



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

President's Quarterly Progress Report: January – March 2017

1. Board Matters

The 37th Audit Committee Meeting was held via teleconference on February 16, 2017 to review progress for the second quarter of the financial year.

Preparations are underway for the upcoming meetings of the Board of Governors to be held in Vancouver during June 15-16, 2017.

I am delighted to welcome Mr. K.K. Sharma, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, as the board member representing India and to place on record our appreciation to Mr. V.S. Oberoi, the former Secretary and board member, for his support and guidance.

2. General

During this quarter, three back-to-back regional consultations on Open Educational Resources (OER) were held. These were organised in partnership with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia with generous support from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The recommendations of the regional meetings and the findings of the global surveys on the status of OER will feed into the 2nd World OER Congress to be held in Slovenia during September 18-20, 2017.

The European regional consultation was hosted by the Maltese Minister of Education and Employment, the Honourable Evarist Bartolo, in Valetta. Seventy two participants from 24 countries attended and were joined by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenia and deputy ministers of education of Slovakia and Serbia. Significantly, there are only three Commonwealth Member States in Europe.

This was followed by the regional consultation for the Middle East and North Africa co-hosted by our partner 'Reach Out to Asia' in Doha, Qatar. Thirty seven participants from 13 countries were present, none of them members of the Commonwealth.

The meeting for Africa was hosted by the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, the Honourable Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, in Port Louis, Mauritius and attended by 46 participants from 23 countries, including a large representation from the Francophonie. Our board member, Ambassador Mariam Katagum, not only participated in the African consultation but also

supported four key stakeholders to join the meeting. Convinced of the potential of OER, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission, Nigeria has invited COL to support the development of a national OER policy for higher education in the country.

The final two meetings are scheduled to be held in Brazil and New Zealand in the next quarter. Details are available at www.rcoer.col.org.

Why does COL support OER? We believe that OER have tremendous potential for increasing access and lowering the costs of quality education. Promoting the use of OER is one key priority in our current Strategic Plan and the discussions at the consultations are shaping our agenda and plan of action. These meetings have served to extend COL's networks, strengthened existing partnerships and consolidated our leadership in OER. We have been able to share our expertise and resources beyond the Commonwealth with a wider international audience.

2.1 President's Activities

My speeches presented at the regional consultations are available at www.col.org/news/speeches-and-presentations.

The Education Ministers' Action Group, chaired by the Honourable Jerome Fitzgerald, Minister of Education, The Bahamas met at the Commonwealth Secretariat in January. Ministers of education from Mauritius, Namibia, St. Lucia and Solomon Islands were present as were senior officials from Fiji, India, Kenya and Malaysia. I joined the meeting via Skype and presented the outcomes of COL's work in each of the countries around the table. The technology worked well resulting in a lively interaction.

Later in the month, I travelled to Nigeria at the invitation of the University of Ibadan to address the question of 'OER: an innovation in higher education?' at an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) training programme. OER was still a new concept for most of the 250 staff present but it was encouraging to note the keen interest taken by the younger faculty. The following day, my presentation on 'OER: some basics' generated animated discussions. Prior to the event, over 40 participants had successfully completed COL's online course on 'Understanding OER'. With COL support, the university is well on its way to adopting OER.

While in Mauritius for the African regional consultation, I had the honour to meet the President of the Republic, Her Excellency Ameena Gurib-Fukeem, who was familiar with COL's work. I also had the privilege to call on His Excellency Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles during my visit to his country. I launched the online course on 'The Blue Economy' at the University of Seychelles. The idea for developing this course was first mooted by President Faure in June 2015 and he was delighted that this was now a reality. When the University of Seychelles offers the free online course this May to anyone, anywhere in the world, it will not only acquire a visibility far beyond its national borders but will also make a significant contribution to sustainable development. I met the Minister of Education, the Honourable Joel Morgan, who identified teacher training as the top priority for Seychelles – the development of an action plan is under way and COL will fast track this initiative.

I recorded two video messages: one on the occasion of International Women's Day and the second for the launch of the National Qualifications Framework, Jamaica. These are done entirely in-house and are available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/comlearn.

This quarter has been busier than usual because of the OER events. It is particularly satisfying to note how successful these have been and how they have contributed to COL's image and brand on a global scale.

3. Programme

The New Year began with the launching of new initiatives, policy development and capacity building. The following section gives an idea of COL's work around the different regions of the Commonwealth.

3.1 Education Sector

3.1.1 Open Schooling

COL signed agreements with the National Institute for Distance Education, Mozambique and the ministries of education in Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu to promote open schooling through training teachers and content development. COL and the Ministry of Education, Belize held a workshop on open schooling policy and management for teachers. In Kenya, 96 vocational television programmes were developed and are available at www.elimutv.co.ke/.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

Seven universities from Africa and Asia completed 43 modules in integrating ICTs in teaching, learning and assessment. Training for teacher educators in ICT integration was held at Egerton University, Kenya; Dar es Salaam University College of Education, Tanzania; and Busitema University, Uganda. A workshop for teacher educators on integrating online facilitation and assessment was organised at Kyambogo University, Uganda.

3.1.3 Higher Education

COL facilitated a series of workshops with the Council of Higher Education (CHE) to strengthen the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF). A final draft of the revised LQF, a roadmap for implementation and recommendations for amending the Higher Education Act were submitted to CHE. In Mozambique, the draft ODL policy for Universidade Eduardo Mondlane was completed.

Ten teachers sponsored by COL have completed the online Certificate in Designing and Facilitating E-Learning from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. Another ten teachers, mostly from the Pacific, have received sponsorships to take the next course.

3.1.4 Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

The Blue Economy course is being offered as a MOOC by the University of Seychelles. A series of meetings with the Ministry of Education and the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education were organised to discuss the implementation of a Diploma in Education to train over 300 in-service teachers.

COL supported the development of the Swaziland Qualifications Framework and is working with the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority and the National University of Samoa to register their national qualifications on the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Framework.

Senior officials from Fiji, Grenada, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia, Samoa and Seychelles registered for the Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance offered by the University of Mauritius.

3.1.5 GIRLS Inspire

COL is working with a number of partners in five countries and over 7000 girls received training during this quarter. In Bangladesh, 600 girls and women were trained in life skills and vocational skills and 1223 girls and women received microloans because of their training. Another 4000 girls and women were hired as interns and accessed income generating opportunities. In India, 231 girls and women were trained in preparing resumes and job applications and 312 girls and women were mentored by local women entrepreneurs. Over 650 girls and women enrolled in vocational skills courses in Mozambique. In Pakistan, 1287 girls were trained in life skills and 1734 in vocational skills.

3.2 Skills Sector

3.2.1 Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)

The online Caribbean Vocational Qualification Assessor training enrolled 43 participants from three countries. The State Resource Centre in Kerala recruited 350 volunteer literacy workers, mostly women, to take the Certificate in Community Development. The course materials for the Tuvalu TVSD programme on painting, sewing, horticulture and concrete were finalised and are in use. Over 190 teachers and course developers from seven African countries completed courses on blended online teaching, facilitating e-learning and flexible skills development.

3.2.2 Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F)

COL's L3F partners in India reached 29628 new learners during this quarter. Over 1700 rural women vendors in India are using Aptus, a COL innovation, to access over \$700,000 worth of credit. Twenty nine organisations adopted L3F and received training from existing partners. The Farmers' Producer Company formed by L3F women received an equity grant from the Small Farmers Agro-business Consortium of the Government of India for marketing their livestock products.

COL's financial literacy course enabled partners in Kenya to generate substantial savings as compared to no savings before undertaking this training.

L3F was launched in partnership with the Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. Two ministries in Antigua and Barbuda have initiated the L3F programme and are mobilising the communities into learning groups.

3.2.3 Technology-Enabled Learning (TeL)

COL developed and presented a discussion paper on an OER policy for higher education to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, India. A baseline study on the status of TeL was conducted at the Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies, where a policy development workshop was also held. Centurion University of Technology and Management organised a workshop to finalise learning materials for four vocational courses.

The Open University Malaysia and the Open University of Tanzania completed the development of two courses each under a six-country project on Advanced ICT Course Development.

A massive open online course (MOOC) entitled 'Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning' was offered in collaboration with Athabasca University, Canada at which 1145 participants (44.4% male and 55.6% female) from 81 countries enrolled.

The National University of Samoa launched a project to institutionalise technology-enabled learning with the support of COL.

3.2.4 OER for Skills Development

In Sri Lanka, a three-day national workshop brought together 42 policy makers to finalise provincial OER policies.

COL conducted a capacity building workshop for the L3F community in India to promote the use of OER in lifelong learning. Three draft OER policies were developed.

3.3 Cross-cutting Theme

3.3.1 Gender

With the support of COL, the Rural Agricultural Development Authority conducted a study on gender and youth involvement in agriculture in Jamaica. The Sri Lanka University Grants Commission has expressed interest in using COL's Gender Scorecard and Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit to meet the needs of 15 public universities in the country.

3.4 eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO)

eLIO developed six courses in Business Communications that were piloted by the Norwegian Red Cross (Norcross). Courses for the Council of Europe, World Bank,

Norcross and UNHCR were delivered to 202 learners. COL contributed to the successful Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform (SPHEIR) project proposal with the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the first phase of activities began in early March.

3.5 Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)

In India, CEMCA supported a range of activities. CEMCA supported Netaji Subhas Open University to finalise multi-media course materials on 'Inclusive Education'. A national consultation on OER policy for higher education was organised jointly with the Ministry of Human Resource Development. Capacity building in activity-based learning was organised for 790 vocational trainers and 418 students were trained in generic employability skills. A capacity building programme was organised to train 18 representatives from eight community radio stations on how to transform the listener to a learner. Under the 'Science for Women's Health and Nutrition' project supported by the Department of Science and Technology. CEMCA conducted a baseline survey of five additional community radio stations where 5000 women were surveyed and assisted these radio stations to produce 50 sample programmes.

The Director, Dr. Rasool and senior colleagues met representatives of the Pakistan High Commission in India to develop a strategy for enhancing skills in four provinces of Pakistan. CEMCA supported Bangladesh Open University to repurpose its online repository as OER.

3.6 Regional Centres

3.6.1 Southern African Development Community - Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE)

A new multi-lingual website with the three SADC languages (English, French and Portuguese) was launched. An online course on project management was completed by 14 open and distance learning practitioners from Botswana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

3.6.2 Research and Training Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL)

RETRIDOL conducted a training workshop on online facilitation and tutoring. Its work plan is being revised to strengthen ODL in dual mode universities in West Africa.

3.6.3 Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD)

PACFOLD Learn, an online community for strengthening flexible and open learning was launched and attracted 34 members during this quarter. PACFOLD participated in several forums organised by the National University of Samoa, University of South Pacific and METI, a non-profit organisation in Samoa. An action plan for 2017 was also developed.

3.7 Vice President's Activities

In line with the direction given by the Board of Governors, the Vice President focused on strengthening the role of COL in the Pacific where four new projects in Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu were initiated. He led the development of a strategy paper for the Pacific.

Discussions were held with the Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat to offer a joint gender course to their staff. The Vice President presented the progress of L3F and GIRLS Inspire projects to Global Affairs Canada which is funding these projects. The mid-term evaluation roadmap for the Strategic Plan 2015-2021 was developed. Dr. Bala guided the successful SPHEIR proposal under which COL's role is to support partners to address the issue of quality in East African universities.

In his keynote address at the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia Conference 2017, held in Melbourne, Dr. Bala pointed out that lifelong learning needs to be institutionalised by blending formal, non-formal and informal learning. He argued that this would become possible when the three approaches of pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy are integrated. The Vice President said that the ODL community had focused mostly on formal education and needed to pay more attention to harnessing ODL for non-formal learning.

4. Stakeholder Relations

4.1 Member Governments Support

At the end of the third quarter, contributions totalling \$9.5 million were received from 40 countries (as compared to 30 countries as at the same time in the previous year). See 5.1 for a listing by country for this quarter.

4.2 Focal Points

We welcomed the following Focal Points:

- Brunei Darussalam – Mr. Julaihi bin Mohamat, Acting Executive Secretary, Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council, Ministry of Education.
- Malaysia – YBhg. Datin Paduka Ir. Dr. Siti Hamisah Binti Tapsir, Director General, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education.
- Malta – Dr. Alexander Grech, Executive Director, Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning, Ministry for Education and Employment.
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines – Ms. Beverly Neptune, Chief Education Officer (Ag.), Ministry of Education, Ecclesiastical Affairs & National Reconciliation.
- Uganda – Ms. Jolly Uzamukunda, Assistant Commissioner, Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports.

4.3 Congratulatory Letters

Ten congratulatory letters were sent to newly appointed heads of government, ministers of education and of foreign affairs, high commissioners and heads of institutions.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

COL has received over \$11 million in revenue between July 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017 comprising member government contributions, additional contributions and miscellaneous income. This represents over 85% of the revenue forecast.

During this quarter, member government contributions were received from the following countries:

Botswana – \$131,910; Cameroon – \$36,362; India – \$195,700 (second instalment); Kenya – \$59,461; Namibia – \$98,933 (second instalment); New Zealand – \$744,070; Pakistan – \$35,000; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – \$21,714; Samoa – \$79,274; United Kingdom – \$2,148,640; and Vanuatu – \$6,694.

Additional contributions in the amount of \$500,000 from grants and service fees were also recorded during this period.

COL signed a three-year funding agreement with the Department for International Development, UK for ongoing support for 2016-2019 at an annual level of £1.3 million, comparable to the previous two years.

5.2 Cash Flow

At March 31, 2017, COL held approximately \$10 million in cash. This will enable COL to meet operational costs for the balance of the current financial year and maintain a positive cash flow into the next financial year.

COL continued to maintain a restricted reserve of \$9.5 million to provide for unexpected expenses and shortfalls in funding as per its policy.

5.3 Expenditures

At the end of the third quarter, over \$8.3 million was spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staff and office costs. This amount represents 69% of the annual budget of \$12 million approved for 2016-2017.

6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

6.1.1 Departures

Dr. Godson Gatsha, Education Specialist: Higher Education, left COL on March 6, 2017.

Dr. Jessica Aguti, Education Specialist: Teacher Education, left COL on March 29, 2017.

6.1.2 Recruitment

Professor Romeela Mohee from Mauritius has been appointed Education Specialist: Higher Education and joined COL on April 10, 2017.

Dr. Beatrice Obura Ogange from Kenya has been appointed Adviser: Teacher Education and will be joining COL on June 1, 2017.

7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management (IT & KM)

As part of its support function, IT & KM have initiated the migration of two essential services to the Cloud, with data centres located in Canada. This is part of our ongoing efforts to minimise the costs and complexities of hosting critical online services on the premises and to take advantage of affordable and secure Cloud services.

IT & KM completed three MOOCs in agriculture with our partners enabling about 7000 learners to participate in these advanced courses. The MookIT platform has also been deployed to support a MOOC on TeL at Athabasca University and on tourism studies at the University of Malta. Aptus is being used in Trinidad and Tobago for open schooling. Aptus received further visibility through a specially convened workshop on 'Education in Emergencies' at the UNESCO-UNHCR Mobile Learning Week 2017 in Paris, where our Director, Dr. Balaji presented.

8. Communications

COL was mentioned in over 40 media stories during the quarter and received national TV coverage in Seychelles and Sri Lanka. The OER regional consultations and the Blue Economy course garnered the maximum coverage. Both COL's Facebook and Twitter channels continue to experience a steady increase in followers since the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8).

A high-level Task Force has been constituted to advise on how the website can make the transition from 'informing' to 'engaging' the stakeholder.

9. Visitors to COL

Ms. Denise Chong, celebrated author and former COL Board Member, visited COL.

10. Publications/Resources

The following are recent publications and resources of note:

- Publications (oasis.col.org):
 - *Connections*, March 2017, Vol. 22, No. 1 ([Newsletter](#)).
 - *Journal of Learning for Development*, Vol. 4, No. 1 ([JL4D](#)).
 - *Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning: Using ICTs and Blended Learning in Transforming TVET* (hdl.handle.net/11599/2718).
- Speeches and presentations (www.col.org/news/speeches-and-presentations).
- COL Blog (www.col.org/news/col-blog).

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President & Chief Executive Officer
April 12, 2017*