COL in the Commonwealth

2012–2015

Country Reports
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Foreword

COL in the Commonwealth: 2012-2015 Country Reports summarises COL’s activities over the last three years (2012-2015) and captures what we have achieved in each Member State and across the Commonwealth.

This volume is the result of a collaborative process that began in 2011 with extensive partner consultations. Following these consultations, a Country Action Plan was developed to guide COL’s work in each country. The reports contained in this volume describe the implementation of these plans and highlight COL’s achievements during this three year plan.

The reports cover all Member States of the Commonwealth, showing not only what COL has done in developing countries but also how its work aligns with the international development priorities of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The reports are grouped under four regions: Africa and the Mediterranean, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Each regional section contains a brief regional report as well as the reports for each country within that region. The Pan-Commonwealth section describes COL’s Initiatives, under the two sectors: ‘Education’ and ‘Livelihoods and Health’. The reports for this triennium categorise COL activities according to our five core strategies: partnerships, capacity, materials, models and policy, in order to better present how our work contributes to outcomes. ‘COL in Action’ highlights real life examples to illustrate how COL’s work impacts on people, groups and institutions in developing countries.

Most of the initiatives that COL pursued during this triennium are showing demonstrable results in expanding and improving opportunities for education and training, building healthier communities, helping rural communities achieve greater prosperity, and contributing to skills development. As the external Impact Evaluation report states: ‘COL has had a major impact on individuals including farmers…faculty members, institutional leaders in formal and non-formal learning, selected policy makers and educational administrators’ (S. Murgatroyd with J. Tully, 2015). The external Outcome Evaluation concludes that ‘all the Initiatives moved successfully forward, on time and within budget’ (N. Kemp and G. Farrell, 2015). Both evaluations confirm that COL is highly respected and well regarded in the field.

The production of COL in the Commonwealth: 2012-2015 Country Reports was made possible through collective effort and collaboration. Partners on the ground have diligently provided updates to COL. COL staff have tracked and assessed results obtained from partners through a thorough monitoring and evaluation process. COL’s advanced knowledge management systems have enabled us to capture information from numerous sources and synthesise this into the reports that make up this volume. I must particularly commend Alexis Carr for her diligent work in filtering the masses of raw data and converting them into a coherent and meaningful narrative.

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

Access to education remains inequitable, especially in rural areas, with girls particularly disadvantaged. Despite the encouraging progress made to increase access to schooling, the latest edition of the Global Education Digest reveals that an alarmingly high number of children are repeating grades and leaving school before completing primary or lower-secondary education. Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) notes that 32.2 million primary pupils were held back a grade in 2010, and 31.2 million “dropped out of school and may never return.”

The dilemma, therefore, is not only to deal with out-of-school children, but also to address why children leave school. Those most at risk are girls, minors, rural and poor children. COL defines open schooling as the physical separation of the school learner from the teacher, combined with the use of unconventional teaching methodologies and information and communications technologies (ICTs). Open schooling can be provided by stand-alone, independent distance education institutions, be managed as part of the education ministry within a specific directorate, or be part of a university. Open schooling has been introduced successfully in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to complement, or as an alternative to, the conventional school system.

As part of COL’s initiative to establish and strengthen open schools, COL assisted in the establishment of the Commonwealth Open Schools Association (COMOSA), which involves partners from every region of the Commonwealth. The basic objective of the association is to cooperate and collaborate in the development, promotion and introduction of innovative, high-quality, relevant, equitable, gender-sensitive and cost-effective programmes of school education for sustainable development in Commonwealth countries through open and distance learning (ODL).

COL IN ACTION

In rural areas of Trinidad & Tobago, many young people drop out of the formal school system early, leaving them less prepared for the workforce. The remote village of Matelot on the north coast of Trinidad is no exception. To help address this problem, COL is testing a new and innovative “Big Picture” framework at a Catholic school in Matelot. This framework seeks to help organisations go beyond outputs so that participants can realise the benefits of a given activity. The school in Matelot has high hopes for the new job-ready skills programme that will be piloted using the framework: “[The] provision of an open school has the potential for reversing the migration trend, as villagers both young and mature are able to … complete secondary school … and, through further education and training, to build careers and access jobs within the North Coast community, thus contributing to its development,” said Sharon Mangroo, the Chair of the Catholic Education Board of Management. Students will be trained in agricultural processing, small boat engine repair and net mending. Since the community has asked that students be trained in these areas, the chance of them gaining employment is very high – good news for both the students and the community.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

► 22 partners have signed the COMOSA constitution
**QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL COMMONWEALTH CITIZENS**

Increased access to affordable primary, secondary and tertiary education especially for girls, women and the marginalised

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**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Governments in developing Commonwealth countries have increasingly adopted open and distance education as a way of addressing the increased demand for higher education. COL’s Higher Education initiative promotes greater access to quality higher education in the Commonwealth countries. It also supports policy-makers, institutions and leaders in higher education in harnessing the potential of ODL and technology as a way of addressing the growing demands for higher education, and the issues of rising costs and diminishing public funding.

*Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA)*

As part of COL’s Higher Education initiative of promoting management and leadership development, the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) was launched in 2002. A decade later, in 2013, 12 courses were revised, another 10 were rewritten and one elective course, Business Ethics, was added. Eleven partner institutions spread across the Commonwealth are currently offering the CEMBA/CEMPA programme.

*COL Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM)*

In countries where quality assurance systems are not well established, universities often find it useful to invite external panels to advise them on quality improvement and wider issues. However, these panels can be costly. The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL-RIM) provides higher education institutions with a “do-it-yourself” approach to institutional quality audits. COL developed COL-RIM as a cost-effective approach that focuses on self-assessment and helps institutions improve internal quality assurance, planning and systematic institutional improvement. The COL-RIM package, consisting of a conceptual framework and handbook, is freely available from COL.

The Higher Education initiative continues to help governments and institutions develop national and institutional ODL policies, improve the quality of systems, and improve staff capacity to develop and deliver quality programmes. The initiative will continue to promote good practices and support Commonwealth Member States as they seek to strengthen the credibility of open and distance learning (ODL) as a viable means of developing human resources for their economic and social development.
TEACHER EDUCATION

If education is to play its role as a primary agent of transformation for sustainable development, countries need teachers who will help prepare learners to be involved in this transformation. However, there is still an enormous deficit of teachers across Commonwealth countries and a huge unmet need for teachers and trainers for the vocationalisation of secondary education. As well, the other major challenge is posed by the poor quality of teachers and teacher educators. Addressing these challenges must include supporting and improving teacher education. Improvements are needed in teacher education institutions, in the institutions’ capacity to train more teachers, in the capacity of teacher educators, and in the programmes and materials they deploy.

COL is working to help teacher education institutions offer quality ODL programmes that will enable teachers to upgrade their skills and qualifications. Working in partnership with teacher training institutions, governments and other international agencies, COL is spearheading several major teacher education initiatives. These initiatives focus on school-based in-service models to increase the number of teachers trained and enhance the quality and development of teachers and teacher educators. The initiatives also have a focus on teacher educator development and the training of teachers for vocational subjects in secondary schools. Through a collaborative effort by COL and its partners, COL is working to contribute to the goal of improving teacher education across the Commonwealth.

COL IN ACTION

COL is helping train 500 teachers in Kenya through its Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) materials. COL started by training 50 master trainers, each of whom is responsible for training at least 10 other teachers in their local community. Using this multiplier effect allows COL to increase its impact. Richard Ituriu is one of the master trainers who benefited from COL’s intervention. He lives in the rural community of Meru and believes that learning English is essential to the future of the children he teaches. English is the language of commerce and instruction, so “poor English will mean poor performance in other subjects as well.” Since implementing ORELT materials, he has seen his students’ grades improve, something he attributes to the materials. Richard is keen to see ORELT taught across Kenya and has already trained eight teachers, including two from his own school. Richard isn’t the only one who wants to see ORELT expanded in Kenya. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development has approved the use of ORELT as supplementary English educational materials in secondary schools. COL’s external evaluators also commented on the importance of COL’s work, noting, “All the teachers visited reported that the modules are very helpful; they make the teaching and learning of English more exciting, easier and lively … [and] give them a rare opportunity to learn English in a more practical way.”

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

- 24 teacher education institutions in eight countries have enhanced the quality of their curricula through the development and use of new materials, including OER
- 4,815 teachers and teacher educators were trained in various aspects of ODL
GENDER

As a cross-cutting theme, gender underpins all seven of COL’s initiatives. One-third of the world’s poor live in Commonwealth countries and two-thirds of them are women. Poverty has a female face. COL recognises that the advancement of the goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to its agenda of learning for development. For COL, gender equality is a cross-cutting corporate goal that requires both women’s and men’s views, interests and needs to shape its programmes. The gender cross-cutting theme focuses on internal and external capacity-building in gender-responsive programming and policy development. Its objective is to enhance the institutional capacity of COL and its partner organisations to integrate gender equality considerations in programmes, policies and planning.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

► As a result of COL’s work, at least 21,000 girls and women have increased access to learning opportunities in the Commonwealth.

COL IN ACTION

Ms Valarmathy from Theni, India, is a member of the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative. A primary school dropout, she joined a self-help group and L3F in 2008/2009. Under L3F she began learning about agriculture, business planning and financial management through her mobile phone and other ICT media. She also participated in regular meetings with other L3F members in which they shared and reinforced their learning. Through these interactions, she learned goat husbandry, was able to save money, and eventually started a successful goat enterprise. The bank that gave her the loan to start her business recruited Ms. Valarmathy to become a resource person for the community banking process under L3F. She was appointed as business correspondent of this major commercial bank, and currently operates the mobile banking system, conducting transactions for community members, as well as remaining an active L3F member in the goat enterprise.
Increased access to affordable primary, secondary and tertiary education especially for girls, women and the marginalised

Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)

Small states constitute two-thirds of the Commonwealth membership. These include small islands with small populations located in the Caribbean, Pacific, Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, as well as landlocked and coastal states with small populations. All are members of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), which is not an institution but a mechanism initiated by and built on the support of Ministers of Education of developing small states of the Commonwealth. VUSSC is committed to collaboration in developing, adapting and sharing openly licensed content resources — that is, open educational resources (OER) — for education, training and capacity-building, and to using information and communications technologies (ICTs) to broaden access to education. Development of VUSSC has been coordinated by COL on behalf of Commonwealth Ministers of Education. All 31 small states are actively engaged in the VUSSC initiative. VUSSC countries have chosen to focus on creating skills-related post-secondary courses in areas such as tourism, entrepreneurship, professional development, disaster management and a range of technical and vocational subjects, but it has also focused on the development of tertiary-level programmes. These open, electronically held course materials — developed by small states, for small states — can be readily adapted to the specific context of each country. Small states thus become active contributors to global development and leaders in educational reform through the innovative use ICTs.

One particularly unique characteristic of VUSSC is its Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF), which is intended to ensure that all VUSSC materials can be adapted into recognised courses and programmes that students can take for credit through the recognised institutions of the small states. As such, the TQF acts as a translation instrument for the portability of qualifications between countries.

COL in Action

Members of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) Management Committee announced the completion of the review of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) TQF. The Open University of Malaysia hosted a meeting during the first week of March 2015 to finalise the review of the TQF and the referencing of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) against the TQF and to approve the registration of six VUSSC programmes on the TQF. The completed TQF will provide small states with more up-to-date procedures and guidelines and a referencing tool for alignment of qualifications to the TQF. The TQF will function as a translation device, making qualifications more readable, which in turn will help learners and workers move between countries or change jobs. It is a key aim of the TQF to contribute to creating a workforce in small states that is mobile and flexible.

The TQF was created on the recommendation of education ministers and was developed in partnership with VUSSC members, comprising National Quality Assurance Agencies (NQAAs) and National Qualifications Authorities (NQAs), and was facilitated by COL.

7th Pan-Commonwealth Forum

COL’s 7th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7) was held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 2 to 6 December 2013 and co-hosted by the federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) was the lead partner institution. The overall theme for PCF7 was “Open Learning for Development: From Empowerment to Transformation.” This overall theme had five sub-themes: (1) Girls’ and Women’s Education, (2) Skills Development, (3) Promoting Open Educational Resources, (4) Innovation and Technology, and (5) Institutional Development. The next Pan-Commonwealth Forum, PCF8, will be held in Malaysia in November 2016.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

- 10 institutions in four Commonwealth regions use gender-inclusive OER to offer 11 courses and programmes
- Six programmes/courses are registered on the TQF
- Over 600 participants from 49 countries attended the forum in 2013
LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS

Weak human resource development in the agricultural sector is one of the main causes of underdevelopment of agriculture, poverty of farming communities, inequality (in terms of land holdings and of gender) and unsustainable practices. This weakness stems from several factors: the high cost and inability of the didactic mode of extension to reach large numbers of farming communities; limitations in perceiving human resource development holistically, linked to other components in the development value chain; and declining investment by governments and other agencies.

The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative offers a paradigm shift that can strengthen human resource development by:

► Facilitating learning in the context of social capital and financial capital
► Promoting open and distance learning (ODL) and community knowledge management with the horizontal transfer of knowledge, and enhancing self-directed learning using ICT, which can reduce the transaction costs of learning
► Offering a win-win framework of inviting secondary stakeholders, such as financial institutions and ICT companies, to invest in the programme for a self-sustaining development process
► Focusing on a “women in development approach,” since many women in developing Commonwealth countries have inadequate access to land rights, credit and markets, as well as limited decision-making roles, while contributing substantially to agricultural labour

Such a paradigm shift is expected to empower farming communities – particularly the marginalised sections, such as women – and strengthen their livelihoods.

Ms Olivia Atieno from Ugunja, Kenya, is the only breadwinner in her large family, a fact that can make life very challenging in rural Kenya. A school dropout, she joined L3F in 2010 in the hopes that she could improve her livelihood. Now she learns daily through the mobile phone, and shares her learning with other L3F group members in her community. From this learning, Ms Atieno was able to establish dairy goat, orange flesh sweet potato, and maize agro-businesses, which have increased her household income. She has also become an important member and active coordinator of the cooperative group in her community, and continues to conduct cooperative transactions and manage her businesses via the mobile phone. Her enhanced household income has enabled Olivia to send her three children to schools and college, giving them an opportunity that she never had.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

► L3F as a sustainable system has been implemented by secondary stakeholders with enhanced investment in nine countries in three Commonwealth regions
► Empowerment increased for L3F groups in six countries in two Commonwealth regions
Sustainable and replicable learning systems in place for farming, health and skills development in the formal and informal sectors

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

In developing countries, 341 million young people are not in education, employment or training (World Bank, 2012). Technology-enhanced, flexible and blended approaches to technical and vocational education and training can contribute to improvements in access, gender, quality and efficiency. COL’s Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) initiative focuses on promoting new flexible and blended models, policy development, capacity-building and learning materials. TVSD does this by:

Supporting strategic planning and policy development at national and institutional levels

Offering a range of capacity-building activities to support integration of technology and flexible delivery mechanisms for policy-makers, managers and teachers in order to assist skills development professionals to learn about, and use, new technology-enhanced approaches

Helping organisations, institutions and ministries define and contextualise effective flexible and blended skills development models – including a focus on training for sustainable livelihoods

Supporting the development of new learning materials and repurposing of OERs in technical and vocational subjects

COL IN ACTION

The small island nation of Nauru has a particular problem with overcrowded housing and a high proportion of unemployed youth. With support from COL and New Zealand Aid, Nauru trained 218 young people in working with concrete and in vocational literacy. About 78% of the students completed the programme, which mobilised tutors and tradespeople in 14 districts. During the training, old houses were fixed and many new community projects were built, including:

- a community playground
- a community shower
- community water tank base
- community bus stands
- a pig sty
- an infant school tuck-shop base
- a church bell hut
- a BBQ stand for the community hall
- foundation for community meeting venue

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS:

- 17 new OER skills training courses have been produced
- The flexible and blended TVET model is being integrated in 40 institutions
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

How can large numbers of people, often in difficult circumstances, be reached and enabled to learn the basic health information they need to survive and thrive? The demands are big and resources are limited. COL’s Healthy Communities initiative was established in 2009. It addresses Millennium Development Goals by working to increase access to learning opportunities by all citizens, but especially healthcare workers and community-based groups in developing regions of the Commonwealth.

The Healthy Communities initiative enables better individual and community responses to issues of maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and fitness, the environment, and other development challenges, particularly those faced by women and youth. Activities focus on the core strategies of the Healthy Communities initiative:

- Developing flexible, low-cost, high-impact communication for development models
- Building capacity of national and regional agencies and working in partnership to achieve greater scale using media and technology
- Developing district-level learning programmes
- Developing training and advocacy materials
- Supporting policy feedback

COL IN ACTION

Hilda’s sister died while giving birth because she had no professional support and did not make it to the hospital in time. Hilda got a group of women together who wanted to do something about the high level of maternal mortality in the area she lives in, the Mchinji District of Malawi.

Hilda listens to and participates in the COL-supported radio programme Bag of Life, which reaches 3,000 active learners and as many 15,000 passive listeners on a weekly basis. The radio programme provides them with information on maternal and child health by sharing stories of women’s actual experiences. Hilda and her friends also go door to door to inform women on issues related to pregnancy and delivery that are aired on the programme. Today the programme is talking about healthy food for a pregnant woman and the need to rest. Hilda smiles when, in the middle of the programme, songs on pregnancy and childbirth are aired. Hilda’s group wrote and performed these songs – they are listening to their own voices, their own stories and ideas. While Hilda lives in extremely challenging circumstances, she now has access to new learning opportunities and platforms that enable her and her peers to take more control over their own healthcare and that of their families.
ELEARNING

eLearning is a cross-cutting COL theme that engages with stakeholders in the Education and Livelihoods & Health sectors to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to achieve goals. In the COL context, eLearning is also part of the open and distance learning (ODL) agenda and plays a key role in expanding access.

COL has undertaken a range of activities to support governments in integrating ICT into their education and training systems and to assist institutions, individuals and communities in using ICT confidently and creatively to achieve their respective goals and participate in the global community. This includes COL providing policy support to governments, developing the eLearning capacity of institutions and organisations, and supporting governments and institutions in developing and using open education resources (OER).

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

► 13 institutions and nine countries initiated eLearning programmes in three Commonwealth regions
► Over 4,700 teachers have been trained in teaching and learning online, ICT integration, OER and mobile app development for education

APTUS

A large number of learners and teachers in the developing world operate in “unconnected” environments – unconnected to the power grid and to the Internet. There needs to be a different approach to reach individuals and give them support. Aptus is a mobile learning solution that makes use of two simple, low-cost devices: a mini PC and WiFi router. The result is a solution that can be deployed in areas with no access to grid electricity or data connectivity. Users (with tablets, smartphones or laptops) can access over 3,000 videos, 100,000 Wikipedia articles and 3.7 million Wiktionary entries, all open educational resources (OER) of repute and quality, as well as a full suite of platforms such as WordPress 3 and Drupal 7.

COL initiated field trials and provided Aptus sets to participants in 15 countries. COL received positive feedback and acted on the many suggestions to improve the approach. Currently, Aptus is deployed on a collaborative project in Vanuatu in support of a national tablets distribution project, and has found general acceptance in some other countries in the Pacific. COL has demonstrated a viable and low-cost practical solution to distribute OER even in remote locations.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

► 3,000 videos, 100,000 Wikipedia articles and 3.7 million Wiktionary entries are available on Aptus
MOOCs

As issues of demand and affordability of higher education have grown, increased access to technology has offered many solutions. One of these is in the form of massive open online courses (MOOCs). At present, MOOCs are being used for continuous professional development and training in the developing world and have the potential to offer lifelong learning opportunities for all.

COL, keen to explore the relevance of MOOCs in learning for development, has been working with partners to develop and launch several MOOCs. Two MOOCs offered with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IITK) reached at least 92 countries and about 4,700 learners. An innovative MOOC for Farmers that uses only basic (voice) phones has also been designed and delivered. It attracted 1,055 learners. COL has demonstrated that a MOOC can be re-engineered and adopted for training different types of audiences in developing countries.

COL IN ACTION

Typically, MOOCs are associated with higher education and professional training. However, COL and the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IITK) have revolutionised this technology by offering a horticulture MOOC in a non-traditional manner, covering semi-literate learners. Since Internet connectivity and smartphones are rare among small farmers, the horticulture MOOC was designed in audio-only format for delivery on basic mobile phones. This easy-to-use system is a major innovation. Out of the 1,055 participants who signed up for the horticulture MOOC, 675 remained active throughout, and 296 have received completion certificates from COL and IITK. A few of the recipients have had no exposure to schools. MOOCs such as this one are expected to increase the participants’ skills and productivity, leading to greater development in their communities. This is the first time that a MOOC has been blended successfully with a non-Internet technology on such a large scale. COL and IITK’s work paves the way for other MOOCs to be offered in non-traditional fields and to rural communities.

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

- Two MOOCs reached at least 92 countries and about 4,700 learners
- 1,055 learners participated in the mobile phone-based MOOC for Farmers

Photo source: http://www.m4dev.org/m4d.pdf
DIRECTORY OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (DOER)

Developing and developed countries around the world produce sizeable amounts of open educational resources (OER), yet discoverability and accessibility of OER are still major issues for many. The Directory of Open Educational Resources (DOER), located on the Commonwealth Connects portal, is a Web-based service that allows users to search for OER courses by meta-tags, including subject, title, author and edutag. Developed and hosted by COL, the directory offers access to more than 1,300 courses from Commonwealth universities, all available as free courses. These quality materials can be used by educators, learners, curriculum developers and others to enhance the teaching and learning process.

COL’S WEBSITE

COL’s extensive resources, freely available through its website, www.col.org, include:

► Connections newsletter
► Blog
► Research, books, toolkits and other publications commissioned by COL
► Country information
► Course materials, gender microsite, quality assurance microsite, speeches and other resources

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS

► More than 1,300 courses are available on the DOER

► COL’s website is currently being updated, with the official launch of the new and improved site expected in 2015