COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

COL in the Commonwealth

2018–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

SIERRA LEONE

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TARGETS 2021	ACHIEVED BY 2020
Improved sustainable livelihoods **300,000 PEOPLE**	**257,484** people
470 **ORGANISATIONS** Improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL	Target EXCEEDED **654** organisations
1.4 million **PEOPLE** Increased and equitable access to, and use of, quality learning opportunities	**880,039** people

Introduction

Since its creation some 30 years ago, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has become a true catalyst for positive change for a third of the world's population. Our vision of "learning for sustainable development" means that learning must lead to social inclusion, economic growth and environmental conservation. This aligns COL's work with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities for all."

COL harnesses the potential of open, distance and technology-enabled learning to help Member States accelerate progress towards achieving development outcomes.

To achieve outcomes and impact, COL has led six paradigm shifts:

- If the child cannot go to school, the school comes to the child.
- Technology-enabled learning can break open the ivory towers of tertiary education.
- Open educational resources (OER) are the answer to closed and costly textbooks.
- The digital divide can be transformed into a digital dividend.
- Literacy is not always a precondition for learning.
- The social capital of the mother is the most important determinant in bringing girls to school.

What are COL's key success factors? COL aligns its work with global priorities and ensures that it stays relevant to Member States' needs and priorities. COL is relevant, responsive and results oriented. The 2018–2020 Country Highlights summarise COL's progress towards achieving SDG4.

Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning

Working in two sectors, Education and Skills, with Gender as a crosscutting theme, COL uses pioneering models and approaches to achieve impact.

- COL has developed an innovative employability framework to strengthen and evaluate the impact of higher education institutions on graduates' employability, with a focus on industry and labour-market engagement.
- GIRLS Inspire has reached close to 81,000 girls and young women in remote and unreached communities, providing schooling and skilling them for livelihoods.
- The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model is being upscaled in partnership with national banks, moving from the meso to the macro level.
- The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme is now being implemented across the Commonwealth.
- Ambitious projects to improve gender equality in two Commonwealth regions have been launched. These holistic models are based on community mobilisation and address areas such as capacity building in education, gender-based violence, health, empowerment, economic opportunities, and policy.
- Blockchain technology, built according to open standards, was used to issue certificates for massive open online courses (MOOCs) in different disciplines.
- COL has developed a comprehensive solution for data resilience in education for small states facing climate-related disasters.
- The ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9), held in Edinburgh, brought together close to 550 thought leaders, policy makers and practitioners to share best practices and harness innovation for change, with a view to providing employability skills to young people, offering a quality education to all regardless of circumstances, and identifying practical ways for technology to speed up our progress.

SIERRA LEONE

COL works with partners in Sierra Leone to expand access to quality education and lifelong learning for all. Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL's Board of Governors, and Mrs Musu M. Gorvie, Deputy Director, Higher Education, Ministry of Technical and Higher Education, is COL's Focal Point for Sierra Leone.

COL's current work in Sierra Leone is primarily in the areas of teacher education, higher education (through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth) and technology-enabled learning (TEL). Learners from Sierra Leone have benefited from open online courses and other COL resources.

The following are the highlights from 2018 to 2020.

Programmes

TEACHER EDUCATION

The Teacher Education initiative works with partner institutions to improve teacher quality and achieve better learning outcomes for students. Through the Teacher Futures model, it works with governments, teacher education institutions, schools and other partners to deliver quality learning opportunities through in-service, technology-enabled teacher professional development. Sierra Leone was among the first countries to adopt the model.

COL is collaborating with Freetown Teachers College (FTC) and Sierra Leone's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to address declining learner performance and the demand for improved teacher quality in the country's junior secondary schools through the Integrated In-Service Teacher Training Project for Junior Secondary School Teachers (INSET).

In February 2018, 30 school principals, champions and teachers from ten schools took part in a three-day sensitisation workshop conducted by staff from FTC to enhance support for INSET.

In March 2018, COL's Adviser: Teacher Education visited Sierra Leone to sensitise stakeholders about Teacher Futures, review its activity plan and facilitate a learning design workshop. As a result of the visit, 21 teacher educators were trained in learning design, including the use of microlearning in teacher development. Drafts of four modules were developed, along with sample teacher-generated microlearning content.

An INSET roll-out seminar was held in October 2018 at FTC. The main goal of the seminar was to introduce school principals, FTC mentors and school champions to the INSET programme and to orientate them to the programme's resources and implementation model.

A *Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development – Secondary* has been developed and contextualised for Sierra Leone, together with an *Implementation Guide* for the programme.

Twenty-four enumerators and data collection supervisors were trained in October 2018. Subsequently, the trained enumerators collected baseline data from schools in Freetown and Kono.

A national community of practice was set up for the principals, school champions, lead mentors and enrolled teachers in the 12 schools involved in Teacher Futures – Sierra Leone, with a total of 139 members.

A series of workshops were organised in collaboration with FTC. In March 2019, COL conducted a two-day workshop at the FTC Campus in Kossoh Town, Freetown on *Leadership in Teacher Professional Development*. As well, COL supported a three-day workshop on *Community Practice Management in INSET Implementation* in March 2019. A workshop on *Mentorship in Teacher Professional Development* was held in June 2019 as part of COL's support for the INSET programme.

A two-day mid-term meeting for internal evaluation was held at FTC in June 2019.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Initiated by ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth, VUSSC supports the collaborative development and sharing of OER to promote learning for sustainable development.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, VUSSC has repurposed and made available online certificate, diploma and undergraduate degree programmes in Youth Work Development to universities that are members of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work. The University of Sierra Leone is a member of the Consortium. COL's Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at the *Technical Workshop* hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

This initiative aims to encourage more institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. Activities of the TEL initiative focus on the individual, institutional and country levels.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been organising a MOOC on *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning*. Two participants from Sierra Leone joined the course's third offering, in October–November 2019.

Events and Special Activities

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

The Africa and Mediterranean regional meeting of COL's Focal Points took place on 24–25 September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana to strengthen the effectiveness of COL's work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region, and to share information about developments related to learning for sustainable development.

MOOC ON INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS

In collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, COL organised a MOOC on *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business*, and 16 learners from Sierra Leone joined the course's second offering, in November–December 2019.

PCF9

Close to 550 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from across the Commonwealth and beyond gathered at the historic Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Scotland for the ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9), themed *Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning*. It was organised from 9 to 12 September 2019 in partnership with The Open University, UK.

The four days of insightful keynote addresses, engaging plenary panels, informative parallel sessions, and other programme highlights provided a unique opportunity to bridge traditional divides between borders and sectors. Discussions centred around four key sub-themes: *Opening Up Education, Equity and Inclusion*, *Technology* and *Employability*, and delegates appreciated the focus on new forum features — artificial intelligence, youth and girls' education and learners with special abilities. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers.

COL sponsored Dr Dennis Luseni, Deputy Director, Teacher Development and Performance, Teaching Service Commission, to attend the forum as well as the *Teacher Education* workshop, which was hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

PCF9 Edinburgh Statement

Forum *partners* from over 60 countries believe that it is possible to significantly accelerate progress towards the aim and targets of SDG4 by prioritising the following collective actions now:

1. **Accomplishment at scale**
   Mobilise an emergency response to ensure that all children in the Commonwealth, including girls, learners with different abilities, and learners from vulnerable and marginalised communities, experience a quality education focused on accomplishment, knowledge exchange and the continued ability to learn.

2. **Skills for productive lives**
   Urgently create learning opportunities for marginalised, excluded, vulnerable and out-of-school young people to build skills for leading a productive life, embracing technology to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and confidence, and bridging accessible formal, non-formal and informal education.

3. **Creating new digital dividends**
   Develop new, innovative, flexible modes of education to foster creativity, imagination and peer knowledge exchange, increase reach and ensure no one is left behind, through the use of appropriate media and delivery, including blended approaches to digital learning.

4. Teachers as skilled agents of change

Teachers and teacher educators are the main agents of change for quality education and can be supported to catalyse action in their schools, communities and colleges as respected professionals who model lifelong learning. To do this we propose:

Creating **alternative, flexible and technology enabled pathways into teaching** to resolve the shortage of skilled and motivated teachers;

Expanding low-cost, highly effective ways to **support school-based teacher professional development** to build change capacity and capability within regional and national educational systems.

5. Positively disrupt higher education

Support innovation for quality higher education; **strengthen the technology-enabled learning ecosystem** throughout the Commonwealth, including the scope to develop professional skills, recognition, validation and verification of experiential and prior learning through micro-credentialing and blockchain technology; expand the reach of open education for dispersed audiences; and improve barrier-free access to tertiary education.

6. Challenging assessment

Radically relook at assessment models: build a culture of assessment to support employability and micro-entrepreneurship.

Our ambition is to achieve this through:

Bold inclusive collaboration;

Bringing together the diverse groups of critical thinkers, innovators and practitioners who can collaboratively make change happen by delivering quality education and lifelong learning for all;

Making greater use of data, evidence and storytelling to galvanise political will for enabling policies and well-resourced implementation plans;

Sustaining the momentum;

Building an active network of learning, support and action starting now.

Sustaining and building our momentum for change, we aim to bring our key commitments to the fore of the policy agenda through the Conference of Commonwealth

New Publications and Resources

In 2018–2020, COL produced a number of publications and resources, including:

Knowledge Series: Designing and Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners

As online learning and MOOCs become mainstream, it is important to explore new forms of credentialing. This publication offers a step-by-step guide to plan, design and implement micro-credentials and badges in diverse contexts and provides greater flexibility in the journey of the new learner-earner through a skills and capability framework.

A Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development: SECONDARY

This toolkit is for implementing school-based teacher development as a way to improve the performance of schools and raise the achievement of children. This valuable resource includes a detailed framework, which can be adapted to the context of a particular country, region, district or school, and offers practical daily activities for teachers.

Guidelines on the Development of Open Educational Resources Policies

This new publication provides specific tools to analyse current contexts and policy environments, understand issues related to copyright and licensing, and align policy in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The guidelines present a systematic process for designing and implementing OER policies and measuring their impact.

A Guide to Integrating Employability in Higher Education Institutions: The Commonwealth of Learning's Employability Model

This publication provides clear guidelines on how to integrate employability pathways into instructional systems. From career counselling to career support, the guide demonstrates how institutions can prepare graduates for employment or entrepreneurship.

Gender Scorecard 2.0: Instructions and Templates

This is a tool to audit the capacity of institutions to mainstream gender. It helps with analysing existing policies and practices and developing clear steps for the effective promotion of gender equity.

All COL publications can be found on its open-access repository at **oasis.col.org**.

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