

Commonwealth of Learning Media Empowerment - Delivering Health-Based Training and Information to Address the Millennium Development Goals



The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC) Staff Member Producing a Video about HIV/AIDS Prevention and Stigma in Swaziland

PLEASE NOTE: COL's COLME programme was wound down during 2007-2008. Please see www.col.org/livelihoods for COL's current Livelihoods & Health programme activities.

What is the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of more than 50 independent sovereign states, which provide support to each other, and work together toward international goals. The Commonwealth is described as a "family" of nations, originally linked together in the British Empire, and now building on their common heritage in language, culture and education, which enables them to work together in an atmosphere of greater trust and understanding than generally prevails among nations. Bringing together some 1.7 billion people of many faiths, races, languages, traditions and levels of economic development, the Commonwealth represents almost one-third of the world's population.

What is the Commonwealth of Learning?

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) 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. Headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, COL is the only official Commonwealth agency located outside Britain and is the world's only intergovernmental organisation solely concerned with the promotion and development of distance education and open learning. COL is helping to increase the capacities of developing nations to meet the demands for improved access to quality education and training.

Overview of COL's Work in the Health Sector

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underpin COL's current Three Year Plan (2006-2009) with three of the Goals focused on health (reduction of infant mortality, improvement of maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). COL's discussions with the World Health Organization (WHO) Geneva in 2001 resulted in a partnership in which COL has liaised with WHO country offices in identifying key players, mainly in-country non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who are addressing the health

concerns of disadvantaged groups. COL's role has been to work with these organizations by providing audio and video production digital technology and accompanying training, towards creating content to reach greater numbers of people with appropriate health information in the linguistic and cultural context of the targeted group(s). Delivery of training has been in the form of radio, television and village cinema events (projector, screen, generator and DVDs that the NGO has created concerning health issues in the form of skits and dramas). The work has served to strengthen the WHO/Ministry of Health to NGO link by having the WHO provide health information from their vast resources to the NGOs to be then produced for the targeted groups and delivered during health media events. The COL/WHO activities have also aided organisations in addressing donors with qualitative case study models, utilising digital images, audio and video describing work they are undertaking within their region/country.

During COL's past Three Year Plan (2003-2006) and now its current Plan (2006-2009), the organisation has liaised with the WHO in Sri Lanka, South Africa, Swaziland, The Gambia, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) in Guyana and Barbados. A summary and description of the activities are outlined below.

COL Health Activities

Summary of Health Initiatives with In-Country Organisations (See detailed descriptions below this section)

- **South Africa** – Valley Trust – Ongoing support on video productions concerning health issues in KwaZulu Natal. Video productions utilized in health events both locally and through national broadcaster.
- **The Gambia** – Nova Scotia Gambia Association (NSGA) - Enhancement of Peer Health Education project – 40% of population reached. Ongoing and reinforcement of health messages.
- **Sierra Leone** – Nova Scotia – Sierra Leone Programme (NSSLP) - Five videos produced for target groups. Delivered to rural areas and to truckers sensitizing them to issues of AIDS.
- **Swaziland** – The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC) - Media unit implemented, training conducted and videos and audio programmes produced and aired on TV.
- **Tanzania** – The Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC) – COL will work with WHO Tanzania and CSSC which is an ecumenical body representing the interests of about 15 member Churches and 10 Church related Organizations in Tanzania. CSSC is a strong voice of its members over 600 and 400 Church-owned Health and Education Institutions respectively in the country. Its main role is facilitation of delivery of social services, Education and Health. The activity with WHO and CSSC will focus on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention training.
- **Sri Lanka** - Sarvodaya - Health Media Unit established with Sarvodaya. Delivery of information (water and food safe) to tsunami affected groups on the Eastern shore of the country. Health pilot defined for North of the country (delayed).
- **India** – Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) – Following on from a COL activity with the Media Unit in 2003, COL is supporting the development and delivery of HIV/AIDS stigma video produced and delivery by TNAU's Media Unit to villages within the State of Tamil Nadu.
- **Solomon Islands** – Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) – COL working with the WHO office in Honiara, Solomon Islands has implemented of a health media centre with a local NGO, SIDT to address HIV and malaria issues throughout the country.
- **Kiribati** – Kiribati Video - Ongoing support for productions concerning health issues related to HIV/AIDS with a local video production organisation called Kiribati Video.

- **Papua New Guinea** – Anglicare STOPAIDS – Anglicare have regional offices in different parts of the country that will be able to deliver HIV prevention and stigma information with video productions produced at the headquarters in Port Moresby.
- **Guyana** - Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) – COL is working with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the GRPA to reach both coastal and remote communities with health information with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention.
- **Barbados** - Comfort, Assist, Reach-Out, Educate (C.A.R.E) – COL is working with PAHO and C.A.R.E to address issues in the country and region concerning HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention.

Initiative Descriptions

South Africa - COL/WHO HIV Stigma Training in South Africa (Implemented 2002)

In its current three year plan COL highlighted applying ODL to health in recognition of its relevance to the MDGs. The framework for COL's activities in health has been to align our efforts to WHO's priorities, specifically communicable diseases with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS. COL's expertise in ODL and training has brought a valuable element to WHO by reaching greater numbers of disadvantaged groups with health-based information and training. An example of this collaboration was an activity in KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa that addressed the issue of HIV/AIDS stigma. WHO headquarter in Geneva and COL partnered with an NGO called the Valley Trust (VT) in KwaZulu Natal to develop VT's capacity to adapt and create effective training and delivery of information to groups located in rural areas. VT is now able to create cost effective video-based information addressing a host of health issues and also effectively reach greater populations with HIV/AIDS stigma information that traditional face-to-face mode of delivery of training cannot.



Starlight Cinema - Village Health Cinema Event in The Gambia

The Gambia - Peer Health Education - Addressing Health and HIV/AIDS Stigma/Prevention Issues (Implemented 2001)

COL's has worked with the staff of the Nova Scotia Gambia Association (NSGA), an NGO based in both Canada and The Gambia. COL aided NSGA with both the technology and training to document NSGA's work in peer health education in The Gambia. NSGA is now utilizing both radio and video to reach villages throughout the country. With a gas generator and a data projector, video productions produced locally by NSGA are taken upriver and shown in villages in the evening. Organised health events have large audiences view videos of skits and dramas on HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma produced by the NSGA in The Gambia. In many cases the videos are created in the regions where the shown during village cinema events. Since 2003 village cinema events have reached over half a million people.

Due to the success of the NSGA work, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has provided funding to replicate the peer health education project in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone – Peer Health Education (Implemented 2004)

The work with the NSGA in The Gambia (see above) has resulted in a highly successful peer health education model that has reached the entire secondary school sector in The Gambia. CIDA, in 2004, funded the NSGA to implement the model throughout Sierra Leone. The health project in Sierra Leone is called the Nova Scotia Sierra Leone Programme (NSSLP). The NSSLP will include peer health training to all districts of the country in addition to training of truck drivers concerning HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma and the utilisation of professional footballers as role models for young Sierra Leoneans. COL has partnered with the NSSLP to aid in reaching greater numbers of people throughout the country using the models established with the NSGA in The Gambia.

Swaziland – Health Media Addressing HIV/AIDS (Implemented 2004)

The activity with a Swaziland-based NGO, The AIDS Information and Support Centre (TASC), was a result of a dialogue between COL and WHO Swaziland office. Swaziland is at the top of the list of countries in critical need of support due to its high incidence of HIV/AIDS. The first phase of the project has been completed (November 2004). TASC has delivered health information to the national television broadcaster and developed case studies for use in its training of community care workers.

Tanzania – The Christian Social Services Commission (CSSC) (Implemented 2005)

COL worked with WHO Tanzania office and CSSC which is an ecumenical body representing the interests of about 15 member Churches and 10 Church related Organizations in Tanzania. CSSC is a strong voice of its members over 600 and 400 Church-owned Health and Education Institutions respectively in the country. Its main role is facilitation of delivery of social services, Education and Health. The activity with WHO and CSSC will focus on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention.

Sri Lanka – Sarvodaya –Addressing Issues of Malaria and Health (Implemented 2003)

In Sri Lanka, COL worked with the WHO Sri Lanka office and Sarvodaya a local NGO to address issues concerning communicable diseases. COL employed its ODL expertise to aid Sarvodaya's capacity to create malaria-based information through the creation of a Health Media Unit. The information created by Sarvodaya has been delivered via radio, television and mobile units travelling with projector and generator to the villages. This model has proven to be especially effective given the events of the December 2004 tsunami. Since the tsunami Sarvodaya has liaised with the WHO to delivery water and food safe information to the affected eastern shore including Tamil held territory.

India – Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) (Implemented 2003)

The work with TNAU Media Unit was originally focused on agricultural methods and training with farmers in Tamil Nadu. Since the issues of HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma in the rural areas of India is a growing problem, COL has worked with the Media Unit to update their technology and expertise to deliver health training to targeted groups. Videos produced in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu State are currently being delivered to audiences in the villages.

Solomon Islands - Health Media Addressing HIV/AIDS and Malaria (Implemented 2005)

COL, working in partnership with the WHO Solomons Islands office and the Pacific Regional Office in Suva, Fiji, has centred a health-based activity with a local NGO called Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT). The activity has focused on health issues in the rural areas of the Solomon Islands. Rates of malaria in the Solomons are some the highest in the world. The project has delivered health information to isolated groups utilizing village cinema with video productions completed by SIDT.

Kiribati – Enhancing the work of Kiribati Video (Implemented 2004)

COL has been actively working with the technical vocational education sector in the Pacific in the last five years. One of the projects was centred at the Tarawa Technical Institute in North Tarawa, Kiribati. It was through this work that COL felt that a small media organization called Kiribati Video (KV), whose high quality video productions in cultural issues in Kiribati could be utilized as a trainer and producer of high quality health media. COL has enhanced KV's video production facilities (December 2004) as a first phase and will look to KV as a valuable resource for health based video productions for the Pacific region in the future.

Papua New Guinea – Addressing HIV/AIDS Among Youth (Implemented 2006)

The activity with Anglicare STOPAIDS has a focus on reaching the remote rugged interior of the country. Anglicare's headquarters are in Port Moresby but they maintain centres in two other regions of the country. The increase of HIV infections in PNG is alarming. The activity will utilise Anglicare's ability to reach the remote and linguistically diverse parts of the country with customised health-based information. The drama troupe at Anglicare, which produces skits and dramas for presentation at roadsides and village events, has been trained in media production. Their work concerning HIV stigma and prevention have been produced onto video and used at village cinema events in remote parts of the country.

Guyana - Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA) (Implemented 2006)

COL worked with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the GRPA to reach both coastal and remote communities with health information with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. GRPA provides laboratory services to complement the clinical services (testing for HIV, random blood sugar, pap smear, etc). GRPA facilitates programmes for health professionals who function at maternal and child health clinics. They also have a Youth Services Centre in Georgetown where peer health and awareness sessions are undertaken. The activity with the GRPA established a health media unit to enhance the organisation's reach across the country.

Barbados - Comfort, Assist, Reach-Out, Educate (C.A.R.E.) (Implemented 2006)

COL worked with PAHO and C.A.R.E. to address issues in the country and region concerning HIV/AIDS stigma and prevention. C.A.R.E. is committed to being the voice of the HIV/AIDS community by education, rehabilitating, motivating and networking with PLWHA, thus ensuring a better quality of life, making a valuable contribution to society and minimising the impact of HIV/AIDS on the wider community. The COL activity with C.A.R.E. has given the organisation both the tools and training to tailor their message through television, radio and on-going field events in the communities.

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