This appears to have been accomplished with the RBM based model and the results chain. It also had clear indicators to track progress and the external factors that would influence the project which were backed with evidence. To cross check the evidence triangulation has been used by checking the documents, physical verification and speaking with individuals and groups of stakeholders.

The purpose of this M & E review is to provide stakeholders with feedback on the project performance in relation to the set objectives and expected results. The early establishment of the M & E framework in the planning phase with the RBM based model and performance indicators to track the progress of the project is helpful. Emphasis is also placed on forward looking recommendations that would help to improve project design and implementation effectiveness in Phase II of the project.

Findings-expected and unexpected

The expected findings were 1) the management of the project is largely directed by a reverend father who is interested in Life long Learning and ICTs 2) a project office at AAC is functional 3) consultations on a need basis takes place with interested staff and students 4) the management system, specific to educational institutions in the region seems to be efficient 5) the management system may need to adapt once the farmers become involved in the project for which the institution seems to be prepared 6) selected staff and students trained in L3 and TechMODE, so that they may become trainers of future staff, students and farmers 7) concept of L3 has not been integrated into the curriculum as yet 8) AAC has established one “Light on the Wall touch screen”. The others are proposed to be established after funding is obtained and villages selected 9) 3 multi-media ODL materials produced 10) AAC has begun the process of sensitizing the university and market re the relevance of L3 and TechMODE. This process may take time.

The unexpected findings were: 1) opportunities for AAC to place additional students in villages. 2) additional competencies for staff and students 3) AAC understands skills and competencies required by banks 4) bank officials familiar with AAC students for recruitment purposes 5) information centres in villages allow students to develop business skills 6) practical skills being developed 7) benefits of internationalization and mutual understanding.

Conclusions:

- The concept of integrating L3 and TechMODE in the curriculum of relevant courses as an outcome and the steps taken to achieve it are most appropriate, though there may be a delay.
- AAC’s objectives of establishing field based L3 centres with “Light on the Wall touch screens” are relevant.
- As an educational institution, AAC should produce appropriate ODL materials
- AAC should pursue to advocate for L3 and TechMODE curriculum at AAC and MKU.
- Context for the project and the activities conducted in the project are appropriate though the duration of the project is too short.
- The roles and responsibilities of the partners have been complementary and mutually reinforcing.
- The quality of the management and implementation of the activities seem to have been positive for the context.
- COL’s direct and indirect contributions to the project have been effective.
- COL’s investment in these projects could be increased considering the impact it makes and could make in the future.
- COL’s partnership with the institutions and personnel in developing countries should be re-examined for a “just partnership”.
- The COL consultant in Chennai played an effective role in this project

Recommendations:

1. Phase two of the project be continued
2. COL assist AAC to negotiate with Madurai Kamaraj University to obtain the necessary approvals on courses and course curriculum.
3. COL assist AAC to obtain multi-media visual production facilities and the “Light on the Wall touch screens” in each of the identified villages.

4. COL increase its investments in L3 projects and conduct them for longer durations..
5. AAC be encouraged to explore self sustaining and cost recovery systems so that the field centres may be sustainable.
6. COL consider the encouragement of private L3 kiosks with touch screens and ODL materials with commercial/ service products as value addition.
7. COL share its experiences of the L3 project with major educational and development practitioners, internationally.
8. COL document its L3 activities in video or DVD formats and disseminate them for learning and development purposes.
9. COL recognize its own networks, maintain and build on them as a key strategy. COL should also work with major donor countries to explore whether they can partner with development professionals to create new linkages.
10. COL's strategic use of limited resources, its status, image and high profile visits have all contributed to the leveraging of partnerships, high level of investments and collective buy-ins. It may be useful to examine and consider whether a similar approach could be utilized across the organization and others.

Limitations

1. The review needed more time in the field to reach the unanticipated areas of impact and to do justice to the review report through reflection.

3.0 Project Context

Introduction

“Life Long Learning for Farmers (L3F) as a new paradigm for extension in agriculture and food security is slowly gaining momentum in India and in other developing countries. The banking sector and other financial institutions are gradually realizing the need for L3F as a business strategy to reach millions of rural poor in India. The Finance Minister of Government of India has introduced the concept of “Including the excluded” in the banking sector and L3F is one such option for reaching the un-reached in a self-sustaining manner. Pilot projects are taking place in many parts of the country.

While such new initiatives are taking place, very few realize that such initiatives require human resources to support the multi-dimensional activities. The banking sector has been constantly suggesting the need for trained human resources to support such innovative ideas. At present the students who are coming out of agricultural extension courses have limited perspectives about the role of banking and the role of life long learning in agricultural development. There is a need to have students developing multi-dimensional perspectives to address such issues. In addition to the innovative courses, the students also need to know and understand the role of ICT, Technology Mediated Open & Distance Education (TechMODE), relevance of Self Directed Learning, etc. Practitioners of rural development and academics feel that if students, rural farmers and agricultural workers are to cope with the changing world and globalization effectively they should be able to learn and contribute towards the self directed, self sustaining and self replicating development processes.

Objectives of the L3F Project

The objectives of the present project are:

01. To build the capacity of some select staff and students in L3F and TechMODE such as e-learning, learning management system, open source learning, etc.
02. To establish a demonstration centre on ICT based L3F with the help of the ‘Light on the Wall’ concept. This concept is essentially a self-directed learning tool which is a “touch screen” with ODL materials. Learners wishing to learn can use the touch screen and bring up the materials for self learning.
03. To train the students in various aspects of L3F such as conducting a situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, writing project proposals for banks, networking, etc.
04. To assess the effectiveness of integrating L3F and TechMODE in the curriculum and to define a long term, self sustaining education process in L3F and TechMODE (integrated into the graduate and post graduate courses)
05. To support the L3F project in Vidiyal with multi-media generated learning materials.

A) DESCRIPTION OF INTENDED OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES AND RELATED SUCCESS INDICATORS

Please see table 2 for description of outputs/outcomes and indicators

Table 2: Outputs, Outcomes and Indicators

Objectives	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	Risks and Assumptions	Milestones for the Roadmap by July 2008
Outcome 1 Concept of L3F getting integrated in the courses of IT and Rural Development in the College	1. Syllabus of undergraduate and post-graduate programmes of AAC specifying various dimensions of L3F	June 2008	June 2009	1. Comparison of syllabus of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009	1. University and Board agreeing to the integration of new concept.	
Output 1 Capacity of staff and students of AAC on Tech MODE and L3F strengthened	1. 1500 person hours of training conducted with the help of COL on L3F and Tech MODE, WikiEducator, Open Source Management, e-Learning etc	May 2008	December 2008	1. Physical verification of training records, learning materials and attendance.	1. COL supporting the external human resources for training	
Output 2 Introducing L3F and Tech MODE in L3F and Tech MODE as test case in undergraduate and post graduate programmes	1. Draft syllabus framed. 2. Learning materials in print form as well as in multi-media form developed 3. 750 person hours of information collection by students for the project. 4. 700 students studying L3F and Tech MODE as part of their course.	June 2008	June 2009	1. Assessments of students performance 2. Physical verification of learning materials	1. Board of the College approving the test case.	
Outcome 2 AAC establishing field based L3F centres and linking	1. AAC establishing "Light on the Wall" project at Checkanoorani. 2. AAC helping	May 2008	December 2008	1. Physical verification of the "Light on the Wall" centre. 2. Records of Vidiyal and PMG	1. AAC getting external support to set up the centres	

Objectives	Indicators	Baseline	Target	Means of Verification	Risks and Assumptions	Milestones for the Roadmap by July 2008
with the activities of AAC	VIDIYAL in preparing learning materials. 3. AAC students getting trained in Vicinal and “Light on the Wall Project”.					
Output 1 AAC setting up the “Light on the Wall (LoW)centre”	1. Approval of the plan of Light on the Walls by stakeholders of Checkanoorani 2. Developing an operation plan for providing dynamic and static information in LoW. 3. Training the students to provide regularly the dynamic information. 4. Monitoring and review of LoW.	May 2008	December 2008	1. Approved plan 2. Pre-Project survey 3. Physical verification 4. Records of training programmes 5. Records of operations 6. Post project survey	1. AAC getting external support to set up the centres 2. Stakeholders accepting the setting up of LoW.	

Output 2 AAC providing multi-media learning materials for Vidiyal	1. AAC developing 6 multi-media learning materials for Vidiyal.	May 2008	December 2008	1. Physical verification 2. PMG records of Vidiyal	1. Vidiyal indicating its learning needs to AAC	
Outcome 3 University and market considering the relevance of L3F and tech MODE	1. Madurai Kamaraj University (MKU) discussing the relevance of L3F and tech MODE in various curriculums. 2. Students trained in L3F and tech MODE	May 2008	June 2009	1. University records and minutes of the meetings. 2. Placement records		

	getting better placement.				
Output 1 AAC developing and implementing policy advocacy strategies with MKU	1. AAC organizing workshop with MKU on L3F and Tech MODE and their relevance to students.	May 2008	December 2009	1. AAC records and the minutes of the meeting 2. MKU records	

Output 2 AAC developing policy advocacy strategies with the market	1. AAC developing brochures on L3F and Tech MODE and distributing to companies visiting AAC for campus placements	May 2008	June 2009	1. AAC records 2. Physical verification.		
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B) ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED TO ACHIEVE OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES Dec 2007-July 2008

AAC has successfully completed the following:

1. Establishment of “*Light on the Wall*”
2. Training of AAC staff and students in concepts and practices of ODL
3. Training of staff and students of AAC in preparing multi-media based training materials
4. Prepared more than 10 ODL materials in multi-media format and have shared them with VIDYAL.

With the above activities AAC has been able to achieve the first three objectives completely and to some extent the fourth objective.

C) PARTNERS INVOLVED

Arul Anandar College (AAC)

AAC is one of the few recognized colleges in India which offers graduate and post graduate and research programmes in rural development. It offers IT integrated graduate programmes and also professional computer courses at post graduate level. In the past few years, AAC has collaborated with various development agencies to implement grass-roots level development projects in the villages surrounding the campus.

During the last two years AAC has participated in many programmes organized by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). In particular, it is actively involved in developing the framework of L3F. AAC has realized that if L3F concepts have to be strengthened they should

be integrated into the curriculum of universities and teaching institutions. Concepts like open source learning, e-learning, learning management system, etc. are still not part of the conventional IT curriculum in many institutions. Therefore AAC is interested in developing the process oriented approach for integrating L3F and TechMODE in its rural development and IT programmes for the benefit of students.

Vidiyal

Vidiyal is a Non Governmental Organisation, working in Chinnamanur and Bodi blocks of Theni District, Tamil Nadu, India. As per the very literary meaning of the tamil word ‘Vidiyal’, the organization has been working for the real dawn or outbreak of their target groups from their socio-economic darkness. Vidiyal works with grass roots level people and organizes them through Self Help Groups (SHGs) and motivates them to recognize their own conditions and facilitates them to help themselves for their own development. Vidiyal works with 250 Self Help Groups, who now have savings and credits worth Rs.50 million per annum.. One of the main strengths of Vidiyal is that it facilitates a conducive environment for the Self Help Groups to plan for their progress and achieve them. Most of Vidiyal’s members are involved in animal husbandry and raise animals for their living.

Indian Overseas Bank

Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) is a major bank in India with about 1400 branches spread all over India. The Government of India has mandated the banks to offer rural credit to organized groups which present viable and sustainable agricultural projects. Rasingapuram has an IOB branch and with the facilitation of COL and Vidiyal, the SHGs have now obtained loans for their goat rearing enterprise.

Commonwealth of Learning

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Vancouver, Canada, is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training and one of its programmes is aimed at contributing to poverty reduction.

The focus for the poverty reduction programme at COL is through food security and environment sustainability. COL firmly believes that modern information and communication technology (ICT) that has given a new dimension to open and distance learning can help in reaching the un-reached and facilitate a self-directed learning among farmers, landless labourers and marginalised sections of the rural and urban communities.

Since India is also focusing on “ICT enabled rural development”, COL explored the possibility of integrating ICT and open and distance learning (ODL) for agricultural education, extension and training of farmers, landless labourers and extension officials. Accordingly, COL and its partners decided to find ways to use ICT to promote Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and thus contribute to rural poverty reduction (K.Balasubramaniam et al 2005).

D) LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

The reviewer was faced with methodological challenges with regard to performance measures for relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project that is influenced by many actors and external factors.

The time allocated for the review exercise of this project was underestimated. This was later compounded by the internal activities at AAC and the deadlines set by COL. This became clear after the review exercise commenced. The review needed more time in the field to reach the unanticipated areas of impact and to do justice to the project in the review report.

Due to the time constraint, this review could only focus on independent views of the project staff and group views of the beneficiaries who were directly involved in the project.

E) ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The review would not have been possible if the organizations visited in Tamil Nadu and the individuals who worked there did not share their thoughts and aspirations in the manner in which they did. They were all very helpful, open and frank with their views and comments. This provided the insight and the understanding on the issues, which were human and affected their livelihoods deeply.

The reviewer is grateful for the advice, assistance, logistical arrangements and the sharing of relevant documents and reports to the following organizations and individuals without whom this review could not have been accomplished.

Commonwealth of Learning
Vidiyal
Arul Anandar College
Dr Krishna Alluri
Dr K. Balasubramaniam
Mr Kamaraj
Fr Thomas
Fr Pusparaj
Dr John Joseph

3. Monitoring and Evaluation Purposes

A key enabling condition for effective evaluation is the early establishment of monitoring and evaluation framework in the project planning phase. This appears to have been accomplished with the RBM based model and the results chain. It also had clear indicators to track progress and the external factors that would influence the project which were backed with evidence. To cross check the evidence triangulation has been used by checking the documents, physical verification and speaking with individuals and groups of stakeholders.

The purpose of this review is to provide stakeholders with feedback on the project performance in relation to the set objectives and expected results. Emphasis is also placed on forward looking recommendations that would help improve project design and implementation effectiveness in Phase II of the project which would hopefully start in September 2008. The 6 month phase 1 project which started in December 2007 ended in July 2008.

In order to determine the performance of the project over the six month period, the review has looked at the relevance, validity and appropriateness of project design. It has also reviewed the achievement in implementation and monitoring of the planned project activities and outputs against actual result. Also examined are institutional arrangements and issues of sustainability. As far as possible, project outcomes have been highlighted. Key lessons learned from and challenges encountered in project implementation have been noted and recommendations made.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation Design and Implementation

Data Collection strategies

This review is an independent assessment which was conducted by one consultant with able facilitation offered by COL consultant for L3 Farmers project, Dr K. Balasubramaniam and the staff of VIDYAL and AAC. The methodology adopted was designed to meet the requirements and expectations set out in the terms of reference for this evaluation. The approach is considered credible to identify outcomes attributed to the project.

4.1 The Review Plan

The consultant and the COL consultant synthesized the review methodology, identified the issues to be addressed, developed guiding questions and identified sources of information on all aspects of project planning and implementation. This resulted into a review work plan and methodology which was discussed with the stakeholders at the meetings and helped them to understand about the review exercise and prepare them for their involvement in the process.

4.2 Document Review

A review was done of project documents including, but not limited to, relevant project documents, outputs, monitoring progress reports; project development /initiation materials; specific products developed for the project by implementing/ collaborating partners such as workshop reports, training materials, policies, strategic plans, technical reports and data bases.

4.3 Key Informants Interviews.

Discussions were conducted with individuals and in groups at AAC where students, farmers and the officials took part in the discussions. Structured and unstructured guiding questions, based on expected achievements and defined roles, were used as the tool for interacting with individual officers/key informants to get information on the various aspects of project implementation process, achievements and challenges.

4.4 Field Visits

Field Visits to project sites were conducted to view the activities and assess the out comes and impact of the project. It also provided opportunities for meetings with beneficiaries, facilitators and interested stakeholders.

4.5 Stakeholder Involvement

The project review has been conducted using a participatory approach whereby the consultant worked with the COL consultant for logistical and administrative support for the smooth conduct of the review. The review consultant also had close interactions with the various stakeholders involved in project implementation which facilitated direct discussions with them for independent views on the project performance. The information on project performance has, therefore, been derived from both primary and secondary sources. Findings on project performance and final recommendations for the evaluation are based on analysis made of information collected through three main methods; review of project documents; interviews with key stakeholders and project staff as well as through field visits.

5. Findings

5.2 Management and Implementation of activities

AAC is an educational institution with emphasis on education. The difference from other educational institutions is AAC's focus and emphasis on rural development. AAC's strongest faculty is the Rural Development Faculty and they seem to be deeply involved in the community and cater to rural students of that area. This gives AAC its credibility and status in the surrounding community which helps with the L3F project. Vidiyal with its associated SHGs and Federation is the second partner in this project. The third partner is COL.

AAC has set up a L3F project office within its campus and one of the senior reverends is the Project Director. As with most educational institutions, and for a number of valid reasons, the person of authority manages the project. Consultations and discussions with Vidiyal, farmers, students and the COL consultants take place when necessary but largely the project is managed by the project director.

It appears the system which is specific to the college seems to be efficient and the work moving forward as planned. Most of the activities of the project to this period have been within the college and not many challenges have been encountered.

Once the activities move to the surrounding villages the management system may change and this is recognized by AAC, which is positive for the project. It may be necessary at that stage to involve the farmers in the management of the project, so that they have a voice and be included in the conduct of the project. This would help to build capacity and eventually allow the project to be managed by farmers themselves for sustainability.

5.4 Achievement of Intended Project Outputs and Outcomes

Outcome 1

Concept of L3 being integrated in the courses of IT and Rural Development in the College

Output 1

Capacity of staff and students of AAC on Tech MODE and L3 strengthened

Output 2

Introducing L3 and Tech MODE as a test case in undergraduate and post graduate programmes

Output 1 in the above outcome has been achieved and the staff and the students are fairly confident in their capacities for Tech MODE and life long learning.

Output 2 is in the process of being negotiated with the Board of Studies and the different programmes.

As a result, Outcome 1 has not been achieved to-date and realizing how academic institutions work, it will take a few months for this to materialize.

Outcome 2

AAC establishing field based L3 centres and linking with the activities of AAC

Output 1

AAC setting up the “Light on the Wall (LoW) centre”

Output 2

AAC providing multi-media learning materials for Vidiyal

Output 1 has been set up in a kiosk near the AAC campus. It works very well and the multi-media touch screen is a pleasure to operate and is well established. In fact, AAC has deployed a Master’s student to assist the farmers operate the touch screen and answer questions. It is expected that the student will gradually move away from the kiosk once people familiarize themselves with the apparatus. The touch screen was originally expected to be placed in the market in area of Checkanoorani, where people assemble for the market, but unfortunately could not be placed there due to political pressures.

Output 2: Three multi-media ODL materials have been prepared by AAC and handed over to Vidiyal.

Outcome 2 has been partly accomplished as one field centre has been established. AAC has already surveyed about 10 villages and have identified a few for the establishment of the other centres.

Outcome 3

University and market considering the relevance of L3 and tech MODE

Output 1

AAC developing and implementing policy advocacy strategies with MKU

Output 2

AAC developing policy advocacy strategies with the market

On Outcome 3, AAC has begun the process of sensitizing the university and market re the relevance of L3 and TechMODE. This process will take time as the university has its own procedures and will not be rushed. The market too has to be sensitized and this is mainly achieved during campus placement.

5.5 Unexpected Outputs and Outcomes

- The interaction with farmers has given an opportunity for AAC to place more students in additional villages.
- The interaction of AAC with farmers in surrounding areas is limited because the staff have teaching and research duties which do not allow them to visit the fields often. The involvement of Vidiyal may help to alleviate this challenge.
- Students are beginning to use multi-media materials and gain additional competencies
- The interaction with bank officials allows AAC to assess what kind of students are employed by banks and train them accordingly.
- The interaction also allows the bank officials to assess the competencies of students from AAC for recruitment purposes
- The establishment of information centres in the villages allows students to learn business skills and later become entrepreneurs
- Students are able to hone their skills in a practical manner and not be limited to theory.
- The presence of the project encourages visitors from related fields, both national and international, to interact with staff and students which has benefits of internationalization, mutual understanding etc.

6. Conclusions

A) APPROPRIATENESS OF THE INTENDED OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

Outcome 1

- For an educational institution such as AAC, where rural development is the focus for rural students, the concept of integrating L3 and TechMODE in the curriculum of relevant courses as an outcome is most appropriate.
- In order to achieve the above AAC has built the capacity of selected staff and students in the above concepts.
- AAC is in the process of introducing the curricula in the different decision making bodies of AAC and the Madurai Kamaraj University where they need to be approved for students to obtain credit.
- These decision making procedures of the college are long and time consuming and one has to exercise patience.

Outcome 2

- Due to the focus of promoting rural development to rural students, AAC's objective of establishing field based L3 centres is most relevant.

- This not only consolidates their commitment to rural development, it also helps AAC to be present in the field. AAC has set up one “Light on the Wall – touch screen” on the road front, which is strategic to attracting farmers and passers-by. AAC has also engaged a student to help out with the operation and learning of ODL materials till the farmers become familiar with the machine and are self-directed.
- As an educational institution, AAC has the ability to research, compile and collate the information as necessary and produce ODL materials. AAC has already produced a number of materials with which they train their own students and share them with Vidiyal.

Outcome 3

- AAC has begun the process of advocating for the L3F and TechMODE to be incorporated in its own curriculum and that of the Madurai Kamaraj University. The approvals from the Board of Studies of AAC and the Madurai Kamaraj University are necessary to make progress. Once these approvals are obtained AAC intends to advocates these courses with employers and companies in the general market.

B) PROJECT CONTEXT, APPROPRIATENESS OF ACTIVITIES, THE ROLE OF THE PARTNERS, THE QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES

- The project context has been appropriate as the climate in India for such projects is suitable. The Government of India and Tamil Nadu in particular encourages the use of ICTs. AAC is an educational institution with a focus on rural development which caters to rural students. Practical experience for students and staff can be offered by Vidiyal. Together with AAC, offering students placements by inviting employers and companies to the campus makes the project ideal.
- The activities have been appropriate, as they have been developed in a sequential manner and the focus is getting the outputs and outcomes of Lifelong Learning and TechMODE, which are central in the project.
- Unfortunately the short duration of the project, has not helped because of the time and procedures that educational institutions require to approve new proposals.
- The partners have all assumed their roles and responsibilities fairly well. AAC has built the necessary capacity for this project with its staff and students. AAC has set up a “Light on the Wall Touch Screen” as a demonstration unit. More units would be set up once the present one is tested, more villages identified and more funding obtained. Vidiyal offers advice and is awaiting its first batch of students. AAC may wish to encourage Vidiyal to assist them with the field work with farmers. This could be beneficial for all stakeholders. COL has played a catalytic and encouraging role.
- The quality of the management and implementation of the activities seem to have been positive. If the interviews with the individuals and group beneficiaries are an indicator,

they all seem to support the management of AAC. The open nature of the management of this project is to be appreciated.

C) EFFECTIVENESS OF COL'S DIRECT AND INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PROJECT

- The formulation of the project concept through electronic media, the participatory nature of the discussions, the facilitation offered by COL, the discussions at the PCF's, the consensus derivation and the pilot testing in India are all actions which are worthy of a meaningful project being designed.
- The research, time, partner selection and ownership building are all key elements for a successful project and COL has demonstrated this aspect.
- The main goals of COL, namely the promotion of Life long Learning and ICTs has been the focus in all these projects with the consequent reduction of poverty.
- COL's contribution in monetary terms is not very much on this project. But in terms of what it has achieved with that small amount of money is creditable.
- In short, even if the financial investment was small, in terms of time and energy the investment has been substantial. As for results and impact it has been impressive.
- However, this does not mean that COL should not invest more in such projects. These projects do produce results to reduce poverty, encourage life long learning and promote ICTs, which are some of the goals of COL. If it does meet the mandate and COL is proud of these outcomes, as it should be, the level of investments in such projects should be increased so that the projects will achieve more and the personnel who work in these projects feel comfortable and rewarded in a sustainable manner.
- International agencies who receive funding from donor agencies are able to demonstrate to the donors that they are achieving results, which helps them to receive continued funding. This success is largely due to the work of dedicated partners and people in developing countries who work diligently. No doubt the partners receive benefits but most of it is for the beneficiaries. It is time international agencies considered the personnel in these countries and provided them with reasonable and just benefits so that they too with their families could lead a better quality of life. Partnership is a word that is used freely. It may now be necessary to re-consider its meaning in our own development projects and examine ourselves, whether there is true and equal partnership in our joint activities. For our work we do profess and practice partnership but for benefits.
The question is, is there partnership? Policies on these aspects need to be examined and appropriate action taken to usher in perhaps the "just partnership".
- The networks and relationships that COL resource persons possess with diverse people in international and national contexts are important. This is one of COL's strengths and

has been an effective facilitator for these projects. COL needs to maintain these networks and encourage them.

- The effectiveness of the COL consultant in Chennai has played a major role in the outcomes of the project. The consultant is knowledgeable, resourceful, enthusiastic, friendly, connected, direct and has very good public relations with the project and other personnel. The consultant has been able to intervene and negotiate on behalf of the project as a COL consultant and this status together with his own abilities gives him credibility. This is a major factor in the effectiveness of the project.
- The COL team is respected in the project area. It appears that many members of COL in Canada have traveled to the sites, listened and encouraged the beneficiaries and project personnel. Canadians and Indians have learned and benefited from this project.

D) LESSONS LEARNED

- Please see lessons learned under Vidiyal project

7. Recommendations

Based on the review findings, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendation 1: In view of the overall implementation of phase 1 of the Promotion of Life long Learning for Farmers (L3F) among small and marginal farmers and integration of the TechMODE and L3F in academic curriculum and lessons learned during this process it is recommended that a Phase 2, be pursued and the project continued. This will allow AAC to continue with its objectives and achieve its goals.

Recommendation 2: AAC is an important instrument in entering the educational system with L3F and ODL concepts. Therefore COL should assist AAC to negotiate with Madurai Kamaraj University to obtain the necessary approvals.

Recommendation 3: COL should assist AAC to obtain facilities and training in multi-media visual production and the setting up of Light on the Wall touch screens in each of the identified villages.

Recommendation 4: COL increases its investment in such L3F projects through longer durations so that they may be more comprehensive and achieve them with just and equitable benefits to partners. Capacity building efforts for banking and market agencies is a strategy that may be considered to promote life long learning within the marginalized communities.

Recommendation 6: AAC be encouraged to explore self sustaining and cost recovery systems so that the field centres may be sustainable. This would help them to be self reliant and attract the talent most suitable for their work. Vidiyal be encouraged to assist AAC in its field activities.

Recommendation 7: COL considers the establishment and promotion of private L3F kiosks with touch screens and ODL materials. In addition to the touch screens, the kiosks should be encouraged to have value addition so that the kiosk may attract farmers, marginalized communities and the general public. The purpose is that the private kiosk owner or facilitator is able to sustain him/herself and at the same time promote L3F.

Recommendation 8: COL shares its experiences of the L3F project with major educational and development practitioners so that they may learn and possibly apply the principles and concepts in their own program.

Recommendation 9: To disseminate and communicate how the L3F model works COL should document its L3F activities in video or DVD formats. This would serve as a guide for developing such programmes in English, French and Tamil and possibly other local languages as the need arises. These audio-visual materials (ODL perhaps!!) will help to sensitize development practitioners and possibly encourage them to visit these projects later on!! Another useful aspect of these materials is that they could be used by educational institutions, across the world, to supplement their lectures and demonstrate success stories in development.

Recommendation 10: COL's strength is its resource persons and the extensive international networks and contacts they bring with them. L3F is a case in point where its development and implementation were facilitated by these networks. COL should recognize these networks, maintain and build on them as a key strategy. COL should also look within major donor countries to explore whether they can partner with development professionals to extend their work with creative linkages.

Recommendation 11: COL's strategic use of limited resources, its status, image and high profile visits have all contributed to the leveraging of partnerships, high level of investments and collective buy-in. It may be useful to examine and consider whether a similar approach could be utilized across the organization and others.

9. Annexes

a) Data Collection Instruments:

1. Review Plan

- Review of contracts of consultant, Vidiyal and AAC
- Objectives and tasks to be accomplished in review
- Visit to field sites, planned in detail
- Issues to be identified
- Sources of information
- Persons to be interviewed individually and in groups
- Guiding questions to be asked for obtaining data
- Feedback

2. Document Review

- The L3 Farmers Project: Report and recommendations to the Commonwealth of Learning on Open and Distance Lifelong Learning for Smallholder Farmers and Agricultural Communities by Colin Latchem, Ajit Maru and Krishna Alluri
- Evaluation of the 2003-2006 commonwealth of learning strategic plan final report by Patrick Spaven march 2006
- An Interim Report on L3F for Farmers Project in Tamil Nadu by K. Balasubramaniam
- Towards a Perspective Plan for implementing L3F Project in Tamil Nadu, India by K. Balasubramaniam 2005
- Lifelong Learning for Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Rural Prosperity: Empowerment of Rural Women through Distance Learning Resources in Agriculture and Rural Development in Sri Lanka by K. Balasubramanian; March 2006
- Networks for lifelong learning and rural poverty reduction in Asia – lessons and challenges by K. Balasubramanian, Ajit Maru and Krishna Alluri
- Life Long Learning For Subsistence and Small Scale Farmers 3 Case Studies in Southern Africa by Jane Harley; May 2005
- Life Long Learning (L3F) for Farmers: A Pilot Project in Sri Lanka by Uma Coomaraswamy, Kshanika Hirimburegama, Krishna Alluri, for presentation at PCF5, March27-2008
- Annual Report of Vidiyal- 2007-2008 and their documents on project implementation
- Perspective plan of Vidiyal –L3F Project First Phase
- Perspective plan of Arul Anandar College – L3F Project First Phase
- COL’s contract with Vidiyal
- COL’s contract with AAC and their documents on project implementation

3. Key Informant Interviews

- a) **COL consultant at Chennai**
- b) **Vidiyal Officials**
 - Mr Kamaraj
 - Mrs Kannmani
 - Mr Kasi
- c) **Members of Vidivelli – 40 women (meeting)**
- d) **SHGs at Ramakrishnapuram – 58 women from SHGs (meeting)**
- e) **Uppukotai Kiosk**
 - Mr Gnanakulanthai – Kiosk Owner
 - Ms Arasakumari
 - Ms Allarani
 - Mr Pommakaali
- f) **MullaiNagar –Milk Federation**
 - My Mayaraj –President
- g) **Govindanagaram Kiosk**
 - Mr Chandrasekeran – Kiosk Owner
 - Members of SHGs – 8 women and three men (meeting)
- h) **Farmers Training Centre – TANUVAS**

Dr K.Saravanakumar
Dr T.A. Vijayalingam
Dr A. Senthilkumar

i) Aavin – Milk Collecting Centre

President
Secretary

j) Reddiarchatiram Seed Growers association – Kannivadi

Mr Rajasekar –President
Mr Kalaichelvan
Mrs Arogyamari
Mr Natarajan
Mr Mukilan - MSSRF
Mr Srinivasan – MSSRF

k) Arul Anandar College, Karamathur

Fr Pushparaj – Principal
Fr Thomas
Dr John Joseph
Mr Kannan
Mr Nirmal Kumar
Ms Kasturi
Students – 12 (meeting)
Farmers – 9 (Meeting)

l) Two Managers from Indian Overseas Bank (IOB)

4. Field Visits with COL consultant in Chennai

July 27	Chennai/Madurai – drive to Theni
July 28	Visit Rasingapuram – Vidiyal and Vidivelli – Meetings
July 29	Visit Ramakrishnapuram – Meet with SHGs
July 30	Visit Uppukotai – Meet SHGs and Private Kiosk Owners Visit MullaiNagar – Meet with President, Secretary of Federation
July 31	Visit Govindanagaram – Visit previous L3F Project Kiosks
Aug 1	Visit Farmer’s Training Centre – TANUVAS Visit Aavin Milk Collecting Centre
Aug 2	Visit Kannivadi – Reddiarchatiram Seed Growers Association
Aug 3	Meeting with all stakeholders at Theni
Aug 4	Visit AAC and discussions with stakeholders
Aug 5	Joint Discussion with AAC and Vidiyal for Perspective Plan Depart Madurai for Chennai
Aug 6	Discussion in Chennai re project with COL consultant
Aug 7	Depart for Canada

5. Stakeholder Involvement

- COL specialist in Vancouver
- COL consultant in Chennai

- Vidiyal staff
- Vidivelli members
- Earlier L3F Projects – key persons
- Entrepreneurs from previous L3F projects
- Arul Anandar College faculty, staff and students

b) Terms of Reference of Consultant

1. Review the projects of VIDİYAL and AAC based on the M & E plans developed by them;
2. Identify appropriate data and develop data collection strategies;
3. Study the milestones and roadmap for reaching the outputs and outcomes by December 2008-June 2009;
4. Organise stakeholders meeting in collaboration with VIDİYAL and AAC to assess the relevance of the milestones and roadmap;
5. Conduct a survey among the various clientele groups for studying their involvement and the potential impacts of the project;
6. Prepare and submit a report on optimizing the strengths and overcoming the challenges in achieving the outputs and outcomes;
7. Shall help AAC and VIDİYAL to evolve a perspective plan for implementing the project during July 2008-June 2009; and
8. Produce a report according to the M & E report format of COL (attached).

c) Contributors

- 1) The documents reviewed by the consultant
- 2) The women and men with whom discussions were held during the visit to the field
- 3) Dr Krishna Alluri
 Dr K.Balasubramaniam
 Mr Kamaraj
 Ms Jackamma
 Ms Kannmani
 Fr Rev. Thomas
 Dr Joseph John
 Mr Gnanakulanthai – Uppukotai
 Ms Arasakumari
 Ms Allarani
 Mr Chandrasekaran – Govindanagaram
 and many others