

PAKISTAN

COL activities in 2003-2006

BACKGROUND

Pakistan has had a long history of distance education and is home to one of the great mega-universities of the world. It is perhaps for this reason that Pakistan has included open and distance learning (ODL) in its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) which states: “Special attention is focussed on education and research infrastructure, electronic access highway, digital library programme, curriculum and distance education mechanism.” (Para 5.143: 2004). Pakistan resumed its contribution to COL in 2005-06. The last contribution Pakistan made was in 1995.

SUMMARY

During the 2003-2006 period, COL’s work in Pakistan proceeded along two dimensions: capacity-building within the country and support to senior staff to participate in training programmes and conferences in other countries. Even during the years when Pakistan was no longer in the Commonwealth (1999-2004), COL continued to engage with the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) for the development of the Commonwealth Executive master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/MPA) programme.

POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

Working in partnership

COL President Sir John Daniel visited Pakistan in connection with a Best Practice Awards Ceremony for the CEMBA/MPA programme in March 2005. At that time, he met the Prime Minister Mr. Shaukat Azi; the Education Minister, General Javed Ashraf Qazi; the Minister for Special Education, Ms. Zobaida Jalal; and the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission, Professor Atta-ur-Rahman.

COL, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the University of Abertay Dundee organised a professional development series: *Managing Change: Leadership and Strategic Change in Higher Education – a Programme for Leaders of Commonwealth Universities in Scotland* since 2000. The August 2006 event has been opened up to vice chancellors not just from Africa, as formerly, but from across the Commonwealth. The vice chancellors of AIOU and Fatima Jinnah University were selected for participation.

Preparation and use of learning materials

Pakistan was one of four countries on the Asian subcontinent to have participated in the development of the COL-supported CEMBA/MPA programme. This programme was first offered to students in Pakistan in 2003 and has attracted 592 students as at December 2005.

The COL-developed Teacher Training materials for technical and vocational education and training are being considered by AIOU for local use.

The COL/Open University of Sri Lanka Guidelines on Quality Assurance for Distance Education are being considered for use by the distance education system in Pakistan by the Higher Education Commission.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

COL organised a Multiple Media Content Development Workshop at the AIOU in March 2006 during which 41 staff members were trained and 14 scripts developed.

A Consultative Meeting for the South Asia Region to Promote Literacy and Skills Training was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 26-28 September 2005. A professor from AIOU and the Executive Director, Adult Basic Education Society in Pakistan participated in the event.

A senior official from Pakistan attended the first meeting of the South Asian Consortium for Teacher Education Development (SACTED) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 3-4 November 2004. The first Advisory Meeting of SACTED was held in Delhi, India on 24-25 January 2005 at which Pakistan was represented.

There were three COL-supported Pakistani delegates at the 3rd Pan-Commonwealth Forum held in Dunedin, New Zealand from 4-8 July 2004.

COL assisted the development of Open Schooling by sending staff from AIOU to attend an institute for education/government officials from Commonwealth developing countries organised at the National Institute of Open Schooling, New Delhi in September 2005.

Pakistan was part of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization, Bangkok to develop a multimedia training package on Gender and Rural Development which was completed in December 2004.

Pakistan is also one of the countries covered by CEMCA as the South Asia node for the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet).

A senior professor, Department of Business Administration, AIOU spent a two month sabbatical at COL during October and November 2005 to work on specific aspects of the CEMBA/MPA programme of which he is the coordinator for his institution.

The vice chancellor and two staff members of AIOU attended the Executive Governing Board (EGB) and the Academic Board (AB) meetings of the CEMBA/MPA programme in New Delhi in March 2004. The vice chancellor and a professor of AIOU attended the CEMBA/MPA EGB and AB meetings on 4-5 April 2006 in Penang, Malaysia.

A senior professor of AIOU participated in the Open Schooling conference held in Kovalam, India in February, 2006.

At an International Workshop for Community Radio Managers organised jointly by Anna University and COL in December 2004, one participant from Pakistan was sponsored jointly by CEMCA/COL and UNESCO.

LOOKING FORWARD

The period 2003-2006 was a successful one in terms of promoting professional development for Pakistani decision makers and practitioners. Attendance at events and conferences both at home and abroad permitted a very valuable exchange of expertise and experiences. In the 2006-2009 period there will be a greater opportunity to introduce new programmes and policies. AIOU is considering developing capacity in research and thesis writing at the Masters level in Rural Development with support from COL. AIOU is also in discussion with COL regarding the possibility of starting an open school.