

# INDIA

## COL activities in 2003-2006

### Background

At the 1987 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi led the drive to create the Commonwealth of Learning. The strong support from India that he pledged to COL has continued ever since, during a period when India's economy has been transformed and the country has become a technology leader and a prolific innovator in matters of development.

India is the largest Commonwealth country and COL is deeply engaged there. As well as continuing to assist with developments in the country itself, COL also promotes Indian expertise in other countries. It does this both by helping institutions extend their international reach, particularly into Africa and Asia, and by giving Indian experts a leading role in COL's initiatives – both in other countries and Commonwealth wide.

India has a seat on COL's Board of Governors as a major donor. One-fifth of COL's staff members hold Indian nationality, including the Vice-President, Professor Asha Kanwar. The last Indian to hold this post was the late and revered Indian educator Professor G. Ram Reddy, Chairman of the University Grants Commission and founding Vice-Chancellor of the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

### SUMMARY

In 2003-2006 COL has helped India make significant progress in three areas of its development agenda in particular. Poverty and hunger are decreasing as COL's partnership approach to improving rural prosperity replicates itself in more villages. Secondary education is being extended by the expansion and extension of open schooling. A greener India will result from the improvements in environmental education that COL has supported at all levels.

COL has close partnerships with a wide range of Indian institutions aimed at capacity building, institutional development and the transfer of know-how. This has helped institutions such as the National Institute for Open Schooling, the Indira Gandhi National Open University and the Centre for Environmental Education to extend their reach into Africa and other parts of Asia.

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in New Delhi is the only component of COL not housed at its Vancouver headquarters. It publishes the quarterly newsletter *EduComm Asia* as well as a range of knowledge resources and manuals on topics such as: Multimedia for Teacher Developers; eLearning, Principles; Procedures and Practices; Teleconferencing Manual; and Educational Research Toolkits.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENT THEMES

### Reduction of Poverty and Hunger

COL has implemented its Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3Farmers) programme in 15 villages in Tamil Nadu (TN) and the approach is now being copied spontaneously by other communities. It is designed to help poor rural farmers acquire relevant knowledge in a sustainable manner for economic advancement. Essentially COL mobilises farmers, through village associations, to identify how they might be more productive and what information they would need for this. To supply this information COL has facilitated the creation of a consortium of the TN Agricultural University, the TN Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, the University of Madras, Anna University, and the TN Open University. Commercial information and communications technologies (ICT) kiosks are used for exchanging information and for enabling the villagers to learn about quality control, insurance, and other topics relevant to more productive farming. The State Bank of India has increased its lending to farmers on the promise of higher productivity.

### COL-Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education Innovations and Networks (PROTEIN)

This programme facilitates the implementation of innovative projects that adopt ODL and ICT for poverty reduction in the developing Commonwealth ([www.col.org/protein](http://www.col.org/protein)). COL offers expertise in ODL and start-up, limited-term financial support to qualifying projects that help build human capacity to gain knowledge and skills in contributing to food security, environmental protection, rural development, nutritional education and micro-enterprise. Successful projects have a high level of inter-institutional collaboration, significant and innovative ODL and ICT use, and well-researched content and learning design to support contextually relevant rural and peri-urban capacity building for poverty reduction.

India won two awards under the programme:

- The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, received an award for implementing “Coping with Drought: A computer-based distance learning module for villagers in India,” in collaboration with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Hyderabad and other partners. The combined efforts of the partners contributed to ICRISAT’s efforts in developing a major initiative on “Virtual Academy for the Semi-Arid Tropics” (VASAT) that is receiving international recognition.

- The Constant Service in Developing Education and Rural Reconstruction (CONSIDER), Andhra Pradesh, received the award to assist women and girls, who stay on land while men are out deep-sea fishing, to learn community-based improved methods of post-harvest technologies for processing fish and to implement self-supportive women's co-operatives.

## **Education and Literacy**

With respect to universal primary education and India's SSA (Education for All) programme, COL has focussed on helping with the implementation of technology-mediated teacher education, working with I-CONSENT (Indian CONSortium for School Education Transformation), the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, the National Council for Teacher Education, and the University of Delhi.

COL's ongoing partnership with the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) has helped to widen access to basic and secondary education by strengthening NIOS' own capacity, by facilitating the development of open schools in various states, and by transferring NIOS' know-how to Africa.

With special funding from the UK's Department for International Development, COL conducted a successful project that demonstrated the use of technology-based community learning centres to support literacy work with a focus on reading skills, work that Indian partners are continuing.

## **Environment**

COL, in partnership with the Centre for Environmental Education, the Indian Institute of Science and the Karnataka State Open University has facilitated the development of environmental education at various levels from the Green Teacher Diploma to postgraduate professional development for engineers.

# **INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

## **Open Universities**

COL President Sir John Daniel symbolised COL's long partnership with the Indira Gandhi National Open University by giving keynote speeches at two major conferences hosted by IGNOU in 2005. Through COL IGNOU has shared its expertise with the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) that has also adopted the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA programmes in which IGNOU has 212 students enrolled.

In collaboration with IGNOU and the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation COL has developed the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme which makes it possible for Ministry-designated individuals from Commonwealth countries to obtain postgraduate qualifications in Distance Education from IGNOU. Thirty-three students have completed a postgraduate diploma and a cohort of 50 students from Nigeria embarked on the programme in 2005.

In 2003-2006 COL has strengthened its links with some of the state open universities, notably YCMOU (Maharashtra) (workshop on Instructional Design of Multi-Media Materials and Dialogic Presentations

using EDUSAT, 2005); NSOU (West Bengal) (workshop/conference on A Culture of Quality, 2005); BRAOU (Andhra Pradesh) (workshop on Research Methodology in Open and Distance Learning for academic staff, 2005) and Faculty seminar by the COL President, (2006); and BAOU (Gujarat) (interactive seminar by COL staff with 60 study centres in 2006).

### **University Grants Commission**

COL's partnership with the University Grants Commission and its Centre for Educational Communication (CEC) has developed strongly over the triennium, starting with a policy dialogue which resulted in a scheme for eContent development for university and college teachers and the organisation of two workshops on multi-media and eContent development. These in turn led to the development of 125 Learning Objects in five disciplines and a further workshop in 2005. CEC staff have been trained and a Technology Incubation Cell has been set up. COL and the CEC also organised a National Forum on the Impact of Developments in Communication Technology on Education and Social Message Communication (2005). The CEC held a workshop on Technology Education and the Learning Cube prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Convention on eLearning Resources sponsored by COL and the UGC (Pune, June 2006). The UGC made a significant contribution to the consultative meeting that COL hosted in preparing its 2006-2009 Plan.

### **National Assessment and Accreditation Council**

COL has developed an effective partnership with the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). One focus has been the development of materials on quality assurance (QA) for higher education generally: a course to generate awareness about QA and a toolkit for training QA auditors. A second project has concentrated on QA in teacher education. COL and NAAC hosted a meeting of teacher educators from seven Commonwealth countries to identify good practices which were distilled into a set of Quality Indicators that were launched in 2006 and are being used around the Commonwealth.

### **National Institute for Open Schooling**

COL's partnership with the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS), which also involves CEMCA, has developed strongly during the triennium with three aims.

The first is to build capacity within NIOS. This has included: conducting a training needs assessment and developing training strategies; developing staff members' ability to produce audio and video material in support of NIOS Media Enhancement Project; supporting two workshops on Instructional Design for print-based materials in 2005 and 2006; and sending staff to The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand for training in the delivery and support of technical and vocational education. COL supported a major conference (2006) on Quality Assurance in Technical/Vocational Training through Open Schooling that promoted the integration of skill training and basic education within NIOS.

A second aim is to support the development of new and existing State Open Schools within India. A 2005 conference, sponsored by COL, on the Promotion and Expansion of Open Schooling attracted 15 secretaries of state and many eminent educationalists.

The third aim is to help other Commonwealth countries benefit from India's expertise and experience in open schooling. In 2004 NIOS hosted a week-long training event for 14 educators from Africa and the Pacific and a similar event in 2005 attracted other participants from Africa and South Asia. To further the development of open schooling more widely in South Asia, COL is now supporting NIOS' links with Sri Lanka's National Institute of Education and the Open School of the Bangladesh Open University.

### **National Council of Educational Research and Training**

COL has a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to create a distance/online version of an international diploma course in guidance and counselling and held two workshops in 2004 to train NCERT staff for this purpose. In the same year NCERT also hosted a management development institute for 12 principals of teacher-training colleges from Sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of improving the quality and quantity of teacher training in support of the goal of Education for All. CEMCA and NCERT, in collaboration with NIOS, organised an eLearning Workshop for about 30 Teacher Developers of Multimedia Content.

### **I-CONSENT (Indian CONSortium for School Education Transformation)**

Through its links with the Maharashtra Knowledge Corporation Limited (MKCL) COL has been involved from the beginning in the development of I-CONSENT. In 2004 COL and MKCL organised a meeting on IT-enabled Teacher Education in India in order to plan courses on this topic for nationwide use. This was followed, early in 2005 by a course planning meeting convened by COL and I-CONSENT with a national workshop three months later. At a meeting in September 2005 at the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education the I-CONSENT partners agreed to finalise a proposal for in-service teacher training for submission to the Government of India and the State Government of Maharashtra.

### **Centre for Environmental Education**

COL has had a fruitful partnership with the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE) going back to an instructional design workshop held in 2002. Further COL workshops on distance learning module design in 2004 facilitated the announcement of the CEE's decision to become a dual-mode institute at an international conference on Education for a Sustainable Future in January 2005. A Green Teacher course and Diploma in Environmental Education were launched at that time. Since then COL has continued to support the CEE with follow-up meetings and has also facilitated the use of CEE's distance learning offerings by the National Teachers' Institute, Nigeria.

### **Rajiv Gandhi Foundation**

COL supports the work of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. In collaboration with IGNOU it has developed self-instructional materials intended to improve the effectiveness and productivity of staff in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). One outcome is courses that will form part of a certificate programme for those working with street children.

## **Agricultural institutions**

COL has supported the expansion of the use of technology-mediated learning for agricultural education in India through a workshop for senior staff from agricultural universities and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research.

India is also an important node in COL's extensive network of relationships with national and international agricultural research organisations. COL has advised the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) about its outreach work and helped it to develop an "Edugrid" of learning materials and take the lead in creating the Virtual Academy for the Semi-Arid Tropics. This involves open universities, agricultural research institutions and organisations using ICTs for development in India and Sahelian Africa. The aim is sustainable rural development and food security. As an example COL has initiated collaboration between IGNOU and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan aimed at developing a course that would help poor communities generate income through the use of bamboo and rattan.

COL has also worked in partnership with the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU). Its work with TNAU Media Unit was originally focussed 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.

## **INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES**

Other countries have great interest in India's expertise in many areas. One of COL's roles is to facilitate contacts between Indian institutions and potential overseas partners and to ensure the presence of Indian specialists at regional and international meetings. This is a partial list of the work COL has done under this heading in 2003-2006.

### **Literacy and Livelihoods**

India participated in the International Literacy and Livelihoods Experts Meeting held in Canada in 2004 and the University of Delhi is leading the creation, with CEMCA and COL, of a Literacy and Livelihoods Network linking the five Commonwealth countries of South Asia.

### **Literacy and Skills Training in West Africa**

The National Institute for Information Technology (NIIT) is partnering with COL and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on a joint project in literacy and skills training. This is set within the framework of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) with funding from the African Development Bank.

## **Literacy and Skills Training in South Asia**

In 2005 COL organised in Dhaka, Bangladesh, a consultative meeting for the South Asia Region on the promotion of literacy and skills training by using ODL methods to take activities to scale.

## **Global Distance Education Network**

CEMCA is the South Asia node for the Global Distance Education Network (GDENet) which finds and provides knowledge resources for distance educators in the region.

## **Gender and Rural Development**

CEMCA is working with the Bangkok Office of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation to produce and distribute a multi-media training package on Gender and Rural Development for academics, researchers and extension agencies in India and South Asia. The training resource is available on the FAO-RAP website. [www.fao.or.th/In-depth\\_focus/gender/index.htm](http://www.fao.or.th/In-depth_focus/gender/index.htm)

## **South Asia Consortium for Teacher Education Development (SACTED)**

COL facilitated the creation of SACTED in 2004. Since then SACTED has met in India and developed close links with the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). SACTED may become a mechanism for extending the work of the Centre for Environmental Education more widely in South Asia.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the 2003-2006 triennium, COL has facilitated Indian participation in a host of international events. As well as contributing to the professional development of the individuals involved, such events are an important vehicle for publicising and sharing Indian approaches to contemporary challenges.

## **Open, Distance and Technology-Mediated Learning and Development**

Two representatives from India took part in a high-level institute on this topic in Vancouver in 2005 which has resulted in a publication on ODL and development.

## **Application of Multi-media in the Schooling Sector using Satellites**

This international symposium, jointly organised by COL and the Indian Space Research Organisation in Ahmedabad, attracted experts from Africa, Asia and the other countries of South Asia. It served to launch the process of content development for EDUSAT and enabled Indian educators to learn from the experience of other countries.

### **Content Development for Community Radio:**

CEMCA has supported content development workshops with the campus-community radio stations of the University of Pune and Karnataka State Open University, which have broadcast content developed by women working with two NGOs, the Foundation for Research in Community Health (FRCH) and IT for Change (ITFC).

### **Managing Community Radio Stations**

An international workshop for managers of community radio stations was held in Chennai in 2005, bringing together expertise ranging from studio technicians to station managers, government officials, academics and NGO leaders. A manual on managing community radio stations is being developed. Those trained in the content development workshop also participated in this event to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how community radio is managed.

### **Research Methodology in ODL**

A workshop for 30 mid-career Indian academics from eight states was held in 2005 in Hyderabad in association with the G. Ram Reddy Research Academy of Distance Education.

### **IT-Enabled Teacher Education in India**

COL's association with I-CONSENT, noted earlier, has been an important mechanism for capacity-building in the use of ICTs and ODL in teacher education.

### **Young Professionals**

Under COL's Young Professionals Attachment Programme India has hosted interns at the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, UNIFEM's Global Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Centre for Environmental Education, the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Asia Regional Office and the International Planned Parenthood Federation South Asia Regional Office.

### **Digital Libraries**

CEMCA sponsored ten participants from India to the first International Conference on Digital Libraries held in New Delhi in 2004.

### **Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning**

COL sponsored 35 delegates from India to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in New Zealand in 2004.

## **EVALUATION**

COL commissioned Dr. Patrick Spaven to conduct a formal and independent evaluation of its work in 2003-2006. Several of his case studies involved COL programmes in India. The following are some samples of quotations from his conclusions:

### **Reduction of Poverty and Hunger - Lifelong Learning for Farmers**

“Meetings with farmers in four of the villages produced a wave of personal accounts of benefit, ranging from improvements in milk yields, to attitude change such as a determination to plan for, rather than be resigned to, the future. Some women, in particular, appear to be experiencing transformational change in their lives.”

“Driving all this is the confidence and empowerment that the learning process, the expanding access to information through ICT, the prospect of financial independence are generating.”

“Self-replication is beginning. Three neighbouring villages have formed associations for implementing the model in their villages with minimal help from the project.”

### **Education for All – Open Schooling**

“COL is credited by its working partners with a significant increase in awareness and interest in open schooling in Asia and Africa. NIOS is an influential organisation in its field in India and in other countries; and it gives COL credit for raising its profile and increasing its credibility in both national and international arenas. It was originally not sure that its own model and experience were replicable elsewhere. COL gave it the confidence to look and reach outwards. Open school partners consulted from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan traced their current efforts back to awareness of the activities of COL and NIOS.”

“COL’s contribution is inevitably small. An important question is whether its impact is greater than could be expected given the scale of its inputs. In the case of COL’s work in partnership with NIOS the answer is certainly yes.”

### **Education for All – Teacher Education**

“The teacher education quality indicators have been favourably received by the organisations taking part in the process. This was made more likely by the highly participatory nature of the process. It also seems to have been an efficient process which kept to its planned timetable.”

### **Environmental Education**

“In most senses this looks like an effective project to date... The partnership has been harmonious. The Centre for Environmental Education is now very satisfied with COL’s inputs... The course concept, materials and methodology are of high quality. They encourage an interactive, multi-disciplinary, locally

relevant approach to studying the environment and sustainable development. This is unusual in Indian schools. The evaluator met a group of participants from the first pilot batch. Their enthusiasm for the course was palpable.”

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

India will continue to have a full and fruitful partnership with COL as it extends and enhances its open, distance and technology enhanced learning systems in the future. Learning for development, improving rural prosperity and more sustainable environmental policies will be a focus of this work. The close partnerships COL has developed with Indian institutions have laid the foundations for future co-operation. India’s progress in areas such as the extension of open schooling and the implantation of the lifelong learning for farmers (L3 Farmers) will be building blocks for the period 2006-2009.