



Online Distance Learning Initiative Fact Sheet

1. What is Online Distance Learning Initiative?

The ODL Learning Initiative is using Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSATs) to access internet connectivity for knowledge resources and interactive learning in selected Somali universities/ tertiary institutions.

2. Who are the partner universities and how were they eligible to participate in the Initiative?

Currently six universities are participating in the ODL initiative: Mogadishu University and the Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) in Mogadishu, Puntland State University and East Africa University in Puntland and University of Hargeisa and Amoud University in Somaliland.

Eligibility minimum requirements proposed for each site to qualify as partners in the project included:

- Institution ability to offer university-degree level courses
- Institution significant commitment to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – facilitated learning – for e.g. establishing computer networks, developing in-house computer science training, building a website, employing IT expertise, establishing links to the internet through local ISPs.
- Institution expression of preliminary interest in expanding its use of ICT to facilitate their use in accessing global knowledge and learning.

In an effort to develop a public private partnership, the Civil Service Institute is sharing a link with the University of Hargeisa in order to support public administration develop linkages and access to online course material.

3. How many students does this benefit?

We expect the project to attract at least 50 students per course and/ or degree programme. Currently there are three short courses offered at the six partner institutions in collaboration with the Africa Virtual University - Journalism, Communication and Information Technology training. We are also implementing a Teacher Education Programme and Journalism degree courses at Hargeisa, Amoud and East Africa universities. In addition, the Capacity Building for Somali Financial Planners project has 200 students (approximately 33 students per institution). The Financial Planners online distance learning main course was launched on 19 August 2006 and is expected to last eight months. The course website is www.somali odl.net. In total we expect at least 1,200 students, 30 percent female, to benefit per year in the initiative. Currently more than 800 students are enrolled at SIMAD, UOH and PSU.

4. What are the respective roles of the World Bank, UNDP and the African Virtual University?

The World Bank is in partnership with the UNDP through the Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) initiative. UNDP is taking the lead as the implementing partner while the AVU offers the technical assistance and support in the online distance learning methodologies.

5. What are the courses on offer?

Short certificate courses – Journalism, Information Technology and Business Communications.

Medium course – Financial Planning and Management

Longer courses include – Teacher Education diploma and degree programme, Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication.

6. How much do the courses cost?

Universities are free to set their own reasonable fees levels. A common range is between US \$30 - \$100 per module. The Financial Planning and Management course costs US\$20 per month per student from the private sector and US\$10 per month per student from the public sector.

7. What is the process of students enrolling on one of the online courses?

Student administration and enrollment is directly managed and coordinated through the Open Distance E-learning (ODEL) center in each participating university.

8. What is the partnership with Curtin Business School and Books for Africa?

The project has recently developed a partnership with Curtin Business School in Australia and Books for Africa that involves the delivery of half a million US dollars worth of books and computers to Somali universities.

The first container was organized by Curtin Business School through the UniAid Somalia initiative. It contains nearly 10,000 new and recycled books and other materials worth US\$ 200,000 and arrived at the port of Berbera in August 2006. They were donated by Western Australian universities (University of Western Australia, Murdoch University, Notre Dame University and Edith Cowan University), institutions and the general public in and around Perth. University of Hargeisa is responsible for onward distribution to the other institutions.

Books for Africa (BFA) operates out of Saint Paul, Minnesota and is *the largest shipper of donated textbooks to the African continent*. The learning materials are worth US\$ 250,000 and the two 40-foot containers are expected in September 2006; one will be delivered via port of Djibouti to serve the universities in the North and the other via the port of Bosaso to serve the universities in the South-Central region of Somalia. Once the books arrive in Somalia they will be distributed to the six learning centres by the receiving universities, Amoud University (Djibouti) and Mogadishu University/ EAU (Bosaso).

UNDP supports the shipment of the books.

ODL Participating Institutions

1. Mogadishu University - Mogadishu University (MU) was officially opened on 22 September 1997 by a group of Somali educators and former University professors as a non-profit national institution for higher education. At the present, the University consists of five faculties: Education, Law and Shari'a, Arts, Economics and Management Sciences, and Computer Science/ IT, which award BA, BSC degrees and a nursing institute (High Institute of Nursing), which produces qualified nurses with three years diploma. The University has also established an Institute for Somali Studies (ISOS) and a Center for Continued Education, which coordinates public services through symposiums, workshops and other management training courses. Student population for the year 2003-2004 was about 1000 students, while teaching staff are about 70 professors, lecturers and tutors. MU has had three graduated groups since 2001, 2002 and 2003 from all faculties and institutes except faculty of Computer Science. Languages of instructions are both Arabic and English, the two official languages of MU.

UNDP has recently provided the institution with VSAT equipment for internet connectivity to supplement current learning with online and distance education courses. Visit <http://www.mogadishuuniversity.com/> for the universities complete profile.

2. Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) - SIMAD is currently offering Business Administration, IT courses, Accounting and Languages in Diploma and Bachelor levels; in addition the institution designs, develops and implements customized courses for the private and business enterprises. SIMAD already has a functional distance learning

center but there is a clear need for additional capacity enhancement in online and distance learning.

The Distance Learning Center runs various diploma level programs where the current busy mid-level managers (technicians) who work in the existing private and public enterprises study customized distance courses that are related to their specific field of specializations. The center is equipped with VSAT equipment that can facilitate, but not yet, E-learning programs that are run in other international higher learning institutions. The center has a computer lab equipped with Pentium V computers having all the software and hardware applications that are necessary for Internet link and other requirements.



Exhibit 3: SIMAD VSAT Dish

3. Puntland State University – Puntland State University (PSU) has its roots entrenched from the patriotic and humanitarian joint efforts of KAALO (local NGO) and Diakonia of Sweden that has been instrumental in providing the much needed financial support, physical structures and equipment. Kaalo was started with the aim of improving the livelihood of the Somali people through the provision of basic needs in sustainable and environmentally sound approach. Towards the mandate of promoting higher education in Puntland, the idea of Puntland State University was borne. PSU has become the fastest growing institution of higher learning in Puntland, its location in Garowe (the capital of Puntland state), establishment of a functional Government operations and the emergent peace and stability in the greater Somalia, makes the provision of distance learning facility an asset to augment the college's ICT center in the provision of online courses to the civil servants, private sector and other community members as well as offering conferencing (hall, video or telex) services to the society.
4. East Africa University (EAU) is located about 5 km outside the center of Bossaso town in Puntland State. The university started its operation in October 1999 and has about 500 students. The first graduation batch of students completed their degree requirements in February 2005 and graduated in June 2005. EAU offers degree programs in: Business Administration, Computer Science, Shari'ah and Darasat Islam and Education.
5. The University of Hargeisa (UoH) is presently situated in a one-square kilometre of land that used to be a boarding secondary school before the collapse of the military regime of Siyad Barre. The campus and its buildings later became an unofficial Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp and then a militia barracks. Following much deliberation and intensive campaigns, the old school grounds were transformed into a University in the year 2000. The university is in the heart of the Somaliland capital, Hargeisa and is very strategically placed to serve the educational needs of both local city residents and international staff residing in the capital. The university is currently running five faculties: Business Administration, Islamic Studies, Science, Medicine and Law.

UoH was the first Somali tertiary institution to join the African Virtual University network in 2004. The University presently runs three short-course programs with the AVU namely, Information Technology, packaged by the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Certificate in Journalism, packaged and delivered by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and language certificate courses that have proven the viability and indispensability of teaching vital disciplines through online distance methodologies. Thus far, the University of Hargeisa has had over 500 learners involved at one semester or another during the past one year of operation and there is good progress in to the second cycle (year 2 of ODL) with planned implementation of full bachelor's levels in Journalism and Teacher Education.

6. Amoud University is located 4.5 kilometers east of Borama, Somaliland, on the grounds of the prestigious former Amoud Secondary School which was established in 1952. Its establishment was formerly approved in a workshop held in Borama in August 1996, following a proposal submitted by a group of Somaliland citizens working in the Gulf States. The university was officially inaugurated in November 1998. The university has an enrolment of 450 students and a medical school situated in Borama town, next to the Borama Medical Hospital, where medical students perform their practical sessions. The University currently has three faculties: Education, Medicine and Business and Public Administration.

7. External Partner Universities

- The UNDP Grant Agreement with AVU seeks to strengthen the capacity of the network of institutions in Somalia coordinated by the AVU to deliver and manage quality ICT assisted education and training opportunities. This project seeks to build capacity at three institutions in Somalia in the area of:
 1. Programme development, delivery and management of Open Distance and e-learning programmes, and
 2. The development and delivery of an Open distance and e-learning teacher education programme.

The AVU is a tertiary education network that uses blended Open Distance and e-Learning (ODEL) programs to facilitate quality tertiary education dissemination through established African universities to increase access for a wider array of learners, including traditional students, life-long learners and active workers and professionals. It was initially launched in 1997 as a World Bank project and has evolved to become in 2000 an African-led and African-run initiative. AVU was transferred from the World Bank in Washington DC, USA to Kenya in 2002 and registered its headquarters in Nairobi as an inter-governmental organization.

- Indiana University of Pennsylvania Research Institute (IUPRI) is already offering certificate of Journalism to the six selected institutions in Somalia in collaboration with the AVU. The contract with UNDP will be seeking to provide the needed capacity building and guidance to upgrade the certificate program to full Bachelor of Arts Degree in Journalism and Mass Communication and Master's level at a later stage in UOH, Amoud and EAU, meeting the current demand from successful students for articulation to higher academic qualification within the discipline.

African journalism education institutions are inadequately staffed in Somalia. There is a lack of specialized journalists to tackle complex socio-economic issues in Somalia and hence the need to train new, and retrain some of the existing journalists as Somalia enters the Information Society. Somalia's democratic, socio-economic institutions will be enhanced by a vibrant free mass media ensuring a continued need for education in journalism and communication in Africa. Such distance education will complement existing journalism education institutions.

- UNDP contracted an international consortium of European and African universities that will use a range of learning methods such as web and CD-ROM-based streamed video, self-based e-learning, email communication, chat rooms and provision of hardcopy study materials, Members of the consortium include:
 - University of Fort Hare, South Africa (<http://www.ufh.ac.za>), is offering ODL training in financial planning and management to planners from both the public and private sectors, to boost economic growth, transparency and accountability in line with principles of good governance. The successful students attain a certificate/diploma.

- International Management Consultants Limited (<http://www.imcl.biz/>) is leading the course management, including liaison with UNDP and the training institutions administration of the distance learning and the web based e-learning system.

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