COL in the Commonwealth

2015–2021
Acknowledgements

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COL in the Commonwealth
2015–2021
Contents:

Africa
Asia
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COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2021 Country Reports summarise COL’s activities over the last six years, detailing what we have achieved in each Member State and across the Commonwealth. The reports describe not only how COL has addressed country needs in education and training but also how its work supports the priorities of its development partners: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the global community to embrace distance and online delivery to keep the doors of learning open. The current crisis has highlighted, yet again, the uneven development of technology across the Commonwealth. COL has been promoting the use of a range of technologies, from print, radio and TV to the Internet, to reach learners in different contexts. As an intergovernmental organisation established by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote distance learning and technologies for human resource development, COL’s role has never been more important.

COL’s Strategic Plan 2015–2021 was based on the conviction that learning leads to sustainable development. COL has continued to use its expertise in distance education and technology-based approaches to promote lifelong learning that leads to sustainable development, which means economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation. This aligns COL’s work with SDG4, which aspires to provide equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning for all.

To accelerate progress towards this goal and enhance impact, COL has been fostering partnerships, building capacity, supporting the development of materials and replicable models, and enabling policy. Focusing on these core strategies, this compendium begins with a Pan-Commonwealth section, which describes COL’s initiatives under Education and Skills, with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. This is followed by a section containing brief regional overviews for Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The regional summaries are followed by individual country reports, which highlight some of the results achieved.

You will be pleased to note that COL has exceeded the targets identified for the six-year plan. External evaluators, who conducted a meta-evaluation to assess the impact of the Strategic Plan 2015–2021, concluded that “COL programming over the period assessed... was relevant, effective, and efficient. COL is having an impact in many dimensions and across several initiatives; and in many cases, where government has taken interest and is assuming more leadership, there are good reasons to believe some of the changes at the institutional and government levels are sustainable.”

This success has been possible through the support that COL has received from ministries of education as well as partner organisations and experts. COL in the Commonwealth is also the result of collective effort and collaboration. Partners on the ground have diligently provided COL with updates, while COL staff have tracked and assessed results obtained through meticulous monitoring and evaluation. I am very grateful to everyone involved for their valuable inputs.

Pandemics, natural disasters and widening inequalities will continue to challenge our systems. The lessons learned in the past will help shape a better future. COL will support Member States in their efforts to rebuild robust and resilient systems of education and training by providing bold and imaginative solutions to address future risks and uncertainties. Your continued support will be key to achieving these goals.

Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved sustainable livelihoods</th>
<th>TARGETS 2021</th>
<th>ACHIEVED by April 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL</td>
<td>470 organisations</td>
<td>764 organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased and equitable access to and use of quality learning opportunities</td>
<td>1.4 million people</td>
<td>2,059,159 people</td>
</tr>
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- **300,000 PEOPLE**
- **389,544 people**
- **Target EXCEEDED**
Located in British Columbia, Canada, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation that serves the education and training needs of the 54 independent states that comprise the Commonwealth and their combined population of 2.4 billion, of whom more than 60% are under the age of 30. COL was established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government specifically to help ministries, institutions and organisations expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches.

COL participates in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and presents its progress report to foreign ministers. During the 25th CHOGM, in London in April 2018, COL highlighted at various forums the paradigm shifts required to secure “our common future.” As well, at the triennial Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) and the meetings of the Commonwealth Education Ministers’ Action Group, COL reports on its progress in promoting learning for sustainable development.

COL leverages its impact through a wide range of partnerships that include institutions, national organisations, international development agencies and non-governmental organisations. Inter-governmental partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women, UNESCO and UNESCO’s Institute for Information Technologies (IITE) and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). COL also works with donor agencies such as the World Bank, regional organisations such as the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation, national and regional distance education associations, industry, and private-sector foundations such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

COL assists governmental, non-governmental and community partners in developing policy, building capacity, refining models, creating materials and nurturing collaborative networks.
COL’s response to COVID-19

COL has been quick to respond to the urgency of the situation and the evolving needs across the Commonwealth by initiating relevant projects and targeted country interventions and joining global coalitions.

COL has joined the UNESCO Global Education Coalition and “Combat COVID-19: Keep Learning”, spearheaded by IITE. COL also initiated the International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19, commonly known as OpenDoor, bringing together over 60 organisations and institutions around the world. COL’s online repository of curated content and tools became a go-to resource for educators across the world. The COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative has provided access to free online courses to almost 150,000 Commonwealth citizens, many of whom have lost their livelihoods due to COVID-19.

In an effort to help young women and girls become successful in their fields of interest and build future generations of leaders, COL has launched CommonwealthWiseWomen. This new mentoring programme offers unique networking opportunities to women and girls from underserved communities across the Commonwealth by pairing them with successful and influential women in leadership roles.

Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience

“What lessons can be drawn from the COVID-19 experience to make education systems more resilient in future? This policy brief provides examples of how governments and institutions made it possible for people to continue their education during the pandemic and identifies factors that contributed to success. The responses required are reviewed from social, pedagogical, technological and psychological perspectives.”
**COL’s Programmes**

**Education and Skills** are COL’s two programme sectors, with gender as a cross-cutting theme.

**OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)**

Open/innovative schooling is increasingly recognised as a viable solution to the growing demand for equitable access to secondary education, especially for girls and marginalised groups, and particularly in remote locations. Governments are seeking to redefine the way secondary education addresses societal needs by diversifying the curriculum. This means making technical and vocational programmes available alongside academic offerings — something that open schools are well positioned to do.

**Activities**

OIS currently works in Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Eswatini, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia. COL also supports the information-sharing activities of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association.

COL has supported the development of policies and strategies in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Tanzania; developed and enhanced open schooling models in Belize, Malawi, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia; and promoted quality OER, including for persons with disabilities, in Bangladesh, Botswana, Eswatini and Namibia. It also has been building capacity in course development, delivery and assessment in Guyana and Papua New Guinea.

**Outcomes**

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the current model for OIS is relatively new and involves developing, piloting, scaling and mainstreaming OER, ODL, eLearning methods and open educational practices in order to have a large-scale systemic impact. Since the implementation of this model started in 2017, educators in six countries have developed curriculum-based OER and have piloted or are close to piloting their use. The pilots in Mozambique and Zambia are currently reaching about 800 formerly out-of-school youths per year, and both countries are now looking towards scaling. In addition, as part of their response...
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To the pandemic lockdowns, participating countries shared some of the OER they had in development, and these were downloaded more than 26,000 times in 2020. In a similar vein, curriculum-based resources created for use by learners in Kenya were viewed on YouTube more than 20,000 times in the first eight weeks and, it is estimated, were viewed by more than 150,000 learners in Kenya and Tanzania when first broadcast.

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

Teaching quality is considered to be the most important factor affecting learning in schools in most Commonwealth countries. COL’s focus is on improving teacher quality through school- and technology-based training models, which can cut costs and achieve scale. Working in partnership with government agencies and teacher education institutions, COL supports capacity development in the integration of technology and OER into pre- and in-service training.

**Activities**

COL is working with ministries of education as well as non-governmental organisations and teacher education institutions in The Gambia, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Uganda to develop capacity and resources for school-based teacher development.

In response to partner needs and emerging pedagogies, the initiative has also developed online courses, including MOOCs and webinars for educators and education leaders.

COL’s Educational Podcasting for Innovative Classrooms is a response to the increased need for practices, processes and systems for effective last-mile teaching and teacher professional development in partner countries.

**Outcomes**

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the model has been replicated in ten countries. The findings from the evaluations and interviews with key actors at institutional and government levels suggest that the model is succeeding in West Africa, particularly The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and it shows potential for scale, with the strategic selection of institutions by governments.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL continues to support policy makers, institutions and leaders in higher education to harness the potential of ODL and technology and enable them to cope with the increasing demand for quality higher education in the face of rising costs and diminishing public funding. COL has developed action plans aligned to the priorities of specific countries to increase access to quality higher education, while also forging partnerships with international and regional organisations to leverage its impact.

**Activities**

Institutions in Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka,
Uganda and Zambia have partnered with COL in various projects.

COL is collaborating with 12 higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master in Business Administration and Commonwealth Executive Master in Public Administration programmes.

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning project, led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

**Outcomes**

The evaluation of Higher Education initiatives in the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021* found that student performance had improved and student satisfaction had increased. There is evidence that systemic investments in technology, staff training, materials development and quality assurance policies have all had a positive impact.

**THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

Strengthening and improving the quality and scope of existing tertiary institutions is a key priority for small states. The VUSSC partnership represents 32 small states of the Commonwealth dedicated to sharing educational resources and expanding access to tertiary education. VUSSC works with ministries of education and their agencies, post-secondary institutions and non-governmental organisations to build capacity in online course development, pedagogy and assessment. It promotes technology-enabled learning through the provision of a learning platform and enables the transfer of credits across small states through the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework.

**Activities**

VUSSC has been active in small states across three regions — Africa (Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles), the Caribbean (The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana) and the Pacific (Fiji, Solomon Islands) — promoting eLearning, supporting the development of OER and providing learning opportunities at certificate, diploma and degree levels.

VUSSC has supported the development of a series of blue economy MOOCs in which close to 6,000 learners from across the world have participated.

In response to the increasing need to transition to online delivery, VUSSC has supported institutions in Africa and the Caribbean to manage and use learning management systems to create and offer courses.

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 an online undergraduate degree programme in Youth Work Development to universities that are members of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work.

**Outcomes**

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, there is strong support from ministers of education in the small states of the Commonwealth, and COL offers a variety of courses responding to the unique needs of small states in areas such as the blue economy, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, disaster management and port management. VUSSC has played a major role in the development of OER that have led to educators’ pedagogical development and students’ improved educational performance. The Transnational Qualifications Framework, which allows for the recognition of qualifications earned in one nation by 31 other nations, is a major strength.
The Skills sector addresses the needs of both formal and non-formal learning. The initiatives in this sector are: Technology-Enabled Learning, Lifelong Learning for Farmers, GIRLS Inspire, and Technical and Vocational Skills Development, including Skills Online.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)
This initiative aims to encourage more governments and institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. COL believes that for technology to have a transformative effect in teaching and learning, a focus on policy–technology–capacity is needed, and practice must be based on research evidence.

Activities
This initiative is being implemented in Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Fiji, Grenada, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Samoa, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Since its launch in 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users. Over 24,000 learners have benefited from MOOCs organised in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada. Since 2018, COL’s online course Understanding OER has been used by over 13,000 people worldwide; in 2020, it won a prestigious Brandon Hall Group Silver Award.

Outcomes
According to the Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021, TEL demonstrates the systematic use of technology to offer quality education at scale. The C-DELTA (seven modules) and Online Course on Open Education Resources (LearnOER) platforms are examples. TEL provides peer-reviewed and quality-assured tools and resources to help any educational institution integrate technology in teaching and learning so as to improve the quality of education.

PCF8
PCF8 was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 27 to 30 November 2016. More than 500 participants from 59 countries joined COL and host partner Open University Malaysia for four days of speeches, presentations and discussions on the theme Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development. In the framework of the forum, education ministers from five countries held a Ministerial Roundtable, where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. Forum delegates adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration with a set of ten recommendations for governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society, on topics that included lifelong learning, ODL, access and equity, teacher education, OER, education of women and girls, research and innovation.
student learning and success. The Advanced ICT Skills Development Project has developed 26 OER courses to make the teaching and learning of advanced ICT skills affordable. These courses are developed as OER textbooks that can be adapted by institutions to offer courses. In addition, this initiative works to improve TEL policies.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

This programme empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning processes, and organise themselves to solve the challenges of lack of access to credit and finance to improve their livelihoods. In this model, COL is a catalyst in bringing together institutions, civil society and the private sector to build the capacity of communities through gender-sensitive learning.

**Activities**

Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda and Zambia are currently implementing the L3F model. Nearly 800,000 farmers, more than half of them women, have participated in L3F learning activities. COL has also trained over 100,000 learners across several countries of the Commonwealth using MOOCs - to scale up L3F through building capacity in agricultural extension. During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, about 42,000 learners were trained using innovative mobiMOOCs. Banks in various countries collaborate with L3F, including NABARD, a large agricultural bank in India, and Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank. COL has been building the capacity of staff at the Bank of Tanzania through a visit to India and subsequent follow-up training workshops.

**Outcomes**

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, since being piloted in 2006, the L3F programme has been demonstrated to enhance crop productivity, household incomes and empowerment, not simply through learning but also by linking small-holder farmers to sources of financing and to other actors in the supply chain. Participants invest their incomes in children’s education, better food and improved housing, as well as increasing their assets and diversifying their income-generating activities, which multiplies the development impact. COL’s ability to broker partnerships is a key strength: the L3F model links participants with microfinance, agricultural extension workers and agricultural supply chains using a social-capital approach.

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL is building the capacity of TVET government agencies and institutions to increase access to quality TVSD through using ODL and learning technologies. COL is supporting selected partners to implement Skills in Demand projects, which blend online learning with learning in the workplace or community. Tapping into the physical and human resources in these contexts helps overcome TVET-specific challenges of how to develop practical skills while still reaching marginalised learners in informal sectors and remote locations.
Activities

Since 2015, COL has trained more than 3,000 TVET educators across the Commonwealth in flexible and blended learning. COL is supporting government agency partners in The Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Zambia to implement national change strategies for flexible and blended TVET. COL has seven Skills in Demand projects underway in Kenya, Nauru, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Zambia, and across the Caribbean in partnership with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies. Skills being developed are project management, gardening, construction, computer and mobile phone repair, furniture making, and teaching and assessment for TVET teachers and workplace trainers.

Outcomes

According to the Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021, more than 100 partners are implementing flexible and blended (FaB) learning approaches to varying degrees, and there is evidence that organisations are moving toward more flexible TVSD. COL has online OER to build capacity in flexible skills development, allowing countries to cost-effectively scale up institutional capability through training trainers to use COL’s OER. COL’s new Skills in Demand model was found to meet the needs of national TVET agencies and bring government support that allowed work to scale rapidly across institutions and workplaces. TVSD also promoted learning networks: the INVEST Africa Community Learning Network has more than 2,000 members, and the African Foundation for Quality e-Learning for TVET (AFQueT) was founded in 2019 by nine individuals from five African countries who have had their capability in eLearning built through COL.

As well, Skills Online aims to support the efforts of Member States to disseminate skills required for employment and entrepreneurship. Through hybrid models that apply ODL techniques, it helps women, girls, youths, persons with disabilities, entrepreneurs and the unemployed to acquire relevant 21st-century skills and access in-country mentorship support. It enhances the ODL capabilities of both TVET institutions and other non-governmental organisations involved in skills development.

The COL–Coursera partnership has been offered in 50 Commonwealth countries, resulting in over one million course enrolments and over 182,000 certificates. In addition, COL has collaborated with Udemy Inc., facilitating access for vulnerable youths in Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda to 4,000 highly curated online courses that have benefited over 8,100 learners. In India, COL has helped reskill 2,100 auto-technicians, tailors and beauticians to become sanitation hygiene entrepreneurs and train 5,000 women digital entrepreneurs to meet new demands created by COVID-19.

GENDER

Gender is a cross-cutting theme that underpins and complements all COL initiatives. COL recognises that the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment is central to its agenda of learning for sustainable development. COL supports partners in mainstreaming gender and in implementing holistic projects to address specific gender issues. Targeted programmes tackle the distinct challenges faced by...
girls/women and boys/men in regions where they are most disadvantaged, while also shifting the social norms that create and perpetuate gender inequalities.

**Activities**

Projects are being implemented in Botswana, Ghana, Guyana, India, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago. Through a variety of skills-building activities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, COL has been empowering women to achieve sustainable livelihoods. In Sri Lanka and Tanzania, COL has trained girls and young women in ICT, and in the Caribbean, it has helped address issues of boys’ underachievement. In 2020, COL launched a gender-equality capacity-building project with the participation of 11 partners in nine countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

As well, a special project, GIRLS Inspire, has aimed to provide schooling and skills development to some of the hardest-to-reach girls in the Commonwealth. COL has worked in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania to provide education and training to almost 100,000 girls to equip them for employment and entrepreneurship. This project has been supported by Global Affairs Canada and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Outcomes**

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, COL has the ability to influence as well as support partners, and its long history and relationships give it credibility. Three of the gender projects — the Social Safety Net project, Lifelong Learning for Mothers, and the Gender Mainstreaming project — have developed strategies and mechanisms for implementation that can be scaled up. The Gender Mainstreaming model has clear guidelines, and the three phases of the gender mainstreaming strategy are logically connected and relevant. In addition, COL has developed tools, including a Gender Audit Tool and a Gender Road Map template. A social protection mobile application has also been developed for Solomon Islands.

**COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)**

COL’s regional office in Asia is based in New Delhi, India. CEMCA promotes the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of media and technology to serve the education and training needs of the Commonwealth Member States of Asia. CEMCA works in education and skills development, with a focus on community media, particularly community radio.

**Activities**

Through activities with partners in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka, CEMCA has helped institutions improve their capacity to leverage ODL for increased access to education. During the COVID-19 lockdown in the region in 2020, CEMCA offered training to faculty and leaders in ODL institutions to help with the transition to online learning. Recently, virtual labs have been introduced.
Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, CEMCA operates with a small academic staff and well-developed networks. Its advocacy efforts and technical support have led to the successful adoption of institutional OER policies. Similarly, capacity building with institutions has created improvements in knowledge, changes in attitude, and changes in systems and practices, leading to the increased use of OER to create learning materials. In a few cases, partner institutions have shared their experience with other universities, creating a multiplier effect. CEMCA has also been able to obtain additional contributions from other donors or development agencies.

REGIONAL CENTRES

COL supports regional centres in Western and Southern Africa, Europe and the Pacific. These are hosted by ODL institutions (in Botswana, Fiji and Nigeria) or ministries (in Malta). They carry out activities that are aligned to COL’s mandate and programmes.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the regional centres are centres of excellence focused on advocacy and research in ODL. They have generated activities that can be replicated by new partners. In addition, they have well-developed networks of consultants to help them expand activities. The evaluation found that the regional centres are becoming increasingly relevant in their respective regions. The more established ones have developed networks and partnerships, significantly increasing ODL capacity in their regions.

SERVICES

COL’s eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO) is a service initiative that works with international organisations on a fee-for-service basis to develop and deliver professional development courses and projects. Over the past 20 years, eLIO has progressively diversified its services to provide innovative solutions to meet the needs of globally dispersed staff and enable learning for sustainable development.

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 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 in the Commonwealth

AFRICA
2015–2021
By 2030, young Africans aged 15–24 are expected to make up 42% of the world’s youth and will account for 75% of those under age 35 in Africa, presenting a huge opportunity to change this demographic fact into a demographic dividend. Education has a key role to play in reducing inequality, improving health, boosting employability and spurring social empowerment, and it is pivotal for meeting the global sustainable development agenda. Distance and online learning provide additional opportunities, but many parts of the region still experience significant challenges with connectivity and electricity, access to platforms, content, and teacher capacity.

In Africa, mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants are at 76.57% (2018), and 17.37% of households have Internet (2018).

There are five public open universities in Commonwealth Africa, and the University of South Africa was the first distance teaching university in the world. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, governments provided remote learning to out-of-school students using a variety of approaches, such as radio, television programmes, eLearning platforms, and social media.

COL focuses on adding value to the countries’ efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions of Africa in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education include emphasising quality and inclusive secondary and higher education and strengthening teacher development programmes. In the area of skills, COL supports the expansion of access to technical and vocational education, the linking of informal learning to credit in agriculture, and the use of technology-enabled learning (TEL). These initiatives have been designed to achieve
socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at low economic and environmental costs.

Two regional centres help promote the development of leadership and expertise in the fields of open distance learning (ODL) and TEL within Africa. The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) is supported by the Botswana Ministry of Education and hosted by Botswana Open University. SADC-CDE operates to increase the provision of quality distance education in the region, support research activities, and undertake and promote training and development in ODL. The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) is hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). This regional centre promotes capacity-building and research activities in ODL while also serving as a centre of expertise for Nigeria and West Africa.

The Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021 concluded that COL’s activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women’s and girls’ empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.

COL’s major regional initiatives in the African Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2021 are outlined below.

• COL assisted the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning with transitioning into Botswana Open University (BOU, effective 1 December 2017) by providing technical advice, reviewing the institution’s systems and supporting capacity building.

• BOU, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, the Open University of Mauritius, NOUN and the University of Seychelles have benefited from the high-quality learning and professional development opportunities offered by COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration programmes.

• BOU and the University of Mauritius offer the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) Master of Educational Leadership programme. BOU also offers VUSSC degree and diploma programmes in Business and Entrepreneurship.

The collaboration between Botswana Open University and COL through the VUSSC was beneficial to the small states of the Commonwealth, and the introduction of open educational resources reduced the cost of study materials by more than 50%.

– An Evaluation of the Bachelor of Business Entrepreneurship Programme by Open and Distance Learning: The Case for Botswana Open University (2020)

• Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) project, COL works to enhance teaching quality, student outcomes, employability and research output by addressing the critical academic staff shortages faced in many East African universities. Nine PEBL institutions have utilised COL’s quality assurance (QA) rubrics for the review of blended courses, and 15 institutions have drafted their institutional QA review reports. Between October 2019 and September 2020, 10,083 students took quality-assured, credit-bearing blended learning courses developed by PEBL.

• In partnership with RETRIDOL and hosted by NOUN, COL has supported the development of dual-mode universities in Nigeria. Two universities have acquired the permit to operate as dual-mode universities. The ODL policies for nine universities have been approved by their institutional senates, positioning them to acquire dual-mode
accreditation from Nigeria’s National Universities Commission.

- In January 2021, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between COL and NOUN to continue supporting RETRIDOL as a centre of expertise in ODL for West Africa.

- SADC-CDE has engaged in capacity building in open schooling, non-formal education, and gender. Through these efforts, it has supported all 11 Commonwealth Member States of the SADC region, as well as three additional countries in the East African Community: Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.

- SADC-CDE also supports the capacity building of officers in ministries across the region in the area of distance education. It is currently sponsoring 33 learners from Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Seychelles.

- COL launched a new regional community of practice for QA in blended and online courses, involving higher education institutions and national QA agencies from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia and Zambia.

- An institutional trial audit of the University of South Africa (Unisa) conducted by COL marked a critical milestone in a year-long collaborative project. Initiated to prepare Unisa for its institutional review by South Africa’s Council of Higher Education, the trial audit supported South Africa’s largest university in reviewing its policies and practices, with a focus on teaching, learning and student success.

- The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is underway in The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice and school-based training. A total of 4,174 teachers and teacher educators have been reached.

- Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teacher capacity in responding to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include Cybersecurity Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), OER for Online Learning and Teaching Mathematics with Technology, among others. These have attracted 2,974 participants from 19 Commonwealth countries in Africa.

- COL’s OER for Online Learning MOOC, offered in 2020, attracted a total of 390 participants from 28 countries in Africa.

- With COL’s support, the ministries of education in Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia have been integrating open/innovative schooling (OIS) in their education systems. The OIS initiative has also been working with partners to follow up on the outcomes of COL-supported programmes through research studies, and to promote peer auditing for QA. Another important activity is the strengthening of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association through increased member engagement and social media presence.

- COL helped to develop institutional ODL policies in Cameroon, Uganda and Zambia. Baseline studies on the status of ODL in Cameroon and

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**The students in the treatment schools — i.e., those who benefited from COL’s intervention — have higher scores than their counterparts in the control schools. The combined mean score of the students from the treatment schools is higher than their counterparts’ from the control schools.**

— The Evaluation of the Integrated INSET School-Based Teacher Development Programme (INSET SBTD) Sierra Leone (2019)
Rwanda indicated that the current demand for higher education in Cameroon will double by 2030 and that there is an urgent need for stronger capacity building in Rwanda. Quality Assurance Certificates of Recognition for successfully implementing the COL Review and Improvement Model were issued to two institutions in Lesotho and Seychelles.

- In collaboration with the University of Cape Town, South Africa, COL has developed the conceptual framework and seven modules for the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme to build the capacities of teachers and learners to use digital skills for lifelong learning throughout the Commonwealth.

- COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative has contributed to the improved livelihoods of more than 500,000 people in Africa. In Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, partners are moving towards macro-level expansion through partnerships with governments and national banks. In Tanzania, COL has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture to integrate L3F and table banking in co-operative law and legislation. The innovative mobilMOOC approach has increased access to learning using basic mobile phones. Subregional organisations, such as the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), have partnered with COL to use AgMOOCs for building agricultural capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Through the Government of Canada’s funding for the GIRLS Inspire project, COL has provided relevant skills that lead to livelihoods for more than 7,500 unreached and marginalised girls in remote and rural areas in Mozambique and Tanzania and has prevented child marriages.

- The Skills in Demand model, which links educational institutions and industry partners, was introduced in Africa. COL supported three partners in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia to work with informal industry associations to increase
As a result of COL’s interventions, the Kenya Technical Teachers Training College revised its strategy to include technology-enabled teaching and learning, leading to the establishment of the ICT and ODeL departments, and the allocation of budgets to support ICT integration in teaching and learning. The institution also established departmental performance contracts aligned to the college’s strategic priorities and operational procedures to guide the FaB approach led by the ODeL Department.


economy and blue growth, which attracted close to 6,000 participants worldwide.

• In partnership with the Open University of Mauritius, COL offered its Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC in June 2019, November 2019 and June 2020. The MOOC attracted close to 5,000 participants from the Commonwealth countries in Africa.

• The Africa OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for African delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in March 2017 in Port Louis, Mauritius. Representatives of 16 Commonwealth countries from Africa were in attendance.

• 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 related to learning for sustainable development. In April 2020, COL held online consultations with Focal Points from the region as part of

access to formal TVET through blending online and workplace learning.

• COL has launched a project in Mauritius with the Global Rainbow Foundation (GRF) to build the capacity of service workers, teachers and volunteers who work with people with disabilities. With COL’s support, GRF has developed short, interactive, online courses for these practitioners.

• In partnership with the University of Seychelles, COL organised a series of MOOCs on the blue

the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).

- African Virtual University, Botswana Open University, Busitema University (Uganda), Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (Kenya), Moi University (Kenya), Mzuzu University (Malawi), Namibian College of Open Learning, National Open University of Nigeria, National Teachers’ Institute – Kaduna (Nigeria), Open University of Mauritius, Uganda Management Institute, Thika Technical Training Institute (Kenya), University of Namibia, University of Rwanda, University of Seychelles and University of South Africa are all members of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19.

- Ms Kgomotso Motlotle (Botswana), Ms Margaret Mensah-Williams (Namibia), Professor Romeela Mohee (Mauritius) and Professor Mpine Makoe (South Africa) are mentors in COL’s CommonwealthWiseWomen programme, aimed at developing the leadership potential of women and girls in the Commonwealth.

- Through the Ghana Library Authority, Rwanda Telecentre Network and Kenya’s Programme for Capacity Development in Africa, there were over 15,700 enrolments in Udemy courses, aimed at upskilling young people for better livelihoods.

- More than 44,500 learners from Africa joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world. Learners earned over 44,800 certificates of course completion, boosting their employability in the face of COVID-19.
Botswana (population: 2,303,697 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 87.7% (2014), a secondary net enrolment rate of 59.8% (2003) and a gross enrolment rate of 79.9% (2008). The Botswana Qualifications Authority is the country’s co-ordinating body for the development of quality vocational skills. There are about 30 vocational and technical training centres, and the Botswana International University of Science and Technology is one of several tertiary institutions offering courses in technical and vocational education. Teacher education is offered through the University of Botswana, along with four teacher-training colleges. Other tertiary institutions include the Botswana College of Agriculture, the Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce, and the Botswana Accountancy College. Open and distance learning is offered by Botswana Open University (BOU), whose mandate is to make education accessible to all of Botswana. BOU hosts the Southern African Development Community's Centre for Distance Education, COL's regional centre for Southern Africa.

Internet connectivity is available to 41% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 174 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Botswana. One of the Ministry of Basic Education's strategic priorities is the utilisation and integration of ICT and e-education as a means to improve teaching and learning and as a tool to improve education management.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. In response to the government temporarily suspending the national school calendar due to COVID-19, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development broadcast classes through TV to assist with distance learning. The Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited (BTCL), in partnership with a local innovator, introduced free access to their online platform, geared towards helping students with educational content.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL's Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Mrs Fancy Amey, Director, Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), is COL’s Focal Point for Botswana.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

The Honourable Dr Unity Dow is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Dr Daniel Tau is a COL Honorary Fellow.
COL’s Work in Botswana: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL works with partners primarily in the areas of gender and higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Botswana have also participated in COL’s open online courses and have benefited from other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Dr Tommie Hamaluba of BOU participated in the pre-PCF9 Commonwealth Open Schooling Association meeting in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019 and is the co-author of a chapter in COL’s most recent OIS publication.

In 2020, COL commissioned the South African Institute for Distance Education to support the open school at BOU with online training in Moodle to develop new OER content in junior business studies. It is anticipated that the completed content will be used by 10,000 learners.

TEACHER EDUCATION

In September 2018, COL’s Adviser: Teacher Education gave a talk on teacher professional development for primary school teachers at the Tlokweng College of Education, in Botswana. The talk outlined COL’s work in supporting Commonwealth governments and institutions with using technology-enabled approaches to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. It also highlighted the potential areas of partnership with the college and the Government of Botswana in the area of professional development for teachers in primary schools.

A total of 21 learners from Botswana participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC launched in 2020.

A total of 33 learners from Botswana participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 73 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Thirty-three learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.
HIGHER EDUCATION

COL assisted the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) with transitioning into an open university (BOU) by providing technical advice, reviewing the institution’s systems and supporting capacity building.

A unit cost analysis and activity-based costing model was developed and completed with data from the Serowe College of Education, Botswana. Based on this model, COL supported BOU to develop costing sheets, a financial model and an academic workload model for the tertiary arm of the university. The model and tools were presented to the Ministry of Education and the Human Resource Development Council in April 2018. Training sessions were held with academic and administrative staff on the financial tool and the academic workload model.

A set of financial planning tools for BOU, including a financial planning template, a programme costing template, an academic workload calculator, a time allocation report, and a report titled *A Comprehensive Financial Planning Model for the Tertiary Education Stream of the Botswana Open University* were developed with COL’s support in June 2018.

In January 2019, COL entered into an agreement with BOU to support the institution in capacity building for online course development, facilitation and student support systems, and to strengthen the institutional quality assurance (QA) system, including the development of QA guidelines for open and distance learning (ODL).

In the framework of this initiative, a learner support strategy and implementation plan were developed. A needs assessment survey regarding learner support tools at BOU has been completed amongst its academic staff.

Representatives of BOU faculty attended in-person workshops to develop a quality-enhancement plan and develop/implement online learner support tools. A BOU cohort participated in an online course on facilitating online courses.

In addition, COL supported a meeting to develop national quality guidelines, which included representatives from BOU, the Ministry of Basic Education, the Ministry of Tertiary Education, the Botswana Qualifications Authority and Botho University.

BOU staff also participated in a workshop titled *Online Course Development through the Use of OER* in March 2019. Subsequently, three modules have been developed and reviewed for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Special and Inclusive Education programme.

BOU offers COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium. A total of 509 students enrolled in the programmes between 2014 and 2019, with 64 graduating between 2017 and 2019.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Dr Daniel Tau, Vice Chancellor, is a member of the Executive Governing Board, and Professor Baakile Motshegwa, Dean for the School of Business and Management Studies, is a member of its Academic Board.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana, in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries participated, including from Bangladesh. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

COL launched a new regional community of practice for QA in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national QA agencies from seven Southern African countries, including Botswana. Following a launch meeting in South Africa in April 2018, a task force was formed to draft QA guidelines. Pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions, including BOU, were completed. The revised guidelines were subsequently shared in a paper at the Southern African Quality Assurance Network meeting in October 2018. In December 2019, members of the community of
practice reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and the indicators to be used by national qualifications agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions. The final version of the toolkit is available on COL’s online repository, OAIs...

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 298 participants from Botswana.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Dr Daniel Tau, Vice Chancellor at BOU, serves on the VUSSC Management Committee.

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, including BOU.

In January 2019, COL entered into an agreement with BOU to support the development of three special and inclusive education courses, and a Practicum Guide for the BEd in Special and Inclusive Education. COL will also support the integration of special and inclusive education issues into all courses through curriculum review and revision, as well as capacity building for tutors. In the framework of this agreement, BOU staff participated in a capacity-building workshop in April 2019 and a Special and Inclusive Education Enhancement Writers Workshop in July 2019. Revision of five courses is currently underway. In the framework of this partnership, course outlines for three new courses — Education of the Gifted and Talented; Learning Disabilities; and Autistic Spectrum Disorders — have been prepared, and the completed blueprints have been uploaded to the BOU portal.

As well, BOU offers COL’s Master of Arts in Educational Leadership programme, from which 35 persons have graduated to date.

COL signed an agreement with the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA) and the Nurses and Midwives Council, Botswana to support access for 12,000 nurses and midwives to Continuing...
Professional Education eLearning modules offered through the WCEA online platform. It is expected that course completion will result in strengthened nursing and midwifery competencies and, by extension, the delivery of better health care to patients in Botswana.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Botswana were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including Botswana.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

Botswana’s Human Resource Development Council approached COL for assistance with improving their apprenticeships and student internships to better achieve Botswana’s national skills development goals. COL developed an inception report, a situational analysis, a student internship and apprenticeship policy, associated guidelines, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and an employer database. The next steps will be to develop an implementation plan and transfer knowledge.

TVSD has been offering several online training courses across the Commonwealth, including *Flexible Skills*.
Development, Facilitating Online Courses, Moodle Implementation, and Blended Learning in the Classroom. One staff member from BOU completed the 2020 iteration of the Flexible Skills Development course.

A total of 1,119 learners from Botswana have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. COL’s partners in Botswana are BOU and the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. The first cohort of programme graduates from Botswana were recognised at a virtual convocation for Africa held on 18 August 2020, where the Honourable Dr Douglas Letsholathebe delivered special remarks.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL supported the development of draft OER guidelines for the ten regional operations offices of Botswana’s Ministry of Education and Skills Development by organising advocacy and sensitisation sessions. The aim of these activities was to provide direction in the use of OER for quality teaching and learning in the general education system.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Botswana were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Botswana.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Botswana report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2016–2017, BOCODOL (now BOU) pilot-tested the Institutional Gender Scorecard for Gender Mainstreaming developed by COL. The resulting gender mainstreaming efforts have led to gender-sensitive higher education programmes and policies.

Subsequently, and with the support of Gender Links, an NGO based in Gaborone, BOU completed a series of gender sensitisation workshops involving 64 staff from all areas of the university, in preparation for conducting COL’s Gender Scorecard audit.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) Mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Ms Kgomotso Motlotle, former Secretary General of the Botswana National Commission for UNESCO, is a CWW mentor.

REGIONAL CENTRE

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)

SADC-CDE operates in partnership with the Botswana Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology. Following a Memorandum of Agreement, it has been hosted by BOU since September 2018, promoting training and development in ODL and increasing the provision of quality distance education in Southern Africa.

In August 2018, SADC-CDE and COL held a workshop on Technology-Enabled Learning for Open Schooling at BOU in Gaborone. The workshop presented opportunities to augment the volume, quality and delivery of content through the adoption of TEL and COL’s offline, off-grid Aptus device.
In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop on non-formal education in Botswana with participants from eight countries in the region. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL as well as to information and communication technologies in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and Gender Links organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg. Participants included academics and administrators of ten institutions from eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In May 2019, SADC-CDE hosted a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to open schooling and introduce COL’s Open and Innovative Schooling model. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In 2019–2020, 33 staff from various institutions in Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Seychelles were sponsored to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners (CDEP) programme offered by BOU. The online induction for this cohort was conducted on 29 August 2020.

SADC-CDE supported the publication of the Policy Brief SADC-ODeL Response to COVID-19, released in May 2020.

As well, SADC-CDE ran a series of webinars for 40 open schooling staff in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Tanzania to train them in technology-enabled learning. This ran from August to October 2020.

A total of ten BOU staff participated in a series of six webinars on Learning Design for Online Course Provision for Open Schooling and have been working on action plans for subsequent interventions.

In June 2020, COL trained two members of the SADC-CDE staff in monitoring and evaluation.

Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the participation of four delegates from Botswana at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Education ministers from five countries participated in PCF8, holding a Ministerial Roundtable where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. The Honourable Dr Unity Dow chaired this meeting. In addition, Mrs Ivy Rose Mathew, Botho University, Dr Bantu Lulu Morolong, BOCODOL, and Dr Daniel Tau, BOCODOL, attended the forum.

COL sponsored nine delegates from Botswana to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Ms Fancy Amey, BOU/SADC-CDE, Mrs Mabel Bothasitse, BOU, Dr Tommie Hamaluba, BOU, Dr Bantu Lulu Morolong, BOU, Dr Mmabaledi Seeletso, BOU, Dr Tebogo Ethel Seretse, BOU, Dr Daniel Tau, BOU, Mr Chawapa Thabo, BOU, and Mr Bakani Thothe, Botswana Qualifications Authority. In addition, Ms Amey and Mr Thabo attended the Regional Centres meeting, Mrs Bothasitse and Mr Thothe
participated in the Higher Education workshop, Dr Hamaluba attended the Open Schooling meeting and Dr Morolong participated in a Gender meeting. Dr Tau, a member of the VUSSC Management Committee, participated in two of the three VUSSC PCF9 pre-conference activities. All were hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mrs Fancy Amey, the COL Focal Point for Botswana, Ms Grace Muzila, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic Education, and Mr Taolo Tsimanyane, Acting Deputy Director of the Department of Information Communication Technology and Media Services, Ministry of Basic Education, attended.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and BOU. It was inaugurated by the Minister, the Honourable Ngaka Ngaka. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Ms Fancy Amey represented Botswana at both meetings.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

The Blockchain in Education webinar series was offered in July 2020 by COL’s regional centre in Europe, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning. It brought together 91 participants, including from partner institutions in Botswana.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Botswana.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Botswana.
Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Botswana include:
- Ministry of Basic Education
- Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology
- Botswana Open University (formerly Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning)
- Human Resource Development Council

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:
1) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
2) invest in innovations and research;
3) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
4) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
5) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Cameroon (population: 25,876,380 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 92.9% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 46% (2016). Cameroon has six public universities, which, along with several private universities, support public efforts to increase access to tertiary education services within the region. The École Normale Supérieure of the University of Yaoundé 1 is the leading school for teacher education, and Bamenda University of Science and Technology is one of several tertiary institutions offering courses in technical and vocational education.

Internet connectivity is available to 23% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 82 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Cameroon. The Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development’s Document de Stratégie du Secteur de l’Éducation et de la Formation includes plans to build the capacities of teachers to use IT tools and digital educational resources, promote new training tools, and improve ICT learning environments in schools.

Building Education Resilience in the Face of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, daily educational programmes were broadcast on radio and television to assist learning from home, with a special focus on exam preparation.

Board of Governors

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

Focal Point

Mrs Anne Oben, Director, Commonwealth Department, Ministry of External Relations, is COL’s Focal Point for Cameroon.

Notable Mention

Professor Ajaga Nji is a former Honorary COL Adviser.

COL’s Work in Cameroon: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Cameroon is primarily in the areas of higher education, teacher education, and technical and vocational skills development. Learners from Cameroon have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
TEACHER EDUCATION

A study report entitled *A Review of Teacher Professional Development in Sub-Saharan Africa with a Focus on Mathematics Teaching in Secondary Schools in Cameroon* has informed the design of a project on the use of educational technology in mathematics teaching, to be implemented in Cameroon in partnership with the Ministry of Secondary Education.

Learners from Cameroon participated in the three course offerings of the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered in 2020, as well as in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC. There were 22 participants in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020, and learners from Cameroon joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION

COL has worked with the University of Buea (UB) to develop an institutional ODL and quality assurance policy.

COL continued to help policy makers, institutions and leaders in higher education harness the potential of ODL and technology, to enable them to cope with the increasing demand for quality higher education in the face of rising costs and diminishing public funding. COL has developed action plans aligned with the priorities of specific countries, including Cameroon, to increase access to quality higher education and forge partnerships with international and regional organisations to leverage impact.

In 2016, COL published the *Baseline Study on the Current State of Open and Distance Learning in Cameroon*.

In November 2019, COL signed an agreement with UB to build the capacity of its staff in online design, development and facilitation, including the use of OER, and to develop an implementation plan for a quality assurance (QA) policy and rubrics for ODL in teacher education. A workshop was conducted in January 2020 to train academics from UB in designing and developing blended/online courses, with a special emphasis on OER. To date, 13 course blueprints have been developed and eight online courses completed.

In October 2020, a virtual workshop to develop an implementation plan for the QA policy and QA rubrics for ODL was held with 22 participants. QA guidelines and rubrics have been developed using the eight courses created in early 2020 as the basis for practical workshops.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 52 participants from Cameroon.
Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

At the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Fiji in February 2018, COL organised a Skills for Development roundtable, where the Honourable Jean Ernest Massena Ngalle Bibehe, Minister of Secondary Education, participated.

As well, COL has conducted an extensive study among nursing and paramedical professionals in the North-West Region of Cameroon. The findings of the study identified three major areas where these healthcare professionals lack adequate skills to perform their duties with confidence: computer/information technology skills, research skills, and leadership development of the specialty.

A total of 32 learners from Cameroon have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL worked with Cameroon’s Ministry of Basic Education and Ministry of Secondary Education to launch a national advocacy and sensitisation project, introducing OER to over 300 policy makers in the country’s ten regions. Further, ten regional OER guidelines were drafted, catering to the specific needs of Anglophone and Francophone regions. In 2017, COL published Regional OER Guidelines: Cameroon, a document that outlines key issues and makes suggestions for integrating OER into teaching and learning across the education system.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Cameroon were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Cameroon report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

REGIONAL CENTRE

REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING (RETRIDOL)

Cameroon benefits from activities organised by COL’s regional centre RETRIDOL. In December 2020, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a series of six online workshops from December 2020 to February 2021, under the title Learning Design for Online Course Provision Leading to Sensitisation for Course Development Using OER, for Institutions of the West Africa Sub-Region (WASR). The workshops, aimed at supporting institutions in boosting their capacity to develop and deliver online or blended courses, included five staff from Dschang University and five staff from University of Buea. The main deliverable from the workshops has been an action plan; now, COL and RETRIDOL will work with each institution to achieve further development that will lead to tangible outcomes for these two Cameroonian universities.
Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored the participation of Mr Afoutendem Lucas Nkwetta, University of Dschang, at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored three delegates from Cameroon to attend PCF9, which was organised in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. They included Professor Gratien G. Atindogbé, University of Buea, Ms Endurence Midinette Koumassol Dissake, University of Buea, and Dr Christopher Tankou, University of Dschang. As well, Professor Atindogbé participated in the Teacher Education workshop hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Professor Ivo Leke Tambo, at that time the COL Focal Point for Cameroon, attended.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

In 2020–2021, COL’s Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Cameroon were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Cameroon.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in the Republic of Cameroon include:

- Ministry of Basic Education
- Ministry of External Relations
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Ministry of Secondary Education
- University of Buea
- University of Dschang

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Eswatini (population: 1,148,130 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 82.5% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 41.7% (2015). The University of Eswatini (UNESWA) offers degrees in agriculture, commerce, education, health sciences, humanities, sciences and social sciences and incorporates the Institute of Distance Learning; the institute’s mission is to increase access to tertiary education by providing demand-driven educational and training opportunities to individuals, offering quality courses using the distance education delivery mode.

Internet connectivity is available to 30% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 94 (2017) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Eswatini. The Ministry of Education and Training’s National Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme 2018/19 – 2020/21 intends to place a greater emphasis on teaching ICT as a subject and using ICT in education. The sector will continue to strengthen ICT in education, which will include the construction of more ICT laboratories, the provision of ICT equipment, capacity building for teachers and the implementation of ICT syllabuses at both primary and secondary education levels.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education and Training, with support from UNICEF, initiated a programme of home-based learning for external examination grades. The lessons on core subjects have been aired on radio and TV, and elective lessons have been published in the local daily newspapers.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mrs Fikile Mdluli, Chief Inspector of Tertiary Education, Ministry of Education and Training, is COL’s Focal Point for Eswatini.

**NOTABLE MENTION**

Professor Lydia Makhubu is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s current work in Eswatini is primarily in the areas of higher education and the development of national policy on open and distance learning (ODL). Eswatini is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, and it benefits from the support of the Southern African Development Community’s Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Eswatini have also joined COL’s open online courses and tapped into other resources.

Lady Howard Mabuza, the Honourable Minister of Education and Training, represented the government of Eswatini at the Ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum in Edinburgh, UK, where she also attended a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers.

Education Sector Overview

**OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)**

Following a request from the Emalatini Distance Centre (EDC) for assistance to support a new direction for the school, COL’s Education Specialist: Open Schooling met with EDC management and representatives of the Ministry of Education in June 2019. COL also supported work to conceptualise, execute and finalise a desktop literature review to develop the framework for a new blended/online model for EDC’s work in open schooling, providing an opportunity to learn about teaching online by learning online.

Currently, COL is supporting the online development of 1,500 curriculum-based OER in 12 subject areas. The content and the open schooling model will be piloted in 15 schools, with plans to scale up to 290 schools. As of January 2021, 687 curriculum-based OER have been developed, with the potential to reach up to 29,000 learners.

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

Teacher educators from Eswatini participated in a five-day training workshop at the Singapore National Institute of Education in May 2016. The training supported teacher educators in integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into their programmes as a key strategy to improve quality in education. COL provided support to Eswatini to
train 540 teachers in using educational technology in teaching and learning through UNESWA.


There were 40 participants from Eswatini in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, offered twice in October–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

In March 2016, COL and Asia e University organised a high-level roundtable in Malaysia for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions. Representatives from 16 countries were in attendance, including Eswatini.

In partnership with UNESWA, COL is implementing an integrated higher education model. In September 2018, a project design workshop was organised for UNESWA staff. Participants completed a SWOT analysis, along with a baseline survey of institutional quality assurance (QA), and they received training on elements of the higher education model and quality ODL. As well, COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education gave a public lecture on “The Role of Blended Learning in Higher Education.”

In February 2019, COL helped organise institutional and national ODL policy development workshops.

In March 2019, a module-writing workshop was organised for managers working within the Bachelor of Nursing Science programme, which is to be run in a blended learning format.

As well, COL contributed to the revision of the Mature Aged Entry Programme of UNESWA’s Institute of Distance Education (IDE) and the development of IDE’s business and marketing plan. IDE staff, along with representatives of other UNESWA departments, took part in an online facilitation/tutoring course.

Following the completion of a needs assessment survey of local entrepreneurs, a model for an entrepreneurship programme was developed at UNESWA in June 2019.
A draft academic workload model was completed and submitted to UNESWA, along with a five-year business and marketing plan for ODL activities.

In June 2019, a capacity-building course was organised for transforming nursing modules in the BSc Nursing programme. Five modules and e-tutorial guides have been completed, and another set of modules is in preparation.

COL launched a new regional community of practice for QA in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national QA agencies from seven southern African countries, including Eswatini. Following the launch meeting in South Africa in April 2018, a task force was formed to develop QA guidelines. A good practices guide has also been completed, consisting of five case studies of QA in five countries, including Eswatini. In December 2019, members of the community of practice met in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and indicators to be used by national qualification agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions.

As well, COL helped develop a national ODL policy for Eswatini, which was presented to the government in October 2019.

Eswatini requested COL’s assistance with establishing the SADC University of Transformation. A draft report was shared with the Eswatini Higher Education Council in February 2020, followed by a visit from COL’s Special Adviser for Technology and Innovation to obtain feedback on the draft report and determine the way forward for the establishment of the university. During the visit, the Special Adviser met with the Honourable Minister Lady Howard Mabuza, who was appreciative of COL’s support in all endeavours. A workshop titled Quality Assurance in Blended Learning was also organised at UNESWA for practitioners of the Nursing Science programme.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 22 participants from Eswatini.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes while promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

VUSSC supported the then Swaziland Education Council to develop the Swaziland Qualifications Framework (SQF). The structure of the SQF has been benchmarked against regional and international structures such as the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework and the Transnational Qualifications Framework. VUSSC has also worked with UNESWA to develop blended learning.
materials and enhance eLearning capacity among staff across a number of departments.

As part of its efforts to support the collaborative development and sharing of OER to promote learning for sustainable development, VUSSC helped UNESWA institutionalise OER. More than 130 UNESWA staff were involved in capacity-building activities; as a result, programmes are being repurposed in three areas. One significant area is nursing, where the OER courses developed are being offered for a Bachelor of Nursing Science. In 2019, 35 students were admitted to the BNSc programme.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the demand for ODL and OER, VUSSC participated in a virtual training for UNESWA faculty.

As well, in 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Eswatini were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

A total of 74 learners from Eswatini have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Eswatini were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Swaziland report is a compilation of sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

Special Events and Activities

CONFERMENT OF HONORARY DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

His Majesty King Mswati III, Chancellor of the then University of Swaziland, conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Education on COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, at a convocation held in October 2016.

COL supported four delegates from Eswatini to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Education ministers from five countries participated in PCF8, holding a ministerial roundtable on 29 November, where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. The Honourable Mr Phineas Magagula, Minister of Education, was present. Dr Shokahle Roster Dlamini, Dr Njabuliso Nsibande and Ms Nokuthula Thembi Vilakati, all from the University of Swaziland, participated in the forum.

COL sponsored five delegates from Eswatini to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers, where the Honourable Lady Howard-Mabuza, Minister for Education and Training, was present. Also in attendance were Dr Khetsiwe Kunene, UNESWA, Dr Karen Meyers, UNESWA, Mr Mboni Dlamini, Eswatini Higher Education Council, and Ms Nokuthula Vilakati, UNESWA. Mr Dlamini and Ms Vilakati were invited to participate in the Higher Education workshop hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018.
in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Mrs Fikile Mdluli, Chief Inspector of Tertiary Education, Ministry of Education and Training, represented Eswatini at both meetings.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Eswatini.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, had 1,685 enrolments, including 20 participants from Eswatini.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Eswatini include:

- Ministry for Education and Training
- Emlalatini Development Centre
- University of Eswatini

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
The Gambia (population: 2,347,706 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 76.8% (2018) and a gross enrolment rate of 50.1% (2010). The University of The Gambia and The Gambia College offer courses in teacher training, while technical and vocational education is offered by The Gambia Technical Training Institute. The Gambia is a member of the regional African Virtual University, which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 20% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 140 (2018) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in The Gambia. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology’s Education Sector Policy 2016–2030 plans to promote the gradual shift from 100% reliance on print text to the introduction of digitalised interactive teaching and learning materials suitable for various teaching and learning platforms. The teacher training curricula will be reviewed to improve content knowledge and modern pedagogical practices, which will consider the use of ICT in education, education in ICT, distance learning modes and further learning.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Republic of The Gambia adopted the Education Sector Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Plan. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education provided distance learning materials, developed by teachers experienced in distance education, on TV, radio and social media platforms.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mr Anthony Mendy, Director of Tertiary and Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MHERST), is COL’s Focal Point for The Gambia.
COL’s current work in The Gambia is primarily in the area of teacher education. The Gambia is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from The Gambia have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION

After The Gambia rejoined the Commonwealth, a request was received from the In-Service Training Unit of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) for in-service teacher training. In this connection, a stakeholder forum on project design for school-based teacher development was held at The Gambia College in May 2018. At the end of the forum, 20 schools had been identified for the project.

In September 2018, COL’s Adviser: Teacher Education visited The Gambia and briefed the permanent secretaries of MHERST and MoBSE on COL’s Teacher Futures programme. The Adviser also visited The Gambia College for a pre-kick-off meeting and gave a talk on COL’s Teacher Education initiative.

A series of capacity-development activities have been held since then. In January 2019, COL, in collaboration with MoBSE and The Gambia College, held a two-day workshop for education leaders at the Brikama Campus, which focused on leadership in teacher professional development. Another workshop held at The Gambia College aimed to sensitise participants on school-based teacher development. Education leaders, school administrators and teachers participated in an e-workshop on learner-centred pedagogies and an in-person training session on learning for sustainable communities. A workshop facilitated by COL’s Adviser: Minister of Basic and Secondary Education Visits COL

On 5 June 2019, Professor Asha Kanwar welcomed the Honourable Ms Claudiana Ayo Cole, Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, The Gambia, to COL. Discussions focused on country priorities, including curriculum development and review for both teacher education and the school system, and Minister Cole spoke of the need for more capacity to implement curriculum changes.
Teacher Education in November 2019 for 35 delegates was held at The Gambia College and focused on the use of OER for eLearning and microlearning delivery. A teacher community of practice has been established.

A webinar series on Pedagogies for the Post COVID-19 Era was developed by COL to support partners in building resilient education systems that will be sustainable both during and beyond crises. It was launched on 8 June 2020 with a session for education leaders, teacher educators and teachers from The Gambia. The webinar also marked the launch of Teacher Futures – Gambia.

"If pedagogical change is to be realised, then we have to promote the kind of learner-centred teaching and learning that we are envisaging, as we look at other mitigating factors. We are looking at both offline platforms and eLearning centres to see how to reach out to teachers with relevant pedagogies during this period," said Mr Momodou Jeng, Director, Science and Technology Education, MoBSE, at the launch of Teacher Futures – The Gambia.

Teacher Futures – Gambia targets over 1,100 teachers in 20 schools and aims to impact more than 25,000 learners in the first phase. The training materials, which include video, audio and other microlearning resources, are hosted on an eLearning platform for easy access and for sharing and discussion by teacher mentors and teachers on other platforms.

A total of 47 learners from The Gambia participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 101 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

Participants from The Gambia joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from The Gambia were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

In response to COVID-19, The Gambia’s Ministry of Education and the International Trade Centre’s Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) approached COL for assistance in building the capability of the country’s TVET system in distance and online learning. COL and The Gambia agreed on a plan. Two staff members from Gambia Technical Teachers College completed COL’s online Flexible Skills Development (FSD) course.

A COL consultant and one GTTI staff member then co-trained 48 TVET teachers in FSD.

A total of 138 learners from The Gambia have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.
TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning* (TEL) since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from The Gambia were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

REGIONAL CENTRE

REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING (RETRIDOL)

The Gambia benefits from activities organised by COL’s regional centre RETRIDOL. In June 2018, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a workshop at the University of The Gambia entitled *Overview of Open and Distance Learning* (ODL). The workshop, which aimed at supporting institutions to embrace distance education practices, was held at the University of The Gambia and run by RETRIDOL staff. Eleven institutions and 21 individuals participated in this activity. An action plan from The Gambia College has been received and is expected to be implemented in 2021.

In December 2020, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a series of six online workshops from December 2020 to February 2021 under the title *Learning Design for Online Course Provision Leading to Sensitisation for Course Development Using OER, for Institutions of the West Africa Sub-Region (WASR)*. The workshops, aimed at supporting institutions to increase their capacity to develop and deliver online or blended courses, included ten staff from five institutions in The Gambia. The main deliverable from the workshops is an action plan according to which COL and RETRIDOL will work with each institution for further development, leading to tangible outcomes for these Gambian institutions.

Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Mr Anthony Mendy, Director of Tertiary and Higher Education, MHERST, represented The Gambia at both meetings.

COL PRESIDENT DELIVERS LECTURE ON DEVELOPING ODL POLICY

In June 2018, COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar delivered a lecture at the University of The Gambia titled “Developing an ODL Policy: An International Perspective.” The lecture was part of a three-day workshop providing an overview of ODL, which was co-organised by COL and RETRIDOL in collaboration with University of The Gambia and MoBSE.
NINTH PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF9)

COL sponsored Ms Awa Saho Jallow, Senior Education Officer, MoBSE, to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, as well as a pre-forum workshop in Edinburgh, hosted by COL's Teacher Education programme.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted participants from The Gambia.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from The Gambia.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in The Gambia include:

• Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
• Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
• The Gambia College
• University of The Gambia

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Ghana (population: 30,417,856 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 86.2% (2019) and a secondary school completion rate of 57.2% (2019). The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training was established in 2006 to oversee the activities of private and public providers of technical and vocational education and training, including the informal sector. Teacher training is offered at the University of Education. The University of Ghana houses the School of Continuing and Distance Education, which is committed to developing world-class human resources and capacities relevant to the needs of Ghana and other African countries through continuing and ICT-based distance education. The Institute of Distance Learning at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology was established to deliver programmes of study in the distance learning mode. Ghana is a member of the regional African Virtual University, which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 38% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 134 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Ghana. The Ministry of Education’s Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan, 2018–2021 intends to improved ICT use in education at all levels, strengthen ICT in education policy and improve ICT resources and infrastructure in educational institutions.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education adopted the COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response Plan for Ghana, which includes distance learning provided through radio, television and the Internet.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, OVC, is COL’s Focal Point for Ghana.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

The Honourable Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Akilagpa Sawyerr is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Ms Esi Sutherland-Addy is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s Work in Ghana: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Ghana is primarily in the areas of higher education, teacher education, lifelong learning for farmers, gender, and vocational skills development. Learners from Ghana have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

COL signed an agreement with the Tamale College of Education (TACE) to strengthen basic schoolteacher quality through professional learning communities and the coaching of in-service teachers in Northern Ghana. Teacher Futures – Ghana was officially launched at a workshop on school-based teacher development in November 2019. Teacher Futures – Ghana has been working with a total of 380 teachers and 10,071 learners in 25 schools spread over five districts in Northern Ghana.

Following the programme launch, COL supported a four-day workshop on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) at TACE in December 2019, which was attended by a total of 40 participants. It aimed at introducing teacher educators and teachers to the key concepts and principles of PBL and other learner-centred approaches for improved pedagogic practice.

An Enumerators Training Workshop was organised in January 2020 for 13 TACE staff to help them adapt their data collection tools to the local context.

In September 2020, COL supported TACE to organise a workshop for 40 participants on resources and tools for collaborative learning in teacher professional development, including OER. The event also marked the transition to phase two of Teacher Futures – Ghana.

Learners from Ghana participated in the offerings of the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC in 2020.

A total of 56 learners from Ghana participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 120 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Thirty-one learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

As well, participants from Ghana joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar met with Ghana’s Honourable Minister of Education, Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, in Accra in August 2016. The two leaders discussed skills development for girls, open schooling and higher education.
HIGHER EDUCATION

COL continues to work with Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Close to 5,500 learners from Ghana graduated from the programme between 2007 and 2018.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Professor Rita Akosua Dickson, Vice-Chancellor, is a member of the EGB, and Dr Nathaniel Boso, Dean of KNUST School of Business, serves on the AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 159 participants from Ghana.

Teachers in Ghana trained in collaborative professional learning

With COL’s support, the Tamale College of Education hosted a workshop on resources and tools for collaborative learning in teacher professional development, including OER. The event also marked the transition to phase two of Teacher Futures–Ghana.

“This project has come at the right time. We therefore pledge our full support to help develop our serving teachers professionally and build competencies for their betterment as well as the learners,” said the circuit supervisor for North region, Mr David Awala.
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

A comprehensive baseline study of open and distance flexible learning in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) was prepared in 2015. The College of Technology, Kumasi (COLTEK), Koforidua Technical University (KTU) and Takoradi Technical University (TTU) joined COL’s INVEST Africa initiative, with a view to increasing access to high-quality, flexible and blended skills training in support of sustainable livelihoods. KTU had 55 members engaged in informal learning and collaboration in the associated online community of practice. The university has been recognised by the African Union as having one of the ten most promising models in TVET for the 21st century. More than 5,000 students from KTU have been engaged in formal online education programmes. A KTU tracer study revealed that nearly 1,000 artisans have improved their sustainable livelihoods through flexible non-formal training. Graduates reported increases in quality-of-life indicators, including confidence, self-esteem, living conditions and ownership of goods.

COL developed a set of resources that integrate sustainable development principles into TVET as part of teachers’ capacity building in INVEST Africa partner institutions. Sixteen course plans that integrate the sustainable development principles of economic growth, environmental conservation and social inclusion were developed at a workshop in June hosted by the Kenya Technical Trainers’ College. The workshop included 30 educators from seven countries — Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia — and resulted in plans for cascading the training to other teachers.

Getenergy is a UK-based organisation that specialises in education and training for the oil and gas industry. In 2015–2016, COL provided technical support for innovation in teaching and learning at TTO through Getenergy’s Field Ready model, which focuses on preparing young people to meet the demanding international employment standards of the oil and gas industry. KTU is the pilot partner institution of Getenergy for the Field Ready model. As part of the initial training, COL facilitated sessions for TTU heads of department and teaching staff on the COL model for flexible TVET through appropriate technology. It organised a workshop to introduce the flexible TVET model and to share monitoring and evaluation protocols. Twenty-two senior managers and teachers participated in workshop sessions. Participants were enthusiastic about integrating technology at TTU in a more flexible model, which includes developing new online courses for which there is high student demand and creating an artisan programme. Four people from
TTU participated in the Flexible Skills Development online course for West Africa from October to December 2017.

In June 2018, COL supported KTU in organising a workshop on Women in TVET Leadership for Sustainable Development in Technical Universities in Ghana. Another sustainable-development workshop was organised at the Kenya Technical Teachers College, with participation from 13 institutions in the region, including four from Ghana. TVSD has been offering several online training courses across the Commonwealth, which have included 45 learners from Ghana who have completion certificates (in Flexible Skills Development, Facilitating Online Courses, Moodle Implementation and Blended Learning in the Classroom). In June 2019, COL’s Skills in Demand model was introduced in Africa to 16 institutes from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia in a workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya. Participants included, among others, lecturers in relevant vocational courses and experts in flexible and distance learning.

Two Ghanaian institutions were selected for the first round of Skills in Demand projects: KTU and College of Technology Education Kumasi. Both institutions have established partnerships with local members of the Ghana National Association of Garages (GNAG), the association representing artisans working in Ghana’s automobile industry. In October 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD visited Ghana to facilitate two project design workshops and meet with government officials from the Ministry of Education, the Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling, and the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

COL supported a mapping workshop in Kumasi on 17 December 2019. Representatives from COLTEK, KTU and GNAG met to agree on the final details of the competencies to be developed through the programme of learning, and the roles and responsibilities to be shared between the organisations.

In October 2019, COL’s Skills Online initiative entered into a co-investment partnership with the Ghana Library Authority to promote skills among youths, especially girls/women and people with disabilities. This unique partnership brings a range of over 4,000 curated courses on Udemy, an online platform, directly to target groups in Ghana. Through this work, over 2,200 young people have been recruited, mentored and trained to access employment from the job market in key sectors in Ghana.

In November 2019, COL’s Skills Online initiative, in partnership with the National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI), Ghana, conducted a workshop to orientate staff of NVTI and its allied institutions on eLearning. With the Government of Ghana’s move to upgrade NVTI’s technical capacity, this partnership will assist NVTI with embracing TEL approaches to their TVET education in the coming years.

Unstable, expensive internet no obstacle for young Ghanaian

As a manager at Ghana’s National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), Hassan Hamadu monitors and evaluates ICT projects across his region. He is also involved in building the capacity of the NHIA staff and stakeholders and is always looking for professional development opportunities.

He has benefited from free online courses in the framework of a joint initiative between COL and the Read2Skill Ghana programme of the Ghana Library Authority.

Hassan has built his hard and soft skills, from cloud computing to cybersecurity to public speaking and leadership. Due to an unstable and expensive Internet connection, he would download the course content at night, when the bandwidth was cheaper, and watch the lectures offline in his free time during the day. Hassan says his new skills have helped boost his confidence to impart knowledge to his trainees.
In February 2020, COL’s Skills Online released *Skills Development for Sustainable Livelihoods: An Overview of Four Case Studies*. The report consolidates the findings from an overview of the skills demand, supply and gaps in four target countries, including Ghana.

A total of 27,091 learners from Ghana have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, in partnership with the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana Tamale College and the Ghana Library Authority. The first cohort of programme graduates from Ghana were recognised at the First Virtual Convocation for Africa, held on 18 August 2020, where Ms Gifty Twum Ampofo delivered special remarks.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

COL supported the rollout of L3F initiatives in five districts in the Upper East Region of Ghana. L3F in Ghana aims to improve the economic status and livelihood security of marginalised farming communities, particularly women, and to strengthen the capacity of Presbyterian Agriculture Stations in their application of the ICT-based L3F model.

Following the adoption of L3F by the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, a baseline study was conducted involving 640 members in north Ghana. It found that the financial literacy programme has resulted in a strong table-banking movement in the region. Capacity building was undertaken with the staff of the Presbyterian Agriculture Station-Garu (PASG) and their partners, in the application of ICT and ODL methodologies in farmer extension. The main partners developed operating plans, identified marginalised groups, and developed gender-responsive management information systems and financial information systems with strategies for internalising the learning from model building.

Courses on *Financial Literacy and Sustainable Farming of Sorghum* were developed in partnership with the District Department of Agriculture and translated into local languages. Through mobile and ICT-enabled learning, more than 6,500 farmers have been reached. Many of these farmers were linked to village savings and loan associations, from which they received loans and thereby increased their productivity and profitability.

A total of 6,040 L3F participants were trained in the production of premium-grade sorghum as per quality standards demanded by Guinness Ghana. These farmers have shifted from subsistence to commercial farming in an arrangement through which they receive agricultural inputs and agronomic practices to supply up to 48% of the local raw materials required by Guinness Ghana.

A corporate-literacy training session was conducted for 609 farmers to enable them to become shareholders in the Sedabon Limited Liability Company.

COL has also supported the development of a mobile-based learning platform in partnership with the mobile phone company Hubtel. PASG delivered audio-based training in local languages to 11,333 learners.
Bessfa Rural Bank is supporting L3F farmers with credit and loans and is using the mobile learning platform to train farmers in credit management. An officer has been appointed by the bank to work with PASG to develop special products suitable for farmers as well as to design special courses for the L3F farmers.

A total of 2,500 farmers have been mobilised and converted into lifelong learners.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PASG revised their strategy to focus more on voicemail messages and on engaging farmers at the household level. The use of technology became more crucial than ever before, and the training programme for the farmers, which was already based on mobile learning, went on despite impediments in other areas of their work. PASG indicated that mobile-based learning must be given a priority.

In mid-2020, COL launched three AgMOOCs, with a combined registration of 33,292 from over 30 countries. Ghana was among the top registrants.

Towards the end of 2020, an additional 500 farmers registered for L3F, and a new livestock course was developed and translated into local languages.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Ghana were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Ghana.

GENDER

The *Gender Profile 2017: Ghana* report is a compilation of sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

A Gender Scorecard activity with KTU was completed in April 2018. The result was a report and roadmap for further activities to strengthen gender mainstreaming. A contract was subsequently signed with KTU to implement COL’s Gender Roadmap. KTU was identified as one of the institutions to participate in COL’s gender evaluation.

With support from COL, KTU has now started to implement its Gender Mainstreaming Roadmap. A Gender Centre has been set up, and a new gender website has been launched. A documentary on gender mainstreaming is currently under development, along with a series of awareness-raising posters and banners.

KTU reviewed their gender policy and the gender thrust of their strategic plan to incorporate the issues highlighted during the gender audit COL held in 2020.

REGIONAL CENTRE

REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING (RETRIDOL)

Ghana benefits from activities organised by COL’s regional centre RETRIDOL.

In June 2018, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a workshop at the University of Ghana entitled *Overview of Open and Distance Learning (ODL)*. The workshop, aimed at supporting institutions to embrace distance education practices, was attended by 22 senior administrators and faculty from ten Ghanaian educational institutions. As a result of this training, Koforidua Technical College and Laweh Open University College have developed institutional ODL policies.

In December 2020, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a series of six online workshops from December 2020 to February 2021, under the title *Learning Design for Online Course Provision Leading to Sensitisation for Course Development Using OER, for Institutions of the West Africa Sub-Region (WASR)*. Aimed at supporting institutions to increase their capacity to develop and deliver online or blended courses, the series included ten faculty from the following Ghanaian institutions: KTU; Ghana Technology University College; Ghana Institute of Journalism; AAM-University of Skill Training and Entrepreneurial Development; and University of Cape Coast.
Special Events and Activities

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the participation of five delegates from Ghana at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Education ministers from five countries participated in a Ministerial Roundtable, where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. The Honourable Naana Jane Opoku-Aygemang was present, as were Dr Samuel Okae-Adjie, KTU, Mr Buckman Akuffo, KTU, Mr Joshua Mallet, Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS) and Mr Michael S. Gawugah, CENDLOS. KTU’s Director of the Institute for Open and Distance Learning attended a workshop in monitoring, evaluation and learning at PCF8, during which he presented his plan for conducting tracer studies of KTU students completing KTU programmes. The KTU vice chancellor also attended PCF8, and COL sponsored a staff member to make a joint presentation.

COL sponsored three delegates from Ghana to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Mr Solomon Samba Atigah, PASG, Dr Humphrey Danso, COLTEK, and Professor Mansah Prah, University of Cape Coast. In addition, Mr Atigah attended an L3F session, Dr Danso the TVSD workshop and Professor Prah the Gender meeting — all hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mr Joshua Mallet, Director of CENDLOS, attended.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, OVC, represented Ghana at the 2020 meeting. Mr. Joshua Mallet, Director, CENDLOS, also participated.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

In 2020–2021, COL’s Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Ghana were among the nearly 6,000 course participants.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 12 participants from Ghana.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Ghana include:
• Ministry of Education
• General Agricultural Workers’ Union of Trades Union Congress
• Ghana Library Authority
• Koforidua Technical University
• Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
• National Vocational Training Institute
• Presbyterian Agriculture Station – Garu
• Tamale College of Education

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:
i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Kenya (population: 52,573,973 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 80% (2012) and a secondary net enrolment rate of 47.4% (2009). The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development evaluates and approves curriculum materials for basic and tertiary education and offers curriculum-based consultancy services in basic and tertiary education and training. The University of Nairobi established the Centre for Open and Distance Learning (CODL). Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology offers distance learning through their Digital School of Virtual and Open Learning. Kenya is the home of the headquarters for the African Virtual University, which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region. The Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority’s mandate is to regulate and co-ordinate TVET in Kenya and promote access, equity, quality and relevance in TVET by inspecting, registering, accrediting and licensing TVET institutions, trainers and programmes.

Internet connectivity is available to 23% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 104 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Kenya. The Ministry of Education’s National Education Sector Strategic Plan for the Period 2018–2022 includes plans to enhance relevance and capacities for science, technology and innovation in education, training and research for labour markets. The ministry also aims to integrate ICT in teaching, learning and assessment in primary, secondary and adult continuing education.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education adopted the Kenya Basic Education COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan, which includes expanding access to digital learning and strengthening the Kenya Education Cloud. The ministry also provides radio and television programmes at the primary and secondary levels and supports access to textbooks and other teaching and learning materials in remote areas.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Charles Obiero, Senior Deputy Director, Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Kenya.

**NOTABLE MENTIONS**

Professor Peter E. Kinyanjui is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Ambassador Dr Amina Mohamed, EGH, CAV, is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s Work in Kenya: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

COL’s current work in Kenya is primarily in the areas of higher education, teacher education, lifelong learning for farmers, technical and vocational skills development, and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Kenya have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

In 2016, COL supported Elimu Digital Media to develop 117 science and 96 vocational television programmes, which are available online and broadcast on Elimu TV. In 2017, COL launched impact studies of two Elimu Digital Media projects: Enabling Quality Secondary Science Education through ICT and Media; and Enabling Access to Skill-Based Education for Out-of-School Youths. The study found that while those who used the videos derived benefit, there was a need to support the integration of this approach into classroom teaching for day scholars and to find additional avenues to promote engagement with the video content outside of the classroom.

COL continued to support Elimu Digital Media in 2020 to increase access to secondary education content in Kenya and Tanzania, providing a platform whereby every household with a television or Internet access can tap into up-to-date secondary education content during COVID-19 and beyond. To date, 1,056 short curriculum-based OER have been developed, broadcast and backed up on YouTube. Although development has only recently been concluded, it is estimated that the resources have already been accessed by more than 150,000 learners and teachers in Kenya and Tanzania.

In May 2019, COL’s regional centre, the Southern African Development Community’s Centre for Distance Education, hosted a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to open schooling and introduce COL’s OIS model. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL brought together experts from several countries to develop Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) materials in 2015. These have been used to improve the teaching of English in Kenya, reaching 300 teachers and 714 students. ORELT comprises a collection of open educational resources (OER) — including multimedia resources that are available online and offline — supporting classroom teaching in junior secondary schools.

Three East African universities, including Egerton University in Kenya, in August 2016 collectively launched a project called DigiTeacher. This project
addressed the challenges arising from the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning in the region. Through the DigiTeacher project, the three universities designed a Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate in ICT Integration in Education.

Also in 2016, in response to market demands that require innovative educational methods, Kenyatta University transformed the course materials in its teacher training course from print-based modules to vibrant, multimedia e-content. With COL’s support, 21 teacher educators were trained in a wide array of topics, including OER, social media, models of technology integration, and planning for technology integration.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE), COL conducted a stakeholder forum on inclusive education in secondary schools in Kenya in August 2018. Forum participants developed a strategy for COL to support the Teacher Futures programme in Kenya. In September 2018, COL’s Adviser: Teacher Education visited Kenya to discuss details of the proposed programme with key officials at the Ministry of Education.

In May 2019, a leadership workshop on teacher professional development was held at KISE as part of the Teacher Futures programme. The workshop explored the role of institutional leaders in implementing school-based teacher development while focusing on effective inclusion of all learners. The Teachers Service Commission and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development were represented at the workshop.

As well, Kenyan teacher educators, school administrators and teachers participated in a three-week e-workshop on pedagogies for inclusive education. As a result, a national community of practice evolved, bringing together representatives of some 20 institutions in various parts of the country, as well as KISE staff.

In June 2019, a capacity-building workshop on content development was conducted at Egerton University as part of a wider project intended to strengthen the university’s capacity to provide quality-enhanced blended and online learning in their teacher training programmes.

A workshop on inclusive communities was organised for KISE in July 2019. The workshop aimed at sensitising the participants about the role of community-based and other non-governmental organisations in supporting inclusion both within and outside the school environment.

In collaboration with The Open University, UK, COL supported the Ministry of Education and KISE in hosting a learning design workshop in November 2019, where 54 participants contributed to resource development for a programme on inclusive education.
The Training Handbook: School-Based Teacher Development for Inclusive Education, published in October 2020, was developed with the support of COL and The Open University, UK for use by KISE in teacher training.

In June 2020, COL launched Teacher Futures – Kenya at a virtual event, which brought together teachers, teacher educators, education officials and other stakeholders. The programme trains teachers on inclusive education practices and initially targets teachers in 20 project schools; the total student population is approximately 21,148, out of which an estimated 2,500 learners are likely to have a range of disabilities. The training materials, developed with expertise from The Open University’s Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa programme, include text, video and audio resources, which are available as OER.

A total of 203 learners from Kenya participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 532 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Twenty-seven learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

In November 2020, in collaboration with The Open University, COL supported an online co-design workshop to develop ideas and inform content for two MOOCs in inclusive education, to be released in the first half of 2021. The workshop brought together a total of 18 participants from Jamaica, Kenya and Uganda and included decision makers, teachers and practitioners with relevant classroom experience in the area of inclusive education.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) project, led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The 12 Kenya institutions are: Africa Nazarene University; Kenya Methodist University; Kenyatta University; Maseno University; Moi University; Riara University; Scott Christian University; St. Paul’s University; Strathmore University; United States International University; University of East Africa, Baraton; and University of Nairobi.

Activities and outcomes include a series of workshops, webinars and publications, outlined below.

In April 2018, COL co-organised a workshop in Nairobi on quality assurance, under the aegis of PEBL. Facilitated by COL, the workshop aimed to build the capacity of 29 participants from 21 universities in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In April 2019, the online course Quality Assurance in Blended Learning was launched on COL’s Higher Education Moodle platform as part of the PEBL project. Thirty-nine quality assurance practitioners enrolled in the course. A second online course, Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa, was developed by COL later in the year and piloted in November, with 42 quality assurance practitioners enrolling, including several from Kenya.

In May 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was held in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to the Institutional Quality Assurance Review for Blended Learning Tool. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Of the
17 participants, seven were from Kenya, representing Africa Nazarene University, Kenya Methodist University, Kenyatta University, Maseno University, Riara University, St. Paul’s University, Strathmore University, University of East Africa, Baraton, and University of Nairobi.

In November 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was hosted by Kenyatta University in Nairobi as a continuation of capacity-building efforts under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop brought together senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The Kenyan institutions were: Africa Nazarene University, Kenya Methodist University, Kenyatta University, Maseno University, Moi University, Riara University, St. Paul’s University, Strathmore University, United States International University, University of East Africa, Baraton, and University of Nairobi.

Under PEBL, two webinars were conducted in October 2020 to help institutions in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda complete their onsite quality assurance institutional review. Kenyan participants hailed from Maseno University, Strathmore University and the University of Nairobi.

In 2020, COL published the Quality Assurance Rubric for Blended Learning, which includes a case study from Kenyatta University. In 2021, COL published the Institutional Quality Assurance Review for Blended Learning Tool. Both publications were developed based on input from the universities participating in the PEBL project.

Outside of PEBL, the Higher Education initiative conducted a series of other activities, as noted below.

Thirty-seven stakeholders from various universities and teacher education institutions in seven African countries, including Kenya, came together for the Train-the-Trainers Workshop on Quality Assurance for Teacher Training and Professional Development, organised by the African Council for Distance Education at the Open University of Tanzania in March 2019. The workshop focused on the need for schools of education within universities and other institutions to develop resilient mechanisms to improve teacher development. Organised with support from COL, it examined evidence-based quality assurance practices in higher education overall, and teacher training and professional development in particular.

COL helped organise a quality assurance workshop for 51 staff members from Egerton University to explore quality issues in the development of online and blended courses.

In March 2020, a five-day on-site workshop on online course design and development was held at Moi University with 15 staff from four schools. Seven completed modules have been reviewed, as well as 12 online course designs. The development of an employability strategy and training on competency-based curriculum development was delayed by COVID-19 and took place virtually in early 2021.

A five-day onsite workshop on online course design and development was carried out at Moi University in early 2020 with 15 staff members from the
Department of Education. An employability policy workshop and subsequent skills workshop took place virtually with 82 participants from Moi and 30 external stakeholders.

As well, in the framework of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. Maseno University and the University of Nairobi are members of the consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 221 participants from Kenya.

In December 2020, a Contribution Agreement with Kenyatta University was finalised to support the university in piloting the use of online simulations for STEM subjects and in localising and pilot testing COL’s Empowered Educators Programme, EXTEND. The pilot project is scheduled for the first half of 2021, with participation of faculty and students from the departments of Biology, Chemistry and Zoology.

Skills Sector Overview

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

An ICT review was carried out on 44 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions in Kenya. The review highlighted some challenges and provided recommendations to address them.

Between 2015 and 2018, COL developed a set of resources that integrates sustainable development principles into TVET as part of teachers’ capacity building in INVEST Africa partner institutions. Since teacher capacity building is a key component of this initiative, COL has facilitated a range of online and face-to-face capacity-building activities to support teachers in creating e-portfolios and providing evidence of their new competencies. COL-trained people cascade their knowledge and skills to their colleagues. Sixteen course plans that integrate the sustainable development principles of economic growth, environmental conservation and social inclusion were developed at a workshop in June hosted by the Kenya Technical Trainers’ College. The workshop included 30 educators from seven countries — Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia — and resulted in plans for cascading the training to other teachers. Kenya has adopted COL’s flexible-and-blended (FaB) TVET model and increased their partnership to 44 institutions.

At a five-day workshop in Nakuru, Kenya in May 2016, six INVEST Africa Master Champions worked in collaboration with COL’s Open Educational Resources Adviser to train 36 new Champions in the FaB TVET model and in open, distance and flexible learning institutional policy. In 2017, more than 8,000 learners across the seven countries benefited from flexible skills training programmes. COL supported Thika Technical Training Institute in capacity building for a tracer study to collect data on the outcomes for learners. The study showed that following the training, one-third of learners were self-employed and the remaining two-thirds had found employment.
TVET staff and officials from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania have completed online capacity-building programmes in Moodle Administration, Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development, Blended Learning in the Classroom, and Facilitating with PowerPoint.

As well, COL supported TVET staff and managers from Fiji, Kenya, Nigeria, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

In June 2018, COL helped facilitate a Sustainable Development in TVET workshop at the Kenya Technical Teachers College (KTTC) for participants from 13 institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia.

Currently, COL is working with KTTC to channel the potential of ODL to scale up a face-to-face model for training master craftspersons to train others. KTTC has an established partnership with the Kenya National Federation of Jua Kali Associations, which represents all artisans in Kenya. In the framework of this project, KTTC finalised Memoranda of Understanding with Kenya’s National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) and the National Federation of Jua Kali Associations. COL consultants supported the development of a national qualification for the training, and of learning and assessment materials.

In response to COVID-19, Kenya’s TVET Directorate in the Ministry of Education developed a plan: Establishment of Distance and Flexible Learning in TVET. COL supported the implementation of the plan by providing OER for four of COL’s online capability-building courses and appointing a consultant to assist with the creation of an OER repository.

Skills Online: changing lives one at a time

The eldest of five siblings, Bravin Mugangasia had to leave rural Kenya for Nairobi in search of a better life. His big break came when he was introduced to COL’s Skills Online programme.

“I successfully finished [the course] on advanced Excel, which enabled me to become more effective when understanding data. This caught the eye of my boss, who gave me more responsibilities,” says Bravin. “The promotion came with a fair salary package, and this also impacted my family, as my brother was able to join his dream secondary school, and I was able to pay part of the school fees.”

As part of a plan with the Ministry of Education for the establishment of distance and flexible learning in TVET, COL provided support in defining requirements for a TVET Resources Directory and assessing a pre-configured OER repository platform. In the framework of this initiative, KTTC started developing learning materials.

As well, TVSD has been offering several online training courses across the Commonwealth, which have included 528 learners from Kenya who achieved course completion certificates (in Flexible Skills Development, Facilitating Online Courses, Moodle Implementation and Blended Learning in the Classroom).

COL’s Skills Online initiative has partnered with a Kenyan non-governmental organisation, Programme for Capacity Development in Africa, to promote employability skills amongst unemployed youths in Kenya, with a view to preparing them for the job market. Through an innovative partnership with Udemy Inc., the world’s largest eLearning
marketplace, COL made over 4,000 high-quality curated online courses aligned to “employability” accessible for Kenyan youths. As of December 2020, there were over 12,600 enrolments and 2,662 certifications.

The COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative was implemented by multiple partners in Kenya, including P4CDA, the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Moi University, Refuge Point and the Ministry of Education. The aim is to assist people who have lost their livelihoods during the COVID-19 crisis by helping them gain new skills for employability. A total of 2,271 learners from Kenya have benefited from these online courses.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

COL’s L3F programme is important to Kenya’s rural population because it helps these communities find appropriate technology-based solutions to improve their livelihoods. L3F also empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning process, organise themselves to solve the challenges of food security, and improve their living conditions.

An L3F study in Kenya showed that a 1% increase in empowerment can increase the profits of enterprises by 2.3%. The study also revealed that L3F farmers have higher average empowerment scores than their non-L3F counterparts, and that combining learning with social and financial capital was the critical success factor for empowerment.

COL’s L3F partner in Kenya is Siyaya Seed Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO). SACCO’s financial literacy program has enabled farmers to access loans from various financial institutions, reflected in a 41% increase in the number of borrowers over a one-year period. SACCO has solidified its working relationship with the Kenya Union of Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (KUSCCO), the national umbrella organisation responsible for strengthening the SACCO movement in Kenya. The new relationship has enabled SACCO to access capacity-building opportunities provided by KUSCCO and receive tax waivers from the government.

COL has also entered into a partnership with the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF). This partnership will see KENAFF adopt ICT/ODL-based strategies in the capacity building of its farmer groups. It is anticipated that the approach will enable the organisation to integrate at least 10,000 learners into L3F over the next year or so. KENAFF has successfully concluded a baseline survey and launched the first project phase.

Other activities have included materials development and training on agroforestry and the establishment of a tree nursery as an enterprise in November 2019, with the goal of boosting participant capacity to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental conservation.
In October 2019, a mobile platform was launched jointly with the local government, with 445 farmers registered as learners.

In March 2020, two workshops were organised with COL’s support, leading to strengthened capacity of the dairy farmers network to implement the county-level Dairy Strategic Plan and increase dairy production. In March 2020, SACCO jointly with the Ministry of Livestock offered training to 200 dairy farmers on dairy management practices.

Training on agroforestry was conducted by SACCO in February–March 2020, and trainees received more than 120,000 seedlings. As well, SACCO has partnered with Heifer International to reach over 16,000 poultry farmers in four new counties. In addition, more than 100 community facilitators were trained in fish farming in March 2020.

Overall, 4,030 farmers have been trained in sustainable agriculture, poultry farming and financial management, and 724 new farmers registered on the mobile learning platform during the pandemic.

In response to COVID-19, COL launched three AgMOOCs, with a combined registration of 33,292 from over 30 countries, including Kenya.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

Since July 2018, COL has been supporting Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST) to implement TEL. In September 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning facilitated a workshop to develop a TEL policy, with the involvement of internal JOOUST stakeholders. Under the auspices of this project, a baseline study of TEL at JOOUST was produced, and a workshop titled *Blended Course Design with the Moodle Learning Management System* was organised in January 2019. Taking forward the implementation of TEL, JOOUST started developing 20 blended courses for students. A workshop on developing the blended courses was organised in June 2019. JOOUST developed 17 courses as part of its TEL implementation, and 2,917 people registered.

Kaimosi Friends University College (KAFUCO) completed the first step in implementing the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme. A training-of-trainers workshop was organised in August 2019 for KAFUCO teachers. In addition, C-DELTA was implemented as a non-credit course, and 28 people registered. COL also supported a visioning workshop at KAFUCO to develop a TEL policy for the institution.

Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including 425 in Kenya.
In partnership with KAFUCO, COL held a face-to-face workshop in November 2019 to develop a TEL policy for the institution, in which 23 faculty members participated. Continuing with the implementation of TEL, 29 teachers participated in a capacity-building workshop, Blended Course Design with the Moodle Learning Management System, in February 2020.

As part of TEL implementation at Kibabii University (KIBU), COL supported the development of a draft policy for implementing TEL; at an online workshop in August 2020, 41 staff and faculty participated. As well, an online Designing Blended Courses Using Moodle workshop was organised in November–December 2020 for 22 staff members from KIBU.

Kenyan representatives participated in two meetings with a TEL focus, hosted by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018. Dr Silvance Onyango Abeka, JOOUST, participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting, and Mrs Barbara Khavugwi Makhaya from Maseno University attended the C-DELTA Training of Trainers Workshop.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Kenya were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Kenya report is a compilation of sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In February 2019, COL, in collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire end-of-project meeting for preventing child, early and forced marriages. Attendees also included representatives from the ministries of gender in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap for how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship.
Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported a 15-member Kenyan delegation to participate in PCF8, which was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. The members of the Kenyan delegation were: Mr Elvis Amenya, UNHCR, Ms Pauline Chege, Thika Technical Training Institute, Ms Frida Kanana Erastus, Kenyatta University, Ms Anne Polly Kagwira Kithini, Mombasa Technical Training Institute, Mr Francis Macharia, Thika Technical Training Institute, Mr Mursal Bashir Hassan, Ministry of Education, Ms Jackline Nyrere, Mr Robert Okinda, Kenya Technical Trainers College, Mr Abdi Tiony, Rift Valley Technical Training Institute, Mr Francis Wambua, Maasai Technical Training Institute, Mr Anthony Wanjala, Coast Institute of Technology, Ms Nancy Acheng Makokha, Kenya AIDS Intervention Prevention Project Group, Mr Vitalis Ogemah, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Mr Charles Obiero, Ministry of Education, and Ms Grace Apondo Otieno.

COL sponsored ten delegates from Kenya to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. They included Dr Silvance Abeka, JOUUST, Professor Peter Adoyo, Maseno University, Ms Melisa Achoko Allela, Technical University of Kenya, Mr Eric Andalya, Ms Elizabeth Okwisa Mbasu, Gesci, Dr Sammy Muteti Mutsiya, Maasai Mara University, Ms Teresa Wangui Njue, Masai Technical Training Institute, Mr Fredrick Haga Ochieng, Ministry of Education, Mrs Victorine Owino, SAACO, and Mr Timothy Gideon Wambua, KISE. As well, Ms Allela, Professor Adoyo, Ms Mbasu, Mr Ochieng and Mr Wambua participated in the workshop offered by COL’s Teacher Education initiative, Mr Andalya joined the Higher Education and TVSD workshops, Mrs Owino attended the L3F session and Dr Abeka attended the TEL Partners meeting. Professor Adoyo also participated at a Gender initiative meeting. All workshops and meetings were hosted by COL in Edinburgh.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mr Charles Obiero, Senior Deputy Director, Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and Ms Catherine Ngugi, Project Director, OER Africa, attended.

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

The Africa and Mediterranean regional meeting of COL’s Focal Points took place in 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. Mr Charles Obiero, Senior Deputy Director, Directorate of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, represented Kenya at the meeting.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

A total of 106 participants from Kenya benefited from the two blue economy MOOCs offered by VUSSC in 2020.
Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including 21 participants from Kenya.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 138 participants from Kenya.

Offered by COL’s Regional Centres initiative and PACFOLD in November–December 2020, the first module in the Youth Work MOOC series, titled *Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities*, attracted one learner from Kenya. The remaining five modules are being delivered from January to May 2021.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Kenya include:

- Ministry of Education
- African Council for Distance Education
- Egerton University
- Elimu Digital Media
- Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology
- Kaimosi Friends University College
- Kenya AIDS Intervention Prevention Project Group
- Kenya Institute of Special Education
- Kenya National Farmers Federation
- Kenya Technical Trainers College
- Kenyatta University
- Kibabii University
- Masai Technical Training Institute
- Moi University
- Programme for Capacity Development in Africa
- Siaya Seed SAACO
- Ugunja Community Resource Centre

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Lesotho (population: 2,125,268 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.3% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 41.4% (2016). Higher education institutions include the National University of Lesotho, the Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management, the Lesotho College of Education, Leretholi Polytechnic and Lesotho Agricultural College, all of which support public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 30% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 114 (2017) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Lesotho. The Ministry of Education and Training’s Education Sector Plan 2016–2026 includes plans to integrate ICT into teacher training programmes, provide ICT solutions in select secondary schools, integrate ICT across faculties, schools and departments for higher learning institutions, and enhance applications of ICT in education information management.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education and Training adopted the Education Sector Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). The ministry developed and implemented radio and television learning modules, generated and distributed learner packs, and created early child development resources. Medium-term plans include establishing an online platform for curriculum and learning modules and providing solar radios for learners in hard-to-reach areas.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Monaheng Mohale, Director, Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre, is COL’s Focal Point for Lesotho.

**COL’s Work in Lesotho: Six-Year Review 2015–2021**

COL’s current work in Lesotho is primarily in the area of higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Lesotho benefits from the activities organised under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Lesotho have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

In Lesotho, COL is providing support with the setting up of internal quality assurance systems (IQAs) in higher education institutions. Following a 2015 visit by COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education to explore the status of ODL and IQA, representatives from Lesotho participated in a workshop on Developing Criteria for Peer Auditing for five Commonwealth countries, which led to the development of an inter-institutional framework for quality assurance in 2016. In 2017, COL conducted a workshop to develop institutional IQA mechanisms and a training manual with the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and over 15 institutions in Lesotho participated.

Following a 2018 workshop with participants from public and private universities, organised by CHE, a training manual was developed for establishing IQAs in universities. The Lesotho Qualifications Framework was officially approved by the Lesotho Cabinet in June 2019.

As well, COL helped organise a capacity-building workshop for public and private universities on online programme design, which resulted in the development of eight draft programme plans.

COL launched a new regional community of practice for quality assurance in open and distance learning, involving higher education institutions and national quality assurance agencies from seven southern African countries, including Lesotho. The launch meeting was held in South Africa in April 2018, and a task force was formed to draft quality assurance guidelines and pilot them. Subsequently, pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions, including the National University of Lesotho, were completed. In December 2019, members of the community of practice reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and the indicators to be used by national qualification agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions.

COL supported CHE to develop a policy to regulate qualifications as per the Lesotho Qualifications Framework. The Ministry of Education and CHE, with representatives from six institutions, developed accreditation standards for ODL. CHE restarted their National Accreditation Standards project, which had been delayed by COVID-19. A workshop was held in November 2020. A validation meeting took place in January 2021.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 43 participants from Lesotho.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes while promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org. Five learners from Lesotho participated in the online course Designing and Developing Online Assessment, offered by VUSSC in 2020.

As a result of COL’s support over the last few years, the National University of Lesotho (NUL) is now offering distance education programmes. As a first step, COL helped NUL build its capacity for offering ODL programmes, then supported the university in developing its own materials and using or adapting...
VUSSC materials. Also, when the ODL programmes were ready to be offered, COL provided support for the university faculty via online facilitation. COL supported the development and contextualisation of three programmes at NUL, including two diplomas — in Communication Studies and in Business Management — and a Bachelor of Arts in Business and Entrepreneurship. A programme on Environmental Management for Sustainable Development has also been developed.

In October 2016, two Content Development workshops were held at NUL with 37 participants. A workshop to further support NUL in improving its capacity to offer ODL courses was held in October 2017 and attended by 45 participants. COL continues to work with NUL on programme development and OER.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Lesotho were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

A total of 491 learners from Lesotho have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, in partnership with the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre and the National Manpower Development Secretariat.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Lesotho were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Over 2,300 learners from 17 African nations who had successfully completed online courses under the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative were recognised at a virtual convocation on 18 August 2020.
Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Lesotho.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Lesotho* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)**

Lesotho benefits from activities organised by SADC-CDE, a COL regional centre in Southern Africa, hosted by Botswana Open University.

In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop in Botswana on non-formal education, with participants from eight countries in the region, including Lesotho. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL and to ICT in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes. Subsequently, Lesotho College developed an action plan, with SADC-CDE’s support, to implement non-formal education programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and Gender Links, a Botswana NGO, organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators of ten institutions from eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In February 2020, SADC-CDE sponsored 20 staff from the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre (LDTC) to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners programme, offered by Botswana Open University. This will serve to upskill the LDTC staff as they prepare to launch programmes in non-formal education.

From August to October 2020, SADC-CDE ran a series of six webinars for 40 open schooling staff in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Tanzania to train them in technology-enabled learning.

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the participation of Dr H. Manthoto Lephoto and Ms Botsephana Makhakhane at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored Mrs Makotelo Teboho Motseko, CEO of CHE, to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. In addition, Mrs Motseko was invited to participate at the Higher Education meeting held in Edinburgh prior to the forum.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. In September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana, COL organised a regional meeting of Focal Points for Africa, in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. Dr H. Manthoto Lephoto, COL’s Focal Point for Lesotho, was in attendance.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

A total of 30 learners from Lesotho participated in the October–November 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC; there were 21 participants from Lesotho in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–November 2020. Learners from Lesotho joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Lesotho include:

• Ministry of Education and Training
• Council on Higher Education
• Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre
• National University of Lesotho

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Malawi (population: 18,628,747 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 97.6% (2009), a gross enrolment rate of 144.8% (2019) and a secondary school completion rate of 34.2% (2018). The Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational, Education and Training Authority is responsible for the regulation, promotion and facilitation of TEVET in Malawi. The University of Malawi (UNIMA) is comprised of Chancellor College, which houses the School of Education, the College of Medicine, Kamuzu College of Nursing, and the Polytechnic. Other public universities include Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Malawi University of Science and Technology and Mzuzu University.

Internet connectivity is available to 14% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 48 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Malawi. The National ICT Policy aims to integrate ICT in the education systems at all levels in order to improve access to and quality in education and improve the management of Malawi’s education systems.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Disaster Management Affairs and Public Events and the Ministry of Health adopted the National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, which includes activities such as the production of learning continuity programmes broadcast through radio, TV and the Internet, and the provision of resources such as radios, textbooks, study guides and equipment to the poorest.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Joshua Valeta, Director of Open and Distance Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, is COL’s Focal Point for Malawi.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Dr Fred Gennings Wanyavinkhumbo Msiska, at Mzuzu University, held a UNESCO–COL Chair in Open and Distance Learning.
COL’s Work in Malawi: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

COL’s current work in Malawi is primarily in the areas of gender, higher education, and open and innovative schooling. Malawi benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Malawi have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

In 2017, COL conducted a workshop for 35 senior staff from open schools in the southern region of Malawi on the management of open schools. COL also organised a stakeholder workshop to discuss a draft ODL policy for Malawi.

COL contracted UK’s NotesMaster to support staff training and content development in Malawi, Mozambique and Seychelles. Fourteen staff members were involved in the training, and 12 subjects were developed as OER. COL’s Senior Advisor: Open Schooling visited Malawi to discuss open and innovative schooling, meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Malawi College of Distance Education and two open schools.

Following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in November 2018, COL started implementing the OIS model in Malawi. A separate agreement was signed with Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) as the implementing partner. Between January and June 2020, the draft OER were shared openly as part of Malawi’s COVID-19 response and were accessed over 16,000 times. The contents will be accessed offline using Aptus in after-hours classes from May 2021 and are projected to reach at least 1,500 out-of-school youths.

In June 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: Open Schooling had a series of meetings in Lilongwe with MoEST to explore the ongoing development of the OIS model in Malawi. The meetings involved senior ministry officials as well as staff of MCDE, the implementing agency.

MoEST also nominated five persons for UNIMA’s Certificate in Online Teaching, which started in April 2019. This is an important part of the support provided within the OIS model; having learned how to develop digital OER content, content developers then learn about the possibilities of working fully online.

Subsequent content development has resulted in the creation of OER resources. A workshop at MCDE in June 2019 on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) resulted in the development of an M&E strategy. COL has also provided support to cascade M&E training to 46 centre managers and co-ordinators who will be involved in 15 schools in the piloting phase.

As well, in October 2019, COL organised a study visit to the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) for two members of MCDE and one representative from MoEST to learn from NAMCOL’s experience in delivering open and distance education.

MCDE has shared 4,982 OER in an open access space, and quality assurance is in progress.

Preparations are underway at MCDE to organise staff training for piloting the OIS model from May 2021. COL is providing guidelines and resources for the workshop and is also working with NotesMaster to prepare the nearly 5,000 OER developed for use on the Aptus device.
**TEACHER EDUCATION**

COL supported teacher educators from UNIMA to attend a five-day training workshop on ICT in teaching and learning, at the National Institute of Education, Singapore in May 2016. The training supported teacher educators with integrating ICT into their programmes as a key strategy to improve quality in education.

Learners from Malawi participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and four participated in the *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL organised an ODL policy formulation workshop for UNIMA, at which the policy was developed and approved by the university.

Currently, COL is implementing a Higher Education Integrated Model at UNIMA. A programme design workshop was held at UNIMA in August 2018 to identify specific projects for the implementation of this model. Following a series of stakeholder meetings in April 2019, an academic workload model and a five-year business and marketing plan for ODL activities were developed and submitted to UNIMA. In May 2019, a training workshop in online course development was carried out, which resulted in the development of blueprints for five courses.

A high-level roundtable for vice chancellors and heads of ODL was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 2018. Thirty-one vice chancellors and representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including one from Malawi. The meeting was co-hosted by Asia e University.

COL launched a new regional community of practice (CoP) for quality assurance in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national quality assurance agencies from seven southern African countries, including Malawi. Following the CoP’s launch at a meeting in South Africa in April 2018, a task force was formed to draft quality assurance guidelines and pilot them. Subsequently, pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions, including UNIMA, were completed. The revised guidelines were shared in a paper at the Southern African Quality Assurance Network meeting in October 2018. In December 2019, members of the CoP reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and the indicators to be used by national qualifications agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions. The final version of the toolkit is available on COL’s online repository, OAasis.

As well, COL sponsored faculty from the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in
COL IN THE COMMONWEALTH: 2015–2021

A collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 15 participants from Malawi.

An ODL policy review is underway at Mzuzu University.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. UNIMA is a member of the consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

A total of 19 learners from Malawi have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Malawi were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The *Gender Profile 2017: Malawi* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

Skills training helps bridge gender gap in Malawi

With COL’s support, 225 vulnerable women and girls from the Mchinji District of Malawi have acquired valuable skills for sustainable livelihoods. They have benefited from training in shoemaking as part of the Lifelong Learning for Mothers (L3M) project administered by the Concerned Youth Organisation (CYO).

“Shoemaking skills will help me generate more income and pay school fees for my children.”

“Shoemaking industry has been dominated by men, but with women in the L3M project, women have obtained shoemaking skills, bridging the gender gap and eliminating the misconception that men are the only breadwinners in households,” said Harvey Chimaliro, CYO Executive Director.

Georgina Gama, one of the training participants, now wants to start her own business. She is hopeful that her products will sell well, since they are high quality. Another trainee, Janet Kachauwa, said: “Shoemaking skills will help me generate more income and pay school fees for my children.”
In February 2019, COL, in collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire end-of-project meeting for preventing child, early and forced marriages. Attendees also included representatives from the ministries of gender in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap on how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship.

COL has been working with the Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI) and the Commonwealth Network Against Child Marriages, through the Concerned Youth Organisation (CYO), on a programme called Lifelong Learning for Mothers. It is based on COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme and also integrates open schooling. Aimed at improving the lives of women and girls, it is implemented in the Mchinji District of Malawi.

In the framework of the project, CERADI staff completed training on ICT and ODL learning strategies in October 2018. As well, CERADI identified 199 groups to work with over the next three years. Meetings were held with Airtel and Telekom Malawi for the distribution of the learning resources via text messages. A total of 150 facilitators have been trained in the use of ODL and M&E, and 15 group representatives and ten CERADI staff have been trained in gender-sensitive learning resources. Close to 5,000 members were reached and trained in financial literacy, savings and entrepreneurship using ODL materials; 150 groups have been linked to mobile provider Airtel Malawi.

After the inception phase, which was introduced by CERADI, COL developed a holistic conceptual framework, theory of change, and logic model. Stakeholder meetings were held in Mchinji and Lilongwe in February 2019 to consult with all prospective partners on the project documentation and get their feedback on the M&E framework developed by COL, as well as to identify partners for the next phase. Baseline tools were also developed.

To implement the next phase of the project, COL in 2020 continued its engagement with CYO and CERADI. CYO has conducted six inception meetings/stakeholder briefings with 168 participants to empower women and girls. In July 2020, the newly appointed Minister of Youth Development and Sports, the Honourable Ulemu Msungama visited the CYO–COL project, which has trained 1,979 persons in skills for livelihoods and another 225 persons in shoemaking and tailoring.

As well, CERADI developed audio clips for radio-based training and identified 100 group facilitators, who were then trained in financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills in the five targeted Traditional Authorities of Kapondo, Nyoka, Kazyozyo, Zulu and Simphasi. To ensure sustainability, the training was done in collaboration with government officers (Community Development Assistants).

CYO organised sessions on various topics, including sustainable agriculture practices, savings, managing small businesses, facilitating access to open schools, and women’s rights and gender equality. A total of 1,017 persons have benefited from these training opportunities.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Malawi. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment training for the Africa region held in November 2020 included participants from Malawi.
Malawi benefits from activities organised by SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, hosted by Botswana Open University.

In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop on non-formal education in Botswana, with participants from eight countries in the region, including Malawi. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL, as well as to ICT in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and the Botswana NGO Gender Links organised a gender-sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators from ten institutions in eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In July 2019, SADC-CDE sponsored three staff from Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners programme to augment their skills, competencies and knowledge.

**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL sponsored Mr Gibson Masache, UNIMA, to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored two delegates from Malawi to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. They included Mr Andrew Chimpololo and Professor Edrinnie Kayambazinthu, both from UNIMA. Professor Kayambazinthu was also invited to participate in the higher education workshop hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of the forum.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mrs Ruth Samati-Kambali, Acting Deputy Director of MCDE, attended.

**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. Mrs Ruth Samati-Kambali, Acting Deputy Director, MCDE, represented Malawi at the meeting.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including participants from Malawi.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Malawi were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Malawi include:
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- Centre for Research and Development Initiative
- Concerned Youth Organisation
- Malawi College of Distance Education
- University of Malawi

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Mauritius (population: 1,265,711 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 94.8% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 84.3% (2018). The University of Mauritius (UoM) includes the faculties of agriculture, engineering, law, management, science (including the Department of Medicine), and social sciences and humanities. Other institutions include: the University of Technology, the Mauritius Institute of Education (for teacher training), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute and Université des Mascareignes. The Open University of Mauritius provides access to quality higher education at an affordable cost with excellent flexibility through open and distance learning (ODL). The Mauritius Institute of Training and Development oversees TVET in the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 64% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 151 (2018) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Mauritius. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources’ Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008–2020 indicates the intention to allocate resources for schools to be technologically equipped for the implementation of ICT programmes. ICT in schools will be used to develop basic computer literacy skills, to support learning, and as a tool for school management. The ministry will also explore possibilities for incorporating diverse modes of training, including face-to-face and distance modes, as well as maximising the use of ICT to create virtual classrooms.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. In response to the pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research broadcast to TV the educational resources available on the Student Support Programme portal. Secondary school classes were conducted using videoconferencing platforms, and the ministry compiled a list of useful links and apps for educators and their students to complement teaching and learning through digital media.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**FOCAL POINT**

Mr Vassoo Putchay, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, is COL’s focal point for Mauritius.

**NOTABLE MENTION**

Professor Goolam Mohamedbhai is an Honorary COL Adviser.
COL’s current work in Mauritius is primarily in the areas of open and innovative schooling, technology-enabled learning, and higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. It benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Mauritius have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)
COL signed an agreement with UoM to present a course titled Developing and Teaching Online for representatives of education ministries in Belize, Mozambique, Vanuatu and Zambia. The purpose of this project is to strengthen the eLearning capacity in ministries for the effective implementation of open schooling. Several cohorts have already completed the training.

TEACHER EDUCATION
COL provided support to the Distance Education and Teachers’ Training in Africa Conference, held at the Mauritius Institute of Education in July 2015. The conference theme was “The Future We Want: Teacher Development for the Transformation of Education in Diverse African Contexts.”

In December 2016, UoM’s Centre for Innovative Lifelong Learning (CILL) trained 13 staff from the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education in the design, development and implementation of blended learning. The university also supported the development of four courses for the Diploma in Education. Seventy-eight lecturers from UoM, the University of Seychelles and the University of Eswatini completed an eight-week online course on Developing and Teaching Online and Blended Courses, offered by CILL.

COL organises annual teacher development workshops at the National Institute of Education, Singapore with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the 2017 event on Capacity Building for Teacher Educators and Education Practitioners in Using Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for Pedagogical Development, Mr Marday Pyneandee, Mauritius Institute of Education, participated.

COL President meets with Mauritius education minister
In February 2019, COL President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar visited Mauritius to receive a Doctorate Honoris Causa from OUM. During the visit, she also met with the Honourable (Mrs) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.
There were 86 participants from Mauritius in the OER for Online Learning (OER40L) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.


There were 30 participants from Mauritius in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

The Open University of Mauritius (OUM) offers COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium. CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Dr Kaviraj Sharma Sukon, Director-General, is a member of the EGB, while Mr Abheenaye Gokhool is a member of the AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

Four delegates from the Mauritian tertiary education sector visited the Open University of Malaysia, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia and Asia e University, also in Malaysia, in May 2017 to discuss higher education strategies and online higher education models, including teacher training.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including from Mauritius. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

COL has an ongoing collaboration with OUM to improve the employability of its ICT graduates. In the framework of this initiative, COL organised a workshop for key representatives of OUM, the Human Resource Development Council, the Ministry of
Helping a Mauritian student follow her dreams

Preety Daby is a secondary-school student from Mauritius whose academic pursuits have been hampered by accessibility issues. She cannot travel on her own and requires assistance from her family. She also has had difficulty obtaining Braille versions of her textbooks.

COL’s partner, the Global Rainbow Foundation, has ensured that she has learning resources and assistive devices. Along with other students with disabilities, Preety will also benefit from a series of online courses being developed as part of the project Technology-Enabled Learning for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and Practitioners Who Support Them.

Preety, who is now getting ready to sit for the Grade 9 national examinations and feels optimistic about the future, has the following message for other persons who are visually impaired: “Never give up, despite your difficulties, and follow your dreams.”

Technology, Communication and Innovation, and local IT companies to develop a competency-based curriculum responsive to industry needs for ICT programmes in the country.

At the request of the Tertiary Education Commission, a four-day meeting was conducted at UoM in November 2018 to develop an academic workload model.

As well, COL and OUM collaborated to develop a MOOC on Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business. The three offerings of the MOOC in 2019–2020 attracted over 9,000 participants from 70 countries, including 1,320 from Mauritius.

COL has also provided assistance in the development of a Quality Assurance Policy Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and data collection tools. As well, an academic workload model was developed and approved, and an employability mapping tool for ICT programmes was piloted. The curriculum for a Master of Science in Applied Computing has been revised in light of the employability mapping tool.

COL launched a new regional community of practice for quality assurance in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national quality assurance agencies from seven southern African countries, including Mauritius. Following its launch at a meeting in South Africa in April 2018, a task force was formed to draft quality assurance guidelines and pilot them. Subsequently, the pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions, including OUM, were completed. An employability toolkit and indicators for national qualification agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions have been developed.

Thirty-seven stakeholders from various universities and teacher education institutions in seven African countries, including Mauritius, came together for a Train-the-Trainers Workshop on Quality Assurance for Teacher Training and Professional Development, organised by the African Council for Distance Education at the Open University of Tanzania in March 2019.

Most recently, COL was contacted by officials of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research for support on the creation of a higher education strategic plan.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.
UoM is one of the institutions offering online diploma courses developed by VUSSC, including COL’s Master of Arts in Education Leadership, from which 11 persons have graduated to date. As well, 37 senior officials from nine countries enrolled in a VUSSC-developed online Postgraduate Diploma in Quality Assurance, which is being offered in partnership with UoM.

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. UoM is a member of the consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018. As well, a workshop was hosted by OUM in May 2019 to strengthen aspiring and practising Youth Work lecturers’ capacity to customise the content of the Youth Work programme and deliver the modules online. Following the workshop, UoM and OUM started offering the degree programme in August 2019.

COL has partnered with the Global Rainbow Foundation (GRF) to carry out the project Technology-Enabled Learning for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and Practitioners who Support Them. Following a disability situation analysis and a needs assessment, GRF developed short, interactive, online courses for service workers, teachers and volunteers who work with persons with disabilities. The online course *Introduction to Disability Needs Assessments and Assistive Technologies*, launched in August 2020, attracted 42 teachers and disability practitioners from Mauritius.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Mauritius were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.
Skills Sector Overview

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

A total of 155 learners from Mauritius have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from OUM.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

Representatives from the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare joined fellow L3F partners to consolidate their activities of the previous three years and plan their activities for 2015–2017.

COL has worked with the Department of Extension and Training at the Food and Agricultural Research and Extension Institute (FAREI) in Mauritius to build capacity among extension staff so they can employ interactive ICT and ODL materials in farmer extension. This support has enabled FAREI to develop its strategy for extending its outreach with respect to training and information dissemination. FAREI received an additional CAD 20,300 from the parent ministry to further develop and replicate the strategy.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In January 2016, COL organised a strategy meeting in Mauritius to develop advanced ICT skills courses collaboratively. Experts from Commonwealth open universities participated in a two-day strategy meeting to discuss the development of ICT skills courses. With the support of COL, UoM organised a workshop on advanced ICT skills course development in November 2017. UoM has developed four advanced skills courses to be offered to youths in Mauritius for employment and entrepreneurship: Digital Marketing, Internet of Things and Cloud Computing, Computer Security, Forensic and Ethical Hacking and R Programming and Big Data Analytics.

In October 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning introduced COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme to the staff of the Mauritius Institute of Education. As well, he discussed strategies to facilitate the launch of four advanced ICT skills courses at UoM. Discussions at the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research focused on a draft OER policy. Subsequently, COL submitted a draft OER policy to the Honourable (Mrs) Leela

Implementation of C-DELTA commenced with a workshop at the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development in April 2019. In July 2019, the Mauritius Institute of Education started rolling out C-DELTA in primary and secondary schools. Some 200 ICT officers have been trained in C-DELTA to support teachers.

As well, Ms Sandhya Gunness from UoM, Mr Kaviraj Goodoory from the Mauritius Institute of Education and Mr Annasamy Kuppan from the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) participated in the C-DELTA Training of Trainers Workshop hosted by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018. MITD is now in the process of integrating C-DELTA as part of its curriculum.

Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Mauritius.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Mauritius were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Mauritius* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Professor Romeela Mohee, Higher Education Commissioner, is a CWW mentor.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)

Mauritius benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and the Botswana NGO Gender Links organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators from ten institutions in eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported three participants to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016: Ms Teenah Jutton, OUM, Mr Mohammed Issak Santally, Senior Lecturer Educational Technology, and Officer-in-Charge, Virtual Centre for Innovative Learning Technologies, UoM, and Ms Yousra Banooor Rajablee, Centre for Innovative and Lifelong Learning, UoM.

COL supported ten delegates from Mauritius to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Mr Tomal Kumar Chadeea, OUM, Ms Rubeena Doomun, OUM, Mr Kaviraj Goodoory, Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), Ms Anuradha Gungadeen, MIE, Mrs Meera Gungea, OUM, Ms Reena Ittea, UoM, Mr Annasamy Kuppan, MITD, Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, GRF, Mrs Kalyani Putty Rogbeer, Tertiary Education Commission, and Mrs Rubina Rampersad, UoM. As well, Mr Goodoory and Mr Kuppan attended the TEL Partners meeting, Ms Doomun and Mrs Putty Rogbeer joined the higher education workshop, and Ms Gungadeen attended a Gender initiative meeting; all events were hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

COL also hosted a ministerial roundtable at PCF9 with participation from six education ministers, where Dr K. S. Sukon, Director General, OUM, was nominated to represent the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS FOR OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Mauritius in March 2017, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research. The Honourable (Mrs) Leela Devo Dookhun, Minister, inaugurated the meeting. There was a large Mauritian representation. The following participants from Mauritius comprised the delegation:

- Dr K. S. Sukon, Director-General, OUM
- Mrs Nema Devi Goorah, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
- Ms Sandhya Gunness, Centre for Innovative Lifelong Learning, UoM
- Professor Romeela Mohee, Chemical and Environmental Engineering, UoM
- Mr Kiran Bhujun, Director, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research Division, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research

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. Mr Megavarnen Varaden, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, represented Mauritius at the meeting.

Singer Jane Constance, UNESCO Artist for Peace and winner of French television competition “The Voice Kids,” treated the PCF9 audience to a moving performance.
DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA AWARD FROM THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS

COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar received a Doctor Honoris Causa Award from OUM on 21 February 2019. In her convocation address, Professor Kanwar expressed gratitude to OUM for the award and to her team at COL, as well as friends from around the Commonwealth who have contributed to her success, noting that “this honour also belongs to them.”

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

At the request of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (MEHRTESR), COL helped organise in-person mentoring sessions for its Blockchain for Managers: Introduction and Applications MOOC in May 2018. Seventy-five people participated, with the majority coming from MEHRTESR, as well as some from the Ministry of Finance.

The Blockchain in Education series conducted in July 2020 included nominated participants from partner institutions in four countries, including in Mauritius. The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 27 participants from Mauritius.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Mauritius include:

- Global Rainbow Foundation
- Mauritius Institute of Education
- Mauritius Institute of Training and Development
- Open University of Mauritius
- University of Mauritius

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Mozambique (population: 30,366,036 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.9% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 19.3% (2015). Tertiary education is provided at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Universidade Pedagógica (for teacher education), Instituto Superior de Relações Internacionais and Universidade Lúrio. Private tertiary institutions include the Higher Polytechnic and University Institute, Catholic University, and Higher Institute for Science and Technology of Mozambique. Mozambique is a member of the regional African Virtual University, which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 21% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 48 (2018) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Mozambique. The Ministry of Education’s Education Strategic Plan 2012–2016 intends to promote ICT as an instrument for the teaching–learning process, introduce ICT in classrooms as learning tools to improve the quality of education, and provide computers for school management at all levels of education. The long-term strategy aims to move toward technology-supported interactive education (i.e., eLearning), which will also create capacity among distance learning providers in using an eLearning platform, serve different levels of education, as well as expand and improve ODL.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education offered classes in different subject areas for primary, secondary and TVET students, broadcasting them by Radio Moçambique and Televisão de Moçambique.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**FOCAL POINT**

Mr Sérgio Cossa, Head, Planning Department, National Institute of Distance Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Mozambique.

**COL’s Work in Mozambique: Six-Year Review 2015–2021**

COL’s current work in Mozambique is primarily in the areas of open and innovative schooling, technical and vocational skills development, and girls’ and women’s education and training. Mozambique benefits from the programmes offered by the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE). Learners from Mozambique have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

COL has been working with the National Institute of Distance Education (INED) to expand open schooling in Mozambique.

A framework for the implementation of open schooling was developed in 2017, and teachers were trained accordingly. The training of 18 literacy teachers and three district technicians created enabling conditions for starting classes. Negotiations were concluded in February 2017 for the training of 17 teachers and course writers from the Ministry of Education and Culture to develop five school subjects as eLearning OER over a period of ten months. The face-to-face workshop, which marked the start of the ten-month process, took place in March 2017 in Maputo, Mozambique. Workshops with instructors, directors and ministry staff were facilitated in July 2017 to build capacity for planning eLearning and developing materials; 33 people participated in the workshops.

In August 2017, representatives from ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia — who have signed agreements with COL to work together to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream and open schools through eLearning and to broaden access to schooling for out-of-school youths — met in Singapore to share experiences in the implementation of COL’s OIS model. This meeting provided an opportunity for the participants to align country implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges and identify innovative ways to increase the programme’s momentum.

In the framework of OIS, COL has supported the ministry in identifying school subjects to be reversioned into eLearning resources and teachers to be trained in curriculum design. INED has developed high-quality OER to be used in mainstream schools and open schools for out-of-school youths and adults. Faculty have been trained in TEL and pedagogy for teaching with COL’s low-cost, off-grid Aptus device.

The implementation phase of the OIS model was launched at a workshop in Matola, Mozambique in August 2018, where the Honourable Minister of Education and Human Development, Ms Conceita Sortane, handed the Aptus devices and laptops to representatives of 15 pilot schools. A follow-up workshop was organised in December 2018 to develop learning resources. Another workshop was held in December 2019 to finalise the content, pedagogical model and learner support, as well as the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the model in the pilot schools. The OIS model has the potential not only to provide a pathway back into learning for out-of-school children but also to improve the quality and outcomes of day-school provision.

COL has also provided support to INED to develop an M&E strategy and a baseline report on open schooling.

Two education practitioners involved in curriculum writing and content development for OIS participated in a study visit to the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) in April 2018. The purpose of the visit was to understand how NAMCOL had evolved in the use of ICT and to explore opportunities for similar applications in the context of Mozambique. Both countries are currently supporting about 900 out-of-school youths a year in after-hours classes using Aptus to access the digital content that has been created.

Under COL’s agreement with the University of Mauritius (UoM) to present a course titled Developing and Teaching Online across the Commonwealth,
participants from Mozambique have successfully completed the training for the UoM certificate in online teaching.

COL’s Education Specialist: Open Schooling participated in the DEASA 2020 Virtual Conference and Annual General Meeting, hosted in Maputo in December 2020, with the presentation “21st-Century Skills for Sustainable Development.”

TEACHER EDUCATION

Two officials from the Ministry of Education and Culture participated in the annual Teacher Education programme organised by COL and the Government of Singapore in August 2017. The five-day workshop was conducted by the National Institute of Education on behalf of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Participants from Mozambique joined the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020, as well as the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC. A total of 23 learners participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. There was participation from Mozambique in the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION

An ODL policy formulation workshop was successfully conducted for Eduardo Mondlane University in November 2016.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 60 participants from Mozambique.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL has been providing support to the National Directorate for Technical and Professional Education for introducing eLearning into the government TVET system. In July 2017, 33 instructors, directors and ministry staff participated in workshops to build their capacity to plan and develop eLearning materials. COL then established online training on TVSD Moodle in Portuguese, with 37 participants from five institutions plus ministry officials studying the course between May and August 2018. In June 2019, a COL consultant conducted five institutional needs assessments and facilitated a workshop in Nampula to support online learners in completing the development of their online courses.

COL developed a set of resources that integrates sustainable development principles into TVET as part of teachers’ capacity building in INVEST Africa partner institutions. Sixteen course plans that integrate the sustainable development principles of economic growth, environmental conservation and social inclusion were developed at a workshop in June 2017, hosted by the Kenya Technical Trainers’ College. The workshop included 30 educators from seven countries — Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria,
Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia — and resulted in plans for cascading the training to other teachers.

The Dom Bosco Higher Institute has been a member of the INVEST Africa partnership since 2013. As a result of COL's capacity building, they have developed and delivered their TVET teacher training qualification for online delivery.

In June 2018, COL hosted a regional workshop in Kenya titled Sustainable Development in TVET, with the participation of 26 representatives from 13 institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique (Dom Bosco Higher Institute), Nigeria and Zambia.

COL's TVSD initiative has been offering several online training courses across the Commonwealth, which have included 36 learners from Mozambique who achieved completion certificates (in the Flexible Skills Development, Facilitating Online Courses, Moodle Implementation, and Blended Learning in the Classroom courses).

A total of seven learners from Mozambique have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Mozambique were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Mozambique report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Mozambique. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment training for the Africa region held in November 2020 included nine participants from Mozambique.

GIRLS INSPIRE

The education and training of girls is a key priority for COL. GIRLS Inspire was initiated in July 2015 with generous support from the governments of Australia and Canada, to mobilise the power of ODL to provide secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls who are prevented from attending schools by barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms and distance from schools. COL's local implementation partners were Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo (ADPP) and Associação Progresso (Progresso).

With funding from Canada, both partners delivered training for women and girls, and they increased national advocacy efforts to spread the message of ending child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

ADPP used various media channels to advocate against CEFM, including radio and television programmes showcasing the GIRLS Inspire project. ADPP produced a short documentary in which GIRLS Inspire participants shared their stories of CEFM and their experiences in the GIRLS Inspire project. The video was aired on national television.

Under the aegis of the project, COL helped train teachers in gender-sensitive pedagogy to increase
their skills and their awareness about the negative consequences of gender-based violence, such as CEFM, sexual abuse and exploitation.

Awareness-raising events have included solidarity marches for International Day of the Girl Child, 16 Days of Activism and World AIDS Day, along with letters to district parliamentarians, exchanges of experiences between women and girls from different groups, and sharing of stories of violence and its impact, to further mobilise community members in addressing the challenges of violence against women and children.

Throughout the life of the project, 138 staff members were trained in project collaboration for women’s and girls’ issues, content development, technology integration and data collection; 28 life-skills and vocational-skills courses were developed; 47 exchanges with external agencies were carried out; 125 events were held; ten radio/video spots reached at least 118,306 community members in 16 communities of four regions; 48 support groups were created — 30 cultural groups and TRIOs for girls’ peer support at ADPP and 18 support groups as well as three District Technician Advocates at Progresso; 16 safe learning environments were established and agreed with communities, in addition to 258 agreements signed with parents and spouses to allow girls to attend school; 4,712 women and girls completed skills training and 1,710 girls were reintegrated into formal schooling; 203 women and girls applied for employment, of whom 172 were successful; 143 women and girls opened bank accounts; and 55 internships were established.

*GIRLS Inspire Country Brief – Mozambique*, a summary of the GIRLS Inspire project in Mozambique and its connection with the Sustainable Development Goals, was published in October 2017.

Canadian Deputy Minister of International Development Ms Diane Jacovella visited Nampula Province to see first-hand the barriers being experienced by these learners and to witness the positive impact that GIRLS Inspire was having on the women and girls being trained in Nacala Porto.

In collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, COL co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire end-of-project meeting in February 2019 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap for how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship. Member of Parliament Ms Marengue Da Cruz and GIRLS Inspire partners from Mozambique were in attendance.
COL IN THE COMMONWEALTH: 2015–2021

The Baseline–Endline Report: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) through Open, Distance and Technology-Based Education in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania, released in August 2019, unpacks the results of surveys and draws on supporting qualitative data, drawn from open-ended questions, case studies and partner reports, to highlight changes that occurred during the project.

With COL’s support, ADPP continues to empower women and girls. In 2020, three of the five modules for the online business and entrepreneurship training for women and girls were completed. Using online learning, 876 women and 82 men were trained in: (i) bargaining and negotiation skills; (ii) entrepreneurship development, including strategic business planning; (iii) marketing; (iv) financial management, including recording keeping; and (v) savings and loans scheme management. A successful training in face mask and shopping bag production was organised, and by the end of August 2020, 2,800 masks and 20 bags had been produced by women and girls. A total of 250 women and girls started 25 savings and loan groups.

A big achievement in economic empowerment for the women has been reported as a result of COL’s collaboration with ADPP. Three of the ten groups who had started savings clubs with micro-loans made a profit of 24,610 meticais from their initial loan of 15,000 meticais (164%).

A gender-sensitive COVID-19 brochure was developed, and the Strengthening Business Capacity and Entrepreneurship among Women and Girls project reached over 3,000 girls, boys, women and men by disseminating the information using WhatsApp. Women and girls want to learn how to use digital platforms to sell their products, so one of the trainers has developed a user-friendly application/platform that will be tested for selling and buying products.

ELEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS (eLIO)

Following a successful first year of developing and delivering an online induction programme for United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) staff in headquarters, country offices and field offices, eLIO enrolled 36 learners from UNFPA Mozambique, who participated together in cohorts from December 2019 to February 2020. Within this period, one learner received a third certificate, which marks full completion of UNFPA’s Virtual Orientation Programme.

REGIONAL CENTRE

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)

Mozambique benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop in Botswana on non-formal education, with participants from eight countries in the region, including Mozambique. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL and ICT in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and the Botswana NGO Gender Links organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators from ten institutions in eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In July 2019, SADC-CDE sponsored three staff from Universidade Eduardo Mondlane to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners programme to augment their skills, competencies and knowledge.
EIGHTH PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF8)

COL sponsored Ms Helvia Momade from Associação Progresso to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mr Sérgio Cossa, COL’s Focal Point for Mozambique, attended.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Mr Sérgio Cossa, Head, Planning Department, INED, represented Mozambique at both meetings.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Mozambique.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Mozambique.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Mozambique were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Mozambique include:

• Ministry of Education and Human Development (formerly Ministry of Education and Culture)
• Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo
• Associação Progresso
• National Directorate for Professional Technical Education
• National Institute of Distance Education

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Namibia (population: 2,494,530 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 97.5% (2018), a secondary net enrolment rate of 52% (2007) and a gross enrolment rate of 65.8% (2007). The principal tertiary institution is the University of Namibia (UNAM), established in 1993, with its main campus in Windhoek and nine other campuses across the country. The university offers courses in agriculture and natural resources, economics and management sciences, education, engineering and information technology, medical and health sciences, and law. There are also polytechnics, technical and agricultural colleges, and four national teacher-training colleges. The Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) is a state-owned educational institution that provides open and distance learning (ODL) and supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 37% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 113 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Namibia. Some of the Ministry of Higher Education, Arts and Culture’s ICT Integration for Equity and Excellence in Education goals are to produce ICT-literate citizens, leverage ICT to assist and facilitate learning for the benefit of all learners and teachers across the curriculum, and broaden access to quality educational services for learners at all levels of the education system.

Building education resilience in the face of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. In response to the pandemic, the Ministry of Education promoted Namibia Reads, an application consisting of e-books, activities and quizzes for children aged 3 to 12 years.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Mr Gerard N. Vries, Deputy Executive Director for Lifelong Learning, Arts and Culture, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, is COL’s Focal Point for Namibia.

COL’s Work in Namibia: Six-Year Review, 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Namibia is primarily in the areas of open and innovative schooling and higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Namibia benefits from activities organised by the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Namibia have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

COL has a longstanding connection with NAMCOL in relation to open schooling, with NAMCOL hosting several regional study visits for other COL partners, most recently for delegates from Malawi and Nigeria. In addition, NAMCOL staff regularly contribute to COL publications, including two chapters in COL’s recent book *Addressing the Learning Needs of Out-of-School Children and Youths through the Expansion of Open Schooling*.

Namibia is an active member of the Commonwealth Open Schools Association, a community of practice.

COL’s Senior Adviser: Open/Innovative Schooling visited NAMCOL in 2017. During the visit, the OIS model was shared with senior management of the college. Discussions with NAMCOL covered eLearning strategies, quality assurance and the use of NotesMaster — a freely accessible eLearning network for open educational resources (OER).

In April 2018, COL partnered with NAMCOL to organise a study visit for four education practitioners from Mozambique and Zambia, who are involved in OIS curriculum writing and content development. The purpose of the visit was to understand how NAMCOL had evolved in the use of ICT and to explore opportunities for similar applications in the context of Mozambique and Zambia. In October 2019, NAMCOL hosted three practitioners from Nigeria’s Universal Basic Education Commission, two members of Malawi College of Distance Education, and one representative from the Malawi Ministry of Education, and everyone shared their experiences of delivering open and distance education. Both countries are currently supporting about 900 out-of-school youths a year in after-hours classes using Aptus to access the digital content that has been created. Following NAMCOL’s lead, Zambia is also making greater use of the online resources to support day-scholars, especially those whose schooling has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with support from the Notesmaster Foundation and UNESCO.

In October 2020, NAMCOL requested that COL provide project support for its transition to dedicated ODL institution status. The inception report on the project has been accepted by NAMCOL, with the final version due in the first half of 2021.

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL supported the participation of teacher educators from Namibia at a five-day training workshop on ICT in teaching and learning, held at the Singapore National Institute of Education in May 2016. The training helped teacher educators integrate ICT into their programmes as a key strategy to improve quality in education.
In April 2020, COL’s Teacher Education and OIS initiatives met virtually with officials from the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, NAMCOL and UNAM in response to a request for technical assistance to support the continuation of teaching and learning in schools, during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were participants from Namibia in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020 as well as in the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

A total of 33 learners from Namibia participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 50 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

The pilot of COL’s Higher Education model was launched in November 2017 in collaboration with UNAM during a project design workshop that brought together 51 participants.

Namibia is also part of a regional community of practice created by COL for quality assurance (QA) in open and distance learning, with participation from higher education institutions and national QA agencies from seven southern African countries. Following the launch meeting in South Africa in April 2018, a task force was formed to develop QA guidelines. A good practices guide has also been completed, consisting of five case studies of QA in five countries; one of these case studies centres on UNAM. In December 2019, members of the community of practice reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and indicators to be used by national qualification agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions.

A high-level roundtable for vice chancellors and heads of ODL was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 2018. Thirty-one vice chancellors and representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including one from Namibia. The meeting was co-hosted by Asia e University.

In partnership with UNAM, COL is implementing its Higher Education Integrated Model in Namibia. In the framework of this project, UNAM staff have been trained to develop a QA policy and guidelines for blended learning. UNAM staff completed the online course Developing and Teaching Online Courses and participated in an online course development workshop in April 2018 (where staff were trained in pedagogy, forms of instruction, and learning management systems).

Training sessions were conducted with academic staff at UNAM, especially from the School of Law, to develop blueprints for LLB modules to be delivered online. Four courses, along with their tutor training plans, were completed in September 2018.

A validation meeting was held in May 2018 to finalise the QA policy and the set of seven QA guidelines with the staff of CODeL (the Centre for Open, Distance and eLearning, at UNAM) and the department responsible for QA, CEQUAM.

In February 2019, CODeL held a workshop to develop an institutional ODeL policy. This was followed by a workshop with CODeL staff on learner support and
assessment strategies — an activity that formed part of the transformation of the LLB degree project. CODEL also enrolled their first 203 students in the newly developed LLB online courses.

A UNAM workshop in April 2019 focused on online course development. Following the training, UNAM staff completed seven online courses, including six courses for the LLB online. A stakeholder workshop took place at UNAM in June 2019 to identify graduate attributes for the LLB programme. The employability mapping tool was subsequently revised and completed. The LLB curriculum was updated in light of the mapping exercise, and graduate attributes were identified.

An institutional ODL policy validation meeting was held at UNAM in June 2019.

The in-depth evaluation plan for the Higher Education initiative was finalised, with the site evaluation interviews completed in October 2019.

In November 2019, 20 staff members from UNAM attended a workshop to complete the institutional employability scorecard and develop an employability strategy. They also benefited from five training workshops to familiarise them with the competency-based curriculum development process and to map learning outcomes to curriculum.

In January 2020, three workshops were conducted with various stakeholders at UNAM to develop the strategy for CODEL to become an eCampus.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 78 participants from Namibia.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF). Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via [www.colvee.org](http://www.colvee.org).

Dr Heroldt Murangi, NAMCOL, and Mr Franz Gertze, Namibia Qualifications Authority, serve on the VUSSC Management Committee. Mr Gertze also serves as the Chair of the VUSSC TQF Management Committee.

In partnership with NAMCOL, VUSSC offered a six-week online course titled Developing and Teaching Online and Blended Courses for representatives from various post-secondary institutions in Namibia. There were 751 learners enrolled in the course, with 137 successfully completing it.

Representatives from Namibia participated in a workshop on formulating peer auditing criteria for five Commonwealth countries, which led to the development of an inter-institutional framework for QA. NAMCOL, in collaboration with the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (now Botswana Open University), has assisted the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre and the Mozambique Institute of Open and
Distance Education with developing quality criteria to conduct peer audits in their respective institutions.

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, including NAMCOL.

Under this consortium, a workshop was hosted at NAMCOL 8–10 May 2019 to strengthen aspiring and practising Youth Work lecturers’ capacity to customise the content of the Youth Work programme and deliver the modules online. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated several sessions, which brought together over 40 participants from six higher education institutions in Southern Africa as well as civil society and government representatives.

Prompted by COVID-19 and the demand for online training, NAMCOL has responded to a request from the Ministry of Education by making available the VUSSC course Developing and Teaching Online; 746 teachers registered, 17 of whom were NAMCOL staff.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth small states, including Namibia.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Namibia were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

A total of 1,657 learners from Namibia have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, in partnership with NAMCOL, the University of Namibia and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. Learners boosted their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. The first cohort of programme graduates from Namibia were recognised at the First Virtual Convocation for Africa, held on 18 August 2020, where the Honourable Ester Anna Nghipondoka delivered special remarks.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Namibia were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Namibia report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWiseWomen (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Ms Margaret Mensah-Williams is a CWW mentor.
Namibia benefits from activities under the aegis of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre that is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop in Botswana on non-formal education, with participants from eight countries in the region, including Namibia. Dr Heroldt Murangi, NAMCOL Director, served as the workshop facilitator. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL and ICT in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and the Botswana NGO Gender Links organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators from ten institutions in eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In 2020, SADC-CDE ran a series of six webinars for 40 open schooling staff in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Tanzania to train them in TEL.

As well, participants from Namibia joined the Blockchain in Education webinar series, conducted in July 2020 by another COL regional centre, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning, in Malta.

### Special Events and Activities

#### PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored Dr Heroldt Murangi, NAMCOL Director, to participate at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored six delegates from Namibia to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. They included Mrs Fiona Anderson, UNAM, Dr Catherine Beukes-Amiss, UNAM, Mr Franz Gertze, Namibia Qualifications Authority, Dr Ngepathimo Kadhila, UNAM, Dr Heroldt Murangi, NAMCOL, and Mr Jan Nitschke, NAMCOL. In addition, Dr Beukes-Amiss and Dr Kadhila attended a Higher Education initiative workshop, and Mr Nitschke participated in the OIS workshop. Dr Murangi and Mr Gertze, members of the VUSSC Management Committee, participated in two of the three VUSSC PCF9 pre-forum committee meetings (VUSSC Interlocutors and VUSSC TQF), all hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

#### REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The African Regional Consultation was held in March 2017 in Port Louis, Mauritius. Dr Heroldt Murangi, Director of NAMCOL, participated.

#### REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held...
virtually in May 2020. Mr Mzingisi Gqwede, Director of the Directorate of Adult Education, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, represented Namibia at both meetings.

COL’s INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

The Blockchain in Education webinar series was conducted in July 2020 with 91 participants from partner institutions in five countries, including from Namibia. Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Namibia.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 25 participants from Namibia.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Namibia include:

• Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
• Namibia Qualifications Authority
• Namibian Open Learning Network Trust
• Namibian College of Open Learning
• University of Namibia

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Nigeria (population: 200,963,599 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 64.1% (2010) and a gross enrolment rate of 42% (2016). *The National Universities Commission* has accredited 44 federal universities, 48 state universities and 79 private universities, including four federal universities of technology, three federal universities of agriculture and the *National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)*, which is a leading ODL institution in Africa providing functional, flexible, accessible and cost-effective education. It currently has 78 Study Centres spread across the country’s six geo-political zones. The *National Teachers Institute* serves as a distance learning educational institution to support teacher professional development and qualification upgrades and to address teacher shortages nation-wide. Nigeria is also a member of the regional *African Virtual University*, which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) is hosted by NOUN with COL’s support. It focuses on the development of leadership and expertise in the field of ODL in West Africa.

Internet connectivity is available to 36% (2015) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 88 (2018) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Education’s *Education for Change: A Ministerial Strategic Plan (2018–2022)* focuses on increasing access through distance learning, enabling a knowledge network for learners, training teachers and trainers, broadening the availability of quality education materials, and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of educational administration and policy. Some of the initiatives include the establishment of the Department of ICT in the Federal Ministry of Education, the development and use of the National Policy on ICT in Education, the provision of ICT infrastructure and services for teaching, learning and research, ICT capacity development for all staff, and the introduction of eLearning and ICT use in open learning and distance education.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Federal Ministry of Education and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) established a Task Team to create a Learn at Home Programme (LHP), which provides information, guidance and resources for the continuing education and individualised learning of children at home.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

Nigeria is represented on the Board by a nominee of the Federal Minister of Education; the position is presently vacant.

**FOCAL POINTS**

Mrs Maria Ada Amedu, Assistant Director, Bilateral Agreements, Commonwealth and African Affairs Branch of Education Support Services Department, Federal Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Nigeria.
COL President visits Nigeria

COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar visited Nigeria from 20 to 24 July 2019. During this period, she visited RETRIDOL and spoke at the launch of the Africa Centre of Excellence on Technology Enhanced Learning, at NOUN. She also met in Abuja with the heads of the National Universities Commission, the National Teachers Institute and UBEC, as well as the Permanent Secretary and directors at the Federal Ministry of Education. She delivered a keynote address at the eighth Distance Education and Teachers’ Training in Africa Conference at the University of Lagos.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Professor Abdalla Uba Adam is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Dr M. M. Bunza is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor Olugbemiro Jegede is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Mohammad Junaid is an Honorary COL Adviser.

Her Excellency Ms Mariam Yalwaji Katagum, Federal Minister of State for Industry, Trade and Investment, is a former Deputy Chair of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor Michael Omolewa is a COL Honorary Fellow and former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

The late Dr Abdurrahman Umar was a member of COL’s Board of Governors.

The late Dr Alhaji Hafiz S. Wali was a COL Honorary Fellow and a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.

COL’s Work in Nigeria: Six-Year Review

COL’s current work in Nigeria is primarily in the areas of higher education, open and innovative schooling, teacher education, technical and vocational skills development and technology-enabled learning.

Learners from Nigeria have benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Nigeria has 10.5 million out-of-school children. It has embraced the OIS model, and COL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UBEC to address the needs of these children.

In the framework of this collaboration, UBEC has identified six states and 109 schools to be involved in the rollout of the model. In October 2019, three practitioners from UBEC participated in a study visit to the Namibian College of Open Learning to learn about its experience in the delivery of open and distance education. As well, COL has sponsored six teachers from six states to participate in a course on Developing and Teaching Online, which was developed by the University of Mauritius to strengthen regional eLearning capacity to implement open schooling effectively.

In collaboration with UBEC, COL facilitated a five-day workshop in Abuja in February 2020, which focused on training development using the OER Commons Open Author platform and brought together 51 content developers and 60 state centre managers, as well as members of the UBEC task team and its sister agencies. UBEC’s content group members have already shared 166 draft resources.

In July 2020, online meetings were held with the UBEC task team, content developers, and centre managers in Nigeria to discuss and develop an open schooling model.

Most recently, COL commissioned the University of Nigeria to undertake action research exploring community-based outreach programmes for out-of-school children, with a focus on girls.

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL played an important role in integrating child-centred methodologies in teacher training through the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) project. A tracer study showed that CFS-trained teachers demonstrated more of the desired teaching behaviours associated with child-centred pedagogy than teachers who had...
not been trained in CFS. This had a significant impact among the students in subjects such as mathematics.

In June 2017, COL and the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) in Kaduna jointly held a capacity-building workshop on the Green Teacher programme. The 31 participants were drawn primarily from NTI’s academic departments and also included two representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education and one representative of the Federal Ministry of Environment. The outcome of the workshop was a work plan for the implementation of the Green Teacher programme. A follow-up Materials Development Workshop for the Green Teacher programme was organised by NTI with support from COL. The main objective of the workshop was to develop modules for the Green Teacher programme. The programme was launched in 2018. Subsequently, the Advanced Diploma in Environmental Education was launched in collaboration with NTI as part of Green Teacher Nigeria. This 12-month blended online programme targets primary and secondary school teachers, as well as staff of environmental protection agencies and other stakeholders in the country. In preparation for the programme rollout, COL trained teacher educators in e-facilitation, managing communities of practice, and collaborative problem-based learning. In the framework of this initiative, COL has supported NTI in capacity building with respect to pedagogies and technologies for effective delivery of this environmental education programme. The content has now been integrated into Nigeria’s National Certificate of Education 1 and 2, as part of the General Education Studies curriculum, reaching a total of 27,211 teachers. As well, in August–November 2019, COL supported NTI to organise a workshop titled Problem-Based Learning and Online Assessment, a Gender Analysis workshop, as well as a series of Monitoring and Evaluation Support sessions. In January 2020, a capacity-building workshop on learner support brought together 63 teaching, administrative and technical staff.

There were 87 participants from Nigeria in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

A total of 248 learners from Nigeria participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 303 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Twenty-six learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, which was organised in November–December 2020.

To promote the co-creation of audio-based resources for learning in low-resource settings, COL has launched Educational Podcasting for Innovative Classrooms (EPIC). The new platform supports online podcast streaming as well as collaboration spaces for in-country teacher communities of practice. EPIC provides a podcast portal for teacher-generated content, a teacher professional-development and community area, as well as links to other resources for teacher professional development. Currently, EPIC has country groups for three countries, including Nigeria.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

NOUN offers COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public
Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Professor Olufemi A. Peters, NOUN’s Vice-Chancellor, is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA EGB, and Dr Samaila Mande, Senior Lecturer, School of Management Sciences, is a member of the AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries attended, including from Nigeria. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

Also within the framework of the Higher Education initiative, COL has been piloting an Employability Model, which utilises a systematic, phased approach to support universities in assessing the readiness, planning, implementation and evaluation of employability initiatives. In June 2018, COL organised focus groups in Lagos and Abuja with participants from universities, companies and university commissions to seek their input on and validation of COL’s employability toolkit.

Thirty-seven stakeholders from various universities and teacher education institutions in seven African countries, including Nigeria, came together for the Train-the-Trainers Workshop on Quality Assurance for Teacher Training and Professional Development, organised by the African Council for Distance Education at the Open University of Tanzania in March 2019. The workshop focused on the need for schools of education within universities and other institutions to develop resilient mechanisms to improve teacher development. Organised with support from COL, it examined evidence-based quality assurance practices in higher education overall, and teacher training and professional development in particular.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 1,098 participants from Nigeria. Professor Vincent Tenebe, who served as a COL Chair between 2010 and 2016, conducted a research study titled Minority Students in Graduate Studies: An Exploration into Women’s Accessibility to Higher Education through the Open and Distance Learning Mode in Nigeria.
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

An important component of COL’s TVSD programme is the capacity building of partner organisations in course design and materials development. Twenty-nine Nigerian institutions participated in COL’s INVEST Africa capacity-building activities, aiming to increase access to high-quality, flexible and blended skills training in support of sustainable livelihoods. In the framework of this initiative, COL developed a set of resources that integrate sustainable development principles into TVSD. A June 2017 workshop, which was hosted by the Kenya Technical Trainers’ College, included participants from Nigeria. The focus was on ways to implement flexible and blended learning in institutions.

The TVSD initiative has been hosting ongoing online capacity building across the Commonwealth via five courses: Moodle Administration, Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development, Blended Learning in the Classroom, and Facilitating with PowerPoint. A total of 354 learners from Nigeria have benefited from these offerings by achieving completion certificates.

With support from COL, Nigerian specialists in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) completed the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

Creating new employment pathways for young Nigerians

For Dr Ibraheem A. Abdul, partnering with COL was “like a dream come true.” He works as director of the Flexible Skills Development Centre at the Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech) and has been managing a project that taps into informal apprenticeships to create new employment pathways for young Nigerians.

With COL’s support, Yabatech has been working with master craftspersons from Africa’s largest computer village, in Lagos, to develop open educational resources for a blended workplace-online learning programme to be delivered in 2021. The college is also building staff capacity to mentor other TVET institutes in blended learning.

Recognising the model’s potential, Dr Abdul is currently hosting a series of free webinars for stakeholders across the country to showcase how Yabatech can contribute to upskilling informal apprentices. “COVID-19 and the associated lockdown has brought the potential of ODL into the limelight,” he says. “Through these webinars, we have secured support from a giant telecommunications company for the current project.”
In June 2018, COL helped facilitate a workshop on Sustainable Development in TVET at the Kenya Technical Training College, with a focus on how to embed “green” programmes. It was attended by participants from 13 institutions in five countries, including Nigeria.

In July 2018, COL supported a three-day stakeholder meeting in Kaduna, Nigeria to provide input on the National TVET Policy and Strategy on Open, Distance and Flexible eLearning (ODFeL), the TVET Procedures Manual on ODFeL and the COL institutional ODFeL policy template. This document-development and stakeholder meeting was carried out in partnership with the National Board of Technical Education (NBTE). There were 27 participants, including several from the Ministry of Education. Subsequently, NBTE drafted a policy and strategy document to guide the implementation of flexible, blended and eLearning in state and federal polytechnics.

Since 2020, COL has been collaborating with Yaba College of Technology and their industry partner, the Computer and Telecommunication Engineers Association of Nigeria (COMTEAN), to implement COL’s Skills in Demand model, which seeks to improve livelihoods for individuals in developing Commonwealth countries by matching skills development to industry and community needs, thereby creating a pathway to employment and entrepreneurship. A project design workshop organised with COL’s support in December 2019 identified how the two partners will use ODL to supplement informal apprenticeships to build learners’ hard and soft skills to achieve formal qualifications in support of growing businesses and reducing youth unemployment. Within this partnership, COL has built the capability of four teams with Yabatech and COMTEAN representatives. Using COL’s SARAS template, these teams have designed a learning experience that blends ODL and workplace learning and have developed learning and assessment materials.

As well, COL supported Nigeria’s National Board of Technical Education to develop a Moodle Implementation Plan and Moodle instance. COL also supported the training of 12 facilitators from two Nigerian polytechnics, with the view to using COL’s OER hosted on this Moodle instance to train teachers from each of Nigeria’s 115 polytechnics to teach online.

A total of 2,815 learners from Nigeria have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, in partnership with the National Board of Technical Education as well as the Ministry of Education.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

As part of the Advanced ICT Skills Development project, NOUN has worked with five other open universities in Africa and Asia to develop courses related to web-application and mobile-application development.

COL supported NOUN in organising a course development workshop in September 2016 to develop two courses for advanced ICT skills development. By the end of 2017, NOUN, with support from COL, had completed the development of two courses: Image Design and Animation and Java Programming. As part of the advanced ICT course development project started with six open universities, these form a collection of courses to be launched by educational institutions in the Commonwealth.

NOUN has offered two MOOCs using COL’s MOOC4DEV platform, one on the foundations of science and another on media literacy.

In September 2017, COL supported the National Universities Commission (NUC) in developing and validating a national policy on OER for higher education.
In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Nigeria were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

In February 2020, learners from Nigeria were trained in the fundamentals of creating and managing a wireless network, at the Fantsuam Foundation, Kaduna State, Nigeria during a workshop provided by the Digital Empowerment Foundation, India, as part of the Barefoot Wireless Engineer programme.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Nigeria.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Nigeria* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

COL’s Gender initiative supports partners in mainstreaming gender and in implementing holistic projects to address specific gender issues. It aims to tackle the distinct challenges faced by girls/women and boys/men in regions where they are most disadvantaged, while also shifting the social norms that create and perpetuate gender inequalities.

In Nigeria, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development has been engaged in talks with COL about the possibility of implementing a project to provide education and training to girls and young women, similar to COL’s flagship GIRLS Inspire project.

In collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, COL co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire end-of-project meeting in February 2019 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap for how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship. Along with project partners, the event brought together parliamentarians and representatives of health and gender ministries from nine countries, including Nigeria.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING (RETRIDOL)**

Hosted by NOUN, RETRIDOL promotes capacity-building and research activities in ODL while serving as a centre of expertise for Nigeria and West Africa. RETRIDOL publishes the *West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning*.

RETRIDOL conducted a train-the-trainers induction workshop in collaboration with NOUN in Abuja from May to June 2017 to train senior university staff in various components of transformation from conventional to dual-mode universities.

In April 2018, RETRIDOL hosted a workshop on TEL that was facilitated by COL. Attended by 23 senior administrators and faculty from nine conventional Nigerian universities and NUC, it aimed at supporting these universities to transition to being dual-mode institutions.

In June 2018, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a workshop at the University of Ghana entitled *Overview of Open and Distance Learning (ODL)*. The workshop, aimed at supporting institutions to embrace distance education practices, was attended...
by 22 senior administrators and faculty from ten Ghanaian educational institutions.

Also in June 2018, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to offer the same workshop at the University of The Gambia. It was attended by 21 senior administrators and faculty from nine Gambian educational institutions and two ministries.

In January 2019, RETRIDOL conducted a workshop on gender sensitisation for 27 participants from 12 universities across Nigeria. The workshop was inaugurated by Ambassador Babatunde A. Nurudeen, Nigeria’s Permanent Representative to the Economic Community of West African States, and Mrs Agnes Bamgbala, Deputy Director of the Directorate of Open and Distance Education, NUC. The workshop focused on the importance of addressing gender inequalities by ensuring that both women’s and men’s views, interests and needs shape policies, plans and programmes in universities. Among the issues raised were how to (i) improve the efficacy of sexual harassment committees and (ii) provide guidance on developing gender policies within institutions.

In March 2019, RETRIDOL held a two-day workshop on Materials Development for Open Educational Resources (OER). The workshop was developed in collaboration with COL and facilitated by Dr Jane-Frances Obiageli Agbu, the International Council of Distance Education Chair in OER. Participants were drawn from 16 universities, along with representatives from NUC. They were introduced to the fundamentals of OER and the necessary skills for developing and deploying OER materials.

In May 2019, RETRIDOL held a four-day workshop titled Operationalising Dual-Mode Universities / Distance Learning Centres in Nigeria and Strategising / Fulfilling Nigeria’s National Universities Commission (NUC) Requirements for Validation as DLCs. The workshop was developed in collaboration with COL and facilitated by Professor Olugbemiro Jegede, former Vice Chancellor of NOUN. Participants were drawn from 15 higher education institutions in Nigeria and included the president or vice chancellor from each institution. Twenty-eight senior officers, drawn from the 15 higher education institutions, also participated in the workshop, for a total of 43 participants.

In February 2020, RETRIDOL held two workshops at the Federal University of Oye-Ekiti to build capacity in acquiring approval from the NUC to open a distance learning centre. In total, 32 participants attended the workshops.

In September–October 2020, a RETRIDOL delegation visited the University of Ilorin, Afe Babalola University, the University of Port Harcourt, and FUT Minna — all of which are seeking to become dual-mode universities — to respond to their needs with regards to accreditation requirements. To date, two institutions have been accredited by the NUC to operate in the dual mode. As well, eight institutions have developed an ODL policy, paving the way for accreditation.

In November 2020, RETRIDOL hosted a writers’ retreat workshop to complete the development of materials for the post-graduate diploma in distance education. The programme was launched in March 2021.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)
PCF8 was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. The Honourable Professor Anthony Gozie Anwukah, Minister of State for Education, Nigeria, participated in the Ministerial Roundtable, where members explored learning for sustainable development. The Nigerian delegation comprised: Her Excellency Ambassador Mariam Yalwaji Katagum; Dr Ibraheem Abdul, Yaba College of Technology; Dr Jane-Frances Agbu, NOUN; Mr Greg Onwodi, NOUN; Ms Rebecca Ojedele, African Radio Drama Association; Mr John Okewole, Yaba College of Technology; Dr Adenike Oladipo, University of Lagos; and Professor Godswill Obioma, Senior Special Adviser to the Federal Minister of Education.

COL supported 16 delegates from Nigeria to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019:

Dr Ibraheem Abdul, Yaba College of Technology; Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu, NOUN; Dr Jane-Frances Agbu, NOUN; Dr Clifford Moses Amini, RETRIDOL; Mrs Francisca Anene, NOUN; Dr Funmilayo Doherty, Yaba College of Technology; Professor Patrick Eke Eya, RETRIDOL; Dr Jummai Garba, National Teacher’s Institute (NTI); Professor Muhammad Junaid, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto; Dr Aminu Kazeem Ibrahim, NOUN; Mr Ndemi Yakedoho Ndemi, NTI; Mr Jima Ngei; Dr Theresa Okafor, Qaardan Educational Foundation; Mr Oluwaseun Philip Oluyide, RETRIDOL; Mr Greg Onwodi, NOUN; and Dr Zainab Muhammad Shuaibu, NTI.

Several delegates were also invited to participate in COL-related meetings in Edinburgh before or after PCF9: Dr Okafor attended a higher education workshop, Dr Garba, Professor Junaid, Mr Ndemi and Dr Shuaibu participated in a teacher education workshop, Dr Abdul attended a TVSD workshop, and Dr Amini, Professor Eya and Mr Oluyide attended the Regional Centres’ meeting.

A major highlight of the forum was the conferment of the title of COL Honorary Fellow on eight eminent individuals, including Professor Abdalla Uba Adamu, NOUN’s Vice Chancellor and CEO, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the cause of open education, social equity and excellence. As well, COL bestowed its Award of Excellence in a Distance and Online Learning Experience on Jima Ngei, a learner who had completed over 330 MOOCs in just three years.

FIRST DISTINGUISHED LECTURE AT NOUN
COL President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar delivered the first public lecture of NOUN’s Distinguished Lecture Series in Abuja in July 2016. Professor Kanwar spoke about the potential of ODL to reach the unreached. The transcript is available at http://hdl.handle.net/11599/2378.
COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. The Nigerian delegates to the consultation were: Professor Garba Dahuwa Azare, Director General/Chief Executive, NTI; the Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO, Her Excellency Ambassador Mariam Yalwaji Katagum; Mr Imoh Sunday Egbo, Deputy Permanent Delegate, Permanent Delegation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to UNESCO; Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, Executive Secretary, NUC; and Mr Christopher Jibreel Maiyaki, Director, Executive Secretary’s Office, NUC.

NUC, which in March 2017 had committed to developing a National Policy on OER for Higher Education, had already developed the document by September and shared it at the 2nd World OER Congress.

**COL WELCOMES NOUN CHAIR IN VANCOUVER**

On 22 January 2020, Peter Okebukola, Council Chair of NOUN and Distinguished Professor of Science and Computer Education, Africa Centre of Excellence in Innovative and Transformative STEM Education, Lagos State University, visited COL to learn from its expertise.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including learners from Nigeria.

Three AgMOOCs were launched in 2020, attracting a combined registration of 33,292 learners from over 30 countries — India, Kenya and Nigeria being the top three.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 79 participants from Nigeria.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Nigeria were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020, and Ms. Maria Ada Amedu, Assistant Director, Education Support Services, Federal Ministry of Education, represented Nigeria.
Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Nigeria include:

- Federal Ministry of Education
- ECOWAS
- National Board of Technical Education
- National Open University of Nigeria
- National Teachers’ Institute
- National Universities Commission
- Researchers on ICTs in Education in Africa, University of Nigeria
- Universal Basic Education Commission
- Yaba College of Technology

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Rwanda (population: 12,626,950 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 94.8% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 35.9% (2018). In 2013, the National University of Rwanda, along with other public higher education institutions, merged to create the University of Rwanda (UR). Technical and vocational education is offered by UR’s College of Science and Technology. UR’s College of Education provides teacher training and houses the Centre for Open and Distance Learning.

Internet connectivity is available to 22% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 77 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Rwanda. One of the nine strategic priorities of the Ministry of Education’s Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018/19 – 2023/24 is the enhanced use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to transform teaching and learning and support the improvement of quality across all levels of education in Rwanda.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education released Keeping the Doors Open for Learning: Response Plan of Ministry of Education to the COVID-19 Outbreak.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Mr Théogène Kayumba, Director of ICT, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Rwanda.

COL’s Work in Rwanda: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Rwanda is primarily in the areas of higher education, teacher education, and technical and vocational skills development. Rwanda benefits from activities organised under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Rwanda have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
**TEACHER EDUCATION**

COL’s Adviser: Teacher Education visited Rwanda in March 2019 and briefed the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Eugène Mutimura, on COL’s work and its Teacher Futures programme. She facilitated a consultative workshop to discuss priorities in the professional development of teachers in Rwanda and potential areas of partnership with COL. The workshop was attended by 12 officials from the Rwanda Education Board (REB), drawn from the departments of Teacher Development, Career Guidance and Counselling, and ICT in Education. Also participating were lecturers from UR.

She also visited Collège Saint André to see the extent of ICT implementation in schools, as well as the potential for teacher access to and use of ICT.

In July 2019, the Ministry of Education and the REB held a Stakeholder Forum, bringing together a total of 49 delegates from the education sector to contribute to the design of Teacher Futures – Rwanda. A proposal is under discussion with COL.

There were 20 participants from Rwanda in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

A total of 187 learners from Rwanda participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 190 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Twenty-six learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education visited Rwanda and held meetings with senior staff of UR, including the vice chancellor, in November 2015. The meetings have led to increased collaboration between COL and UR and have contributed towards the development of policy frameworks and systems to strengthen ODL offerings and increase access to higher education in Rwanda.

UR has developed an open, distance and eLearning policy to assist it in strengthening course offerings and increasing access to higher education. The review and update of the draft national ODL policy was completed in 2017 to include OER provisions and was sent to Rwanda’s Ministry of Education. COL supported the University of Kibungo in developing an institutional ODL policy and implementation plan.

COL conducted and published a baseline study on the status of ODL in Rwanda. The data gathered in the study are vital to the planning of projects and initiatives that support the use of open, distance and eLearning in the country. Having a deep, clear picture of current developments is also critical for the success of COL’s engagement and will ensure that the proposed projects are conceptualised based on an
accurate understanding of the country’s context and what is available.

COL organised and facilitated a learner support project preparation workshop for African universities that are introducing ODL. This project aims to improve learner retention and completion rates. The workshop was attended by representatives from Rwandan universities.

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) project, led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance (QA) mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The five Rwandan institutions are: Kigali Independent University, UR, Institut d’Enseignement Supérieur (INES), Ruhengeri Kibogora Polytechnic and the University of Technology and Arts of Byumba (UTAB). Activities and outcomes include a series of workshops, webinars and publications, outlined below.

In April 2018, COL co-organised and facilitated a workshop in Nairobi, Kenya on QA, under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop aimed to build the capacity of 29 participants from 21 universities in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In April 2019, an online course on Quality Assurance in Blended Learning was launched on COL’s Higher Education Moodle platform as part of the PEBL project. Thirty-nine QA practitioners enrolled in the course. A second online course, Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa, was developed by COL later in the year and piloted in November, with 42 QA practitioners enrolled, including several from Rwanda.

In May 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was held in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to the Institutional Quality Assurance Review for Blended Learning Tool. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Of the 17 participants, four were from Rwanda, representing Kibogora Polytechnic, UR, INES and UTAB.

In November 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was hosted by Kenyatta University in Nairobi as a continuation of capacity-building efforts under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop brought together senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The Rwandan institutions included INES, Kibogora Polytechnic, UR and UTAB.

In October 2020, COL also facilitated two PEBL-sponsored webinars to help institutions from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda complete the onsite QA institutional review. Rwandan participants hailed from Kibogora Polytechnic, UTAB and UR.

In 2020, COL published the Quality Assurance Rubric for Blended Learning, which includes a case study from UR. In 2021, COL published the Institutional Quality Assurance Review for Blended Learning Tool. Both publications were developed based on input from the participating universities in the PEBL project. By the end of March 2021, there had been over 5,500 downloads of the rubric. Six institutions have also shared reports on their use of the rubric.

Outside of PEBL, the Higher Education initiative conducted a series of other activities, as noted below.
In March 2016, COL and Asia e University co-hosted a high-level roundtable in Malaysia for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions. Representatives from 16 countries were in attendance, including from Rwanda.

COL has supported the development of a national ODL policy for Rwanda, which was submitted to the Ministry of Education. As part of the implementation of the Higher Education Integrated Model, a workshop was conducted at UR to develop an institutional QA policy and QA guidelines for ODL.

An online Employability Strategy Development workshop was held with UR in March–April 2020, with contributions from 22 university staff and relevant stakeholders. The strategy has been approved and a competency map developed for the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Engineering.

The Competency-Based Programme Development workshop was conducted online during April and May 2020. A competency map was developed, and all programme modules were reviewed for the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Computer Engineering, with the optional Artificial Intelligence programme in the School of ICT, incorporating input from 15 staff from the School of ICT and 10 School of ICT stakeholders.

UR, with input from COL, developed an Online Protection Policy and a Student Code of Conduct for Online Learning and Safety, which were submitted to the UR Senate.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 1,350 participants from Rwanda.

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**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL’s Skills Online initiative has entered into a partnership with the Rwandan Telecentre Network to promote skills among youths, especially women/girls and people with disabilities. This unique partnership has brought a range of over 4,000 curated courses on Udemy, an online platform, directly to target groups in Rwanda. More than 1,100 young people have been
chosen to access online courses aligned to employability and are further being offered mentorship and counselling support to access employment and establish digital businesses in key sectors in Rwanda. There have been over 2,800 certifications.

Published in February 2020, Skills Development for Sustainable Livelihoods: An Overview of Four Case Studies consolidates the findings from an overview of the skills demand, supply and gaps in four case study countries, including Rwanda.

COL has partnered with Rwanda Telecentre Network (RTN) to train and certify telecentre operators as professional digital agents and to build skills among community members (including learners) who use RTN centres. A whole range of courses in areas such as entrepreneurship, marketing, communication and management from the Udemy for Business platform were made available for unlimited access by recruited learners in Rwanda.

A total of 8,074 learners from Rwanda have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, partnering with RTN and the Rwanda Development Board, a government agency responsible for manpower development in the nation. Learners boosted their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

COL’s Vice President participated in the 7th Africa Agricultural Science Week at the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, held in Kigali in June 2016. He presented a study and spoke on “Smallholders’ Transformation to Business Enterprise in Africa: A Reality or a Mental Illusion?” The study was based on L3F, which is implemented by the Kenya AIDS Intervention and Prevention Project Group and Makerere University, Uganda. As well, the Vice President had discussions with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture about the possibility of replicating the L3F model in Rwanda, as L3F has been adopted in ten other Commonwealth countries.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs – Introduction

Skills Online helps Rwandan woman turn struggling business around

An owner of a digital and online business in Rwanda, Martine Benemariya credits COL’s Skills Online programme with helping her turn around her struggling business.

This mother of two used to find herself at a loss whenever she was confronted with day-to-day technical issues related to computers breaking down, failed Internet networks, unconnected working devices, etc. These ongoing issues greatly impacted her confidence in the success of her business, as she needed to provide reliable online services to her customers.

In December 2019, Martine joined Skills Online — a collaboration between COL, its partners in four countries, including Rwanda, and Udemy Inc., an online learning and teaching marketplace.

Martine says both her customer base and her revenues have increased, and she has regained confidence in her business. “I am giving back to my community by training youths, women and people with disabilities, equipping them with digital literacy skills because these skills help us change our life for the better.”
to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Rwanda were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Rwanda report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

REGIONAL CENTRE

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)

Rwanda has benefited from an activity run by SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University. While Rwanda belongs to the East African Community bloc and is not part of the SADC region, a workshop was hosted in Kigali in May 2019. The workshop sensitised participants to open schooling and introduced COL’s Open and Innovative Schooling model. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The four participants from Rwanda represented the Rwanda Education Board, the Ministry of Education and UR.

Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored two delegates to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016: Mr Bernard Nkuyubwatsi, Centre for Learning Technologies and Innovation, and Mr Evode Mukama, University of Rwanda.

COL sponsored Mr Emmanuel Murenzi from Inspire, Educate and Empower Rwanda to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. Mr Murenzi was also invited to participate in the teacher education workshop hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Mr Théogène Kayumba, Director of ICT, Ministry of Education, represented Rwanda at both meetings.

The COL report Boys’ Underperformance in Education: Revisiting the Issue in the Commonwealth examines the factors that continue to contribute to boys’ underperformance in education in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Zambia.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

A total of 14 participants from Rwanda benefited from the two blue economy MOOCs offered in 2020.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Rwanda.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Rwanda were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partnerships support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partnerships include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Rwanda include:

- Ministry of Education
- Rwanda Education Board
- Rwanda Telecentre Network
- University of Kibungo
- University of Rwanda
Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Seychelles (population: 97,625 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 92.2% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 80.1% (2018). The University of Seychelles (UniSey) is the primary institution of higher education in the country and was established in 2009. It offers programmes in education, communication, technology and business. Seychelles Institute of Technology was established in Mahé in 2005–2006, incorporating the technical studies programmes of the Seychelles Polytechnic. The Seychelles Institute of Distance and Open Learning (SIDOL) evolved in 2000 from the School of Continuing Education of Seychelles Polytechnic. Its main purpose is to facilitate access to education and lifelong learning for out-of-school youths and adults seeking upgrading, training, life skills and enhanced opportunities for employment.

Internet connectivity is available to 59% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 198 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Seychelles. In the National Policy for Open and Distance Learning, the Ministry of Education recognises the important potential of quality open and distance learning for human resources and sustainable development.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, OER were provided on the Ministry of Education website for primary and secondary schools. Recorded lessons for primary and secondary schools were aired on the country’s two main TV stations: Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) and TéléSesel. Additionally, for UniSey, teaching, learning and exams continued through Microsoft 365 Teams, WhatsApp, Zoom and Google classrooms.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mrs Vicky Michel, Chief Liaison Officer, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Seychelles.

NOTABLE MENTION

The Honourable Mr Danny Faure is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s Work in Seychelles: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

COL’s current work in Seychelles is primarily in the area of higher education, mainly through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Seychelles benefits from activities organised under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Seychelles have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION

In partnership with the University of Mauritius, the capacity of 13 staff from the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education has been strengthened in the design, development and implementation of blended learning. As a result, four courses that are part of the Diploma in Education were developed for delivery in 2017 to train 326 in-service teachers in Seychelles and eventually reach 6,520 students every year. As a result, 42 master tutors were trained in the teaching of online and blended learning, while 210 teachers had started training through the blended learning mode.

Learners from Seychelles participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC introduced in 2020.

A total of five learners from Seychelles participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and seven

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL supported a review of the organisational structures, policies and legislation of Seychelles’ tertiary education sector in 2015–2016. This saw the completion of a review of the Tertiary Education Act and related Seychelles legislation and the submission of a report and recommendations to the Tertiary Education Commission.

The University of Seychelles offers COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium. CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body which governs the programmes and has general control over its administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop, review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Ms Joelle Perreau, Vice Chancellor, is a member of the EGB, and Dr Bernard Monnaie, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Sustainable Development, is a member of the AB.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted participants from Seychelles.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvuee.org.

In August 2015, a Teaching with Technology for In-Service Teachers workshop was held in Seychelles secondary schools. In October 2015, 22 participants attended an in-service teacher training workshop was held for the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE) to build the capacity of teacher educators in MOOC technology and instructional design for integrating multimedia in teaching and learning.

The online course Developing and Teaching Online Courses, which started in October 2015 with 33 participants in Seychelles, was completed in December 2015. In December 2016, a workshop on interactive materials development was held for SITE at the University of Mauritius; 13 participants attended.

COL supported the Ministry of Education in its capacity-building activities aimed at assisting in the development of teacher education and training via SITE. In the framework of this initiative, a Guide for Tutors and a Programme Handbook have been developed to support online and blended learning, benefiting over 40 master tutors and tutors and over 200 teachers.

COL has provided assistance in the development of five eLearning courses for the Diploma in Education programme and in the repurposing of the Master in Educational Leadership programme.

As well, COL has been providing support to the Seychelles Nurses and Midwives Council (SNMC) to enable nurses and midwives to enrol in continuing professional education eLearning modules offered through the World Continuing Education Alliance’s (WCEA) online platform. Over 500 nurses and midwives have had access to online continuing education courses on the WCEA platform, with each learner
In partnership with UniSey’s James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute, COL has offered an online course titled *Understanding the Blue Economy* to a global audience. This MOOC raises awareness about the importance of governing, managing and using oceans, seas, lakes and rivers in ways that lead to sustainable growth. The first iteration of the ten-week course attracted 243 participants from 47 countries, including eight academics from UniSey. In June 2019, COL’s Specialist: VUSSC visited the James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute to plan a second offering of a MOOC on the blue economy. The new series of four MOOCs was launched on 8 June 2020, World Oceans Day. Over 5,500 learners from 80 countries have enrolled in these blue economy courses, including 108 participants from Seychelles. In the first few months of 2021 alone, 1,781 learners have enrolled, with 381 learners completing the course.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

A total of eight learners from Seychelles have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Seychelles* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

With COL’s support, the Seychelles Institute of Art and Design, a VUSSC partner institution, developed a draft institutional gender policy.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)**

Seychelles benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and Botswana’s Gender Links NGO organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators from ten institutions and eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In July 2019, SADC-CDE sponsored two staff from the Seychelles Institute for Teacher Education to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners programme to augment their skills, competencies and knowledge.
Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the participation of the Honourable Macsuzy Mondon and Dr Justin Valentin, Vice Chancellor, University of Seychelles to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Education ministers from five countries participated in the Ministerial Roundtable held at PCF8, where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity.

The participation of His Excellency Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, at PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019 underscored the forum’s importance. President Faure delivered an inspiring address on “Empowering Youth – Our Common Wealth.” The Seychelles delegation also included Mrs Aude Labaleine, Secretary of State, Presidential Affairs, Mrs Jacqueline Moustache-Belle, Chief, Presidential Protocol Affairs, His Excellency Mr Derick Ally, High Commissioner, Seychelles High Commission, UK, and Mr John Lesperance, representing the Ministry of Education as Special

His Excellency Danny Faure, the then President of the Republic of Seychelles, spoke about “Empowering Youth – Our Common Wealth” at PCF9.
Advisor to the Minister. In addition, Dr Justin Valentin, Vice Chancellor, University of Seychelles, participated at the VUSSC Interlocutors meeting hosted by COL’s VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation on OER was held in Mauritius in March 2017 and was attended by COL’s Focal Point for Seychelles, Marie-Reine Hoareau.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and Botswana Open University. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Ms Marie-Reine Hoareau, Technical Advisor, International Relations, Ministry of Education, represented Seychelles at both meetings.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Seychelles.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Seychelles include:

- Ministry of Education
- Seychelles Institute of Art and Design
- Seychelles Nurses and Midwives Council
- University of Seychelles

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Sierra Leone (population: 7,813,215 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 98.1% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate of 41.8% (2018). Teacher education is offered through Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (MMCET), a technical university established in 1963. Eastern Polytechnic offers distance learning certificate, diploma and degree programmes. Both institutions are affiliated with the University of Sierra Leone.

Internet connectivity is available to 13% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 86 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Sierra Leone. In its Education Sector Plan 2018–2020, the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education encourages a greater use of ICT in teaching, learning and training.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) released the COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan. MBSSE and the Teaching Service Commission have launched a radio teaching programme for children and adolescents. The programme covers the core curriculum subjects for primary to senior secondary education.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mrs Musu M. Gorvie, Deputy Chief Technical and Higher Education Officer, 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. Learners from Sierra Leone have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION

In May 2016, teacher educators from Njala University participated in a five-day training workshop on ICT in teaching and learning, held at the Singapore National Institute of Education. The workshop, supported by COL, trained teacher educators in integrating ICT into their programmes to improve quality in education.

Freetown Teachers College (FTC) requested support from COL to train junior secondary school teachers in order to improve the quality of learning in schools. A project design workshop took place in June 2017 with 21 participants, facilitated by a consultant provided by COL. A work plan for the implementation of an integrated in-service training programme was developed.
COL continued to provide support to FTC to implement a school-based in-service teacher training programme for junior secondary school teachers in Sierra Leone, under COL’s Teacher Futures programme. Through this programme, COL partners with teacher education institutions to adapt various technologies that support the professional development of teachers. In-service teachers can learn at a distance and engage with peers in both local and international networks and communities of practice.

During November–December 2017, a COL consultant conducted a baseline study of 13 junior secondary schools’ ICT infrastructures, their e-readiness and their teachers’ capacity for eLearning. A survey administered as part of the study revealed that despite the lack of infrastructure, most teachers showed readiness for eLearning.

Currently, COL is collaborating with FTC and the Ministry of Technical and Higher Education 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 as well as 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 workshop 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.

The 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 both experiment and control schools in Freetown and Kono, and a baseline report was prepared.

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

A series of workshops were organised in collaboration with FTC. In March 2019, COL conducted a two-day Leadership in Teacher Professional Development workshop at the FTC Campus in Kossoh Town, Freetown. As well, COL supported a three-day Community Practice Management in INSET Implementation workshop in March 2019. A Mentorship in Teacher Professional Development workshop was held in June 2019 as part of COL’s support for the INSET programme. The project has impacted about 8,000 learners.

A two-day mid-term meeting for internal evaluation was held at FTC in June 2019. There was growing acceptance in the 12 schools of the new approach to continuing professional development, and willingness on the part of the principals to provide the necessary support to their teachers for their active participation in the programme.

As well, COL in August 2020 supported the Teaching Service Commission in Sierra Leone to hold a four-day multi-stakeholder strategic planning workshop for in-service teacher training, with 50 participants. As a result of this workshop, guidelines for in-service training providers and an activity plan for national continuing professional development delivery in Sierra Leone were developed.

There were nine participants from Sierra Leone in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered by COL in 2020.

A total of 18 learners from Sierra Leone participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 29 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Six learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

To promote the co-creation of audio-based resources for learning in low-resource settings, in January 2021, COL launched Educational Podcasting for Innovative Classrooms (EPIC). The new platform supports online podcast streaming as well as collaboration spaces for in-country teacher communities of practice. Currently, EPIC has country groups for three countries, including Sierra Leone.

There were nine participants from Sierra Leone in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered by COL in 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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 consortium member. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

Skills Sector Overview

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**
A total of 13 learners from Sierra Leone have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**
In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Sierra Leone were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**
The *Gender Profile 2017: Sierra Leone* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.
Sierra Leone benefits from activities organised by COL’s regional centre RETRIDOL. In December 2020, COL collaborated with RETRIDOL to organise a series of six online workshops from December 2020 to February 2021, under the title Learning Design for Online Course Provision Leading to Sensitisation for Course Development Using OER for Institutions of the West Africa Sub-Region (WASR). The series aimed at helping institutions build their capacity to develop and deliver online or blended courses, included ten staff from eight institutions in Sierra Leone. The main deliverable from the workshops is an action plan to which COL and RETRIDOL will work with each institution for further development, leading to tangible outcomes for these institutions.

Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored the attendance of Mr Kaprie J. G. Thoronka, CHILDHELP, from Sierra Leone at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 2016.

COL sponsored Dr Dennis Luseni, Deputy Director, Teacher Development and Performance, Teaching Service Commission, to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, as well as the teacher education workshop hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of the forum.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The African Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mr Sahr Fillie, Principal of Freetown Teachers College, attended.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 57 participants from Sierra Leone.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted learners from Sierra Leone.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Sierra Leone were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partnerships support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partnerships include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Sierra Leone include:

• Ministry of Technical and Higher Education
• Freetown Teachers College
• Teaching Service Commission

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
South Africa (population: 58,558,270 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 87.0% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 71.9% (2017). In March 2000, the Services Sector Education and Training Authority (Services SETA) was established and registered in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1998. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) is the professional council for educators, which aims to enhance the status of the teaching profession through appropriate registration and management of professional development. The University of South Africa (UNISA) is the largest open distance learning institution in Africa.

Internet connectivity is available to 56% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 166 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in South Africa. In its Action Plan to 2019 Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030, the government recognises that the most crucial enabler of ICT in schools is high-speed broadband.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, several online courses and reading materials were made available on the site of the Ministry of Education for different grade levels to facilitate learning from home during school closures. The eLearning portal of the Western Cape Government contains different types of resources available in English and Afrikaans for use by students and teachers.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Professor Narend Baijnath, former Chief Executive Officer, South Africa Council on Higher Education, is the Chair of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor Daniel Kgwadi, Vice Chancellor and Principal of the North-West University, represents the government of South Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**FOCAL POINT**

Ms Trudi van Wyk, Chief Director: Social Inclusion, Equity, Access and Quality, Department of Higher Education and Training, is COL’s Focal Point for South Africa.

**COL CHAIR**

Professor Mpine Makoe, Institute for Open and Distance Learning, University of South Africa, serves as a COL Chair.

**NOTABLE MENTIONS**

Ms Jenny Glennie is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor Mandla Makhanya is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Veronica McKay is a former Honorary COL Adviser.

The Honourable Naledi Pandor is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor N. Barney Pityana is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Dr Ihron L. Rensburg is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr John Samuel is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s Work in South Africa: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in South Africa is primarily in the areas of higher education, teacher education, and technology-enabled learning. Learners from South Africa have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)
In January 2017, COL sponsored a workshop on the topic of mobile technology-enabled learning for the African chapter of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association. The workshop was held in Johannesburg and focused on the use of mobile phones in the development of learning content. Attendees came from eight Commonwealth African countries, including South Africa.

In 2020, COL commissioned the South African Institute for Distance Education to support the open school at Botswana Open University (BOU) with online training in Moodle to develop new content for business studies.

TEACHER EDUCATION
The Ministry of Education in South Africa has identified the University of Fort Hare and ten schools in Eastern Cape as institutional partners to implement COL’s school-based teacher development programme.

COL supported teacher educators from South Africa’s North-West University at a five-day training workshop on information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning, at the Singapore National Institute of Education in May 2016. The training workshop built the capacity of teacher educators in integrating ICT into their programmes as a key strategy to improve quality in education.

In collaboration with South Africa’s Department of Basic Education, COL organised a four-day planning forum for professional development in digital learning in September 2018 at the Alice Campus of the University of Fort Hare (UFH) to develop a strategy and action plan for Teacher Futures – South Africa, with a focus on digital education in the country. The forum was facilitated by SchoolNet South Africa.

A series of professional development workshops on Digital Literacy for Teachers and Initiation of Communities of Practice followed in February 2019 at three separate school venues in the Amathole District of the Eastern Cape, along with a learning design workshop in Hogsback. Subsequently, participants from UFH and the Eastern Cape Department of Education enrolled in the Commonwealth Certificate of Teacher ICT Integration.
Thirty-seven stakeholders from various universities and teacher education institutions in seven African countries, including South Africa, came together for the Train-the-Trainers Workshop on Quality Assurance for Teacher Training and Professional Development, organised by the African Council for Distance Education at the Open University of Tanzania in March 2019 with COL’s support. The workshop focused on the need for schools of education within universities and other institutions to develop resilient mechanisms to improve teacher development.

As well, 28 school management team members and district education leaders in Eastern Cape Province completed a four-month Change Leadership for Digital Learning course. A total of 60 teachers from ten schools in Amathole District, Eastern Cape Province completed a course titled Using Digital Learning Resources in the Classroom, designed to guide them in effectively integrating curriculum-aligned digital content into their lessons. With support from COL, on-site training has been conducted at Nzululwazi High School and Sakhululeka High School, Eastern Cape.

Learners from South Africa participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered in 2020 as well as in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC. There were a total of 26 participants from South Africa in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Learners from South Africa joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

A video titled How Technology Developments Are Driving Change in Higher Education was produced for presentation at the Southern African Regional Universities Association Vice Rectors’ Leadership Dialogue, in Cape Town in September 2015.

In October 2015, COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar spoke on the topic of “Growing Capacities for Sustainable Distance eLearning Provision” at the first plenary panel of the 26th International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) World Conference, hosted by UNISA in Sun City. COL provided support to the conference. Professor Kanwar also spoke at the High-Level Policy Forum, organised by ICDE in partnership with UNESCO, COL and the Open Education Consortium.

As part of COL’s efforts to increase access to higher education in dual-mode institutions in Africa’s Commonwealth Member States, COL in September 2016 brought together representatives from 13 universities for a workshop in Pretoria to strengthen learner support. The workshop focused on introducing ODL and learner support to faculty members who were new to ODL. It also covered the implementation of an appropriate learner support system at their respective institutions.

A high-level roundtable for vice chancellors and heads of ODL was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 2018. Thirty-one vice chancellors and their representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including one representative from UNISA. The meeting was co-hosted by Asia e University.

As well, South Africa hosted a meeting in April 2018 to launch a new regional community of practice for quality assurance in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national quality assurance agencies from seven southern African countries. A task force was formed to draft and pilot quality assurance guidelines. Subsequently, pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions (BOU, National University of Lesotho, Open University of Mauritius, University of Namibia, University of Eswatini, University of Malawi and University of Zambia) were completed. A follow-up workshop was conducted in Johannesburg in December 2019 for representatives from the national qualification authorities of Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Zambia.
In December 2019, in partnership with UNISA’s Department of Institutional Research and its Business Intelligence Unit, COL organised a workshop in Pretoria to share an employability readiness model, which had been developed by COL with the Department of Planning and Quality Assurance and the various UNISA colleges.

COL, together with an international panel of quality assurance experts, has guided UNISA in extensive self-review activities. These activities were initiated to prepare UNISA for its institutional review by South Africa’s Council on Higher Education in 2020. Various preparatory workshops were conducted by COL in 2019, and a panel meeting was held in London, UK in July to develop the audit framework and guidelines for the self-review process. A communication strategy for the audit was developed, in consultation with staff, during a workshop held in October 2019. The institutional trial audit of UNISA, conducted by COL in December 2019, marked a critical milestone in this collaborative project between the two institutions. In January 2020, the Trial Quality Audit Report on Doctoral Degrees at UNISA was produced and shared with the university. In March 2020, the audit final report was shared with UNISA’s team. Based on the recommendations in this final report, UNISA developed an improvement plan, on which the panel members provided feedback in May 2020.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 62 participants from South Africa.

COL Chair Professor Mpine Makoe has undertaken a regional scan on the uptake of OER in Sub-Saharan Africa. In response to COVID-19, she has participated in drafting the Policy Brief SADC-ODeL Response to COVID-19, in partnership with Dr Godson Gatsha, BOU.

Professor Makoe is also working on a project to rapidly upskill teachers to teach online and has offered training to 544 educators.
**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

A total of 60 learners from South Africa have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In collaboration with the University of Cape Town, COL developed the curriculum and course materials for the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme, which is being used in over 50 countries.

In March 2017, COL Education Specialist: eLearning participated in the OE Global Conference hosted by the University of Cape Town. He also joined a workshop on the Cape Town Open Education Declaration, organised by the Open Education Consortium.

In collaboration with COL, SchoolNet South Africa conducted a three-day workshop in January 2019 to build teacher capacity to develop digital education skills using the C-DELTA platform. Hosted at the University of Johannesburg, the workshop was attended by 35 public and private school teachers, as well as members of education faculties from across South Africa.

Digital Education Leadership Training for teachers in South Africa

“The course is well designed. It addresses the problems facing us now. It helps us be aware [that] we can protect ourselves in the digital world. It creates awareness of the world at large,” said one of the participants in the C-DELTA course in January 2019.
Representatives from South Africa participated in two meetings with a TEL focus hosted by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018. Mr Andrew Moore from Neil Butcher & Associates, South Africa participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting, while Ms Omashani Naidoo from SchoolNet South Africa and Ms Catherine Thabisa Mayisela from the University of Cape Town attended the C-DELTA Training of Trainers Workshop.

A workshop on C-DELTA was organised by SchoolNet South Africa and the Department of Education in January 2019 with Phendukani Full Service High School, where 20 teachers and 43 learners participated. In February 2020, 63 participants attended another C-DELTA workshop, organised by SchoolNet South Africa and the Department of Education in KwaZulu Natal Province.

Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including over 1,800 in South Africa.

Most recently, C-DELTA received accreditation from the South African Council of Educators, making it equivalent to 35 continuous personal and professional teacher development points.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from South Africa were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, and Professor Mpine Makoe, UNISA, are CWW mentors.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)**

South Africa benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, hosted by BOU.

In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop in Botswana on non-formal education, with participants from eight countries in the region, including two from UNISA. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL and ICT in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and the NGO Gender Links organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. Participants included academics and administrators of ten institutions from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa. Two participants were from UNISA.

**GENDER**

The Gender Profile 2017: South Africa report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women and former Vice President of South Africa, gave a keynote speech at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Participants from South Africa sponsored by COL included Professor Paul Prinsloo, UNISA, Dr Cheryl Lee Brown, University of Cape Town, Ms Shafika Isaacs, independent, Ms Happiness Mzikazi Ntuli, ADPP Mozambique, and Mr Hendrik Kruger, University of Pretoria.

COL sponsored seven delegates from South Africa to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. They included Dr Winston Hendricks, University of Fort Hare, Professor Mpine Makoe, UNISA, Ms Brenda Mallinson, OER Africa, Ms Thabisa Mayisela, University of Cape Town, Mrs Hlengiwe Mfeka, SchoolNet SA, Dr Ephraim Mhlanga, Saide, and Ms Omashani Naidoo, SchoolNet SA. In addition, several were invited to participate in various pre-forum COL meetings held in Edinburgh: Dr Mhlanga attended a higher education workshop, Dr Hendricks and Mrs Mfeka participated in the teacher education workshop, and Ms Naidoo participated in the TEL Partners meeting.

A major highlight of PCF9 was the conferment of the title of COL Honorary Fellow on eight eminent individuals, including Professor Mandla Makhanya, UNISA’s Principal and Vice Chancellor, in recognition of his contribution to lifelong learning in the Commonwealth.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The African Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Ms Jenny Glennie (Saide), Dr Cheryl Hodgkinson-Williams (University of Cape Town) and Dr Mark Horner (Siyavula Foundation) attended.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and BOU. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Ms. Trudi Van Wyk, Chief Director: Social Inclusion, Equity, Access and Quality, Department of Higher Education and Training, participated in the 2020 online meeting.

COMMONWEALTH CONSORTIUM ON YOUTH WORK QUALIFICATIONS

In March 2016, through COL’s Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) initiative, COL, the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Open Campus of the University of the West Indies convened a meeting at UNISA in Pretoria on advancing youth work education and training. The meeting, which included representatives from a number of South African universities and organisations, involved discussions on a proposal to create a Commonwealth Consortium on Youth Work Qualifications and was held to coincide with the Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work. 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 Venda 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.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

The *Blockchain in Education* webinar series conducted in July 2020 with 91 unique participants involved nominated individuals from partner institutions in five countries, including South Africa.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including one from South Africa.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered in September 2020, attracted 28 learners from South Africa.

Participants from South Africa benefited from the four blue economy MOOCs offered by COL in 2020–2021 to nearly 6,000 learners across the world.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in South Africa include:

- Department of Higher Education and Training
- SchoolNet South Africa
- University of Cape Town
- University of Fort Hare
- University of Pretoria
- University of South Africa

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Tanzania (population: 58,005,463 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 81.3% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 26.6% (2018). The National Council for Technical Education (NACTE) oversees and co-ordinates the provision of technical education and training in Tanzania. The Morogoro Vocational Instructors Training College (MVTTC) is responsible for training TVET teachers and trainers. The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) is a distance learning public university established by the Act of Parliament No. 17 of 1992. It is a single-mode institution offering certificate, diploma and degree courses through distance learning. Tanzania is also a member of the regional African Virtual University, which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 16% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 82 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Tanzania. In its Education Sector Development Plan (2016/17–2020/21), the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is committed to expanding and improving the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

Building education resilience in the face of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, in collaboration with the Tanzania Institute for Education, prepared educational programmes for primary- and secondary-level students to continue learning during school closures, aired through TBC Radio, Azam TV, Channel Ten, and ZBC Radio. The ministry has also developed the Tanzania Basic Education Sector Response and Recovery Plan Due to Effects of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Dr Michael Wilfred Ng’umbi, Director, Department of Adult and Distance Education, Open University of Tanzania, is COL’s Focal Point in Tanzania.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Professor Tolly S. A. Mbwette is a COL Honorary Fellow, a former COL Chair and a former Honorary COL Adviser.

Dr Penina Mlama is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor Geoffrey R. V. Mmari is a COL Honorary Fellow.
COL’s current work in Tanzania is primarily in the areas of higher education, Lifelong Learning for Farmers, girls’ and women’s education and training, technology-enabled learning, gender, and technical and vocational skills development. Learners from Tanzania have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)
As part of its open schooling outreach, COL supported ElimuTV in Kenya in the development of 1,056 short curriculum-based videos, which can be accessed by out-of-school learners in both Kenya and Tanzania via broadcast media and YouTube. There is sufficient curricular overlap to make the content relevant for both countries.

Within Tanzania, COL has partnered with the Institute of Adult Education to develop an outreach programme for young mothers and out-of-school youths. The initiative will result in the development of two skills guides and six manuals, and the training of 30 outreach facilitators.

TEACHER EDUCATION
COL has supported the integration of Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) in Tanzania. ORELT are learning materials collaboratively developed to support the classroom activities of teachers in junior secondary schools. They are open-content, multimedia resources in online and traditional text formats.

Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) was part of a collaborative project that also included Egerton University, Kenya, and Busitema University, Uganda in the development of a Post-Graduate Diploma/Certificate in ICT Integration for Teachers. In August 2016, three teacher educators from DUCE participated in the development of the programme. DUCE held a training workshop with 12 teacher educators involved in the adaptation of nine existing modules and the development of one new module. The Post-Graduate Certificate is being finalised.

Teacher educators from Tanzania’s Dar es Salaam University participated in a five-day training workshop on ICT in teaching and learning, at the Singapore National Institute of Education in May 2016. The workshop, which was supported by COL, trained teacher educators in integrating ICT into their programmes to improve quality in education.

Three East African universities, including Dar es Salaam University College of Education, in August 2016 launched a project called DigiTeacher to tackle the challenges arising from the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in the region.

Thirty-seven stakeholders from various universities and teacher education institutions in seven African countries came together for the Train-the-Trainers Workshop on Quality Assurance for Teacher Training and Professional Development, organised by the African Council for Distance Education at OUT in March 2019. The workshop focused on the need for schools of education within universities and other institutions to develop resilient mechanisms for improving teacher development. Organised with support from COL, it examined evidence-based quality assurance practices in higher education overall, and teacher training and professional development in particular.

Learners from Tanzania participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered by COL in 2020, in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020. There were 66 participants in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.
Participants from Tanzania joined an online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning Project (PEBL), led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The four Tanzanian institutions are: Mzumbe University, OUT, St John’s University of Tanzania and State University of Zanzibar (SUZA).

In April 2018, COL co-organised and facilitated a quality assurance workshop in Nairobi, Kenya under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop was aimed at building the capacity of 29 senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Of the 17 participants, four were from Tanzania, representing SUZA, St. John’s University of Tanzania, OUT and Mzumbe University.

In May 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was held in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitize participants to the Institutional Quality Assurance Review for Blended Learning Tool. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Of the 17 participants, four were from Tanzania, representing SUZA, St. John’s University of Tanzania, OUT and Mzumbe University.

In November 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was hosted by Kenyatta University in Nairobi as a continuation of capacity-building efforts under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop brought together senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The Tanzanian institutions were OUT, SUZA, St. John’s University, and Mzumbe University.

Under PEBL, two webinars were conducted in October 2020 to help institutions in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda complete the onsite quality assurance institutional review. Tanzanian participants hailed from SUZA, Mzumbe University and OUT. Each university has taken actions on quality, as evidenced by the submission of quality assurance review reports. The reports demonstrate gaps in the development and delivery of blended learning, and describe corresponding improvement plans to ameliorate disparities.

In 2020, COL published the Quality Assurance Rubric for Blended Learning, which describes the innovative tool that has been designed to support individuals and institutions in the development of blended learning courses. Invaluable contributions to this publication
were made by participants at SUZA, Mzumbe University, St John’s University and OUT.

Outside of PEBL, the Higher Education initiative conducted a series of other activities, as noted below.

In partnership with Asia e University, COL organised two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries attended, including from Tanzania.

In April 2019, COL collaborated with Indira Gandhi National Open University to organise another roundtable, this time in New Delhi, India for vice chancellors of open universities in Asia and Africa. Nineteen vice chancellors were in attendance from eight countries: Bangladesh, Botswana, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 21 participants from Tanzania.

Skills Sector Overview

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

COL’s L3F partner in Tanzania is Matumaini Mapya (MM), a women’s and children’s empowerment NGO. Tanzania’s Kagera region has adopted the L3F model, which reaches over 13,000 participants, mostly women.

COL has helped MM strengthen its partnership with additional partners, such as Kasibante FM Radio, OUT and the Bukoba Municipal Council (BMC). As a result, the capacity of BMC’s Ward Community Development Officers and Agriculture and Livestock Extension Officers as L3F facilitators was boosted. Kasibante FM radio has been used in farmer education on
sustainable agriculture through weekly programmes aired at times convenient for the farmers.

L3F partners from Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania and Uganda visited a Savings and Credit Cooperative Society (SACCO) in Turiani, Tanzania. The SACCO manager reported that the performance of these table-banking groups has been exceptional. They borrow predominantly for productive purposes in agriculture and livestock, and the repayment rates to the SACCO are very high.

MM has mobilised new SACCOs in the Muleba and Karagwe districts of Tanzania to adopt L3F. MM has also developed print- and multimedia-based learning resources that have been applied in the capacity building of SACCO members, utilising an integrated approach that involves the use of both radio and mobile-based strategies, complemented by face-to-face interactions. The L3F programme has helped to increase the annual turnover of many SACCOs in the Kagera region, which has attracted the attention of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In February 2019, MM hosted a meeting in Bukoba with officials from the Central Bank of Tanzania to discuss the possibility of working together on strategic initiatives to help implement the National Financial Education Framework in the Kagera region.

In December 2019, MM and COL co-organised a workshop in Dar es Salaam for staff members from the Bank of Tanzania, Mkombozi Commercial Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture to increase their understanding of the opportunities for using cognitive social capital as collateral, along with the strategies and policies necessary to promote producer finance companies.

Over 500 learners have now enrolled in L3F’s mobile-learning platform through MM, over 100 table bank leaders have been trained in financial management, more than 300 farmers have been trained in loan negotiation, and over 550 farmers have accessed loans.

MM has established a partnership with the TARI – Common Beans Project, creating an opportunity for the L3F programme in Tanzania to operate at the macro level by covering Tanzanian beekeepers’ entire region.

Additionally, the Kagera Youth Empowerment Network has adopted the L3F model.
The Tanzania Bankers Association has agreed to partner with COL and MM on a credit guarantee scheme to recognise learning as collateral.

In December 2019, jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Central Bank of Tanzania, Mkombozi Commercial Bank and MM, COL held a Credit Guarantee Scheme project design workshop in Dar es Salaam with 12 participants.

The 3,000-shareholder Tanzania Producers Financial Company Limited has been registered by MM, along with three SACCOs in the Kagera region. Towards the end of 2020, MM registered 64 new shareholders.

COL supported a policy advocacy/study with the Ministry of Agriculture of Tanzania, with a view to integrating table banking and lifelong learning into co-operative law. A policy brief and sensitisation brochure have been developed.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Between 2015 and 2018, COL developed a set of resources that integrate sustainable development principles into TVET as part of teachers’ capacity building in INVEST Africa partner institutions. Sixteen course plans that integrate the sustainable development principles of economic growth, environmental conservation and social inclusion were developed at a workshop in June 2017, hosted by the Kenya Technical Trainers’ College. The workshop included 30 educators from seven countries — Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia — and resulted in plans for cascading the training to other teachers.

A total of 26 Tanzanian TVET staff and officials have completed online capacity-building courses on Moodle Administration, Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development, Blended Learning in the Classroom and Facilitating with PowerPoint.

A total of 42 learners from Tanzania have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In 2015–2016, COL supported OUT in developing OER policy frameworks. A workshop for the development of advanced ICT courses was held at OUT in July 2016. OUT completed the development of two courses related to the Advanced ICT Course Development project.

As well, COL assisted with the development of an OER policy at OUT.
In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Tanzania were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Tanzania* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

COL has worked with Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST) to develop an institutional gender policy. COL reviewed and provided feedback on a draft institutional gender policy for the university. MUST has used COL’s Gender Scorecard to identify strategies for gender mainstreaming, such as encouraging women to study engineering, science and technology programmes.

In order to help women and girls respond to the challenges experienced during COVID-19, COL partnered with Youth Aid Education and Possible Changes Organization (YAPO) in Tanzania to build the capacity of 1,000 women and girls in vocational and life skills.

In the framework of this partnership, a three-day meeting was held with 45 participants from community-based groups; a gender equality policy was developed by YAPO; and over 500 women/girls were trained in (i) social rights and leadership skills, (ii) public health, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and COVID-19, (iii) financial literacy and entrepreneurship and (iv) a foundation course on computer and ICT literacy.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Tanzania. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment training held for the Africa region in November 2020 included eight participants from Tanzania.

**GIRLS Inspire**

GIRLS Inspire was initiated in July 2015 with the generous support of the governments of Australia and Canada to mobilise the power of ODL to provide secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls who are prevented from attending schools by barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms and distance from schools.

With the funding from Canada, COL’s local implementation partners were the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) and Kiota Women’s Health and Development (KIWOHEDE) in three regions of Tanzania — Dodoma, Lindi and Rukwa — where the prevalence of child marriage is 51%, 48% and 40%, respectively, according to a 2014 report from the United Nations Population Fund.

A total of six communities were reached: in Rukwa, Nkasi District’s Chala Ward and Karambo District’s Msanzi Ward; in Dodoma, Kongwa District’s Sejeli Ward and Bahi District’s Bahi Ward; and in Lindi, Kilwa District’s Masoko Ward and Ruangwa District’s Ruangwa Ward.

IAE and KIWOHEDE collaborated on project planning, implementation and capacity building in their three active districts. They educated their staff on child protection and the reunification of vulnerable children, and they built their staff’s capacity in multimedia
content development. Together, they worked with other organisations and with local governments to build their staff’s multimedia capacity. To mainstream gender equality into all components and phases of their project, they developed their own internal gender policies. To ensure the project’s success through government channels and receive wider buy-in, IAE engaged with various national, regional and local stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, UNESCO and the Prime Minister’s Office – Local Government Authority.

KIWOHEDE staff participated as committee members in the National Dialogue on Ending Female Genital Mutilation, Child Marriage, and Teenage Pregnancies and organised several events commemorating various days, celebrating and raising awareness about gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. As a result of the project, over 3,000 women and girls registered for schooling and life-skills training. Close to 2,700 internships were established, and 800 women and girls successfully gained employment. Nearly 41,500 community members have been reached with awareness-raising activities, and two gender policies have been developed.

The GIRLS Inspire Country Brief – Tanzania, published in October 2017, summarises the GIRLS Inspire project in Tanzania and its connection with the Sustainable Development Goals.

In collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, COL co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire end-of-project meeting in February 2019 in Dar es Salaam. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap for how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship. Attendees from Tanzania included the Honourable Ummy Ally Mwalimu, Minister for Health, Community Development, Gender, Seniors and Children, the Honourable William Tate Ole Nasha, Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology, parliamentarians and local partners. Also in attendance were Dr Nausheen Hamid, Member of the Pakistan National Assembly, and from Mozambique, Ms Marengue Da Cruz, as well as the High Commissioner of Canada to Tanzania, GIRLS Inspire partners from Bangladesh, India, Mozambique and Pakistan, and representatives from the ministries of gender in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and Sri Lanka.

The Baseline–Endline Report: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) through Open, Distance and Technology-Based Education in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania, which was released in August 2019, unpacks the results of surveys and draws on supporting qualitative data taken from

Pre-vocational skills — my only hope

With COL’s support, the Institute of Adult Education provided vocational skills training to Adolofina Manoyika to enable her to launch a business while looking after her two children. “If I can acquire pre-vocational skills such as soap making, batik or nutritious flour making, it will be a turning point in my life. I can do something decent like have a small business and sell my products to earn a good income and improve my life as well as the lives of my children,” Adolofina said.
open-ended questions, case studies and partner reports to highlight changes that occurred during the project.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)**

Tanzania benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In May 2019, SADC-CDE hosted a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to open schooling and introduce COL’s OIS model. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. There were six participants from Uganda, representing the University of Dodoma, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, OUT and IAE.

As well, SADC-CDE ran a series of online workshops for 40 open schooling staff in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Tanzania to train them in TEL. Ten participants hailed from IAE. The online workshops were held from August to October 2020.

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL sponsored 11 participants from Tanzania to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016: Professor Elifas Bisanda, OUT; Professor Tolly S. A. Mbwette, President of the Pan African University Council; Dr Godfrey Mnubi, IAE; Dr Cosmas B. F. Mnyanyi, OUT; Ms Lilian Charles Mutalemwa, OUT; Mr Erick Mwanmule, KIWOHEDE; Mr Clement Ndahani, OUT; Mr Leopold Rweyemamu, Tanzania Consulting Group; Dr Philipo L. Sanga, University of Dar Es Salaam; Dr Hanna Juma Simpassa, OUT; and Dr Mwajuma Lingwanda, Mbeya University of Science and Technology.

A major highlight of PCF8 was the conferment of the title of COL Honorary Fellow on seven eminent individuals, including the late Professor Tolly S. A. Mbwette, President of the Pan African University Council and a former Vice Chancellor of OUT, in recognition of his pivotal role in transforming the educational landscape in Tanzania and the region. The Award of Excellence for Distance Learning Experience in a Degree-Granting Programme was presented to Mr Clement Ndahani.
COL sponsored MM’s Mr Gosbert Kaserwa to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. In addition, he was invited to participate in the L3F workshop in Edinburgh ahead of the forum.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Dr Kassimu Nihuka, Deputy Director Responsible for Academic, IAE, attended.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL's Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana, and Dr Kassimu Nihuka, Deputy Director for Academic, Research and Consultancy, OUT, represented Tanzania at this meeting. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020, with Dr. Michael Ng’umbi, Director, IAE, in attendance.

**COL’s INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Tanzania.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted learners from Tanzania.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Tanzania were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Tanzania include:

- Ministry for Education, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Institute of Adult Education
- Kiota Women’s Health and Development
- Matumaini Mapya
- Mbeya University of Science and Technology
- Open University of Tanzania
- Youth Aid Education and Possible Changes Organization
Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Uganda (population: 44,269,594 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.5% (2013) and a secondary net enrolment rate of 22.4% (2008). The Directorate of BT VET manages more than 110 government training centres, schools, institutes and polytechnics. Teacher education is offered through the Institute of Teacher Education, Kyambogo University (KYU). The introduction of distance learning programmes at Makerere University in 1991 turned Makerere into a dual-mode university.

Internet connectivity is available to 24% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 57 (2018) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in the country. In Uganda’s latest national ICT policy, the government commits to promoting the growth and implementation of open, distance and eLearning (ODEL) modes of study, and to creating opportunities and providing assistance for the disadvantaged, people with special needs, women and youths to acquire ICT skills.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education and Sports announced its COVID-19 Education Sector Response Guidelines.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

**FOCAL POINT**

Ms Jolly Uzamukunda Karabaaya, Commissioner, Higher Education and Sports, Ministry of Education and Sports, is COL’s Focal Point for Uganda.

**NOTABLE MENTION**

Professor Julius N. Odurkene is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s Work in Uganda: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Uganda is primarily in the areas of higher education, Lifelong Learning for Farmers and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Uganda have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL has offered the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration (CCTI), which prepares teachers to integrate a range of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the classroom to enhance students’ learning experience. It also increases school managers’ involvement in the ICT implementation process. In Uganda, 30 teachers successfully completed the CCTI programme.

COL also supported the integration of Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) in Uganda. ORELT are learning materials collaboratively developed to support the classroom activities of teachers in junior secondary schools. They are open-content, multimedia resources in online and traditional text formats. A study was conducted to evaluate the impact of ORELT use in three schools in Uganda. More than 2,800 students were found to be benefiting from exposure to ORELT materials in the three schools.

Teacher educators from Busitema University participated in a five-day training workshop on ICT in teaching and learning, at the Singapore National Institute of Education in May 2016. The workshop, which was supported by COL, trained teacher educators in integrating ICT into their programmes to improve quality in education.

In August 2016, three East African universities, including Busitema University in Uganda, launched a project called DigiTeacher to address the challenge of low capacity in the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in the region. A common postgraduate certificate/diploma based on CCTI course materials was initiated.

Following an agreement signed with Gulu University regarding a school-based teacher mentorship programme in Northern Uganda, COL supported a project initiation workshop for Teacher Futures – Uganda in November 2019. It was attended by 11 participants drawn from Gulu University and Muni University. The aim of the workshop was to support the development of programme content and explore technologies for collaborative learning among teachers in the region. Baseline survey tools were adapted and shared.

An Enumerators Workshop was held for 18 participants at Gulu University from 16–17 January 2020. Subsequently, a baseline survey was conducted in a total of 40 schools in Northern Uganda between 10 and 24 February 2020, ahead of the rollout of the COL-supported school-based teacher mentorship programme in 33 districts in the region.

Learners from Uganda participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered by COL in 2020.

A total of 23 learners from Uganda participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 23 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Four learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

Participants from Uganda joined an online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the
UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

In October 2020, 27 head teachers attended a training workshop on leadership and mentorship in secondary schools at Gulu University. A workshop on teacher competencies, skills and professional traits for secondary school teachers was held at Gulu University in November 2020. Thirty-three teachers from 28 secondary schools in Northern Uganda attended the workshop.

Also in November 2020, in collaboration with The Open University (UK), COL supported an online co-design workshop to develop ideas and inform content for two MOOCs in inclusive education, to be released in the first half of 2021. The workshop brought together a total of 18 participants from Jamaica, Kenya and Uganda, who included decision makers, teachers and practitioners with relevant classroom experience in the area of inclusive education.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) project, led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The three Ugandan institutions are: Makerere University, Kampala International University and Bugema University.

Activities and outcomes include a series of workshops, webinars and publications, outlined below.

In April 2018, a Quality Assurance for Blended Learning workshop facilitated by COL was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya with six partners and participating universities from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In April 2019, an online Quality Assurance in Blended Learning course was launched on COL’s Higher Education initiative Moodle platform, with 39 quality assurance (QA) practitioners enrolled in the course. A second online course, Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa, was developed by COL later in the year and piloted in November with 42 QA practitioners enrolled, including several from Uganda.

In May 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was held in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to the Institutional Quality Assurance Review for Blended Learning Tool. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Of the 17 participants, two were from Uganda, representing Bugema University and Makerere University.

In November 2019, a Quality Assurance in Blended Learning workshop was hosted by Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya as a continuation of capacity-building efforts under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop brought together senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The Ugandan institutions were Kampala International University, Makerere University and Bugema University. These institutions are at various stages of implementing the quality assurance on-site review for blended learning, with a view to completing it by the end of June 2021.

In 2020, COL published the Quality Assurance Rubric for Blended Learning, which describes the innovative tool that has been designed to support individuals and institutions in the development of blended learning courses. Invaluable contributions to this publication were made by Dr Annah Amani (Kampala International University) and Dr John Amoah (Bugema University).

Under PEBL, two webinars were conducted in October 2020 to help institutions in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda complete the onsite QA institutional review. Ugandan participants hailed from Bugema University, Makerere University and Kampala International University.

Outside of PEBL, the Higher Education initiative conducted a series of other activities, noted below.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. Makerere University is a consortium member. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a
technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

In the framework of the Higher Education initiative, COL has been supporting Busitema University. COL has helped develop a ten-year business and marketing plan for ODL. A Programme Design for Online/Blended Learning workshop was conducted in June 2018. This was followed in October 2018 by a four-week virtual training course on Online Course Development and, in October–November 2018, an in-person workshop to finalise online courses and develop facilitation techniques.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 79 participants from Uganda.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

Makerere University Business School (MUBS) is a member of COL’s INVEST Africa network, which is committed to increasing access to high-quality, flexible and blended skills training in support of sustainable livelihoods. Through the TVSD initiative, COL facilitated a workshop to introduce the INVEST Africa partnership and the flexible and blended model of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to 33 potential partner institutions and TVET system stakeholders in September 2015. More than 200 teachers, including teachers from MUBS, were trained in instructional design for flexible and blended learning.

A total of 15 Ugandan TVET staff and officials have completed online capacity-building courses on Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Facilitating Using PowerPoint.

A total of 271 learners from Uganda have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from Busitema University and the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

COL has been working with Makerere University to implement L3F. The programme was started in 2009 in southwest Uganda and has now spread across the country, with over 20,000 participants registered on the m-Omulimisa learning platform, enabling them to access quality learning resources on various aspects of agriculture at no cost. An external evaluation of the L3F programme in central and northern Uganda was commissioned in 2019 to assess its impact on the productivity, income and livelihoods of the L3F participants compared to a control group. The study confirmed earlier evaluations of the approach, which found L3F improves livelihoods. Current efforts working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries are geared towards creating policy space and an enabling environment for the L3F approach to flourish through establishing an enabling framework.

The L3F team in Uganda has engaged with the Uganda Parliamentarians Forum on Food Security, Population and Development to discuss legislative initiatives and policies for enhancing food and nutrition security.

In April 2018, COL partner Makerere University briefed the country’s MPs on the L3F model. The dialogue with the parliamentarians was organised to address the roles and harmonisation of legislative initiatives and policies with respect to enhancing food and nutrition security. It was part of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s support for the Pan-African Parliamentary Alliance for Food and Nutrition Security, which aims to strengthen the capacities of parliamentarians in Africa to better legislate on food and nutrition security. Several organisations, governments and NGOs have adopted L3F, and this adoption has helped the scale-up of the programme nationwide.

In line with the Certified Public Accountants of Uganda’s mandate of offering continuous professional education to ensure that its members keep up to date with developments in the profession, a presentation was made on “Building a Robust Agricultural Sector
Using the L3F Approach” at the 7th Economic Forum, held in Entebbe on 17 July 2019.

More organisations have been adopting the L3F model. AgriNet Uganda Limited (which provides agricultural inputs), the Microfinance Support Centre (which provides loans) and the International Institution of Rural Reconstruction (which provides training) have adopted L3F and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with m-Omulimisa Innovative Agricultural Services. Currently, 12,000 farmers are reached in nine districts across Northern Uganda.

The initiative has resulted in improved access to extension services, improved agricultural technologies and services such as seeds, fertilizer and agriculture insurance, as well as affordable credit. These have led to improved livelihoods and quality of life among farming communities. Through the village agent model, self-employment opportunities are created for rural youths, who earn commissions by providing services to their respective communities through the m-Omulimisa platform.

A trial of financial literacy mobiMOOCs has been set up for 100 farmers in nine districts of Uganda, where village agents and extension workers from NGOs (e.g., Sasakawa Global 2000) manage a call centre to respond to farmers’ queries.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL supports the Uganda Management Institute (UMI) with implementing TEL. In the framework of this collaboration, COL has organised a series of workshops.

COL organised a Developing Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) Policy workshop at UMI, Kampala in November 2017. The workshop was facilitated by COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning. With the active involvement of UMI’s internal stakeholders, a draft TEL policy was developed.

The objective of the March 2018 workshop was to assist UMI teachers/facilitators with exploring the features of the Moodle learning management system (LMS) for blended learning. Another workshop, organised in September 2018, focused on developing blended online courses. Using Moodle, teachers at UMI started creating blended courses for the January 2019 semester offering. COL also supported UMI with setting up an open access repository using DSpace, to complement the LMS. COL further supported UMI to strengthen its TEL implementation by organising a Blended Learning and Online Facilitation workshop in November 2019, which was attended by 27 faculty members from various departments.

COL is supporting KampaBits, an organisation focused on skilling underprivileged youths in ICT and multimedia, to improve their livelihoods through the ICT for Youth Employability project. KampaBits had initially selected 95 youths from the suburban areas of Kampala to train them in advanced ICT skills, life skills, and entrepreneurship training, and to provide job and personal counselling. In the framework of the project, a placement fair was held in November 2018, with
about 20 employers meeting and interacting with the project’s young people. Since then, over 130 project participants have either received a job or started their own enterprise as a result of several training offerings. An independent evaluation of the project in terms of social return on investment showed that every dollar spent on this project resulted in $3.48 of value.

During a trip to Uganda in September 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning visited UMI to review the progress of TEL implementation at the institution. He also visited KampaBits to review the progress of the ICT for Youth Employability project and made an exploratory visit to Makerere University’s College of Education and External Studies (CEES).

A new round of training was completed by KampaBits in 2020 for 82 youths in Kampala, with 63 youths receiving a job or internship or starting their own enterprise as a result of the six months of training.

Most recently, KampaBits has identified 100 young women and girls between the ages of 17 and 26 to participate in the six-month advanced ICT skills training programme.

As well, CEES implemented COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme through a series of workshops in March 2019. Sixty teachers from various departments of CEES received training at the Centre for Teaching and Learning Support. Participants learned how to use the C-DELTA platform so they can serve as champions of digital education skills among fellow teachers as well as students.

Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Uganda.

Representatives from Uganda participated in two meetings with a TEL focus, hosted by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018. Ms Resty Kamya Mwogeza from UMI participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting, while Dr David Kabugo from Makerere University attended the C-DELTA Training of Trainers Workshop.

Continuing its implementation of TEL, UMI organised a Blended Learning and Online Facilitation workshop in November 2019, which was attended by 27 faculty.

In February 2020, the Digital Empowerment Foundation, India held two workshops in Africa with 47 participants in the Barefoot Wireless Engineer programme, at the Centre for Media Literacy and Community Development in Kampala.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Uganda were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

The Gender Profile 2017: Uganda report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

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**Preparing young persons with disabilities for entrepreneurship**

Innocent Kusiima, a 24-year-old with a hearing impairment, has participated in the programme organised by KampaBits with COL’s support. He has gained programming skills, which he intends to use to engage other young persons with disabilities. He said: “If my parents had believed that I could perform well in school even though I have a hearing impairment, I would have learned this earlier than 24. Now is the first time I am getting to do what I have always wanted.”
Uganda benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In May 2019, SADC-CDE hosted a workshop to sensitise participants to open schooling and introduce COL’s OIS model in Kigali, Rwanda. Participants were from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. There were five participants from Uganda, hailing from the National Curriculum Development Centre and the Directorate of Basic and Secondary Education.

### Special Events and Activities

#### PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported five delegates from Uganda to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016: Mr Moses Muhwezi, Makerere University; Ms Carol Seera, Kireka High School; Mr Samuel Ndeda Siminyu, Makerere University; Dr Moses Tenywa, Makerere University; and Mr James Ssenabulya, Nakaseke Rural Youth Sustainable Livelihoods Initiative.

COL sponsored nine delegates from Uganda to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. The Ugandan delegation included Ms Mary Freda Aduno, Teach for Uganda; Ms Agatha Alidri, Gulu University; Dr David Kabugo, Makerere University; Ms Resty Mwogeza Kamya, Uganda Management Institute; Dr Rovincer Najjuma, Makerere University; Mr Daniel Ninsiima, AGINsBA; Mr Emmanuel Semutenga, KampaBits; Dr Moses Tenywa, then at Makerere University; and Mr Leonard Wamakote, Busitema University.

In addition, Mr Ninsiima and Dr Tenywa attended an L3F workshop, Dr David Kabugo, Ms Mwogeza Kamya and Mr Semutenga participated in the TEL Partners meeting, and Ms Alidri participated in the teacher education workshop, all hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of the forum.

#### REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The African Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mr Lyazi Robinson Nsumba, Director, Basic and Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Sports, participated.

#### COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Uganda.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted learners from Uganda.

Participants from Uganda benefited from the four blue economy MOOCs offered by VUSSC in 2020–2021. These courses brought together close to 6,000 participants from across the world.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Uganda include:

- Ministry of Education and Sports
- Agricultural Innovation System Brokerage Association
- Busitema University
- Gulu University
- KampaBits
- Kyambogo University
- Makerere University
- m-Omulimisa Innovative Agricultural Services
- Siaya SEED Savings and Credit Cooperative

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Zambia (population: 17,861,030 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 83.2% (2017) and a gross enrolment rate of 19.9% (1994). Established in 2005, the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) is the main body overseeing TVET implementation in Zambia. Teacher education is offered through the Technical and Vocational Teachers’ College (TVTC). The University of Zambia (UNZA), through its Institute of Distance Education (IDE), has been offering distance education since 1966.

Internet connectivity is available to 14% (2018) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 96 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Zambia. The Zambia National ICT Policy recognises the potential role of ICT in education.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of General Education launched an Education Contingency Plan for Novel Coronavirus.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Yvonne Mweemba Chuulu, Director, Directorate of Open and Distance Education, Ministry of General Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Zambia.

COL’s Work in Zambia: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Zambia is primarily in the areas of higher education, open and innovative schooling, technical and vocational skills development, Lifelong Learning for Farmers and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Zambia have benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

COL has partnered with Zambia’s Ministry of General Education to train teachers in the development of eLearning content and OER in several school subjects and to expand open schooling in the country. COL’s support in Zambia puts special focus on out-of-school youths; however, it is anticipated that the project will also impact mainstream schools, improving throughput and reducing dropout rates.

Discussions started in February 2017 with the Ministry of General Education regarding the training of teachers in technology-enabled learning and the development of eLearning OER for their schools. Workshops were planned to train 25 staff in the development of 13 school subjects as eLearning OER over a period of ten months. The face-to-face workshop, which marked the start of the ten-month process, took place in May 2017 in Zambia. An agreement for two training workshops on the development of learning resources on mobile phones was signed. These workshops took place in June and December 2017.

Two officials from the ministry were invited to attend the annual Teacher Education Project, hosted by COL and the Government of Singapore in August 2017. The five-day workshop was conducted by the National Institute of Education on behalf of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Following this workshop, representatives from the ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia — countries that have signed agreements with COL to collaborate on improving the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream and open schools through eLearning and to broaden access to schooling for out-of-school youths — met in Singapore to share experiences in the implementation of COL’s OIS model in mainstream and open schools. This provided an opportunity for the participants to align country implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges and identify innovative ways to increase the model’s momentum.

COL’s Senior Adviser: Open/Innovative Schooling visited Zambia’s Ministry of Education regarding progress with Phase 1 of the OIS model and the implementation of Phase 2. An agreement was reached with the ministry to identify two officials for a study visit to the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) and to the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (now Botswana Open University). COL also provided input on a draft Strategy for Out-of-School Children’s and Girls’ Education in Zambia.

Zambia has now embraced the OIS model. Two education practitioners involved in curriculum writing and content development for OIS participated in a study visit to NAMCOL in April 2018 to understand how NAMCOL had evolved in the use of ICT and to explore opportunities for similar application in the context of Zambia. A subsequent meeting at the Education Broadcasting Centre in Lusaka in June 2019 explored a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy for OIS. It was observed that the pilot could potentially reach 3,000 out-of-school children across 20 centres. However, the OER developed could also be used by all teachers and learners in Zambia.

Through the Directorate for Distance Education within the Ministry of General Education, and with the active support of the Zambian College of Distance Education, Zambia has now completed the development of curriculum-based digital content and a baseline formative evaluation. This has laid the foundation for a pilot in 20 centres around the country, including five mainstream schools and 15 continuing education centres. The pilot will provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the model before implementation at scale.

In October 2019, COL supported the visit of an external evaluator to the Zambia Department of Open and Distance Education for a series of meetings with the project team, led by the Acting Director – Directorate of Open and Distance Education, Mr Smith Bweupe. The evaluator also visited the offices of the Educational Broadcasting Services, and a pilot primary school, where adult learners, Grade 9 pupils and the school’s ICT team were on hand to demonstrate the use of the Aptus device. In addition, the evaluator met with 12 content developers in their ICT lab to get feedback on the content development process.
Quality review of the draft OER continues. As content is approved, it is moved from the closed development space to the open shared space on the Notesmaster platform. As a legacy of the work done with Notesmaster in Zambia, the Notesmaster Foundation is supporting teacher training to use the curriculum-based OER that have been created, as well as the platform’s new tracking capabilities. In September 2020, 120 teachers were trained in Muchinga Province.

As well, Zambian educators have been benefiting from a course on Developing and Teaching Online, offered under an agreement with the University of Mauritius.

Plans are currently underway for COL to support the development and implementation of an M&E strategy to move from pilot to scale. Ms In’utu Kalumiana, from the Ministry of General Education, gathered the OIS pilot schools for a refresher meeting in October 2020. COL will subsequently support the training of ministry and pilot centre managers to develop and implement an appropriate M&E strategy, including a tracer study among pilot learners, to inform scaling of the OIS initiative.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Thirty-seven stakeholders from various universities and teacher education institutions in seven African countries, including Zambia, came together for the Train-the-Trainers Workshop on Quality Assurance for Teacher Training and Professional Development, organised by the African Council for Distance Education at the Open University of Tanzania in March 2019. The workshop focused on the need for schools of education within universities and other institutions to develop resilient mechanisms to improve teacher development. Organised with support from COL, it examined evidence-based quality assurance practices in higher education overall, and teacher training and professional development in particular.

Learners from Zambia participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered in 2020 and in the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

There were 35 participants from Zambia in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 83 learners participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Eleven learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION

COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education visited Zambia in November 2017 and, in collaboration with the University of Zambia, organised a project design workshop, with participants from the Ministry of General Education, the Zambian Qualifications Authority, the Higher Education Authority, Copperbelt University, Zambian Christian University, Zambian Open University, Texila American University, Zambia College of Distance Education and Mulungushi University. A total of 34 participants attended.

A policy for ODL was completed for the University of Zambia with COL’s support, with a view to helping guide the university as it manages an increasing number of students accessing university education through distance learning.

Three universities in Zambia — Copperbelt University (CU), Mulungushi University (MU) and the University of Zambia (UNZA) — came together in May 2018 for a train-the-trainers workshop about online course design and facilitation. The training was part of COL’s
partnership with the institutions and followed a workshop held late in 2017 that identified the universities’ needs and priorities for strengthening ODL.

Subsequent support to CU included organising a project design workshop, including a SWOT analysis, in June 2019. At UNZA, COL helped organise the online course *Facilitating Online Courses* and develop a three-year business and marketing plan for the Institute of Distance Education. At a UNZA workshop in May 2019, a review of instructional materials took place, where quality assurance guidelines and a gender checklist were adapted to create one quality checklist. Another UNZA workshop in May 2019 focused on online learning design.

In October 2019, 25 participants from CU attended workshops to develop an institutional ODL policy and quality assurance guidelines for ODL.

As well, COL’s Higher Education initiative launched a new regional community of practice in April 2018 for quality assurance in blended and online courses in southern Africa. The inaugural meeting in South Africa brought together 20 stakeholders from higher education institutions and national quality assurance agencies in seven southern African countries, including Zambia. Members have been collaborating to develop quality guidelines for blended and online courses in order to pilot them in the higher education institutions. In December 2019, members of the community of practice reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and indicators to be used by national qualification agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including Zambia. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia’s e University.

A five-day *ODL Design and Development* workshop was conducted online in April 2020, with 22 active staff participants from CU. Ten short courses were converted to online format.

As well, UNZA completed the development of ten online courses as a result of the *Quality and Instructional Material and Redesign for ODL* workshop held in May 2019.

At CU, an employability policy and skills development virtual workshop was held in September 2020 with 16 participants.

In the 2019/2020 school year, 2,161 learners were admitted to UNZA programmes re-engineered with COL’s technical support.

One COL-sponsored scholar from UNZA successfully completed the Master of Instructional Design and Technology programme, offered by the Open University of Malaysia.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 108 participants from Zambia.

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**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

A comprehensive *Baseline Study of Open and Distance Flexible Learning in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)* was prepared in 2015.

COL has worked with African TVET institutions in the INVEST Africa capacity-building model, which is premised on the recognition that flexible and blended learning and teaching approaches can have a positive impact on the goals of TVET institutions to
expand access to quality skills training. In Zambia, COL partnered with the Ministry of Higher Education and TEVETA to develop Open, Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) Policy Guidelines.

COL facilitated partner meetings in 2015, 2016 and 2017 to support the implementation of the flexible and blended model of TVET in partner institutions. At the request of the Ministry of Higher Education, COL supported the development of TVET open, distance and flexible learning policy guidelines, and a team of stakeholders developed draft National TVET Open and Distance Learning Policy Guidelines. This draft was discussed at a meeting of INVEST Zambia principals in October 2017 and has since been adopted by the ministry.

COL worked with TEVETA to develop guidelines for TVET flexible course development, which set the structure for continued capacity building in the flexible TVET model in Zambia. INVEST Africa partners met in November 2017 in Lusaka, Zambia. In attendance were 24 TVET stakeholders, including 20 institutional principals or ODL co-ordinators, the ministry and TEVETA. The outcome was a review of Zambia’s national TVET open, distance and flexible learning policy guidelines and implementation plan.

Further capacity building in ODL course development was provided for INVEST Zambia partners in a workshop in April 2018. Fifty-one instructors from 21 partner institutions attended, along with representatives from TEVETA.

In June 2018, COL helped facilitate the Sustainable Development in TVET workshop at the Kenya Technical Teachers College for participants from 13 institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia.

In response to COVID-19, the Ministry of Higher Education requested COL’s support to build the capacity of TVET educators in online learning. In partnership with TVTC, COL supported a cascading train-the-trainers model. Three Facilitator Mentors whose capacity had been built through COL’s earlier work trained 29 Master Trainers, who then trained 862 learners using COL’s Flexible Skills Development OER; 534 (62%) of the learners completed the course. COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering several online training courses across the Commonwealth, which have included 184 learners from Zambia who achieved completion certificates (in the Flexible Skills Development, Facilitating Online Courses, Moodle Implementation and Blended Learning in the Classroom courses).

COL’s new Skills in Demand model seeks to improve livelihoods for individuals in developing Commonwealth countries by matching skills development to industry and community needs, in this way creating a pathway to employment and entrepreneurship. Integral to the model is blending workplace or community-based learning with distance learning to increase access through flexibility and affordability. In June 2019 at a regional workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya, COL introduced this model to representatives from 16 institutes in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. Participants included government representatives from Zambia, as well as experts in flexible and distance learning and lecturers in relevant vocational courses.

Following a proposal process, two Zambian institutions — Kabwe Institute of Technology (KIT) and Luanshya Technical Business College (LTBC) — were selected to move to the next stage of project implementation. COL facilitated two project design workshops in November 2019. KIT and representatives from community groups (churches and NGOs) agreed to offer computer training and to support learners with gaining employment. LTBC and representatives from Nakadoli, a local furniture co-operative, agreed to enhance their informal apprenticeships to achieve formal national qualifications. The Ministry of Higher Education and TEVETA supported the projects.

Through the LTBC project, COL has supported LTBC and Nakadoli to use COL’s SARAS template to (i) develop a high-level learning design for the national furniture-making qualification using a blend of workplace and online learning, (ii) develop competency-based assessment tools and (iii) develop learning materials. Most recently, LTBC trained 11 master craftspersons from Nakadoli in pedagogy.
A total of 196 learners from Zambia have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19, with support from the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

The L3F model was launched in Zambia in May 2018 with a capacity-building workshop for 25 extension officers from Zambia’s Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. The workshop aimed to equip these officers with the requisite skills for using ODL technologies in farmer extension through the L3F model.

COL is working with the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock to engage and leverage ongoing initiatives by other organisations, with the goals of (i) increasing the participation of more marginalised communities and disadvantaged people in lifelong learning using ICT and (ii) strengthening M&E. Five ministry staff involved in M&E work under the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme — which is supported by the UN’s International Fund for Agricultural Development — have been trained in using ICT to digitise data collection forms and reporting. Other training workshops for district-level extension staff have been conducted in the Southern, Western and Eastern provinces.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock has adopted the L3F extension approach at the national level, working alongside the Enhanced Smallholder Livestock Investment Programme (ESLIP). A total of 134 extension staff from the ministry were trained in facilitating mobile learning using the L3F extension approach.

An L3F sensitisation workshop was held in February 2020, where the m-LAIS learning platform was presented to 30 participants from different organisations and directorates. COL and the partners from Uganda, where the platform originated, played a role in introducing it in Zambia. As of June 2020, there were 24,502 m-LAIS-registered farmers (13,912 male and 10,590 female).

The L3F model has now been adopted in all ten provinces of Zambia, with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In partnership with CU, COL worked to upskill small-scale fisheries in their use of modern fishing technologies and sustainable practices. The project included a capacity-building workshop organised in June 2018 to empower CU staff to incorporate these technologies and practices into their programmes, making use of OER.

COL submitted to the Honourable Mr David Mabumba, Minister of General Education, a report on OER policy for Zambia, along with a draft OER policy. In November 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning visited Zambia to facilitate a national consultation workshop to finalise the draft OER policy for Zambia. Nineteen participants from the Ministry of General Education, the University of Zambia, the Examinations Council of Zambia, the Teachers Commission of Zambia, the Higher Education Authority and some higher education institutions participated in the event.
In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Zambia were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Zambia.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Zambia* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation and decision making.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (SADC-CDE)

Zambia benefits from the activities of SADC-CDE, COL’s regional centre in Southern Africa, which is hosted by Botswana Open University.

In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop in Botswana on non-formal education, with participants from eight countries in the region. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL and ICT in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes. There were four participants from Zambia, representing Highland Open Secondary School and Luanshya School for Continuing Education.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL sponsored Mr Isaac Manda, TVTC, and Mr Mutale M. Kapyanga, ChildHelp, to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored ten participants from Zambia to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Mrs Charity Mbolela Bwalya, Ministry of General Education; Dr Donald Chungu, Copperbelt University; Dr Chibwe Kaoma, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock; Mrs Phyllis Kasonkonoma, Luanshya Technical and Business College; Mr Gabriel Konayuma, Ministry of Higher Education; Dr Edward Lusambo, University of Zambia; Mr Conrad Moffie Mwela, Kabwe Institute of Technology; Ms Mercy Mwiinga, Zambia Qualifications Authority; Mrs Dines Phiri, TEVETA; and Mr Charles Zulu, Ministry of General Education.

As well, several delegates were invited to participate in COL meetings that were held before or after PCF9. Mrs Bwalya participated in the OIS workshop; Dr Chungu, Dr Lusambo and Ms Mwiinga attended the higher education workshop; Dr Kaoma attended the L3F session; and Mrs Kasonkonoma, Mr Moffie Mwela and Mrs Phiri participated in a TVSD meeting.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The African Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Ms Bridget Moya, Ministry of General Education, attended.
REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana, where Ms Bridget Moya, Director, Directorate of Open and Distance Education, Ministry of General Education, represented Zambia. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020, and Ms. Yvonne Mweemba Chuulu, Director, Directorate of Open and Distance Education, Ministry of General Education, participated.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Zambia.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 23 learners from Zambia.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Zambia were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Zambia include:
- Ministry of General Education
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Copperbelt University
- Technical and Vocational Teachers’ College
- University of Zambia
- Zambia Agricultural Research Institute

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
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 Education Ministers, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and PCF10.**
Affordable and accessible technologies are vital for building resilient education systems. In many parts of Asia, connectivity remains a challenge. While about 50% of the global population has access to the Internet, this indicator is at 40% in Asia. Access to mobile subscriptions is much higher, at 122%, presenting an opportunity to build a cloud-based and mobile-friendly system of teaching and learning (Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience).

There are 21 open universities in Commonwealth Asia. Pakistan’s Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974, becoming Asia’s first open university. The Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), a non-profit organisation of higher learning institutions that are primarily concerned with open and distance education, works to widen educational opportunities and improve the quality of the institutions in terms of their educational management, teaching and research.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, Commonwealth governments in Asia developed remote learning content, broadcast lessons over television and radio, and provided education materials on eLearning platforms. Bangladesh has been offering a digital content platform with interactive multimedia educational content and My School at Home television lessons for students in Grades 6–10. Malaysia launched TV Okey, which provides educational programmes for students; its MOE-DL online learning platform and EduWebTV offer collections of online classes and materials for teachers. Filaa from the Maldives and E-thaksalava from Sri Lanka are other examples of online classes and materials. India’s Swayam Prabha Channel airs courses for school education (Classes 9–12), higher education, out-of-school children, vocational education and teacher training.

COL focuses on adding value to countries’ efforts towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions in Asia in the use of appropriate, affordable and accessible technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education...
include an emphasis on achieving inclusive, quality secondary and higher education and strengthening teacher development programmes. In the area of skills, COL supports technology-enabled learning (TEL), expanding access to technical and vocational education, and linking credit and finance to informal learning in agriculture. These initiatives have been designed to achieve socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at low economic and environmental costs.

COL’s regional office in New Delhi, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), promotes the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of media and technology to serve the education and training needs of the Commonwealth Member States of Asia. CEMCA works in education and skills development, with a focus on community media, particularly community radio. Through activities with partners in eight countries, CEMCA has helped institutions leverage open and distance learning (ODL) for increased access to education and building capacity for accreditation. CEMCA has been closely associated with all aspects of developing community radio in the region and has responded to COVID-19 challenges by offering training on creating of online courses and using virtual labs. In the current reporting period, CEMCA activities took place in all Member States except Singapore.

The Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021 concluded that COL’s activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women’s and girls’ empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.

COL’s major initiatives in the Asian Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2021 are outlined below.

- Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan, Bangladesh Open University, the Open University of Sri Lanka and Wawasan Open University, Malaysia have benefited from the high-quality learning and professional development opportunities offered by COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes.

Graduates of the CEMBA/CEMPA programme at Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan) have experienced, on average:

- an increase of 37.6% in monthly earnings;
- an increase of 31.6% in annual income;
- an increase of 28.5 percentage points in the probability of being employed as a manager; and
- an increase of 36.8% in wages (earnings per hour).


- High-level roundtables for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL were held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018, with the participation of VCs and representatives from 19 countries. In April 2019, in partnership with CEMCA, IGNOU and India’s Ministry of Human Resource Development (now the Ministry of Education), COL organised a roundtable for VCs of African and Asian open universities in New Delhi to discuss models for the 21st century.
• A paper stemming from COL’s OER-based eLearning professional development online course at the Open University of Sri Lanka received an ICDE Prize for Innovation and Best Practice – 2015 at the 26th ICDE World Conference, held in Sun City, South Africa in October 2015.

• CEMCA supported four Indian universities under its higher education integrated model to provide access to education through various needs-based courses. A total of 38,514 learners were enrolled and successfully completed the courses.

• As well, jointly with UNESCO’s office in New Delhi, CEMCA published Best Practices of Community Radio and Sustainable Development Goals: A Handbook, with 56 stories from Bangladesh, India and Nepal, covering 15 Sustainable Development Goals.

• As part of the Advanced ICT Skills Development project, four universities in Asia (Allama Iqbal Open University, IGNOU, Open University Malaysia, and the Open University of Sri Lanka) have worked to develop two programmes: Web Application Development and Mobile Application Development.

• COL supported four universities — Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh, Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies, India, SNDT Women’s University, India, and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) — to systematically implement TEL by developing policy, building capacities to develop blended courses, and evaluating the impact of TEL for improving student learning.

COL’s interventions have contributed to improved integration of information and communication technologies in teaching and learning at University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) in comparison to the baseline study conducted in 2018. The overall score of 3.85 on a scale of 5 shows that TEL at UMS is now growing towards robustness. UMS has demonstrated systematic implementation of TEL and has enhanced the quality of the teaching and learning environment by integrating ICT.


• COL’s Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning and Blended Learning Practice MOOCs, offered in collaboration with Canada’s Athabasca University, have attracted large numbers of participants from Asia.

• In India and Sri Lanka, COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative has improved the livelihood security of marginalised farming households, particularly those headed by women, by linking them to social and financial capital through the use of ODL and flexible and blended learning. The innovative L3F model for the economic empowerment of rural women through ODL, using basic mobile phones as access devices, has now been adapted by a regional rural bank in India for scaling up. In addition, AgMOOCs offered in partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur have reached over 120,000 students and faculty in agricultural universities.

• GIRLS Inspire has provided over 92,000 vulnerable women and girls in hard-to-reach areas
of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with opportunities to receive skills training that will enable them to have sustainable livelihoods.

- Supported by COL, the Open University of Malaysia has been working with five other open universities in Africa and Asia to develop courses related to web applications and mobile application development.

- Facilitated by COL, the south-south collaboration between Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and the National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS), India led to improved quality assurance approaches in both institutions, as well as the ongoing development of an inclusive education policy, implementation and review process for the Open School at BOU, to give greater access to children with disabilities.

- In a similar vein, a COL-supported engagement between NIOS and the National Institute for Education (NIE) in Sri Lanka led to the development of a Gender Policy Framework for NIE, which is now in the process of implementation and review.

- The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is being implemented in Sri Lanka. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice as well as school-based training.

- In partnership with Malaysia’s Wawasan Open University, COL’s Gender initiative in 2018–2019 organised two workshops in the framework of the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL to build the leadership capacity of mid-career women in ODL institutions.

- COL and Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a workshop to build the capacity of teacher educators and education practitioners in the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning. This annual initiative, under the Singapore

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The L3F programme has enabled the women to take up various farm- and non-farm-based entrepreneurial activities. After L3F training, around 56% of women have taken up new entrepreneurial business activities. This shows the L3F programme has positively contributed to employment generation and livelihood creation for women in the villages.

–Impact Study of Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) Project by Mann Deshi Foundation and Mann Deshi Cooperative Bank (2018)
COL IN THE COMMONWEALTH: 2015–2021

Cooperation Programme, was held in Singapore in August 2017 and hosted 18 participants from ten Commonwealth countries.

- The Asia Regional OER Consultation, which provided opportunities for Asian delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in December 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

- The 8th Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF8) on Open Learning was organised with the Open University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur in November 2016.

- The Asia regional meeting of COL’s Focal Points took place on 10–11 December 2018 in New Delhi, India to strengthen the effectiveness of COL’s work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region and to share information related to learning for sustainable development. On 1 June 2020, COL held online consultations with Focal Points from the region as part of the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).

- Learners from seven Commonwealth countries in Asia were among close to 6,000 participants in the four blue economy MOOCs offered by COL in 2020–2021.

- Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teachers’ capacity to respond to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include Cybersecurity Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), OER for Online Learning and Teaching Mathematics with Technology, among others. These have

Each year, millions of girls worldwide are forced into early marriage for a variety of economic and cultural reasons. With COL’s support, 1,181 child marriages have been prevented, including 642 in Bangladesh.

- Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) through Open, Distance and Technology-Based Education (2019)
attracted over 2,795 participants from seven Commonwealth countries in Asia.

- Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan), Asia e University (Malaysia), Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (India), Bangladesh Open University, Fatima Jinnah Women University (Pakistan), Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (India), Netaji Subhas Open University (India), Odisha State Open University (India), the Open University of Sri Lanka, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Uttarakhand Open University (India), Wawasan Open University (Malaysia) and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (India) are all members of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19.

- Dr Lily Chan, Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, Professor Abtar Kaur and Professor Dr Zoraini Wati Abas (Malaysia), as well as Professor Vasudha Kamat and Ms Chetna Vijay Sinha (India), are mentors in COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen programme, aimed at developing the leadership potential of women and girls in the Commonwealth.

- Over 36,800 learners from Asia joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world. They invested over 750,000 learning hours and earned close to 52,000 certificates of course completion, boosting their employability in the face of COVID-19.
Introduction

Bangladesh (population: 163,046,161 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 90.5% (2010) and a secondary school completion rate of 66.6% (2018). The Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) is a state regulatory board responsible for monitoring and developing technical and vocational education and training at the secondary level throughout the country. The main public universities are the University of Dhaka, which offers teacher training, the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh Agricultural University, the University of Chittagong and the University of Jahangirnagar. The Bangladesh Open University (BOU) provides distance learning for a wide range of students at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Internet connectivity is available to 18% (2016) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 102 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Education’s Master Plan for ICT in Education in Bangladesh (2012–2021): Progressive Review Report 2019 continues to focus on modernising and revolutionising Bangladesh’s education system through the use of ICT and promoting technology-based teaching and learning. By leveraging ICT in different fields of education, government stakeholders and educators aim to enhance traditional teaching methods through technology-based teaching, learning tools and facilities.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education adopted the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan and developed remote learning content, providing lessons through television, mobile phones, radio and the Internet.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mr Syed Ali Reja, Deputy Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, Secondary & Higher Education Division, is COL’s Focal Point for Bangladesh.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Professor M. Aminul Islam is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Dr Abdul Mannan is a former Honorary COL Adviser.

The Honourable Nurul Islam Nahid, MP, is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s current work in Bangladesh is primarily in the areas of girls’ and women’s education and training, higher education, open and innovative schooling, OER policy development, technology-enabled learning, and technical and vocational skills development.

Bangladesh benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), and learners have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**Education Sector Overview**

**OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)**

Peer-to-peer (P2P) quality review between regional open schools is an important part of COL’s OIS mandate. COL initiated P2P activities to support the development of common criteria for reviewing quality at the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in India and BOU’s Open School. The two institutions agreed to conduct quality assurance audits based on an inter-institutional audit framework. The NIOS team visited BOU in August 2018 and reviewed the quality assurance process of the BOU Open School using the common criteria developed jointly with the BOU team. Reciprocally, the BOU team visited NIOS in February–March 2019, reviewed the quality of NIOS’s open schooling processes, and validated the self-assessment report prepared by the NIOS team through presenting an exit report.

As well, with support from COL, a workshop was organised in May 2018 titled *Gender Mainstreaming and Development of Gender Policy*. The objective of the workshop was to develop a comprehensive gender policy for BOU’s Open School. NIOS provided three facilitators.

A total of 41 learners from Bangladesh participated in the *OER for Online Learning (OER4OL)* MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Eleven representatives from the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh visited COL in August 2015 to discuss ways of forging stronger ties and sharing experiences in the areas of higher education and open and distance learning. The delegates, led by Professor Dr Mohammad Mohabbat Khan, highlighted the sharp increase in demand for higher education across Bangladesh and the pressing need to advance a comprehensive framework for teachers, students and communities alike.

In March 2016, a workshop titled *Training of Trainers for Tutor Training* was held at BOU. Thirty-five staff from seven schools were trained, and a Tutor Manual was developed. In April, a workshop titled *Local Training Co-ordinators* was completed successfully, with 34 participants from the Student Support Service Division and 12 BOU regional centres.

BOU was one of COL’s first partner institutions to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Between 2015 and 2018, 538 persons enrolled in the programmes and 223 graduated.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over its administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. BOU’s Vice Chancellor is invited to serve on the EGB, and Professor Dr M.A. Mannan, served as its member. Mr Mostafa Azad Kamal, Associate Professor, School of Business, is a member of the AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in
May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

A tracer study on CEMBA/CEMPA graduates was completed in January 2021. Details from the qualitative portions of the study provided guidance on 2021 learning features that students are seeking from the programme.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions were held in Malaysia — in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries participated, including Bangladesh. Meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

As well, COL has supported BOU to develop an employability strategy for the School of Business, a marketing plan to encourage girls to enrol in BOU business programmes, and a competency-based curriculum for the Bachelor of Business Administration.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. BOU is a member of the consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

In November 2019, BOU hosted a technical workshop for the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work. It was part of a series designed to prepare partner institutions to develop and deliver the BA in Youth Work in blended and online environments. Workshop participants included BOU faculty, representatives from Bangladeshi Youth Training Centres and NGOs, students from the BOU Diploma in Youth Development Work, as well as delegates and youth work experts from India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the UK. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated a session virtually.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 110 participants from Bangladesh.
**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL has been working with Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) to offer vocational training on vermicomposting, poultry rearing, nurseries, batik printing and flower gardening to women from rural communities. A total of 12,000 women had participated in the training by 2020, enhancing their vocational skills and gaining opportunities to improve the quality of their lives.

TVSD has also worked with DAM to develop and pilot an online gender staff training course. This followed their completion of a gender audit and development of a Gender Action Plan in 2018. In September 2018, COL supported two workshops with DAM staff to develop the materials for the course, plan a delivery strategy, and provide training in the development of OER. Following the training, DAM piloted the course in its head office and seven regional offices.

As well, TVSD supported a situational analysis of the training needs within Bangladesh’s ready-made garment (RMG) industry and the perceived appropriateness of using eLearning for training. The analysis identified managerial training as the major gap and confirmed the need for a blended learning model to help fill this gap. In September 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD visited two factories to meet potential learners and industry partners. COL and DAM have now agreed to work with several RMG companies to pilot a model that combines workplace and online learning to train sewing machine operators for line chief and floor supervisor roles. The project aims to increase the number of Bangladeshi managers, reduce gender inequity in management, and safeguard more women against predicted job losses from automation of the industry.

Participants from Bangladesh have also benefited from the TVSD courses offered to global audiences, including the Facilitating Online course.

COL’s Skills Online initiative partnered with Better Future for Women (BFW) to promote skills among youths, especially women/girls and people with disabilities, including in Rohingya refugee camps. This unique partnership brought a range of over 4,000 curated courses on Udemy, an online platform, directly to target groups in Bangladesh. Over 1,700 young people have been chosen to access online courses aligned to employability and are further being offered mentorship and counselling support to gain employment and establish digital businesses in key sectors in Bangladesh. There have been over 3,000 certifications.

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**Helping a new mother from Bangladesh regain professional confidence**

Nahid Sultana from Dhaka, Bangladesh had to leave her software development job at a private company to care for her newborn baby two years ago. As a new mother, she had to spend most of her time at home, taking care of her child, and feared that she might never be able to restart her career, which had been her only source of income. With support from COL and BFW, Nahid obtained an eLearning scholarship opportunity and learned new skills to stay relevant in the changing software development market.

“I have received certificates and now look forward to reaching out to my old employer and also to applying for new job opportunities,” she said. “I have regained my lost confidence to resume my career afresh.”
In February 2020, Skills Online released *Skills Development for Sustainable Livelihoods: An Overview of Four Case Studies*. The publication consolidates the findings from an overview of the skills demand, supply and gaps in four case study countries, including Bangladesh.

A total of 13,832 learners from Bangladesh have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. The initiative has been implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, BOU and COL’s lead partner, BFW. On 27 April 2021, learners from the region who had earned certificates through the COL–Coursera programme were celebrated at a virtual convocation, where H.E. Tipu Munshi, MP, the Honourable Commerce Minister, made special remarks.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In Bangladesh, COL has supported the development of a draft national OER policy. In June 2019, BOU held a national consultation to review the draft. The consultation was organised jointly with the Ministry of Education and the Access to Information Programme of the Government of Bangladesh.

COL has also supported BOU to develop blended online courses for the Master of Public Health programme. A workshop on developing online courses was organised at BOU in March 2019. Another workshop was hosted in June 2019 to finalise the blended course designs. In December 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning shared a course design template and assisted BOU with enhancing the Moodle learning management system with interactive video and synchronous conferencing facilities.

COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) has been implemented in 15 schools across Bangladesh, in partnership with DAM. A workshop for training teachers to use the C-DELTA platform was organised by DAM in January 2019. A train-the-trainers workshop in January 2020 built the digital capacities of 30 teachers from both government and non-government colleges and teacher training centres to use the C-DELTA platform.

Dr Kazi A. Kalpoma, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice meeting, while Mr Abu Nasar Md Tofail Hossain, BOU, and Mr G. F. Hamim, DAM, attended the C-DELTA *Training of Trainers* workshop, both held in New Delhi, India in December 2018. Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Bangladesh.

COL co-organised a workshop in June 2019 to develop an OER policy to be implemented across 13 educational institutions supported by DAM. As part of this policy, an OER repository has been developed to improve the management and sharing of the large number of educational resources developed by participating institutions. The OER policy has been implemented across the network of DAM institutions.

COL is supporting AUST in implementing the Digital Bangladesh 2021 Vision through TEL. A workshop on developing a draft policy for implementing TEL was held in April 2019. Another workshop, in June 2019, focused on blended course design using Moodle. In December 2019, a capacity-building workshop was organised for teachers on developing blended courses using Moodle.
In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* and *Blended Learning Practice* — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Bangladesh were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Bangladesh* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

DAM used COL’s Gender Scorecard to develop its Gender Roadmap 2017–2025.


COL has been collaborating with the Centre for Mass Education and Science (CMES) to train vulnerable women and girls in hard-to-reach areas for better livelihoods. In the framework of this partnership, COL provided assistance with training girls in ICT through mobile app development. In collaboration with CMES, COL organised a train-the-trainers workshop in September 2018. A total of 25 participants were trained to conduct training programmes on mobile app development for underprivileged girls in Bangladesh. Most recently, COL trained 74 girls from nine rural villages in mobile app development using the MIT AI2 Companion, in collaboration with CMES.

**GIRLS INSPIRE**

GIRLS Inspire was initiated in July 2015 with generous support from Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to mobilise the power of ODL to provide secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls who are prevented from attending schools by barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms and distance from schools.

Funding from GAC supported the implementation of the project Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) through Open, Distance and Technology-Based Education. It addressed the needs of girls, as they are disproportionately impacted due to discriminatory social norms, and it specifically focused on preventing child marriages.

“By directly working with disadvantaged women and girls, we’ve learned that the main barrier in their disadvantaged situation is the social context of our country, and we need to focus on improving their social condition by engaging them with [wage-earning] activities and empowering them physically and mentally.”

– Ayesha Akter Jamy, Former Project Manager, CMES

COL’s local implementation partners were Shidhulai Swarirvar Sangstha (SSS) and CMES. Their community awareness-raising events reached over 200,000 community members in 90 communities on topics such as human rights, repression, reproductive health and the impact of CEFM. Initially, men and boys were reluctant to see the benefits of skills training for girls, but with more community sessions, they were able to acknowledge the value of education for women and girls. A total of 16,636 women and girls completed life-skills training and locally relevant vocational training and attended job fairs to learn about markets and employment. A total of 314 Memoranda of Understanding were signed with prospective employers; 5,688 participants applied for employment, and 5,505 were successful, while 1,846 girls opened bank accounts, and 2,902 girls obtained microloans.
The Director of the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) in Bangladesh, Mr Helal Uddin, visited Amtoli in November 2018 to witness first-hand COL’s GIRLS Inspire project. He observed activities such as skills training, awareness sessions and a performance by a girl’s travelling troupe. Hosted by CMES, the director also joined in a meeting with the women and girls, project staff and local support group members.

As a result of co-operation with COL, SSS developed an “equality, diversity and inclusion” policy, and CMES developed a gender policy. CMES also held two exchanges with advocates for GIRLS Inspire at regional and national forums attended by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and at gender forums attended by other local and international NGOs.

In February 2019, COL, in collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire CEFM end-of-project meeting. It was attended by members of parliament and their representatives from nine countries, including Bangladesh. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap for how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship. In Bangladesh, 642 child marriages were prevented, in part because of GIRLS Inspire, as shown in the final report prepared for GAC.

The project Reaching the Unreached (RtU) through ODL in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, which was funded by DFAT, provided secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls who are prevented from attending school. The initiative mobilised the power of ODL to overcome barriers to education and economic participation and create enabling conditions for sustainable livelihoods.

In the framework of the RtU initiative, SSS used solar-powered boat schools and floating libraries, equipped with Internet-linked laptops, multimedia projectors and educational materials, docking at villages to provide on-board training. By March 2017, 13,578 girls from Bangladesh were trained in life and vocational skills. SSS also helped 1,602 girls to access microloans and 4,389 girls and women to gain income-generating opportunities. Without these boat

RtU THROUGH ODL: Tania’s story best describes the success of this project.

Due to poverty, Tania Begum was married when she was 16. Her father was a day labourer and could not afford to send her to school. Furthermore, the school was far away, and monsoon flooding made it difficult for her to travel there. Tania dropped out of school in Grade 7. She has always wanted to become self-reliant and do something to prevent child, early and forced marriage in her village. In June 2016, she visited the SSS training boat and decided to receive training on sewing, machine operation and maintenance, and tailoring. She completed a 16-week training course in October 2016. Tania then bought a sewing machine with a loan from a financial organisation and started her own tailoring shop at her home. She now earns BDT 5,000 per month. She worked hard and became a skills instructor who is inspiring other women and girls to learn new skills and start similar businesses in the village.

She says, “Now, I cover my own family expenses and have started saving. I am confident, and I make my own decisions. I want to send my daughter to medical school, and I hope to cover her educational expenses.”
As well, partners in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in three webinars using social media, creating databases and providing support during COVID-19.

**COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)**

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA is headquartered in New Delhi, India and works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Mr Syed Ali Reja, Joint Secretary, Secondary and Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, and Professor (Dr) M. A. Mannan, former Vice Chancellor, BOU, are members of the CEMCA Advisory Council.

CEMCA assisted BOU in developing and implementing a comprehensive OER policy to mainstream the use of OER in teaching and learning. Thirty-five academic leaders and 90 ODL professionals from BOU were trained during August and September 2015 to use and create OER materials.

CEMCA, in partnership with Rupantar, has supported the launching of web radio programmes in five community radio stations to strengthen skills development in rural communities.

In collaboration with BOU, CEMCA has been implementing the comprehensive project Impacting Education and Open Schooling through OER — Making a Difference among Learners. In the framework of this initiative, vocational education training (VET) integrated high schooling was developed, along with e-Bachelor in Education / e-Master in Education curricula for five courses. A total of 33 faculty members from BOU’s Open School and School of Education were trained, and their capacities in VET content development were enhanced. Apart from theory, hands-on experience with ICT-based and open and distance education systems was provided, with a view to implementing an OER-based blended vocational education programme. An OER repository was developed for BOU using DSpace. In January 2020, CEMCA organised a two-day workshop
in collaboration with BOU titled *Impacting Education and Open Schooling through OER* for 31 tutors and faculty members who are engaged in providing tutorials for learners in the Higher Secondary Certificate and Education programmes (BEd/MEd). Following the workshop, the university agreed on policy recommendations for BOU, such as exchanging VET materials among regional open universities to achieve cost-effectiveness for the planned VET programme. In August 2020, CEMCA and BOU jointly organised a virtual workshop to facilitate video content development.

Integrating Community Radio with Skills to ensure TL2L (Transformation of Listener to Learner) is another project implemented by CEMCA in Bangladesh. In 2018–2019, CEMCA engaged five community radio stations and one web radio station in Bangladesh to increase awareness amongst youths about avenues for developing skills and thereby finding sustainable livelihoods. Community radio stations have been trained to conduct field activities, such as career counselling, job melas and skills camps.

As well, in the framework of the Integrated Higher Education Model, a Quality Assurance Toolkit for ODL Institutions was finalised at a workshop in February 2019. Hosted by the e-Learning Centre, University of Hyderabad, it brought together 24 participants from 12 higher education institutions in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Two representatives from BOU participated in the workshop.

BOU also requested CEMCA’s support with an online capacity-building programme for their faculty: Development of Outcome-Based Self-Learning Materials. The programme was conducted in October 2020. Over 80 faculty members from various BOU schools actively participated in the four-day programme.

Most recently, CEMCA organised a Development of Outcome-Based Self-Learning Materials workshop for more than 80 BOU faculty members.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

PCF8 was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. COL sponsored ten participants from Bangladesh to attend the forum, including Dr Zobaida Akhtar of BOU, Hassan Banu of CMES, Professor Dr Md. Kabirul Islam of Daffodil International University, Hurain Jannat of CMES, Professor Mostafa Azad Kamal of BOU, Mr Shahnewaz Khan of DAM, Professor Dr Mohammad A. Mannan of BOU, Mr Suprakash Paul of SSS, Mr Mohammad Rezwan, also of SSS, and Mr Abdus Sattar of BOU.

COL also sponsored 13 delegates from Bangladesh to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. As well, four Bangladeshi participants joined the TEL Partners meeting, three attended the Open and Innovative Schooling workshop, one delegate participated in the Higher Education meeting, and there was one participant at the TVSD workshop; all these gatherings were hosted by COL in Edinburgh in the framework of PCF9.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Asian Regional Consultation was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2016. Ms Shahnaz Samad, the COL Focal Point for Bangladesh, and Professor Mustafa Kamal Azad, BOU, were in attendance.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, India, and the second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Mr Syed Ali Reja, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, represented Bangladesh at both meetings.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs


In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Bangladesh were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

A total of 118 learners from Bangladesh have enrolled in the AgMOOC courses offered since 2015.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, had 1,685 enrolments, including from Bangladesh.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Bangladesh include:

- Ministry of Education
- Access to Information (a2i) Programme
- Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology
- Bangladesh Open University
- Better Future for Women
- Centre for Mass Education in Science
- Dhaka Ahsania Mission
- Rupantar
- Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Brunei Darussalam (population: 433,285 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.1% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 82.6% (2018). The Institute of Brunei Technical Education (IBTE) offers full-time and dual-system apprenticeship programmes through its seven campuses and offers continuing education and training programmes for adult learners. The Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) offers teacher education through the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education and also houses the Centre for Lifelong Learning. Other institutions at the tertiary level include the Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, the Institut Teknologi Brunei and the Politeknik Brunei.

Internet connectivity is available to 95% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 129 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Brunei Darussalam. The Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2018–2022 includes an initiative to provide ICT services to strengthen the delivery of basic education (i.e., primary to secondary).

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education developed a learning continuity plan with an online learning focus and also offered guidelines for teachers, parents and students.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Yang Mulia Dayang Rosimah Sumaimah binti Haji Matassim, Acting Executive Secretary, Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Brunei Darussalam.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Pehin Dato’ Abu Bakar Apong is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Dato’ Paduka Haji Ali Hashim Haji Daud is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Dato’ Paduka Haji Abdul Razak bin Haji Muhammad is a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.

Hj. Mohd. Denis bin Hj. Roslee is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

COL’s Work in Brunei Darussalam: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL works in two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. COL has identified five core strategies to achieve outcomes and impact: partnerships, capacity, materials, models and policy. In practice, most COL activities incorporate more than one of these strategies — in some cases, all five.
**Higher Education**

COL worked in partnership with the Brunei Darussalam government to provide master’s degree scholarships for individuals from higher education institutions and departments of higher education, so they can study on a full-time basis in Brunei Darussalam for one or two years. The Ministry of Education provided a scholarship to Mr Emmanuel Okondu of Nigeria to study in the Master of Public Health programme at UBD. He completed the programme in December 2016.

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

Brunei Darussalam is a member of VUSSC. In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

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**Skills Sector Overview**

**Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)**

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Brunei Darussalam.

**Gender**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Brunei Darussalam* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

**Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA)**

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA is headquartered in New Delhi, India and works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

In February 2021, CEMCA organised a virtual session on Understanding OER for 18 teachers of Universiti Brunei Darussalam. The two-hour session described the concept of OER and ways to use Creative Commons licences to design and develop OER.
COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Asia Regional Consultation was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 2016. Mr Julaihi Mohammad, the COL Focal Point for Brunei Darussalam, attended.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL's Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, India, and the second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Yang Mulia Dayang Rosimah Sumaimah binti Haji Matassim, Acting Executive Secretary, Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council, Ministry of Education, provided input for the online meeting in 2020.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL's work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL's work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

**COL partners in Brunei Darussalam include:**
- Ministry of Education
- Brunei Darussalam National Accreditation Council
- Universiti Brunei Darussalam

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
India (population: 1.366 billion in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 92.2% (2013) and a secondary school completion rate of 61.6% (2013). In July 2020, the Ministry of Education (MoE, formerly the Ministry of Human Resources Development, MHRD) unveiled their new National Education Policy (NEP), the writing of which included an unprecedented collaborative, inclusive and highly participatory consultation process. Themes of inclusion and quality education run throughout the policy, which ranges from pre-school to higher education. Some highlights are universal education from pre-school to secondary level, including the use of open schooling for out-of-school children, and a new curriculum structure, with an emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy as well as pre-school education. In higher education, the NEP’s goal is to raise the gross enrolment to 50% while supporting broad-based, multi-disciplinary, holistic and flexible undergraduate education, with vocational education integration that accommodates multiple exit options and appropriate certification.

The NEP also aims to establish a Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) to oversee both public and private institutions, excluding medical and legal education. There are some 54 federal or central universities under the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education; 416 state universities under the state governments, the three oldest — the universities of Calcutta, Madras and Mumbai — dating back to 1857; 97 institutions of national importance recognised and granted autonomous status by the Department of Higher Education; and 372 private universities (2020). India has 15 open universities, with one national university, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), established in 1985, and 15 state open universities.

Vocational education is supported by a number of institutions. The National Skill Development Corporation, established in 2009 by the Ministry of Finance, aims to promote skill development by aiding in the creation of large, quality, for-profit vocational institutions. The Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education (PSSCIVE), a research and development organisation in the field of vocational education, is a constituent unit of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The National Institute of Technical Teachers’ Training and Research (NITTTR) was established by the Ministry of Education with the mandate to improve the quality of technical education. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) plans and co-ordinates the development of the teacher education system throughout the country. SWAYAM is the national online course platform that facilitates the delivery of educational materials from Class 9 to post-graduate level. The platform hosts video lectures, downloadable educational materials, tests and quizzes, and an online discussion forum.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was established in 1989 by the Government of India to provide continuing education from school level up to pre-degree level through open and distance learning (ODL). To enable access to education for students in India, NIOS participates in SWAYAM.

Internet connectivity is available to 20% (2018) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 84 (2019) per 100 people. Through the National Knowledge Network (connecting about 1,600 institutions of higher learning), infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in India. The Ministry of Education’s NEP will support and adopt the integration of technology to improve multiple aspects of education. The ministry also has established the National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT), an autonomous body that works to enhance learning, assessment, planning and
administration in the field of technology for schools and higher education.

India is home to COL’s only regional office, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA).

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education provided e-learning platforms, such as DIKSHA, e-Pathshala, the National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) and SWAYAM. Televised educational materials were offered on 32 channels through Swayam Prabha, including school education (Classes 9–12), higher education (undergraduate, postgraduate), as well as materials for out-of-school children, vocational education and teacher training.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr Amit Khare, Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, represents the Indian government on the Board.

FOCAL POINT

VACANT

COL CHAIR

Professor T. V. Prabhakar, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, serves as a COL Chair.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Mr R. P. Agrawal is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

The late Mr. Sudeep K. Banerjee was a member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr B. S. Baswan is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr B. K. Chaturvedi is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Ms Vibha Puri Das is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr P. R. Dasgupta is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr M. K. Kaw is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

The late Professor G. Ram Reddy was a COL Honorary Fellow and a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors. He was also a former Vice President of COL.

Mr K. K. Sharma is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr Abhimanyu Singh is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr R. Subrahmanyam is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr S. C. Tripathi is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr Kamaraj Keppanan is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Dr Abdul Waheed Khan is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Badri Nath Koul is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Father T. V. Kunnunkal is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Mr Mahesh Chandra Pant is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Vasireddy Sivalinga Prasad is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Nageshwar Rao is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Ms Chetna Vijay Sinha is a COL Honorary Fellow.

The late Professor V. C. Kulantai Swamy was a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Ram G. Takwale is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Vasudha Kamat is an Honorary COL Adviser.

Dr Mrs K. Rama is a former Honorary COL Adviser.
COL’s Work in India: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

COL works in many programme areas in India — girls’ and women’s education and training, open and innovative schooling, higher education, technology-enabled learning, lifelong learning for farmers, and technical and vocational skills development. Learners from India have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Peer-to-peer (P2P) quality review between regional open schools is an important part of COL’s OIS mandate. COL supported a workshop hosted by NIOS for senior staff of NIOS and the Open School of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) to develop quality criteria and plan for P2P quality audits between the two institutions. Following an agreement between the two institutions to conduct quality assurance audits based on an inter-institutional audit framework, the NIOS team visited BOU in August 2018 and reviewed the quality assurance process of the BOU Open School using the common criteria developed jointly with the BOU team. Reciprocally, the BOU team visited NIOS in February–March 2019, reviewed the quality of NIOS’s open schooling process and validated the self-assessment report prepared by the NIOS team.

In January–May 2018, COL hosted Mrs. Anshul Kharbanda, NIOS Academic Officer, for a partially supported internship. Mrs. Kharbanda had an opportunity to visit Open School BC, the South Island Distance Education School, the North Vancouver Distributed Learning School and the Vancouver Learning Network. Subsequent to the visit, Mrs Kharbanda helped organise a workshop on Gender Mainstreaming and Development of Gender Policy in May 2018, the object of which was to develop a comprehensive gender policy for BOU’s Open School. The policy was completed and adopted. In addition, NIOS and BOU Open School completed a P2P quality audit.

A gender policy framework developed jointly by Sri Lanka’s National Institute of Education and NIOS was finalised. The guidelines were adopted and applied to 2,200 learners enrolled in 25 centres.

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL has worked with the Centre for Environmental Education (CEE) on the use and development of OER materials for the Green Teacher Programme, which promotes sustainable development education in schools and teacher education institutions. The resources have been used by teachers and teacher educators to inculcate environmental concerns in children from the early stages. The CEE also provided expertise for the development of the Green Teacher Programme in Nigeria.

With COL’s support, IT for Change, in Bengaluru, completed Creating and Repurposing OER Using FOSS: A How-To Guide for Teachers and Learners. This toolkit provides activities on how to reuse and remix OER that are in text, audio, video and image formats. Teachers are introduced to free, open-source software (FOSS) for remixing media types.
In August 2020, COL and ScooNews | EdBank agreed to collaborate in a partnership to train 100,000 teachers in India over 12 months. As of January 2021, there had been 13,500 signups, with 12,000 participants registered for courses. Certificates of completion had been issued to 1,100 participants.

There were 35 participants from India in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020; a total of 764 learners from India participated in the 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and 386 in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in 2020. A total of 887 learners from India joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

Two participants from India joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020 for 78 participants from 26 countries.

HIGHER EDUCATION
Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries participated, including from India. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

In April 2019, in partnership with CEMCA, IGNOU and MHRD, COL organised a roundtable for VCs of African and Asian open universities in New Delhi to discuss models for the 21st century.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development is a member of the Consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

Dr Avichal Kapur, Joint Secretary of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, visited COL in June 2019 to draft guidelines on quality assurance for open universities.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 971 participants from India.

Activities in Higher Education are also reported in the section on CEMCA (please see below).

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)
In India, COL has worked with several institutions focusing on skills training for women in order to integrate them into the workforce. COL supported the State Resource Centre (SRC) in Kerala to develop a Certificate in Community Development by distance learning to build the capacity and capability of community development workers. Thus far, they have enrolled more than 350 community development workers in the programme. In 2017, COL conducted training on “OER and Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning” with the SRC, in preparation for a tracer study. The SRC team has continued to develop new
programmes with the distance learning model and has more than 2,600 learners.

Under the Skills Online initiative, COL has entered into an agreement with READ-India to skill community women and men in two specific areas: marketing skills and techniques on social media; and online safety and cyber security for community members. In the framework of this partnership, COL supported digital marketing skills and cyber security training for 5,000 learners.

As well, in partnership with LabourNet, COL implemented a blended training programme for 2,100 workers who lost their livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic. Beauticians, auto-service technicians and tailors were retrained in sanitisation skills and workplace hygiene practices through the use of mobile phones over six weeks. OER materials were also produced on these topics, allowing the trainees to set up their own micro-enterprises.

A total of 4,629 learners from India have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

COL’s L3F has been working with non-governmental and community-based organisations, such as Vidiyal, the Mann Deshi Foundation, Arul Anandar College (AAC) and the Reddiyarchatram Seed Growers Association (RSGA).

By 2018, following Vidiyal’s successful advocacy, 15 organisations had adopted L3F. Vidiyal helped improve the capacity of these new organisations to integrate L3F strategies in their policies and programmes and to produce learning materials.

In 2015–2018, RSGA facilitated credit-based learning programmes with the active participation and support of 14 additional organisations. The Farmers’ Producer Company, formed by L3F women, established a meat shop utilising an equity grant received from the Small Farmers’ AgriBusiness Consortium. The L3F initiative continued to strengthen women’s capacity via voice-mail messages, supporting the continuous training they receive in goat rearing, business management and corporate literacy.

AAC initiated a certificate course on Multimedia for Lifelong Learning and ODL, in which 25 students were enrolled. Using theoretical, lab-based and field-based approaches, the programme equipped learners with necessary skills and expertise. AAC also trained staff and other L3F non-governmental organisations in multimedia-based ODL content development. L3F conducted an assessment of the AAC project and formulated strategies for the college to lead other tertiary institutions in integrating L3F into their academic programmes.
COL supported a three-day capacity-building workshop for the L3F community in Chennai to help them convert text, video, images and voice messages to OER to create a repository called L3F Pedia. In the workshop, participants also developed three draft OER policies for their own organisations and finalised plans to make content more accessible to the farming community through technology.

COL’s three partner organisations — AAC, RSGA and Vidiyal — conducted an extensive needs analysis among farming communities to pinpoint the skills gaps to be addressed; this resulted in the identification of 50 critical skills areas. Based on these areas, the partners have developed 150 OER in the native Tamil language using multimedia techniques. The use of multimedia to create this content in a local language helps farmers follow the content easily.

In 2018–2020, L3F initiatives in Tamil Nadu by Vidiyal, RSGA and AAC focused on strengthening the results achieved over the last three years. The main thrust was upscaling the initiative both horizontally and vertically with the support of other stakeholders, such as NGOs, banks and farmer training centres. The initiative also focused on persuading academic institutions to adopt L3F and mainstream it into their academic curricula. The project expanded its geographic reach to three more districts. More NGOs, banks and farmer training centres were identified as partners for collaboration and the implementation of L3F activities.

During 2019–2020, COL organised a series of capacity-building workshops for NABARD managers, focusing on logical framework analysis, which had been conceptualised with input from NABARD’s regional management.

In partnership with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, COL has supported the design and delivery of 27 offerings of MOOCs on topics in agriculture and nutrition. Learners from 50 countries joined these courses, with most coming from India. As well, COL in 2020 launched a series of mobiMOOCs for farmers (an innovative learning platform for those using basic mobile phones), with over 7,500 learners participating. Topics covered corporate and digital banking literacy, digital marketing, soil and pest management practices, and stress management during lockdown. As a result, training participants were able to market their products online, gain new findings showed that every dollar invested in the project generated nine to 16 dollars’ worth of social return. Studies have shown that participation in L3F leads to higher empowerment, which, in turn, reduces the profit inefficiencies of the participating farmers.

In July 2019, a workshop on rural credit guarantee in support of informal learning brought together leaders in the banking and regulatory sector in Tanzania with senior officials in development banking in India. The purpose was to help the Tanzanian delegation understand the nuances of lending with just learning as collateral, as has happened in L3F locations in South India. NABARD, India’s premier development bank, expressed interest in working with bankers in Sub-Saharan Africa and in scaling up the successes of L3F in South India to cover hundreds of thousands of farmers.
orders and keep earning income. The digital banking course has helped them overcome restrictions against gathering at banks by making online transactions easier and convenient.

Most recently, COL entered into an agreement with the Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank to train its staff in aspects of the L3F model. As part of this agreement, in January 2021, COL organised an orientation programme for the bank’s senior and mid-level officials to introduce close to 1,000 staff to the processes and analytics of learning using mobile devices. This is part of COL’s move to transition L3F from the meso to the macro scale, with the potential to impact about 1.7 million farming households in the state.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

COL has partnered with several Indian universities in TEL implementation.

As part of the Advanced ICT Skills Development project, IGNOU has worked with five other open universities in Africa and Asia to create courses in web and mobile application development. IGNOU completed two courses: *Introduction to Mobile Architecture* and *Introduction to Windows and iOS*. IGNOU has launched a certificate programme in mobile app development using these courses and other courses developed by COL with partner institutions. COL also developed and presented a draft policy on OER for higher education to India’s MHRD in 2018.

COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning conducted one workshop each at the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey (SNDT) Women’s University, Mumbai, and IGNOU, New Delhi, in April 2016. The SNDT Women’s University developed and adopted a TEL policy based on COL’s intervention. A total of 18 blended courses were developed at this university and offered to over 1,200 students.

Two workshops — *Course Development for the Diploma in Animation and Multimedia*, held at Odisha State Open University (OSOU) in November 2016, and *Course Development in Media-Related Areas*, at Centurion University of Technology and Management (CUTM), conducted in September–October 2016 — provided capacity building for the development of nine skills-development courses. OSOU organised a review workshop in July 2017 to finalise the *Diploma in Animation and Multimedia* course. In January 2018, OSOU announced the launch of the programme. CUTM organised a two-day review workshop in March 2017 to finalise the learning materials (print and videos) for the four vocational courses being developed at the university.

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**Triple wins from L3F for a woman farmer in India**

Ms Kalarani, a farmer from Alathurampatti, Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu, India and mother of two, juggles multiple responsibilities. She credits COL’s L3F programme with helping her significantly improve her livelihood. Since 2015, she has been a shareholder in Reddiarchatram Sustainable Agriculture Producer Company Limited (RESAPCOL), a farmer-producer company whose members engage in profit sharing. Via RESAPCOL, Ms Kalarani has benefited from L3F’s blended learning approach, which promotes good agricultural practices. In-person training and regular mobile voice messages helped her acquire relevant and timely knowledge about sustainable farming practices.
In the framework of TEL’s advanced ICT skills development project, CUTM completed the development of four skills courses, IGNOU developed two courses — *Introduction to Mobile Architecture* and *Introduction to Windows and iOS* for the Diploma in Mobile Application Development — and OSOU launched a diploma programme in Multimedia and Animation. The programme has six courses: (i) *Introduction to Multimedia*, (ii) *Digital Imaging*, (iii) *2D Animation*, (iv) *3D Animation*, (v) *Audio Visual Production* and (vi) *Project Work*.

COL has contributed to capacity building, course design and policy development at Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGUKT). Activities have included a policy development workshop in March 2017, as well as workshops on the development of blended learning courses using Moodle. Following the creation of a TEL policy, RGUKT staff engaged in offering 17 blended courses to over 2,000 students in different disciplines.

TEL hosted a workshop on *Designing a Community of Practice* for participating institutions in December 2018 in New Delhi. A total of 18 participants from 11 Commonwealth countries were in attendance, including three from India.

As well, a workshop titled *Training of Trainers for the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA)* was held in December 2018 in New Delhi. A total of 22 participants from 12 countries attended, including one from India. Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including 496 from India.

As well, with COL’s support, OSOU organised a national workshop titled *Quality Assurance of OER* in June 2019, with participants hailing from 15 open universities in India. OSOU also took steps to adopt C-DELTA for all its students and organised a workshop in June 2019 on preparing teachers to support learners. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OSOU developed two courses with COL support: *Psychological Care during COVID-19 Pandemic* and *COVID Yuddhagyan for General Public*.

In the framework of its TEL initiative, COL has partnered with the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) to help persons in rural areas maintain wireless networks, thereby providing last-mile connectivity to the Internet. A series of workshops was organised in 2018–2019 to prepare learning materials using OER. In 2020, DEF trained 2,000 Indian weavers and artisans in digital skills.

In 2020, IGNOU launched the Certificate in Mobile Application Development using the advanced ICT
skills courses developed with COL’s support. COL offered an advanced ICT course, AngularJS Development, with Amphisoft Technologies, India to 568 participants, including 100 from nine other Commonwealth countries.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from India were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

In September 2020, Dr Sugata Mitra, Emeritus Professor, National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT), presented a webinar titled The Emerging Future of Learning, part of COL’s OpenDoor Future of Learning and Thought Leadership Series.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: India report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In September 2018, the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation completed a project for COL that aimed at strengthening gender perspectives in academic research and increasing the capacity of researchers to include gender perspectives in their work.

In the framework of the Gender initiative, COL twice hosted the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL, in Malaysia in 2018 and 2019. Dr Sushma Jaireth, an expert in gender studies, was a workshop speaker in the 2018 session.

NIOS conducted a needs analysis and planning workshop to develop a project plan for the proposed Gender Green Teacher programme, which aims to equip NIOS teachers with the skills to integrate gender and environment into their teaching. Three modules were developed in 2020: Gender, Understanding the Environment and Teaching and Learning about Gender, Environment and Sustainable Development. The materials are being translated into Hindi, and recordings of complementary videos are in progress.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) Mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Professor Vasudha Kamat and Ms Chetna Vijay Sinha are CWW mentors.

GIRLS INSPIRE

GIRLS Inspire was initiated by COL in July 2015 with the generous support of the governments of Australia and Canada. Its aim was to mobilise the power of ODL to provide secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls prevented from gaining education by barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms and distance from schools.

The Reaching the Unreached through ODL in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan (RtU) project, funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia, provided secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls prevented...
from gaining education. The initiative mobilised the power of ODL to overcome barriers to education and economic participation and create enabling conditions for sustainable livelihoods.

In early 2016, GIRLS Inspire partnered with the Mann Deshi Foundation, enabling it to reach more girls and women. The Mann Deshi Foundation created mobile training centres using two buses equipped with self-learning materials, laptops and vocational training equipment. In addition, 41 gender-sensitive courses were developed on life skills and vocational skills and delivered face-to-face and via community radio. In total, 6,033 girls across 150 villages were trained in at least three subjects each.

Community workshops on girls’ education, gender equality, health, hygiene, and the impact of child marriage built trust between the communities and the project. Participants included nurses, Accredited Social Health Activists, mayors, village workers, advocates, doctors and teachers. Tablets and multimedia presentations facilitated the sharing of previous work and successes in other villages. A strong storytelling approach was used, which led to greater buy-in from parents and husbands.

The Mann Deshi Foundation’s radio station reaches 170,000 households across 104 villages in the State of Maharashtra, in their local dialects. The team developed radio content on health skills and financial literacy and produced 14 modules on various topics, such as income and expenditure, savings, banking, the importance of education, loan repayment, HIV/AIDS and child marriage. Based on a sample from 31 villages, the community radio programme reached an estimated 42,798 people in 31 villages alone, at least 4,000 of whom were girls and women. After their life-skills and vocational training, 312 girls were in income-generating opportunities as interns, employees or entrepreneurs as part of this project. Learning financial management and having access to banking was critical to their sustained success and economic independence. By the end of the project, 490 girls and women had opened bank accounts.

The RtU project, which concluded in March 2017, had reached over 54,000 girls and women in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, as shown in the final report prepared for DFAT.

Building on the success of this RtU model, the RtU Scaling Up Project: Training and Technology for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls was launched in July 2018 with further funding provided by DFAT, aiming to reach poor rural communities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In the framework of this initiative, over 8,500 women and girls have been trained in India, and more than 2,200 community members were reached through awareness-raising activities. A total of 350 women and girls gained employment, and over 86 benefited from...
internship opportunities. Over 450 men and boys were trained in gender equality.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Professor Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, and Professor Ashok Ogra, Adviser, APJ Group of Institutions, are members of the CEMCA Advisory Council. The Council met face-to-face for annual meetings in 2015–2019 and used a virtual mode to meet in 2020.

In India, CEMCA works in the areas of Higher Education and Skills, as well as Community Radio.

HIGHER EDUCATION

OER POLICY

In December 2015, a report on the status of state open universities in India formed the background document for a meeting of vice chancellors from these institutions, who discussed the theme of “Reforming ODL in India.” CEMCA convened a meeting of the vice chancellors of state open universities in collaboration with MHRD to discuss the implementation of OER policy and development and the sharing of OER. CEMCA also facilitated a national consultation workshop on OER policy in March 2017 and with COL’s support submitted to MHRD a draft national OER policy for higher education.

CEMCA has trained 90 faculty members from the Central University of Hyderabad, Netaji Subhas Open University and Uttarakhand Open University in e-content development. Twenty content writers and editors received training to develop materials using OER for a professional development course at Netaji Subhas Open University titled Inclusive Education.

CEMCA assisted the following universities in India with developing institutional OER policies:

- Central University of Himachal Pradesh
- Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University
- Netaji Subhas Open University
- Odisha State Open University
- Tamil Nadu Open University
- Uttarakhand Open University
- Vardhman Mahaveer Open University
- Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University

In 2019–2020, several workshops were held for more than 200 faculty from these open universities. The universities have the approval of statutory authorities, and institutional OER policies are in place.

At the Central University of Punjab, CEMCA supported building teachers’ capacity in e-content development using Moodle. With COL’s support, Uttarakhand Open University developed learning materials for the Post-Graduate Diploma in Cyber Security and released them as OER.

Mayuri is a 19-year-old girl from Dhondewadi village whose parents passed away when she was three. Her grandmother, over 85 years old, has taken care of her since then. Mayuri left school when she was in Class 9 and started working, earning a mere 150 rupees a day (CAD 3.00).

She learned about Mann Deshi’s programme for young girls, supported by COL, and enrolled herself. She was guided to start her own business instead of working as a wage labourer. Mayuri received information about health and hygiene, cleanliness and financial savings. She was very keen to learn all of this. She also trained in the making of decorative materials/showpieces for households and generates a good profit through this activity.

She now feels confident that she can feed her grandmother and her brother by working from home.
CEMCA helped Telangana State to develop an OER policy, which has been submitted to the state government for final approval. CEMCA is assisting Telangana State to implement the Government of India’s ICT @ School initiative. As part of this, a secondary-level ICT course was developed as a teacher handbook.

ONLINE COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY

Under CEMCA’s Life Skills for Engineers initiative and in collaboration with COL and IIT Kanpur, 19 faculty members were trained in December 2017 in the effective use and management of the mooKIT platform to deliver MOOCs.

In collaboration with the University of Hyderabad and Osmania University, CEMCA designed and developed the Life Skills for Engineers MOOC. The objective of the course was to introduce various concepts relevant for engineers, such as communication skills, critical thinking, leadership skills, morals and ethics. Online interactive counselling sessions for participants were offered as well. Close to 5,500 students enrolled in this course in 2019–2020.

CEMCA has also supported Uttarakhand Open University (UOU) in the design and development of the Natural Resources Management and Livelihood Systems online course, piloted in September 2020.

Also in September 2020, CEMCA conducted a three-day Online Capacity Building programme for the faculty of Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Open University, Chhattisgarh on the theme “Open Educational Resources for Teachers and ODL Facilitators,” which brought 150 members from various schools/divisions in the university together with content developers from formal universities.

As well, CEMCA and the Centre for Educational Technology, IIT Kharagpur developed the Framework and Guidelines for Quality E-content Development, which will be used to prepare quality e-content for different types of courses. The guidelines will assist higher education teachers with e-content development.

With a view to developing the capacity of ODL institutions, CEMCA designed and developed the Quality Assurance Toolkit for ODL Institutions, which has been reviewed by an expert committee from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, and pilot tested at UOU.

CEMCA prepared the Linking Skill Programmes with Academic Programmes in Higher Education guidelines to provide additional skills to students during their formal study, with the aim of improving their livelihoods, employability and sustainability.

A two-day workshop on virtual labs was organised in November 2020 for faculty of UOU to build their awareness about the use of virtual labs to perform laboratory experiments. Another online workshop, titled Use of Technology for Online Teaching and Learning, was offered in collaboration with Pandit Sundarlal Sharma (Open) University.

CEMCA has also facilitated an online staff development programme, Development of MOOC Courses for ODL Learners, for 130 faculty members of Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University.

The Academic Counselling for ODL Learners MOOC was offered in partnership with Odisha State University and attracted 1,800 learners from 59 countries.

HIGHER EDUCATION INTEGRATED MODEL

CEMCA has developed an integrated model to address the challenges of higher education in the current dynamic environment and is moving towards working in depth with its partners. It is providing support and strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to improve sustainable livelihoods. CEMCA also initiated a programme to enhance the life skills of learners and professionals for sustainable livelihoods and has adopted OER and online/blended learning approaches for better learner competencies and opportunities in its initiatives.

The Higher Education Integrated Model has been implemented in six higher education institutions: Bilaspur University, K.K. Handiqui State Open University, Odisha State Open University, Netaji Subhas Open University, University of Hyderabad and UOU.

Through this integrated approach, 120 teachers and content developers enhanced their capacity for e-content development, online course offerings, curriculum revision and MOOC development, during hands-on training workshops. Overall, 16 needs-based and industry-linked courses were developed, 19 existing and 16 new courses at the certificate/diploma/advanced diploma/postgraduate diploma levels were
offered, approximately 4,853 learners were enrolled in these CEMCA-supported courses, and 3,178 learners successfully completed them. CEMCA also supported online and face-to-face counselling for 3,114 learners on employment and entrepreneurship to enhance their employability through job fairs and online placement services.

SKILLS

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

A toolkit for career guidance based on job roles identified by the National Skill Development Corporation was developed and field tested with 230 girls in secondary schools. This initiative, supported by the IKEA Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme, aims to equip girls for financial independence through employment and entrepreneurship. The University of Kashmir, in collaboration with CEMCA, has launched a skills development programme for 250 youths, mostly women. CEMCA supported capacity building for 790 vocational trainers in activity-based learning and 418 students in generic employability skills.

In the skills sector, CEMCA has developed a flexible and blended model for counselling and training in three areas: pedagogy, livelihoods life skills and generic employability skills.

In partnership with Focal Skills Pvt. Ltd., CEMCA worked to establish Incubation Centres in three locations in Himachal Pradesh, where 100 prospective women entrepreneurs over a three-month period learned how to set up beauty salons and become self-employed after being trained for the beauty trade.

CEMCA has supported the Government of Odisha through the Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society to train 1,000 vocational trainers.

In January–February 2020, in partnership with the Guiding Souls Trust, New Delhi, CEMCA organised a two-part Enterprise Development Training for Tribal Women in the Sonbhadra District of Uttar Pradesh. The main objective was to orient the women to enterprise and build their knowledge and skills for setting up businesses. A total of 100 tribal women participated, and some of them showed interest in creating business plans and presenting these to the bank.

In early 2021, in collaboration with the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development, CEMCA offered an online train-the-trainers programme on employability, entrepreneurship and life skills for ITI vocational trainers in Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.

COMMUNITY MEDIA

CEMCA supports civil society organisations and institutions involved in community media to empower communities to pursue sustainable development goals.

Under the Science for Women’s Health and Nutrition project, supported by the Government of India, CEMCA conducted a baseline survey of five community radio stations, in which 5,000 women were surveyed, and CEMCA helped these radio stations to produce 50 sample programmes. CEMCA carried out several capacity-building activities in OER for teachers at the BOSCH Vocational Centre, Bengaluru.

In collaboration with the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow, CEMCA organised a two-day workshop titled Documentary Film Making in
March 2019. A total of 32 students from all over India, from Jammu to Kerala, participated in the workshop.

At the request of the national Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, CEMCA developed a documentary film titled *Community Radio: Step-by-Step Procedures and Policies of the Government of India*.

CEMCA has been organising annual community radio (CR) video challenges with the goal of creating awareness among CR stations, media students and members of the general public about the role of CR in bringing about social development. As well, *Community Radio (CR) Awareness* workshops were organised by CEMCA in 2019–2020, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat and Dimapur, Nagaland. The objective was to raise participants’ awareness about how to establish CR stations. The workshops were supported by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. More than 100 participants from 60 NGOs in Gujarat state, Nagaland and Manipur participated in the workshops. Around 20 NGOs from these states have expressed interest in applying for CR licences.

In 2020, the government of India initiated a *Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP 2020)*, and CEMCA has been engaged to co-ordinate the activities related to this initiative with CR broadcasters. A total of 25 CR stations from all the regions of the country have been identified. In the framework of this initiative, broadcasts in various languages on key aspects of the policy were organised in August–September 2020.

**CEMCA’S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

In response to the needs of stakeholders, CEMCA conducted online programmes for staff development and other programmes for the faculties of open universities in the region. Between March 2020 and January 2021, programmes were conducted for more than 2,000 faculty members and administrators from 11 universities in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Pakistan.

During the lockdown period, CEMCA hosted webinars titled *Cyber Security in Online Learning*, *The Future of Jobs: Post COVID and Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*. Seven webinars were conducted with 40 different CR stations to facilitate experience sharing on providing community support during COVID-19. Audio programmes developed by CEMCA were shared with 289 stations for broadcasting.

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### Special Events and Activities

#### PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored 32 delegates from India to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. A major highlight of the forum was the conferment of the title of COL Honorary Fellow on seven eminent individuals, including Ms Chetna Vijay Sinha, Founder and President of the Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank and its non-profit sister, the Mann Deshi Foundation, in recognition of her valuable contributions to sustainable development, reaching the unreached in remote areas, and the empowerment of women.

COL sponsored 35 delegates from India to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2020. In partnership with NIOS, COL co-hosted the Open and Innovative Schooling workshop, which was attended by eight delegates from India. As well, eight participants from India joined the TEL Partners meeting, and there were eight delegates at the L3F workshop. All three workshops were hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

At PCF9, COL conferred the title of Honorary Fellow on two eminent individuals from India: Professor Nageshwar Rao, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of ODL in the Commonwealth and his leadership of open universities; and Mr Kamaraj Keppanan, Founder of the NGO Vidiyal, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of lifelong learning for farmers in the Commonwealth and contributions to sustainable development. Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University received COL’s Award of Excellence for Institutional Achievement for having
a positive impact on those who otherwise had no hope for a better future. Ms Sakshi Kumari, an NIOS student, received the Award of Excellence in a Distance Learning Experience.

Dr Sugata Mitra, Emeritus Professor, NIIT, delivered a keynote at PCF9 in which he stressed that comprehension, communication and computing should be the key outcomes of schooling.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Asian Regional Consultation was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 2016. In attendance were Dr B. K. Bhadri, Assistant Educational Adviser, MHRD (now MoE), and Dr Mangala Sunder Krishnan, Professor, IIT Madras.

INDIA’S HIGH COMMISSIONER TO CANADA VISITS COL

India’s High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency Mr Vikas Swarup, visited COL headquarters on 18 January 2018 to familiarise himself with its work. Mr Swarup was accompanied by the Consul-General of India in Vancouver, Ms Abhilasha Joshi. COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar briefed the High Commissioner on COL’s work in Member States, particularly India.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, and the second was held virtually in May 2020. Mr Madhu Ranjan Kumar, Joint Secretary (DL & BP), Ministry of Education, represented India at the 2018 meeting.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in India include:

- Ministry of Education (formerly Ministry of Human Resource Development)
Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Malaysia (population: 31,949,777 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 99.6% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 72.2% (2018). The oldest universities are the University of Malaya, which offers teacher training, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, which offers courses in technical and vocational education. Open and distance education is provided by the Open University Malaysia, which was established as a private university by a consortium of 11 public universities in 2000, Wawasan Open University, established in 2006, and the regional Asia e University, established in 2007 by the Asia Cooperation Dialogue.

Internet connectivity is available to 84% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 140 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Malaysia. The Ministry of Education’s Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 includes measures such as providing students with ICT skills and knowledge, equipping all national schools with 4G Internet access and a virtual learning platform, training teachers in ICT, increasing the student-to-device ratio, and piloting ICT innovations, such as distance learning and self-learning.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education launched a new channel to broadcast educational programmes via television, radio and the Internet. The ministry also provided an online learning platform containing digital textbooks, videos, online teaching applications and other useful resources.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

YBhg Datin Noorazah binti Omar, Undersecretary of International Relations Division, Ministry of Higher Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Malaysia.

**NOTABLE MENTIONS**

Professor Dr Zoraini Wati Abas is an Honorary COL Adviser.

Professor Dato’ Dr Ansary Ahmed is a former Honorary COL Advisor.

YBhg Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Anuwar Ali is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Tan Sri Dato’ Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan is a COL Honorary Fellow and former COL President and CEO.

Professor Dato’ Wong Tat Meng is a COL Honorary Fellow.
COL’s work in Malaysia is primarily in the areas of higher education and technology-enabled learning.

Learners from Malaysia have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**Education Sector Overview**

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL has been working with Wawasan Open University (WOU) to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Between 2015 and 2019, 1,067 persons enrolled in the programmes, and 473 graduated.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Professor Dr Lily Chan, Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, currently serves on the CEMBA/CEMPA EGB, while Mr Prakash V. Arumugam, Senior Lecturer, School of Business and Administration, serves on its AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

In January 2018, COL entered an agreement with the Open University Malaysia (OUM) to fund the participation of four scholars from Commonwealth Member States in the Master of Instructional Design and Technology programme.

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I am proud to say that even before the final CEMBA semester, I was hired as the branch manager of a global relocation company with offices in more than 60 countries, and two years later, I was headhunted to be the country manager of a Singapore-based moving company. At the end of 2015, I decided to break out on my own and set up Raven Man Relo Services, offering full-service moving and relocation services to clients in over 40 countries. Everything had to be set up, from the brand name to the mission and vision, the logo, company registration, adherence to legal requirements and industry compliances, etc. Unreservedly, I have to say that my CEMBA education helped to thrust me onto my own again and onto the global platform, too.

— Raymond Loh, CEMBA graduate
Asia e University hosted two high-level summits of vice chancellors (VCs) of open universities from around the Commonwealth, in March 2016 and May 2018. Each of these meetings brought together representatives from 19 countries, including Malaysia.

COL facilitated a study visit of four delegates from the tertiary education sector in Mauritius to OUM, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia and Asia e University in May 2017 to discuss their higher education strategies, online higher education models, teacher training, and areas of collaboration among the institutions.

With the support of India’s Ministry of Human Resource Development, COL collaborated with Indira Gandhi National Open University to organise a two-day roundtable of VCs of open universities in Asia and Africa in April 2019 in New Delhi, India. Nineteen VCs from eight countries, including Malaysia, were in attendance.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 20 participants from Malaysia.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

A total of 89 learners from Malaysia have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

As part of the Advanced ICT Skills Development project with five other open universities in Africa and Asia, OUM has developed two courses: Principles of Design and Digital Imaging as OER.

In November 2016, COL’s Adviser: Open Educational Resources conducted a pre-conference workshop at the 8th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, titled Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Android App Development: Hands-on Workshop on Mobile IT Application Inventor 2, as a field test of COL’s Educational App Development Toolkit for Teachers and Learners. He also co-facilitated a three-day workshop on Designing and Delivering Online Courses and MOOCs at WOU, which was attended by 30 participants from Malaysian and Indian universities.

Following the completion of the report titled Towards National Policy Guidelines for OER in Malaysia, a national consultation on OER policy was held in November 2016 in collaboration with Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. As a result, a draft national OER policy was submitted to the Ministry of Higher Education in May 2017.

In the framework of the TEL initiative, COL is providing ongoing support to Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) to build its capacity to integrate blended learning in its courses. In March 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning facilitated a visioning workshop on developing a UMS policy for the systematic implementation of TEL. A workshop titled Designing Blended Learning Using Moodle was organised in May 2018 to support faculty in the development of blended courses. In November 2018, a workshop co-hosted with COL
focused on strengthening the UMS open access repository, and another workshop was organised to develop 20 blended courses for UMS. In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, COL organised a series of webinar-based workshops titled *Design and Development of Massive Open Online Courses* for the faculty of UMS. Seventy-four teachers completed the course successfully, receiving a certificate of completion. With the support of COL, UMS completed the TEL benchmarking exercise in December 2020, involving over 50 teachers in the process, and developed an action plan for further mainstreaming TEL at UMS.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Malaysia.

Professor Soon Fook Fong, UMS, Mr. Ariel Aaron Schatenstein, Fairview International School Johor, and Dr Purushothaman Ravichandran, University College Fairview, participated in a Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting. Mr. Ariel Aaron and Dr Purushothaman Ravichandran also participated in a C-DELTA Training of Trainers workshop. Both events were organised by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Malaysia were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

With COL’s support, UMS organised the *Introduction to Biorisk Management* MOOC in August 2020, attracting 950 learners.

**GENDER**

The *Gender Profile 2017: Malaysia* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.
In the framework of the Gender initiative and in partnership with WOU, COL organised the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL to build the leadership capacity of mid-career women in ODL institutions. The initial three-day workshop in Penang, in June 2018, provided training in different aspects of leadership to participants from 23 countries. The second workshop was organised in April 2019 to help build a network of role models and mentors who can provide ongoing guidance, encouragement and support to enable women leaders to realise their full potential. In 2018, Dr Rashidah Shuib was invited as a speaker and Dr Siti Aishah Hashim Ali, OUM, participated in the training. Dr Aliza Binti Ali, OUM, attended the 2019 edition of the programme.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Lily Chan, Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, Ms Abtar Kaur and Professor Dr Zoraini Wati Abas are CWW mentors.

**COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)**

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA is headquartered in New Delhi, India and works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Ms YBhg Datin Paduka Ir Dr Siti Hamisah Binti Tapsir, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, is a member of the CEMCA Advisory Council.

An online capacity-building programme on the adoption of open educational resources was organised for the faculty members of Kuala Lumpur’s HELP University in September 2020. Apart from synchronous sessions, asynchronous support was provided to participants. Themes covered during the three-day programme were: Concepts of Open Access, Open Educational Resources, Search and Use OER for Teaching and Learning, and Create OER Using OER through Revise, Remix Method.

HELP University has been supported by CEMCA to design an OER policy. A two-day workshop in September 2020, conducted by an expert from the Open University of Sri Lanka, resulted in the drafting of a university policy.

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

The Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PFC8) was held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2016 in partnership with OUM. The forum brought together the best minds in ODL to discuss issues of common interest, exchange ideas and explore best practices. Over 500 registered participants from 59 countries, including 49 Commonwealth Member States, attended. There were 150 delegates from Malaysia.

Y.B. Dato’ Seri Idris Jusoh, Malaysia’s Honourable Minister of Higher Education, officially opened PCF8, with Professor Asha Kanwar and Professor Dato’ Dr Mansor Fadzil providing welcoming remarks.
Tan Sri Dato’ Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, former President and CEO of COL, served as a plenary speaker.

Professor Dato’ Dr Mansor Fadzil, President and Vice-Chancellor of OUM, spoke on quality and equity in learning.

Education ministers from five countries participated in PCF8, holding a Ministerial Roundtable where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. The Honourable Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Malaysia was in attendance with OUM’s Vice President (Finance Planning), Professor Ramli Bahroom.

The Deputy Higher Education Minister of Malaysia, YB Datuk Dr Mary Yap Kain Ching, spoke at the welcoming dinner.

COL presented OUM with the Award of Excellence for Open and Distance Education Materials: Category A. This award acknowledges the excellence of materials in print, audio, video or a combination of these. OUM was recognised for its course Object-Oriented Programming, offered in the Faculty of Science and Technology to students undertaking the Bachelor of Information Technology and other IT-related programmes.

The Award of Excellence for Open and Distance Education Materials: Category B was presented to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. This award honours the achievements of colleagues who have designed and developed exemplary study materials through the innovative use and reuse of OER. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia received the award for the MOOC Rethinking Teaching; Redesigning Learning, offered by the Faculty of Education.

A key outcome of PCF8 was the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which presents a set of ten recommendations for governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society related to lifelong learning, access and equity, teacher education, OER, and quality.
COL sponsored five delegates from Malaysia to participate at PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Dr Nurbiha A. Shukor, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Dr Nor Farah Wahidah Abdul Rahman, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, and Dr Harithar Kamal, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Professor Dr Soon Fook Fong, UMS, also participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Partners meeting organised in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

COL conferred the title Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning on eight eminent individuals from different corners of the Commonwealth, including Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, Vice Chancellor, USM. She was recognised for her leadership in lifelong learning in the Commonwealth, especially for women, and her outstanding service to the advancement of higher education and science in Malaysia.

COL also presented an Award of Excellence for Distance Education Materials to OUM for its chatbot-assisted course Object-Oriented Programming.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The Asian Regional Consultation, organised jointly with Asia e University, was held in Kuala Lumpur in December 2016. The following participants attended the consultation: Professor Dr Hazman Shah Abdullah, Malaysian Qualifications Agency; Dr Fong Soon Fook, UMS; Professor Rozhan M. Idrus, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia; Associate Professor Dr Janet Woo Tai Kwan, OUM; Professor Dato’ Ansary Ahmed, Ms Wan Lidiana Lidia Wan Abu Bakar, Dr Roshaya Mohamad, Professor John Arul Phillips, and Mr Bala Kumar Thambiah, all from Asia e University; and Professor Madhulika Kaushik and Dr Andy Liew Teik Kooi of WOU. YB Datuk Dr Mary Yap, the Honourable Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Malaysia, delivered the valedictory address at the event.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

During 2018–2020, COL’s Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, India, and the second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Ms M. Nithiya Ruby, Principal Assistant Director, Academic Management Division, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, represented Malaysia at the 2018 meeting. Ms Julianazren Jaafar, Desk Officer, International Relations Division, Ministry of Education, Malaysia, attended online in 2020.
**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

In 2020-2021, COL’s VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Malaysia were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

There were participants from Malaysia in the **OER for Online Learning (OER4OL)** MOOC offered by COL throughout 2020.

Learners from Malaysia participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the **Mobile Learning with Multimedia** MOOC and in the **Cybersecurity Training for Teachers** MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

The **Digital Literacy Lab for Educators** MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, had 1,685 enrolments, including from Malaysia.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Malaysia include:
- Ministry of Higher Education
- Asia e University
- HELP University
- Open University Malaysia
- Universiti Malaysia Sabah
- Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia
- Wawasan Open University

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**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Maldives (population: 530,953 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.4% (2017), a secondary net enrolment rate of 47% (2002) and a gross enrolment ratio of 81.3% (2019). Maldives Polytechnic was established in 2010 as the national government institution to develop, manage and provide training facilities for technical and vocational education and training. The Maldives National University, established in 1973, offers teacher training courses and houses the Centre for Educational Technology and Excellence, which provides distance education.

Internet connectivity is available to 63% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 156 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Maldives. The Ministry of Education’s Maldives Education Sector Plan 2019–2023 includes a policy to effectively use technology in the education system for improved services delivery. The educational technology target is 100% effective use of educational technology in schools, including Internet access for teaching and learning.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education adopted the Maldives Education Response Plan for Covid-19, which included providing “Telekilaas,” an educational programme broadcast over TV, and developing an educational platform named Filaa to provide online learning materials.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mr Ahmed Mausoom, Education Officer, Head of Foreign Relations Section, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Maldives.

NOTABLE MENTION

The Honourable Ms Zahiya Zareer is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
Maldives rejoined the Commonwealth in February 2020 and benefits from activities under the auspices of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia. Learners from Maldives have participated in online courses hosted by COL’s Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth and the Skills Online and Technology-Enabled Learning initiatives.

**Education Sector Overview**

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

Maldives is a member of VUSSC. In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

The Maldives Higher Education Quality Assurance policy was developed with the technical support of COL Higher Education in March–April 2015.

In 2015–2016, Higher Education supported the Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education to formulate the National Policy on Open and Distance Learning for the Republic of Maldives.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Maldives were among the almost 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

A total of 41 learners from Maldives have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. The initiative has been supported by the Ministry of Education. On 27 April 2021, learners from the region who had earned certificates through the COL–Coursera programme were celebrated at a virtual convocation, where the Honourable Dr Ibrahim Hassan, Minister of Higher Education, made special remarks.
TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

The *Baseline Study on Technology-Enabled Learning in the Asian Commonwealth* was published by COL in 2015 in an effort to determine the number of teachers needed to be trained in ICT in education; it includes a case study on Maldives.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Maldives were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

In October 2020, COL President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar launched discussions with the Ministry of Education to supply Aptus, a low-cost device that allows educators and learners to connect to digital learning platforms and content without the need for grid electricity or Internet access.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA is headquartered in New Delhi, India and works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Mr Ahmed Mausoom, Education Officer, Ministry of Education, is a member of the CEMCA Advisory Council.

In September 2020, a three-day capacity-building programme on online learning facilitation was organised by CEMCA for 560 teachers and teacher educators in Maldives, in collaboration with the National Institute of Education (NDI).

CEMCA and NDI also organised an online capacity-building training on virtual labs for teachers and teacher educators in February 2021. The event brought together 194 educators in the areas of physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. Participants were welcomed by the Honourable Fathimath Naseer, Minister of State for Education, Maldives, who emphasised the usefulness of virtual labs for reaching teachers and students across diverse geographies in the country.

Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, India, and the second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Mr Ahmed Mausoom, Education Officer, Head of Foreign Relations Section, Ministry of Education, represented Maldives at the 2020 online meeting.
**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted eight participants from Maldives.

A total of 187 learners from the Maldives participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and 170 participated in the *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Six learners joined the *Teaching Mathematics with Technology* MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, had 1,685 enrolments, including three from Maldives.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Maldives include:

- Ministry of Education
- Maldives National University
- National Institute of Education
- Villa College

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Pakistan (population: 216,565,318 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 67.6% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 37.4% (2018). The Higher Education Commission recognises 217 degree-awarding institutions, 134 of them in the public sector (2020). Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974, becoming Asia’s first open university. The Virtual University of Pakistan, established in 2002, is the first university based completely on modern information and communication technologies. Fatima Jinnah Women’s University opened in 1998 and was Pakistan’s first university exclusively for women.

Vocational education is supported by the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), which regulates, facilitates and provides policy direction in vocational and technical training. Provincial institutions include the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) in the Punjab and Sindh Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority in Sindhu. The Academy of Educational Planning and Management was established in 1982 to train education managers. The Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) was established by the Ministry of Education in 1967 and focuses on providing ICT to educational facilities at various levels. Functions include in-service teachers’ training and introducing IT education at various levels.

Internet connectivity is available to 34% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 76 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Pakistan. An objective of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training’s National Education Policy 2017–2025 is to promote, enhance, expand and strengthen the use of ICT in education. At the tertiary level, the ministry aims to establish new science and technology universities and research technology parks.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training adapted the Pakistan National Education Response and Resilience Plan (K-12) for COVID-19, and televised lessons were available through the TeleSchool channel.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

**FOCAL POINT**

VACANT

**NOTABLE MENTIONS**

Ms Shahnaz Wazir Ali is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor Dr Atta-ur-Rahman, FRS is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

The Honourable Zubaida Jalal is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Naveed Akhtar Malik is a COL Honorary Fellow.
COL’s current work in Pakistan is primarily in the areas of higher education and girls’ and women’s training for livelihoods. Learners from Pakistan have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

HIGHER EDUCATION

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) continues to offer COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium. Between 2015 and 2020, 4,123 persons enrolled in the programmes, and 2,213 graduated.

Graduates of the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes at Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan) have experienced, on average:

- an increase of 37.6% in monthly earnings;
- an increase of 31.6% in annual income;
- an increase of 28.5 percentage points in the probability of being employed as a manager; and
- an increase of 36.8% in wages (earnings per hour).

– Evaluation of CEMBA/CEMPA at Allama Iqbal Open University

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Professor Dr Zia-Ul-Qayyum, Vice Chancellor, currently serves on the EGB, while Professor Syed Hasan Raza, Chairman, Department of Business Administration, and Dr Salman Ali Qureshi, Assistant Professor, Business Administration, serve on its AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

A study tour for vice chancellors in Pakistan was hosted by COL in April–May 2015, in partnership with the British Council and the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan.

Two high-level roundtables for VCs and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Each of these meetings brought together
representatives from 19 countries, including from Pakistan. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. AIOU is a member of the Consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 47 participants from Pakistan.

With COL’s support, the Virtual University of Pakistan (VUP) developed and delivered a course titled Introduction to Artificial Intelligence for IT and Non-IT Professionals. It was offered during two successive semesters in 2020 and 2021, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, over 20,000 learners enrolled for the course. VUP also organised a virtual two-day Quality Assurance in E-Learning workshop in early 2020.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

With support from VUP and the Fatima Jinnah Women’s University, COL has been implementing the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative amongst the final-year students of these universities, who are complementing their academic degrees with employability skills. A total of 962 learners from Pakistan have benefited from these online courses, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

The Qatar Foundation’s Reach Out to Asia organisation, in collaboration with COL, ran a project between January and March 2016 using Aptus at AIOU and College Kanju Swat, which allowed boys in Grades 8 to 10 to access electronic learning materials from a local server without having to connect to the Internet. Children from Grade 10 had one tablet for each child, while children from Grades 8 and 9 had one tablet for every two children. Results from a study of the

Areeba Toor: “An invaluable experience with excellent content.”

Gulnoor Butt: “The best eLearning platform, beneficial for me to learn.”

Hina Fatima: “All of the courses have been taught in a way that is easy to understand.”

Javeriya Yasin: “The skills I learned have encouraged me to grow professionally.”
effectiveness of the project revealed there had been a marked improvement in academic performance, with children earning significantly higher post-test scores than pre-test scores. The children and parents involved also noted that the project increased their knowledge about the use of tablets for learning, and parents and teachers shared that the mobile learning project increased the children’s interest in studying.

COL has also cooperated with AIOU to develop courses titled *Introduction to Web Development* and *Web Programming I (Client-Side Scripting)* under an advanced ICT skills development project for the Certificate in Web Application Development.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Pakistan were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Pakistan.

The new model of COL’s Aptus device, based on the Raspberry-Pi single-board computer, is being developed in Pakistan. This migration to a widely available and standardized processor is expected to yield widespread benefits by facilitating learner access to digital learning materials in a huge number of locations worldwide that are still without Internet connectivity.

**GENDER**

*Gender Profile 2017: Pakistan* is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

**GIRLS INSPIRE**

GIRLS Inspire was initiated in July 2015 with the generous support of the governments of Australia and Canada to mobilise the power of ODL to provide secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls prevented from gaining education by barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms and distance from schools.

Funding from Global Affairs Canada supported the implementation of the project Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) through Open, Distance and Technology-Based Education. It addressed the needs of girls, as they are disproportionately impacted due to discriminatory social norms, and it specifically focused on preventing child marriages. In Pakistan,
GIRLS Inspire worked with two partners who utilised a collaborative approach in their project implementation. Together, the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) and Bedari chose two districts in Punjab with a high prevalence of CEFM; the first phase of the project focused on the Muzaffargarh district and the second phase on Multan. A total of 146 communities were reached in Pakistan in three years.

Bedari and SPARC worked together to raise awareness about CEFM and train women and girls in various life and vocational skills, thereby preparing them for employment or self-employment to lead sustainable and empowered lives. In total, 6,325 girls completed life-skills and vocational-skills training with SPARC and self-growth sessions with Bedari, 610 internships were established, 168 women and girls successful gained employment, 429 women and girls opened bank accounts, and 30 women and girls obtained microloans.

To increase community understanding about the harmful effects of CEFM and the numerous benefits of stopping it, Bedari and SPARC reached 17,266 community members and held 333 meetings and events with stakeholders, including 26 theatre performances. They also formed committees of prominent community members, distributed pamphlets and made door-to-door visits.

A total of 247 staff members were trained in standard operating procedures for child-friendly environments and women’s and girls’ issues, project communication, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Bedari and SPARC established 60 exchanges with other civil society individuals and organisations. These included local, regional and national government officials, TEVTA, and a network of 49 legal councils, whose volunteer lawyers promote and protect human rights. Nationally, Bedari lobbied against CEFM at meetings with parliamentarians, the National Council for Social Welfare, and the Child Rights Movement and at forums such as the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Alliance. Bedari also developed the documentary *A Tale of Two Marriages*, which was seen by more than 120 community members and stopped the marriage of one teenage girl.

In February 2019, COL, in collaboration with Tanzania’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire CEFM end-of-project meeting. It was attended by members of parliament and their representatives from nine countries, including Dr Nousheen Hamid, a member of Pakistan’s National Assembly. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap for how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes that will prepare women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship. Thirty-eight child marriages

Madhia is a 25-year-old from Pakistan who comes from an underprivileged family and has a physical disability caused by polio. She has always wanted to get an education, but her father, a daily wage labourer, could not support her dreams. It was through a friend that Madhia learned about life-changing opportunities offered by COL’s GIRLS Inspire initiative.

Madhia successfully completed courses in dressmaking and in basic life-skills education. She praises the programme for helping her break down barriers and gain financial independence. She has opened a dressmaking centre in her home, and the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child has facilitated her gaining a loan from Akhuwat Foundation to support her business venture.
in Pakistan were prevented, in part because of GIRLS Inspire, as shown in the final report prepared for Global Affairs Canada.

The project Reaching the Unreached (RtU) through ODL in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia. It provided secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls who were prevented from attending school. The initiative mobilised the power of ODL to overcome barriers to education and economic participation and create enabling conditions for sustainable livelihoods.

In early 2016, GIRLS Inspire in Pakistan mobilised teams in Peshawar, Multan, Rawalpindi and Sindh-Hyderabad. SPARC strengthened and scaled up the Centre for Street Children (CSC) operations based in these regions, where school dropout rates are high among girls and child marriage is prevalent. Paired with the mobilisation work, the SPARC team registered 5,673 girls, who were then trained in life and vocational skills. All the girls completed a locally relevant vocational course for employability, such as stitching and tailoring, embroidery, beautician and parlour skills, fabric painting, ikebana making, and candle making. Twenty-eight girls obtained formal employment, and 84 took up internships. SPARC also helped ten girls to access microloans. Five exhibition events were organised to feature the girls’ vocational work and help them earn an income.

Community activities also focused on sensitising boys and men about girls’ and women’s right to education and training. SPARC registered over 300 men and boys in their gender equality training.

The RtU project concluded in March 2017, with 5,673 women and girls in Pakistan trained, as shown in the final report prepared for DFAT.

Building on the success of this RtU model, the RtU Scaling Up Project: Training and Technology for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls, in poor rural communities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, was launched in July 2018 with further funding provided by DFAT. COL continues its partnership with both SPARC and Bedari. In the framework of this initiative, over 12,000 women and girls have been trained in Pakistan, and close to 3,000 community members were reached through awareness-raising activities. Close to 1,000 women and girls gained employment, and over 650 benefited from internship opportunities. Over 300 men and boys were trained in gender equality.

As well, SPARC participated in the National Gender Caucus to influence gender equality policies. COL commissioned SPARC to train 3,590 women and girls through the new centres that were opened during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, 184 girls reported earning an income and 12 opened bank accounts for the first time. Eleven girls who completed the training went on to train other girls in their villages in designing and dressmaking. An awareness session on girls’ education has been held in Peshawar with 17 female members of the Shaheed Abad Community. In Rawalpindi, sessions have been held with women and girls on various topics, including CEFM and women’s empowerment. As well, SPARC participated in three meetings: the Country Steering Committee, and the Communications and M&E Focal Points meetings.

As well, partners in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in three webinars on the use of social media, creating databases and providing support during COVID-19.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Pakistan. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment training for the Asia region held in November 2020 included 16 participants from Pakistan.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA is headquartered in New Delhi, India and works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

In October 2020, CEMCA organised an online capacity-building training for the faculty of the Virtual University of Pakistan. Titled Adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER), the three-day workshop focused on the advantages of OER, copyright and open licensing, as well as ways to evaluate and adapt OER. The workshop included practice sessions on key topics.
3RD E-LEARNING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

In March 2016, COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar delivered a keynote speech titled “Skilling Our Youth” at the 3rd E-Learning and Distance Education conference, organised by the Virtual University of Pakistan.

AIOU INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Professor Kanwar visited Pakistan again in May in 2016. At an international seminar on the Development of a National Policy for ODL, organised by AIOU, she gave the keynote speech and had meetings with the chairman and executive director of Pakistan’s Higher Education Commission. COL is a key player in national ODL policy development in Pakistan, and Professor Kanwar’s visit strengthened existing partnerships with both AIOU and the commission.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

A major highlight of PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016, was the conferment of the title of COL Honorary Fellow on seven eminent individuals, including Professor Naveed Akhtar Malik, Rector of the Virtual University of Pakistan, in recognition of his unique contributions to improving the quality of ODL and his innovations in TEL. In addition, COL sponsored eight other delegates to participate at PCF8: Dr Adnan Riaz, AIOU, Mr Hamid Ali Nadeem, AIOU, Dr Moiz Uddin Ahmed Siddiqui, AIOU, Ms Sabeen Almas, SPARC, Ms Sadia Hussain, SPARC, Mr Safeer Khan, Bedari, Ms Raffat Shuja, Bedari, and Mr Shabab Khan, Planwel.

COL sponsored four delegates from Pakistan to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Ms Sabeen Almas, SPARC, Dr Amtul Hafeez, AIOU, Dr Munir Sewani, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, and Dr Yasira Waqar, Lahore University of Management Sciences.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Asia Regional Consultation was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in December 2016. Professor Naveed A. Malik, Rector of the Virtual University of Pakistan, attended.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Pakistan were among the almost 6,000 participants in these courses.

There were participants from Pakistan in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC offered by COL in

A total of 38 learners from Pakistan participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 115 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, COL’s Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Pakistan.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, had 1,685 enrolments, including from Pakistan.

As well, participants from Pakistan joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partnerships support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Such partnerships include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Pakistan include:

- Higher Education Commission
- Allama Iqbal Open University
- Bedari
- Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child
- Virtual University of Pakistan

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Singapore (population: 5,703,569 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 99.7% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 99.8% (2017). The principal universities are the National University of Singapore (founded in 1905), Nanyang Technological University (1981, as Nanyang Technological Institute), Singapore Management University (2000), Singapore Institute of Technology (2009), Singapore University of Technology and Design (inaugurated in May 2012) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (established in 2005 as SIM University), which offers online courses.

Teacher education is offered by the National Institute of Education, founded in 1950 as the Teachers’ Training College and becoming part of Nanyang Technological University in 1991. Vocational courses are offered at Singapore Polytechnic (1954), Ngee Ann Polytechnic (1963), Temasek Polytechnic (1990), Nanyang Polytechnic (1992), the Institute of Technical Education (1992) and Republic Polytechnic (2002). The SkillsFuture initiative was introduced in 2015 by the Ministry of Education to provide lifelong learning and skills development opportunities for Singaporeans.

Internet connectivity is available to 98% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 156 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Singapore. The Singapore Government’s fourth Technology Master Plan aims to bring ICT into the core of the education process, focus on improving the capabilities and skill sets of teachers, improve the sharing of best practices and successful innovations, and further build up infrastructure.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, schools and institutes of higher learning shifted to full home-based learning, preschools and student care centres suspended general services, and the Ministry of Education developed Singapore Student Learning Space, an eLearning portal that provides online learning material for students and supports teachers.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

**FOCAL POINTS**

Ms Cindy Eu, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Branch, Planning Division, Ministry of Education, is a COL Focal Point for Singapore.

Ms Diana Chua, Senior Officer, International Relations, International Cooperation Branch, Planning Division, Ministry of Education, is also a COL Focal Point for Singapore.
COL’s Work in Singapore: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL has collaborated with Singapore in the areas of open/innovative schooling, teacher education and technology-enabled learning.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)
In August 2017, COL’s Senior Adviser: Open Schooling conducted a workshop with ministerial representatives from five countries where the OIS model is implemented (Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia). The purpose of the workshop, organised at Singapore’s National Institute of Education (NIE), was to share experiences in the implementation of COL’s OIS model in mainstream and open schools, and to provide an opportunity for these participants to align country implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges, and identify innovative ways to increase the programme’s momentum. The workshop deepened participants’ understanding of the OIS model and created a network among the countries where it is being used.

TEACHER EDUCATION
COL’s Education Specialist: Teacher Education visited the Singapore NIE in May 2016 and participated in the training of 29 teacher educators from Africa. This training focused on supporting teacher educators in their integration of ICT in their curricula and classes. ICT integration is a major component in the enhancement of curricula and the adoption of open and distance learning (ODL) methodologies.
Singapore’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted 18 participants from ten Commonwealth countries at a workshop designed to build capacity among teacher educators and education practitioners in the use of ICT to support and improve teaching and learning. Held in August 2017, the workshop was part of an annual initiative under the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Workshop participants included teacher educators, teacher education managers, and ministry representatives from Belize, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia. The lecturers included research staff from NIE International, the consultancy and training arm of the Singapore NIE.

COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted participation from Singapore.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL sponsored Mr Tze Foon Foong, CEO, Nanyang Polytechnic International, to present at the Ministerial Roundtable on Skills Development organised by COL, which was held at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Fiji in February 2018. That same year, COL also sponsored his engagement as the principal resource person to generate recommendations for the TVET sector, at the request of the Fiji Higher Education Commission.

The International Coordination Division of the Ministry of Education in Singapore has been promoting the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative to the entire nation. A total of 250 learners from Singapore have benefited from this initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

Following a workshop organised in May 2016 by COL, in partnership with Singapore’s Technical Cooperation Directorate, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and NIE,
Busitema University (Uganda), Egerton University (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam University College of Education (Tanzania) collectively launched a project to tackle the challenges arising from the integration of ICT in teaching and learning in the region.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Singapore were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Singapore.

GENDER

The Gender Profile 2017: Singapore report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

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Singapore was represented at the Life Skills for Engineers Level I MOOC offered by CEMCA in January 2020.

Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, India, and the second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Ms Cindy Eu, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Branch, Planning Division, Ministry of Education, represented Singapore at the 2020 online meeting.

Partnerships

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In Singapore, COL has partnered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Sri Lanka (population: 21,803,000 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 99.1% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 91% (2018). The University Grants Commission recognises 15 public universities and 18 higher education institutes, and there are six other public universities that come under other departments of government, as of 2020. Leading universities include the University of Colombo, the University of Kelaniya, and the University of Peradeniya. The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) provides courses through distance learning.

The National Institute of Education was established in 1986 under the Ministry of Education with a mandate to design and develop curricula for general and teacher education, provide professional development to the educational community, and spearhead change through research and innovation. Technical colleges offer courses up to the diploma level in engineering and business. The University of Vocational Education, established in 2008 by the Ministry of Education, provides technical and vocational education at the bachelor level.

The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission was established by the Sri Lankan government in 1991. The commission’s primary responsibilities are policy formulation, planning, quality assurance, co-ordination, and the development of tertiary and vocational education in the country.

Internet connectivity is available to 34% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 143 per 100 people (2018). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Sri Lanka. The National Education Commission’s Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka (2016) aims to include technological advances in curricular development as well as to support and provide resources for conducting educational research and enhancing ICT skills for teacher professional development.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education provided educational content through state-run TV channels, Channel Eye and Nethra TV. The ministry also developed E-thaksalava, a national eLearning portal to facilitate learning from home for Grades 1–12. Free Internet access for students of eLearning universities was also provided by the Sri Lankan government.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Madura M. Wehella, Additional Secretary, Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Sri Lanka.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Professor Uma Coomaraswamy is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Professor Shironica Karunanayaka is an Honorary COL Adviser.

Dr Tara de Mel is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr H. M. Sirisena is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor D. S. Wijeyesekera is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL’s current work in Sri Lanka is primarily in the areas of girls’ and women’s education and training, higher education, teacher education, lifelong learning for farmers, and technology-enabled learning. Sri Lanka benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, and learners have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

In May 2016, COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters (D.Lit.) Honoris Causa from OUSL.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

In Sri Lanka, COL finalised an agreement with NIE regarding the development of a gender policy framework for the country. An initial background study was completed and then used as a working document to inform a workshop facilitated in partnership with India’s National Institute of Open Schooling. This led to the development of a draft guiding framework, which was subsequently ratified by NIE’s management. The guidelines were adopted and now apply to 2,200 learners enrolled in 25 centres.

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL’s Vice President visited Sri Lanka in December 2015, meeting with the Additional Secretary and Focal Point in the Ministry of Education and briefing him about COL activities. He also met with the Vice Chancellor and professors of OUSL and identified strategies for strengthening teacher education. He reviewed the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) activities of OUSL, the University of Ruhuna and MOBITEL. These meetings helped strengthen the link between COL and the Sri Lankan government.

COL supported two workshops for advanced ICT course development at OUSL, in August 2015 and July 2016. In 2016, COL commissioned a consultant to work with the Ministry of Education to develop OER for English language teaching.

Following a meeting in Colombo between COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar and Sri Lanka’s Minister of Education, COL pledged to assist Sri Lanka’s teacher education programmes by focusing on school-based, in-service models.

As a follow-up, a four-day Stakeholder Forum on School-Based Professional Teacher Development was held in May–June 2018. A total of 31 participants from the Ministry of Education, teacher centres, NIE and the National College of Education attended the forum, which aimed to identify the entry point for intervention in the teacher development process while avoiding any overlaps or contradictions with the existing school-based teacher development programme.

In May 2019, COL organised a sensitisation workshop titled School-Based Professional Teacher Development (SBPTD) at the Construction Equipment Training Centre, Battaramulla. The workshop was attended by 16 participants, including the Chief Commissioner.
and the Director of Education (Teacher Education Administration). A Teacher Competency Framework was drafted. A follow-up workshop was held in June 2020 to finalise the framework, with 35 participants that included officials from the Ministry of Education.

In September 2020, the Ministry of Education held a workshop to introduce school principals to the COL-supported School-Based Professional Teacher Development programme. Principals from 15 national and provincial pilot schools as well as ministry officials participated and will lead the professional development activities in their respective institutions.


**HIGHER EDUCATION**

In 2015–2016, COL supported a Quality Enhancement Tools Workshop for the University of Jaffna, where 13 tools were developed. COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education visited the University of Jaffna in November 2016 to facilitate a workshop on the development of quality enhancement tools, as part of addressing the COL Review and Improvement Model’s external verification recommendations, adopted by the university’s senate. The process enhanced the institution’s pursuit of a continuous quality improvement approach.

COL continues to work with OUSL to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Between 2015 and 2019, 317 persons enrolled in the programmes, and 228 graduated.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Professor Anbahan Ariadurai, Vice Chancellor, currently serves on the EGB, while Dr H. D. D. Champika Liyanagamage and Professor V. Sivalogathasan, Head and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management Studies, are AB members.
Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana, in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries participated, including Sri Lanka. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

With the support of India’s Ministry of Human Resource Development, COL collaborated with Indira Gandhi National Open University to organise a two-day roundtable of VCs of open universities in Asia and Africa in April 2019 in New Delhi, India. Nineteen VCs from eight countries, including Sri Lanka, were in attendance.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, COL's Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (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. OUSL is a member of the consortium. COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

In November 2019, the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work hosted a technical workshop at Botswana Open University in Gaborone, with the participation of youth work experts from Sri Lanka. The event was part of a series designed to prepare partner institutions to develop and deliver the BA in Youth Work in blended and online environments.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 79 participants from Sri Lanka.

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**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL partnered with the University of Vocational Technology to develop a National Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Teacher Education by distance learning. The University of Vocational Technology continues to offer this programme.

In collaboration with the National Library of Sri Lanka (NLSL), an agency of the Ministry of Education, COL implemented the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative across the nation. The NLSL entered into partnerships with various government agencies, including the Vocational Training Authority, to promote skills among the unemployed and underemployed in the nation. A total of 17,042 learners have benefited from these online courses, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 27 April 2021, learners from the region who had earned certificates through the COL–Coursera programme were celebrated at a virtual convocation, where Professor Kapila Perera, Education Secretary, delivered special remarks.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

COL contributes to the implementation of L3F in Sri Lanka through its support to OUSL and the University of Ruhuna (UR). The focus of UR has included increasing the number of farmers involved in mushroom production, expanding the use of ODL for farmer extension, and strengthening the human resource capacity of agricultural divisions in ICT-based extension.

L3F has supported the development of: gender-sensitive ODL materials; facilitator training in ODL materials
COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2021

development and participatory learning skills; blended learning on mushroom production; strengthening of the voicemail system for mobile-based learning; workshops in entrepreneurship and business-plan development; the creation of links between L3F participants and financial institutions, including state banks; and capacity building for Agricultural Extension Field Workers and for Extension Officers in ICT-based extension. L3F has also supported the offering of a computer-literacy training course for female students at UR.

The Ministry of Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure spearheaded a country-wide scale-up of L3F, with technical support from OUSL and UR. The ministry and MOBITEL employed a full-time staff member responsible for the expansion of L3F. The University of Colombo has joined OUSL and UR in the L3F consortium and is helping to expand L3F to the Batticaloa district. Ericsson Telecommunication donated 20 computers for an ICT centre in Batticaloa, to support the digital literacy of girls from L3F households.

With COL's support, OUSL reached over 2,000 L3F participants in 23 villages of the Galle, Kaluthara, Kandy, Kegalle, Kilinochchi, Kurunegala, Matale and Rathnapura districts to set up computer information centres.

Financial literacy programmes via mobile phones were launched in October 2018, and UR built the capacity of 120 farmers in the use of interactive voicemail services for learning.

In the framework of L3F, COL has also facilitated the production of Guidelines for Developing a Business Plan for Small Entrepreneurs and a booklet titled Empowering and Attracting the Modern Woman to Be Engaged in the Floriculture Industry. As well, ODL resources on ginger, turmeric, pepper and cinnamon production have been completed.
In partnership with UR, COL supported workshops at new help centres on developing apps for mushrooms, floriculture and organic farming. Since April 2019, training programmes have been conducted in a blended learning mode for 120 farmers. Reports by UR state that mushroom productivity has doubled among the L3F participants and that the average monthly income of L3F mushroom farmers has increased by CAD 500 to CAD 600 per month.

In October 2019, COL facilitated discussions with OUSL and UR to conduct field visits and consultations with the Ministry of Telecommunication, Digital Infrastructure and Foreign Employment as well with the Department of Export Agriculture and MOBITEL. A stakeholder meeting in October 2019 aimed to increase awareness of the importance of more L3F organisations (government and banks) to strengthen the capacity of mushroom, floriculture and organic farmers to leverage ODL.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

With COL’s support, OUSL completed the development of two courses: *Introduction to Android* and *Programming with Python*. As part of the advanced ICT course development project started with six open universities, these courses formed a collection for use by educational institutions in the Commonwealth.

In 2015, a *National Workshop on the Participatory Video Storytelling Programme* was implemented by the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum in partnership with the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya. The objective of this programme was to build the capacity of youths to produce community videos on issues affecting underprivileged communities in Sri Lanka and disseminate them through social media. This programme aimed to provide knowledge and skills on community learning and its relevance for producing community videos. The programme engaged 20 youths from Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil backgrounds, who were given eight days of training on producing community videos highlighting various social, cultural, economic and political issues affecting communities in different regions across Sri Lanka.

A paper stemming from COL’s OER-based eLearning professional development online course at OUSL received an ICDE Prize for Innovation and Best Practice at the 26th ICDE World Conference, held in Sun City, South Africa in October 2015. In January 2016, a capacity-building workshop on the use/reuse of OER took place in Sri Lanka in collaboration with OUSL; 24 academics participated.

In 2016, with COL’s support and the guidance of the Ministry of Education, OUSL undertook an advocacy programme to promote the development of draft OER policies for Sri Lanka’s nine provincial ministries of education (PMoE). The policies aimed to provide direction in the use of OER and increase access to, as well as support quality teaching and learning in, the country’s education system.

Within a six-month period, the project increased key stakeholders’ awareness of the concept and impact of OER, advocated for the necessity and benefits of provincial OER policies for education, initiated the process of drafting OER policies for each province, identified champions in each province to draft the policies, and provided ongoing online support to those champions, leading to final draft policies. During this intervention, approximately 60 policy makers across the country were involved in the development of the final drafts for the nine provinces.

As a follow-up, COL provided support to a three-day *National Workshop on Provincial OER Policy Implementation*, which brought together 42 key stakeholders to finalise the provincial policies for potential adoption and implementation. Some of the workshop’s key results were: detailed procedures for policy implementation in each provincial council, including key resource persons within the PMoE and Provincial Directorates of Education; and timelines for implementing the policies in the nine provinces.
In early 2017, OUSL completed a 12-part video-based course on *Instructional Video Production for Teaching and Learning*. This is a hands-on course on how to use technologies such as smartphones to capture, edit and publish high-quality instructional videos for teaching and learning.

COL has also supported OUSL to launch the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme. A three-day workshop on C-DELTA was organised in July 2018 for 41 teachers from 39 schools around the country. The project aims to develop the capacity of schoolteachers and promote the adoption of digital education in schools. Following the workshop, OUSL continued to scale up C-DELTA. Dr Shironica P. Karunanayaka, OUSL, participated in the C-DELTA Training of Trainers workshop held in New Delhi, India in December 2018.

With COL’s support, the Faculty of Education at OUSL conducted a research project on C-DELTA implementation in Sri Lankan schools. Upon the project’s completion, OUSL launched a website, which captures reflections from teachers on their journeys. Following the implementation of C-DELTA in schools, OUSL adopted it as a non-credit course for its learners. A follow-up training-of-trainers workshop was organised in January 2020, with the participation of 40 teachers from across the country and staff from seven OUSL faculties.

Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Sri Lanka.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Sri Lanka were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.
The Gender Profile 2017: Sri Lanka report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

Three universities in Sri Lanka conducted gender audits and developed gender roadmaps using COL’s Institutional Gender Scorecard. COL is now working with 12 additional universities in Sri Lanka to support this process in their institutions. In 2015–2016, the University of Peradeniya pilot-tested the scorecard, and the University of Ruhuna developed a gender roadmap to address its gender audit findings.

In February 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: Women and Girls held meetings with MOBITEL and MAS Holdings to introduce the Gender initiative. In 2018–2019, COL partnered with MAS Holdings to train 50 disadvantaged women to improve their English language proficiency via a blended learning model.

In collaboration with Sri Lanka’s University Grants Commission, COL conducted a three-day train-the-trainers workshop on Gender Mainstreaming in Higher Education in Colombo in June 2018. The workshop aimed at supporting the country’s universities in developing an effective draft action plan to strengthen gender mainstreaming in their institutions.

Since September 2020, COL has been working with the Women’s Development Centre (WDC), based in Kandy, on a national project to use available and affordable technologies to develop and deliver skills training in entrepreneurship to 5,000 women and girls over the next two years, including livelihood and business skills, in the Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Matale districts.

To build ICT capacity among girls in the Kandy district, a five-day workshop for trainers, to train girls on mobile application development, was organised in August 2018 at the ACBT Kandy campus, and 25 girls between the ages of 17 and 27, representing different ethnic groups, learned Android mobile application development using the MIT App Inventor platform. As well, 17 young girls from the Nuwara Eliya and Kandy districts were referred to the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority and the Vocational Training Authority for additional six-month training. WDC further identified 51 women and girls with access to mobile devices and trained them in online business.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Sri Lanka. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment training for the Asia region, held in November 2020, included seven participants from Sri Lanka.

GIRLS INSPIRE

GIRLS Inspire was initiated in July 2015 through the generous support provided by the governments of Australia and Canada to mobilise the power of ODL to provide secondary schooling and skills development training to women and girls who are prevented from gaining education by barriers such as early marriage, cultural norms and distance from schools.

The Reaching the Unreached Scaling Up Project: Training and Technology for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls in poor rural communities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka was launched in July 2018 with funding provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia. COL partnered with WDC as part of its regional expansion to implement this project.

In the framework of the project, close to 3,300 women and girls have been trained in Sri Lanka, and almost 4,000 community members were reached through awareness-raising activities. Close to 200 women and girls gained employment, and over 100 benefited
from internship opportunities. Over 180 men and boys were trained in gender equality.

WDC launched a spoken English class for members of the women entrepreneur association. Through self-help group activities, women and girls engaged in these activities became more vocal; they also started their own savings hubs and small-scale revolving funds to support home-based livelihoods such as home gardening, poultry and cattle rearing, and the sale of food items.

One of the main cross-cutting themes of WDC’s programmes is environmental justice. Training on recycling provided women entrepreneurs with knowledge on how to reuse waste for profit, and techniques for organic farming. As well, WDC has trained close to 90 boys and men in gender awareness. Through its community awareness-raising events, WDC has reached over 2,000 community members.

WDC has also trained 640 women and established an Entrepreneur Association with 950 members who are eligible for microloans following their training. In addition, WDC supported graduates of skills training to establish six food outlets for income-generating opportunities. Due to the pandemic, women and girls in Sri Lanka were trained in establishing their businesses online, as regular sales had declined.

As well, partners in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in three webinars on using social media, creating databases and providing support during COVID-19.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

Established by COL in 1994 with the goal of effectively utilising educational resources for distance education, CEMCA is headquartered in New Delhi, India and works in eight Commonwealth countries of Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Dr (Mrs) Madura M. Wehella, Additional Secretary, Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education, is a member of the CEMCA Advisory Council.

CEMCA supported OUSL to develop the Adopting Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) MOOC for educational leaders, policy makers, teachers and students. This course, which has four modules developed using a scenario-based learning approach, was offered in 2018–2019.

At a regional workshop hosted by the e-Learning Centre, University of Hyderabad, India in February 2019, a Quality Assurance Toolkit for ODL institutions was finalised. The workshop brought together 24 participants from 12 higher education institutions in

Until Rumeisha became involved with COL’s GIRLS Inspire, she would rarely leave the house. This young woman from a village in Sri Lanka was raised in a traditional culture and would manage her day-to-day life with minimal income brought in by her husband and occasional sewing orders. Even though Rumeisha was good at sewing and had participated in a sewing diploma course, her skills remained largely untapped.

A life-changing break came after she met with a representative from the Women’s Development Centre, a GIRLS Inspire partner in Sri Lanka. Rumeisha was invited to participate in a training programme aimed at building women’s livelihood and business skills. She was able to build self-confidence and obtain skills that allowed her to become a sewing instructor for the Industrial Development Board in her native village.

Rumeisha’s experience is an example of how GIRLS Inspire has contributed to a woman’s empowerment by increasing her confidence and improving her agency. Rumeisha is now an inspiration and a role model in her community.
Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Two faculty members from the distance education centre of the University of Peradeniya attended the workshop.

CEMCA holds annual meetings of its Advisory Council, with active participation of representatives from Sri Lanka. The 20th annual meeting was held in a virtual mode in December 2020 to review progress. Council members noted CEMCA’s contribution to ODL in the region and outlined priorities for the future. Dr B. Jayasooriya (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka) mentioned there would be a dedicated department for ODL in his ministry. Members suggested there should be more collaboration with mainstream media to communicate CEMCA’s achievements.

In January 2021, CEMCA organised an online capacity-building workshop for 180 faculty members of the University of Peradeniya titled *Implementation of Open Book & Take-Home Examination*.

### Special Events and Activities

#### PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored four delegates to participate at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016: Dr Nilantha De Silva, University of Ruhuna, Dr Uditha Ratnayake, OUSL, Mr Suraweera Arachchige, University of Vocational Technology, and Dr Nanda Wanniarachchi, Association for Educational Research and Development.

COL sponsored eight delegates from Sri Lanka to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Professor Umarany Coomaraswamy, University Grants Commission, Dr Nilantha De Silva, University of Ruhuna, Samarasinghe Mr Naleen Gamage, University of Moratuwa, Mrs Himasha Gunasekara, OUSL, Professor Shironica Karunanayaka, OUSL, Mr Kanapathippillai Ketheeswaran, OUSL, Dr Uditha Ratnayake, OUSL and Mrs Kamani Samarasinghe, University of the Visual and Performing Arts. In addition, Professor Karunanayaka and Dr Ratnayake attended the COL TEL meeting, and Professor Coomaraswamy and Dr De Silva attended the L3F meeting, both held in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

#### REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Asia met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in December 2018 in New Delhi, India, and the second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Dr Madura M. Wehella, Additional Secretary, Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education, represented Sri Lanka at both meetings.

#### COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including participants from Sri Lanka.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, had 1,685 enrolments, including from Sri Lanka.

As well, educators from Sri Lanka participated in the *OER for Online Learning (OER4OL)* MOOC offered by COL in 2020.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Sri Lanka include:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure
- MAS Holdings
- National Institute of Education
- Open University of Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum
- University Grants Commission
- University of Peradeniya
- University of Ruhuna
- Women’s Development Centre

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
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 Education Ministers, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and PCF10.**
COL in the Commonwealth

CARIBBEAN/AMERICAS
2015–2021
Affordable and accessible technologies are vital for building resilient education systems. While only about 50% of the global population has access to the Internet, in the Caribbean region, the percentage exceeds the global average (61%). Access to mobile subscriptions is much higher and stands at 113%, presenting an opportunity to build a cloud-based and mobile-friendly system of teaching and learning (Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience).

The Region, through its collaborations with the OER repositories of Commonwealth of Learning, is developing its national and regional policies, models and approaches for embracing OERs and Open Learning as innovative ways to democratize access and delivery of inclusive quality education.

– CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy

COL focuses on adding value to the countries’ efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions of the Caribbean in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education include emphasising quality and inclusive secondary and higher education and strengthening teacher development programmes.

COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative boosts employability in the Caribbean

Over 105,600 learners from the Caribbean and the Americas joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world. In Guyana, the initiative reached more than 10% of the country’s population aged 15 to 35, leading the Ministry of Education, Guyana and the Private Sector Commission to sign an MOU recognising the credentials earned under this programme for employment purposes.
In the area of skills, COL supports the expansion of access to technical and vocational education, the reinforcement of non-formal education in agriculture, and technology-enabled learning (TEL). These initiatives have been designed to achieve socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at low economic and environmental costs.

The Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021 concluded that COL’s activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women’s and girls’ empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.

COL’s major regional initiatives in the Commonwealth Caribbean countries and the Americas between 2015 and 2021 are outlined below:

- All the Commonwealth states in the Caribbean are members of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and COL is providing support to build their capacity and expertise in open distance learning (ODL). VUSSC courses are currently offered by the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, the University of Belize, the University of Guyana, and the Guyana Ministry of Education’s in-service teacher education agency.
- Through VUSSC, COL supported CARICOM in revising its regional ODL policy for the Caribbean, in alignment with the CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy.
- The Open Textbook Forum was held in October 2015 in Antigua and Barbuda, and representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines participated. The forum included a series of workshops that focused on the development of OER policies and the strengthening of open textbook initiatives in the region.
- The Caribbean and the Americas OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in April 2017 in Brazil. Representatives of seven Commonwealth countries from the Caribbean were in attendance.
- In June 2018, in partnership with UNICEF, CARICOM and the Ministry of Education, Guyana, COL organised a two-day symposium with the theme “Bridging the Gender Divide: Stemming the Tide of Male Underachievement in the Education System,” aimed at developing approaches to address the underperformance of boys in the education system. Also, as part of its thrust to strengthen its connections to the student community in British Columbia, Canada, COL linked a group of students from the University of British Columbia with four beginning teachers in Guyana to learn about their experience as males in the system.
• In November 2019, COL signed an agreement with Youth Challenge Guyana (YCG) to train and mentor boys and young men from South Georgetown to enhance their self-efficacy and livelihood skills. YCG has since launched a training programme for 43 young men in electrical installation and life skills. In February 2020, YCG organised the Introductory Electrical Installation training programme.

• COL has partnered with UWI’s Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) to strengthen staff capacity to develop and deliver an online MSc degree in Development Studies. Sixty-seven faculty, coaches and administrators from the three SALISES locations, in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, participated in face-to-face and online training activities held between May and August 2019.

• Since April 2020, VUSSC has been running an online course on Quality Assurance in Blended Learning, designed to build the capacity of quality assurance practitioners and learning designers in higher education institutions and of specialists from quality assurance agencies.

• In Dominica, VUSSC supported the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to develop and launch a national public education campaign to encourage behaviours that promote disaster prevention and preparedness, under the theme “Update, Upgrade for a More Resilient Dominica.”

• VUSSC is also supporting the Caribbean Tourism Organization to facilitate the development of online courses in the Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Policy and Development Framework, and a Multi-Hazard Risk Management Guide for the tourism sector.

• COL is also collaborating with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies to offer a joint qualification in youth development. This initial partnership has now expanded to include 17 institutions around the Commonwealth, one of which — the University of Guyana — is in the Caribbean.

• COL partnered with the Joint Board of Teacher Education in the Caribbean region to develop diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs. Subsequently, the Caribbean Assessment Battery for reading, language and mathematics was developed and piloted in Belize and Jamaica.

• As well, the University of Guyana and the University of the Commonwealth Caribbean are among the higher education institutions benefiting from COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration programmes.

• A partnership between COL and SALISES seeks to strengthen staff capacity to develop and deliver
an online MSc degree in Development Studies in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

- COL has been working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) to build the capacity of TVET practitioners through online training. COL supported the development of digital materials to enable CANTA members to train assessors, verifiers and instructors for the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications. COL is supporting CANTA so that it can run these online programmes on its own learning management system.

- In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL developed a MOOC on TEL for over 15,000 learners worldwide. COL and AU have also collaborated on the development of the Blended Learning Practice MOOC, benefiting close to 9,000 learners in the Commonwealth and beyond.

- In 2020–2021, Lakehead University, Canada, in partnership with COL and the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development led the design and development of six micro-courses on Youth Work in the Pacific.

- In June 2018, COL’s Technical and Vocational Skills Development initiative held a regional workshop on Sustainable Development in TVET for participants from Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

- Lifelong Learning for Farmers activities have taken place in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas and Jamaica, leading to improved capacities among farmers as well as extension personnel.

- In June 2019, mid-career women from tertiary institutions across the Caribbean came together for the workshop Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of AI. Facilitated by COL and hosted by the Ministry of Education, The Bahamas, the event explored current technologies and trends in education, such as OER, and the role of AI in enhancing these technologies.

- In January 2020, over 30 representatives from 14 countries in the Caribbean gathered in Saint Lucia for the regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER organised by COL in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

- During 2015–2020, Focal Points met twice for regional consultations to strengthen the
effectiveness of COL’s work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region and to share information related to learning for sustainable development. The first meeting took place in August 2018 in Kingston, Jamaica, and COL reconvened its Caribbean Focal Points in January 2020 in Saint Lucia to further fine-tune its activities in the region and inform the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).

• The Caribbean Examinations Council is a member of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19. As well, COL has been helping develop teacher capacity in online and blended learning via the course OER for Online Learning, which has been regularly offered in the region since June 2020.

• The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is being implemented in Jamaica. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice as well as school-based training.

• In the aftermath of Cyclone Dorian, COL extended support to The Bahamas for restarting schools by providing 30 Aptus devices and 300 tablets. Aptus, a COL innovation, is a low-cost micro-server for digital learning materials that does not require grid power or data connectivity to support tablet-based learning.

• Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teacher capacity in responding to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include Cybersecurity Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), and Teaching Mathematics with Technology, among others. These have attracted over 1,800 participants from 13 countries in the Caribbean.

• In December 2018, a ministerial delegation from Belize visited three distance education schools and the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, Canada, with a view to learning about open schooling in Canada and strengthening the international community of practitioners. COL sponsored the visit.

• In 2020, at the request of the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago, COL offered the course OER for Online Learning to over 8,000 teachers to develop their capacity in online and blended learning and enable them to provide effective pedagogical support to learners in the face of COVID-19.

• Professor Mohammed Ally, Centre for Distance Education, Athabasca University, serves as a COL Chair. Professor George Veletsianos, School of Education and Technology, Royal Roads University, is another COL Chair from Canada.
Antigua and Barbuda

- Primary net enrolment rate: 95.7%
- Secondary school completion rate: 88.8%
Antigua and Barbuda (population: 97,118 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.7% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 88.8% (2018). Antigua State College provides technical and teacher education. Antigua and Barbuda is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 73% (2016) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 192 per 100 people (2017). There is infrastructure available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Antigua and Barbuda. The 2013 ICT Policy in Education for Antigua and Barbuda, developed by the Ministry of Education, Sports, Youth and Gender Affairs, in partnership with COL, articulates the vision for integrating information and communication technologies across all levels of education in the country.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19


COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Patricia J. A. Benn, former Deputy Principal, Antigua State College, is COL’s Focal Point for Antigua and Barbuda.

NOTABLE MENTION

Ms Peecheeta Spencer, former Principal of Antigua State College, is a COL Honorary Fellow.

The Right Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and the Honourable Samantha Marshall, Minister for Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs, met with Dr Moses Tenywa, COL Education Specialist: Agriculture and Livelihoods, on 5 February 2020.
COL’s Work in Antigua and Barbuda: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

Current work in Antigua and Barbuda is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, Lifelong Learning for Farmers, technology-enabled learning, and technical and vocational skills development. Learners from Antigua and Barbuda have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In July 2020, VUSSC presented a session on Teaching and Learning with OER to 135 participants in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology’s annual Summer Institute.

As well, one learner joined the online course on Quality Assurance in Blended Learning, offered by VUSSC since April 2020.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Antigua and Barbuda were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

In 2015, two persons from Antigua and Barbuda attended a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET.

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training course, and the development of online CVQ Verifier Training and CVQ Instructor Training courses. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Antigua and Barbuda is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

A total of 182 learners from Antigua and Barbuda have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

In 2016, COL formalised its partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs (MALFBA). As a result of this partnership, COL has worked with Antigua and Barbuda’s Agricultural Extension Division and the Support for Women and Youth in Agriculture Project, a joint initiative of the Ministry of Social Transformation and Human Resource Development (MSTHRD) and MALFBA to
strengthen the agricultural sector and provide livelihoods for poor and vulnerable women and youths.

In June 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between COL and MALFBA to launch COL’s L3F in Antigua and Barbuda, where the L3F model empowers farming communities through the use of open and distance learning (ODL) and flexible and blended learning.

Since then, L3F in Antigua and Barbuda has recorded significant success, with extension staff from MALFBA and MSTHRD gaining capacity in the use of ICT and ODL in farmer extension. Two hundred farmers drawn from the South West, South East, South Central, North East and North West agricultural districts also have gained essential agricultural, economic and livelihood skills. The programme created a forum for constructive engagement among a large array of stakeholders from within other government departments (agriculture, social transformation, finance), ICT companies and the financial sector, who are working towards jointly addressing identified community needs.

Most recently, hotels, agriculture value chains and supermarkets have partnered with the Ministry of Agriculture in promoting L3F to support the participating farmers’ agricultural activities. In turn, the farmers sell their products to these institutions through a buy-back arrangement.

COL is also partnering with the Caribbean Agricultural Research Development Institute, which has trained 34 L3F participants on germplasm management, water management techniques, and research and development techniques.

In February 2019, an educational visit to the L3F project overseen by the Rural Agricultural Development Authority in Jamaica was organised for four officers and six L3F farmers from Antigua and Barbuda.

As well, business planning has been carried out as part of a project to create five courses on enterprise development, financial literacy, co-operative marketing, agricultural disaster preparedness, and climate-smart agriculture.

Most recently, the government of Antigua and Barbuda has committed to guaranteeing EC$2 million in low-interest farmers’ loans through the Caribbean Union Bank. This has implications for the further expansion of L3F in the country.

In collaboration with the Long Ping High Tech Company, L3F has offered training to farmers, teaching them how to produce exotic crops. As a result, farmers completed land preparation for planting seeds and developed their business plans.

As well, COL’s L3F model will be used to provide support to the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs to implement the Zero Hunger Challenge by strengthening backyard gardening for food sovereignty. A total of 200 backyard farmers are being trained in waterharvesting, shade house production, disaster preparedness, protection of land from deforestation, and marketing of produce using the Farmer Field School approach.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

Seventeen teachers from Antigua and Barbuda participated in the Open Textbook Forum held in October 2015. The forum focused on developing OER policies and strengthening open-textbook initiatives in the Eastern Caribbean region. One of the key outcomes was the development of two courses on entrepreneurship by Antigua and Barbuda’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, with COL’s support. A 2017 study commissioned by COL in Antigua and Barbuda found that the use of open textbooks at Antigua State College resulted in a number of benefits for learners,
including decreased student costs, improved learning outcomes and increased engagement.

In May 2018, The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform was launched in Antigua and Barbuda with a training programme for teachers in St. John’s, Antigua. Thirty teachers from 29 schools attended the workshop; they will go on to provide further support and training to students and teachers adopting C-DELTA in their respective schools. Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr K. Hyram Forde from Antigua State College participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting held in New Delhi, India, in December 2018.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Antigua and Barbuda were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Dr Patricia J. A. Benn, Antigua State College (ASC), and Ms Stacy Payne Mascall, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, attended the regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER in Saint Lucia in January 2020.

The Report on the Baseline Study of Technology-Enabled Learning at Antigua State College, published in September 2020, conveys the findings of a baseline survey conducted at ASC with the objective of establishing TEL preparedness at the institution, and thereafter developing TEL policy and implementing TEL with support from COL. It reports the findings of a self-review of the institutional facilities related to technology and policies, and the preparedness of lecturers and students to use technology for teaching and learning at ASC.

As part of its TEL implementation, ASC held an online workshop on Designing Blended Courses Using Moodle in October–November 2020, with the participation of 26 staff members.

**GENDER**

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Antigua and Barbuda report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2018 and 2019, women aspiring to assume leadership positions in ODL and ICT-based fields gathered in Malaysia for the COL-hosted Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL. Dr Cordella Kelly Hill, ASC, participated in this intensive workshop in 2018.

**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the attendance of Dr Patricia J. A. Benn, ASC, and Mrs Jacqueline Peters Richardson, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

Mr Owolabi Elabanjo, Ministry of Agriculture, and Dr Benn participated in PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, as well as the pre-forum workshops hosted by COL’s L3F and VUSSC.
REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

Dr Benn, ASC, participated in the Caribbean and the Americas Regional Consultation on OER held in Brazil in April 2017 in the lead-up to the 2nd World OER Congress, and in the regional consultations of COL’s Focal Points in 2018 and 2020.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

There were 93 participants from Antigua and Barbuda in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

Learners from Antigua and Barbuda participated in the October–November 2020 Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–November 2020, and the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, which ran in November–December 2020.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including Antigua and Barbuda.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC offered in September 2020 attracted participants from Antigua and Barbuda.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted learners from Antigua and Barbuda.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions, and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Antigua and Barbuda include:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs
- Antigua State College

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
The Bahamas

- 74.2% Primary net enrolment rate
- 62.5% Secondary school completion rate
Introduction

The Bahamas (population: 389,482 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 74.2% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 62.5% (2018). The University of The Bahamas (formerly The College of The Bahamas) is the country’s leading higher education institution, providing a diverse curriculum with courses leading to the bachelor’s degree level. The Bahamas is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region. The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) serves all members of the community and offers academic, technical and continuing education as well as corporate and community training opportunities in a wide range of programmes.

Internet connectivity is available to 85% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 109 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in The Bahamas. The Policy Statement on Electronic Commerce and the Bahamian Digital Agenda (2003), developed by the Ministry of Finance, outlines the government’s commitment to integrate ICT within the public school instructional system. A public consultation is underway on The National Development Plan of The Bahamas (2016), which has implications for the ICT infrastructure for education.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology launched the Bahamas Virtual Learning Portal, which contains relevant pedagogical resources for all students.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Maria T. Seymour, Senior Education Officer, Office of the Director (for) Director of Education, Bahamas Department of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for The Bahamas.
Current work in The Bahamas is primarily in the areas of eLearning, Lifelong Learning for Farmers and tertiary education, the latter being accomplished through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from The Bahamas have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**Education Sector Overview**

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In June 2015, at the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, held in The Bahamas, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat – Youth Affairs, and UWIOC to work together to convert the Youth Work diploma and degree programmes to OER. The bachelor’s degree course titled *Youth in Development Work* was subsequently developed by UWI in collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat and COL.

COL partnered with BTVI in the project Building Institutional Capacity to Develop and Deliver Quality Online Education to The Bahamas. The project supports BTVI in expanding access to and ensuring the quality of online and blended learning. During the recent lockdown, 22 instructors from BTVI, along with a staff member from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, completed the course *Developing and Teaching Online Courses*. BTVI has also developed five online courses as well as learning resources related to Maths, Reading, IT Skills, and Entrepreneurship. These are being released as OER, and students are registering to take the courses online in 2021.

Speaking in Parliament on 16 June 2020, The Bahamas Education Minister, the Honourable Jeffrey Lloyd, acknowledged the importance of COL’s partnership with BTVI, noting that 22 BTVI faculty, along with a staff member from his ministry, have participated in a project that will result in the creation of five blended courses for dual enrollment purposes throughout The Bahamas.
A quality assurance (QA) workshop was held in February 2020 with 38 participants from the Ministry of Education, the University of The Bahamas and BTVI. This was followed by a capacity-building workshop with 28 BTVI faculty to validate the QA guidelines and develop a toolkit for the QA of ODL courses.

Since April 2020, VUSSC has been offering an online course titled *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, which attracted participants from The Bahamas.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from The Bahamas were among the close to 6,000 participants in these courses.

In September 2020, VUSSC launched a course titled *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two offerings of the course brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including The Bahamas.

### Skills Sector Overview

#### TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training* course, and the development of online *CVQ Verifier Training* and *CVQ Instructor Training* courses. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which The Bahamas is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

A total of 106 learners from The Bahamas have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by the Ministry of Education, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

#### LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

A scoping study on the integration of Group Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification in The Bahamas L3F initiative was completed. It highlighted the government’s strategy, which focuses on agricultural production for import substitution as well as the strengthening of export-oriented agriculture.

Based on the study’s recommendations, COL’s Education Specialist: Agriculture and Livelihoods visited in February 2020 and conducted a stakeholder workshop to develop a strategy and design for a project to build capacity for GAP in The Bahamas.

In June 2020, The Bahamas Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority (BAHFSA) delivered a MOOC titled *Good Agricultural Practices* in partnership with COL. This seven-week MOOC attracted 673 learners from 35 countries, including 70 from The Bahamas.
TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from The Bahamas were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Ms Maria Seymour and Dr Marcellus Taylor, Director of Education from the Ministry of Education attended the COL-hosted regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER in Saint Lucia in January 2020.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: The Bahamas report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

Mid-career women from tertiary institutions across the Caribbean came together for the Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) workshop from 11 to 13 June 2019 in Nassau. Facilitated by COL and hosted by the Ministry of Education, the event explored current technologies and trends in education, such as OER, and the role of AI in enhancing these technologies. It also used a gender lens to examine the threats and opportunities associated with using AI in education. Four participants from The Bahamas attended the workshop: Mrs Tracy Ferguson-Johnson, University of the Bahamas; Ms Sonia Andrea Williamson, BTVI; Mrs Bridget Hogg, L. J. Mortimer

The COL report Boys’ Underperformance in Education: Revisiting the Issue in the Commonwealth examines the factors that continue to contribute to boys’ underperformance in education in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Zambia.
Maritime Institute; and Ms Katherine Alexandria Huyler, The Bahamas Agriculture and Marine Science Institute.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Bridget Rolle-Hogg, Associate Professor, Chemistry, University of The Bahamas, is a mentor in the programme.

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### Special Events and Activities

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the attendance of Dr Erecia Hepburn, The College of the Bahamas (now the University of The Bahamas), to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

In September 2019, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers at PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK. Ms Samantha Wilson, Education Officer for Technology Integration, Ministry of Education, represented the minister at the forum. In addition, COL sponsored the participation of Ms Michelle Sears from the Ministry of Education to attend the Interlocutors’ Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

In 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points met twice for regional consultations. Ms Michelle Sears, Assistant Director, Ministry of Education, represented The Bahamas at the 2018 meeting. Ms Maria T. Seymour, Senior Education Officer, Office of the Director (for) Director of Education, Bahamas Department of Education, attended in 2020.

**APTUS DEVICES FOR THE BAHAMAS**

In an online ceremony held on 19 November 2020, COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, symbolically delivered 30 Aptus devices and 300 tablets to the Honourable Jeffrey Lloyd, Minister of Education, The Bahamas to help build education resilience in his country. These tools were recently delivered to the education ministry for use by local schools that are still grappling with the devastation caused by Hurricane Dorian in 2019.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

There were participants from The Bahamas in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

Learners from The Bahamas participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

The Blockchain in Education webinar series was conducted in July 2020 with 91 unique participants, including those from partner institutions in The Bahamas.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including The Bahamas.
The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, which was offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from The Bahamas.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted learners from The Bahamas.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in The Bahamas include:

- Ministry of Education
- Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority
- Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute
- University of The Bahamas (formerly The College of The Bahamas)
Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Barbados

96.7% Primary net enrolment

93.6% Secondary school completion rate
Barbados (population: 287,025 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 96.7% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 93.6% (2018). The TVET Council Barbados is mandated to plan, co-ordinate and establish standards and qualifications for technical and vocational education and training. The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), headquartered at Cave Hill, Barbados, supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 82% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 109 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Barbados. In the National ICT Strategic Plan 2010–2015, the government has expressed its commitment to reform the educational system and integrate ICT fully into the revamped curriculum.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training offered eight professional development courses for teachers and principals and online resources for teachers.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mrs Joy Adamson, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, is COL’s Focal Point for Barbados.

**NOTABLE MENTION**

Dr Luz Marina Longsworth is a COL Honorary Fellow.

The late Sir Roy Marshall was a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.

Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald is a former Honorary COL Adviser.

Dr Joel Warrican is a former COL Chair (Open Campus Barbados, University of the West Indies)
COL’s Work in Barbados: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

Current work in Barbados is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, as well as teacher education, technical and vocational skills development, OER, technology-enabled learning, and ICT policy development. Learners from Barbados have benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

**TEACHER EDUCATION**
COL has partnered with the Joint Board of Teacher Education in the Caribbean region to develop diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs. Dr Patricia Saul, from Erdiston Teachers’ Training College, Barbados, participated in a consultative meeting to discuss the development of the tools.

Learners from Barbados participated in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020, the October–November 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**
In March 2016, COL and Asia e University co-hosted a high-level roundtable in Malaysia for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions. Representatives from 16 countries were in attendance, including from Barbados.

COL has supported capacity building at the Hospitality Institute of Barbados Community College, with a view to helping the instructors use their new skills to develop online and blended courses in tourism.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 20 participants from Barbados.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**
In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In 2016, COL organised three workshops in Barbados in collaboration with Barbados Community College: Using ICT for Language Training, Online Course Design/Development and Online Teaching Strategies; there were 48 participants.

As well, the partnership between COL and UWI’s Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) seeks to strengthen staff capacity to develop and deliver an online MSc degree in Development Studies. The purpose of the project is to expand access to the MSc in Development Studies through facilitating the conversion of learning materials for its online delivery. Sixty-seven faculty, coaches and administrators from the three SALISES locations in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago participated in face-to-face and online training activities held between May and August 2019.

Learners from Barbados have also benefited from the online course titled Quality Assurance in Blended Learning, which has been offered since April 2020,
as well as the professional development online course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*.

COL has been providing technical advice to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) with a view to supporting a climate-smart and sustainable Caribbean tourism industry. COL made available a Moodle installation to CTO, as they seek to strengthen training and capacity building in tourism-related topics. In addition, COL provided technical advice as CTO developed two online training courses: *Sustainable Tourism Policy and Development* and *Multi-hazard Risk Management for the Caribbean Tourism Sector*. The online training and education platform was officially launched in a virtual event held in December 2020.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Barbados were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: *Facilitating Online Courses*, *Flexible Skills Development* and *Blended Learning in the Classroom*. Staff from the TVET Council Barbados, Barbados Community College and Erdiston Teachers’ Training College participated in the courses, with 21 certificates awarded.

COL has supported a regional initiative to standardise training across the region and increase the number of qualified TVET assessors, verifiers and instructors. Staff from the TVET Council Barbados contributed to developing and delivering an online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training* course, and the development of online *CVQ Verifier Training* and *CVQ Instructor Training* courses. Between 2016 and 2019, COL supported five workshops to develop materials for the online programmes and to train staff in Moodle administration. Barbados hosted three workshops in June 2016, December 2016 and June 2018, with participants from the Grenada National Training Agency, the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago, and the TVET Council Barbados.

Fourteen participants from Barbados have completed the online assessor training. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Barbados is a member, to offer the three CVQ courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

In February 2015, learners from Barbados participated in a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET. In June 2018, TVSD held a regional workshop in Barbados on *Sustainable Development in TVET*. There were 19 participants from seven countries, including attendees from the TVET Council Barbados.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Barbados. Dr Claudette Fongkong-Mungal from the University of the West Indies Cave Hill Campus, Barbados participated in the *C-DELTA Training of Trainers* workshop held in New Delhi, India in December 2018.
Ms Annette Alleyne, Barbados Community College, attended the COL-hosted regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER in Saint Lucia in January 2020.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Barbados were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Barbados report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.


In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Luz Longsworth, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UWIOC, and Dr Ann Angela A. Wallace, recently retired from the Sagicor Cave Hill School of Business and Management of UWI as Academic Programme Director and Officer-in-Charge, are mentors in the programme.

Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored three delegates from Barbados to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Dr Claudette Fongkong-Mungal, UWI, Mrs Karen Best, Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, and Ms Marlyn Rawlins, TVET Council Barbados. As well, Ms Best attended the Interlocutors’ Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9, and Ms Rawlins participated in the workshop on

A total of 7,779 learners from Barbados have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 20 September 2020, the first cohort of graduates from Barbados, who had obtained close to 2,000 certificates of completion, was recognised at the virtual COL–Coursera Convocation for the Caribbean region, with special remarks delivered by the Honourable Colin E. Jordan, Minister of Labour and Social Partnership Relations.
Establishing and Improving Workplace-Based Plus Open and Distance Learning Models of TVET Practice, hosted by COL’s TVSD initiative in the framework of PCF9.

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

In 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points met twice for regional consultations. Mrs Karen Best, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training, represented Barbados at the meeting in 2018.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Barbados.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Barbados include:

- Ministry of Education, Technological and Vocational Training (formerly Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Partnership Relations
- The University of the West Indies Open Campus
- TVET Council Barbados

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Belize

95.9% Primary net enrolment rate

71.1% Secondary school completion rate
Belize (population: 390,353 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.9% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 71.1% (2018). The Education and Training Act (2010) stipulates the establishment of the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It outlines the planned composition of the TVET Council and directives for the Council’s constitution. Belize is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 47% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 65 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Belize. In its Education Sector Strategy 2011–2016: Improving Access, Quality and Governance of Education in Belize, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (formerly Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture) recognises that ICT has a potentially important role to play in providing a wider and better education service, and the ministry commits to examining feasibility and initiating pilot programmes that, if successful, can be taken to scale.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. On 21 April 2020, shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MOECST) expressed its commitment to providing access to quality education online, and on 27 April 2020, the ministry started the first educational radio broadcast. Subject areas include language arts, math and general topics. Social media platforms, especially Facebook, have been widely used.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Yvonne Palma, Director of Tertiary and Post Secondary Education Services, Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, is COL’s Focal Point for Belize.

NOTABLE MENTION

Professor Clement Sankat, President, University of Belize, is a COL Honorary Fellow and former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

COL’s Work in Belize: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

Current work in Belize is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, open/innovative schooling, gender, OER, technical and vocational skills development, and technology-enabled learning (TEL). Learners from Belize have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Belize has embraced the OIS model, and recent activities have included institutional and faculty capacity building through developing curricula and resources and establishing cost-effective models of schooling. Other areas include training teachers in how to use TEL and how to develop eLearning OER content for schools. COL regularly consults with MOECST on the model's progress and has initiated discussions about a monitoring and evaluation strategy. Through the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association, Belize works to promote relevant policies and strategies among governments and organisations to enhance quality learning.

In March 2017, COL organised a workshop on open schooling management and policy for the directors of all evening division schools and institutes for TVET.

As well, COL supported the development of 14 school subjects as OER. A resource development workshop enabled 39 staff to build their capacity in TEL and the creation of eLearning OER content for their schools.

In August 2017, representatives from the ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia — who had signed agreements with COL to work together to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream and open schools through eLearning, and to broaden access to schooling for out-of-school youths — met in Singapore. They shared their experiences in the implementation of COL’s OIS model in mainstream and open schools and had the opportunity to align country implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges and identify innovative ways to increase the programme’s momentum.

Learners from Belize successfully participated in several intakes of an online course titled Developing and Teaching Online, organised in partnership with the University of Mauritius.

In December 2018, a ministerial delegation from Belize visited three distance education schools and the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, Canada, with a view to learning about open schooling in Canada and strengthening the international community of practitioners. COL sponsored the visit.

In October 2019, COL's Education Specialist: Open Schooling visited Belize to discuss the development of digital content and plans for piloting that content in selected schools or distance outreach centres. He also visited several evening schools that support out-of-school children, youths and adults.
Most recently, at the request of MOECST, COL expedited the open sharing of content on an online platform as a response to the COVID-19 crisis. Quality assurance and rewriting of English-language OER have been initiated, and training for the next phase of OIS implementation in Belize is expected to commence in spring 2021.

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

In 2017, COL partnered with the University of the West Indies to develop the Caribbean Assessment Battery for reading, language and mathematics — which comprises diagnostic tools for special-needs students. It was piloted in Belize and Jamaica.

There were participants from Belize in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

A total of 66 learners from Belize participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and there were 61 participants in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Learners from Belize joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, which was organised in November–December 2020.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL is collaborating with 12 higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. The University of the Commonwealth Caribbean (UCC) is a member of this initiative. There were 230 UCC enrolments in CEMBA/CEMPA in 2015–2019, with 111 persons graduating.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Dr Yvonne Dawkins, Associate Vice President, and Mrs Dianne Boyd, Director of Administration and Student Services at UCC’s College of Graduate Studies and Research, are members of the AB, and Professor Dennis Gayle, Chairman of the University and Foundation Boards, and University Executive Chancellor, represents UCC on the EGB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

“Professionally, I feel better equipped to make decisions on behalf of my school. I feel the programme is preparing me to move up to a higher office and contribute to the future of education in Belize.”

– Jacklyn Burns, Master’s in Educational Leadership candidate
The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 106 participants from Jamaica.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF). Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

A meeting with Belize’s Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture and institution officials took place in 2015 to strengthen the National Qualifications Framework and link it with the TQF. The eLearning programme Developing and Teaching Online Courses attracted 26 participants, including teachers and educational managers.

Since 2018, COL has been providing support to the University of Belize (UB) to expand access and strengthen capacity to deliver the Master of Educational Leadership online. In September 2018, UB aligned the VUSSC Master of Educational Leadership programme with national professional standards for educational leaders and with UB regulations. In November 2018, a capacity-building workshop was held at UB with 23 participants to strengthen staff capacity to deliver online graduate education. In February 2019, 38 students enrolled in a *Master of Educational Leadership* course customised from VUSSC materials. In February 2020, COL facilitated workshops with staff and students involved in a programme on thesis supervision. UB is aiming to increase its graduate programmes and build a culture of research, and COL is providing support to strengthen faculty competencies for serving as research supervisors of graduate students from a distance.

Learners from Belize have benefited from the online course titled *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, offered since April 2020, as well as the online professional development course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*.

In September 2020, COL launched the course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two offerings have brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including Belize.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Belize were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

TVSD has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: *Facilitating Online Courses*, *Flexible Skills Development* and *Blended Learning in the Classroom*. Twelve staff representatives from three of Belize’s institutes for technical and vocational education and the Cayo Centre for Employment Training completed the *Flexible Skills Development* course.

In 2015, one person from Belize attended a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET.

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training* course, and the development of online CVQ *Verifier Training* and CVQ *Instructor Training* courses.

Four participants from Belize completed the online assessor training offered by the TVET Council Barbados. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Belize is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.
A total of 308 learners from Belize have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Belize were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

COL supported MOECST to develop the Belize ICT in Education Strategy (2017–2022) in 2018.

COL has entered into an agreement with MOECST to implement the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform. In November–December 2020, an online training of trainers workshop on C-DELTA was organised for teachers from 40 schools in Belize.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Belize.

**GENDER**

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Belize report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2018 and 2019, women aspiring to assume leadership positions in ODL and ICT-based fields gathered in Malaysia for the COL-hosted Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL. Ms Francine Leannie Sabal and Ms Karen Benita Waight, both from UB, participated in this intensive workshop.

In June 2019, Mrs Beverly Faber, UB, and Mrs Sharmayne Saunders, UWIOC, attended the regional workshop Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Nassau, The Bahamas.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Ms Karen Bautista Waight, Microbiology Lecturer in the Faculty of Science and Technology, UB, is a mentor in the programme.
**Special Events and Activities**

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**
In April 2017, COL supported Dr Yvonne Palma from MOECST to attend the Caribbean and the Americas regional consultation, held in Brazil in the lead-up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**
COL supported the attendance of Dr Lorna McKay, UB, to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored six delegates from Belize to participate at PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, including Dr Priscilla Lopez, UB; Dr Maxine McKay, UB; Yvonne Palma, MOECST, who also attended the Interlocutors’ Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9; and Dr Sheldon Samuels, MOECST, who joined COL’s pre-forum Open Schooling workshop. At PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers, where Ms Deborah Domingo, CEO, MOECST was nominated to represent the minister.

In addition, at PCF9 COL conferred the title Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning on Professor Emeritus Clement Sankat, President, University of Belize, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of quality higher education, which has made a difference to the lives of many learners in the Commonwealth.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**
Dr Yvonne Palma also represented Belize at the two regional consultations of Focal Points in 2018 and 2020, as well as the COL-hosted regional *Capacity-Building Workshop on OER* in Saint Lucia in January 2020.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including 122 from Belize.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered in September 2020, attracted participants from Belize.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 30 participants from Belize.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Belize include:

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (formerly Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture)
- University of Belize

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Canada

101% Gross primary school enrolment rate

114% Gross secondary school enrolment rate
Canada has high gross enrolment rates at the primary (101%), secondary (114%) and tertiary levels (70%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020), and the large majority of young Canadians (aged 15–24 years) are involved in work, study, or a combination of both (87.7%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020).

Most of Canada’s universities have an online presence. Athabasca University (AU) and Université TÉLUQ operate primarily in the online distance mode.

Several distance education networks are active in Canada, including Contact North | Contact Nord, which helps underserved Ontarians access education and training without leaving their communities, as well as BCcampus and eCampus Ontario, which offer a sustainable approach to online learning for public post-secondary institutions.

As of 2017, there were 34.8 million Internet users in Canada, constituting 92.7% of the population (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020). ICT capability is built into the Canadian school curriculum to strengthen citizens’ digital literacy skills.

Canada is a major donor for COL and hosts its headquarters. It has been providing institutional as well as individual expertise to promote learning for sustainable development across the Commonwealth. Special-purpose funding offered by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has contributed to COL’s work to end the cycle of child, early and forced marriage and address the barriers to women’s and girls’ economic participation in the most hard-to-reach parts of the Commonwealth. Scores of Canadian experts have provided technical advice on ODL, OER and curriculum design to institutions in Commonwealth Member States.

Canada’s international development priorities relevant to COL’s mission include contributing to humanitarian assistance through international engagement, and strengthening Canada’s contribution to achieve a more just, inclusive and sustainable world. COL’s contributions in OER, MOOCs and the development of youth work are some examples of the way these priorities are addressed.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

To support teachers’ transition to the new demands generated by the COVID-19 crisis, in April 2020, COL and AU offered two MOOCs for teachers in diverse contexts. The courses were led by AU’s Professor Martha Cleveland-Innes, with support from Dr Nathaniel Ostashevski and Mr Dan Wilton. AU has also joined the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19.

COL has produced a 12-part video series as a key resource for educators who faced the forced transition to online learning.
transition to online teaching caused by COVID-19. The series features insights from Dr Tony Bates, renowned Canadian leader in the field of online and distance education.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr Arif Lalani, Director-General, International Organizations, Global Affairs Canada, represents the Government of Canada on the COL Board of Governors.

**NOTABLE MENTIONS**

- D. Dominique A. M. X. Abrioux is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Mr Gerry Armstrong is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, O.C., is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Ms Denise Chong is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Ms Robin Ciceri is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- The late Dr Glenn Crombie was a member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Sir John Daniel, O.C., is a COL Honorary Fellow, a former COL President and CEO, and a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.
- Ms Janet L. Ecker, ICD.D, is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Dr Glen M. Farrell is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Mr Don Hamilton was a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.
- Mr Shell Harvey is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Dr H. Ian Macdonald, O.C., is a COL Honorary Fellow and former Chair of the COL Board of Governors.
- The late Dr Lewis Perinbam, O.C., was a Chair of the COL Board of Governors.
- Ms Tina Sartoretto is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Ms Jodi White is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

Some of COL’s activities related to Canada’s international development priorities are highlighted below.

**Education Sector Overview**

**OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING**

COL supported the Gwen Lizarraga Open School in Belize through a twinning project with the Fraser Valley Distance Education School, in British Columbia. The Canada–Caribbean Chapter of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) organised an Open Schooling Conference in Belize in 2015. COMOSA is an international community of practitioners and institutions who share their knowledge and experiences for the greater good of open and innovative schooling and to improve practice.

In April 2017, COL’s Senior Adviser: Open Schooling visited Open School BC to discuss twinning and the participation of Caribbean open schools in a British Columbia conference on eLearning. The meeting has led to increased and more effective capacity support for ODL from the partners, and the establishment of a community of practice.

In March 2018, COL arranged a study visit for Mrs. Anshul Karbanda, National Institute of Open Schooling, India to three distance education schools.
and the Ministry of Education in British Columbia. The purpose of the visit was to introduce her to open schooling in Canada and strengthen COMOSA.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL is a community partner of the Centre for Community Engaged Learning at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and has benefited from student intern support for various projects. Since 2017, UBC interns have conducted research and attended consultation meetings with COL’s partners in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania.

In 2017 COL facilitated the development of an open access policy for the University of Malta through the engagement of Professor Stevan Harnad, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada.

In 2018, COL facilitated a meeting for Mrs K. Charitar, the Financial Controller of the Tertiary Education Commission in Mauritius, with the Acting Comptroller at UBC to discuss efficiency measures in higher education.

A total of 150 participants from Canada joined the three offerings of the *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, co-organised by COL and the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020.

Professor Mohammed Ally, Centre for Distance Education, AU, serves as a COL Chair. In November 2020, COL published the study *Sustainable Development and Education in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)*, co-authored by Professor Ally and Dr Norine Wark, which offers recommendations on the role of 4IR in education for sustainable development in countries at all stages of development.

Skills Sector Overview

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

The support of GAC has enabled COL and its partners to scale up the L3F initiative in Ghana and Tanzania. The following are some of the key results achieved in the project: 9,178 participants from smallholder farming communities (more than 60% of whom are women) have built their capacities with a blended learning approach, utilising basic mobile phones, radios, CDs and group-based learning. Participants have acquired skills and knowledge in financial literacy, enterprise management, sustainable agriculture, credit planning, livestock management and gender issues. They have also been able to access credit through various financial institutions. With L3F interventions, 3,468 participants in two Savings and...
Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs), facilitated by the Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives, accessed credit worth CAD 828,000. More than 5,700 women own livelihood assets in their names due to enhanced participation in socioeconomic organisations. Sample surveys and focus-group discussions indicated that the income in 5,700 L3F households had increased by 29% over a three-year period. There was also evidence of an increase in food consumption in these households.

Realising the potential of table banking and L3F in the SACCOs, the Ministry of Agriculture in Tanzania is contemplating the scope of introducing them in the co-operative sector and in the process is reviewing the Co-operative Development Policy of 2002 and the Co-operative Societies Act of 2013; it has sought COL’s support in this review. Such an initiative has the potential to convert every agricultural co-operative into a platform for lifelong learning in Tanzania’s farming communities.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In 2017, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia completed the Research on Open Educational Resources for Development project, funded by the International Development Research Centre, Canada. The project led to the publication of the book *Promoting Use and Contribution of Open Educational Resources* in 2017.

In partnership with AU, COL developed a MOOC on TEL. Over 15,000 learners worldwide have benefited from its seven offerings since 2017.

COL and AU have also collaborated on the development of the *Blended Learning Practice* MOOC. In the framework of this co-operation, COL’s Learning Specialist, eLearning attended a workshop at AU in June 2019. The MOOC has been offered since March 2020 to close to 9,000 learners in the Commonwealth and beyond.

AU partners have also participated in COL-led international gatherings. In September 2019, AU’s Mr Nathaniel Ostashewski participated in the TEL Partners Meeting and PCF9, both held in Edinburgh, UK.

Lakehead University, in partnership with COL and its Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), led the design and development of six micro-courses on Youth Work in the Pacific in 2020 and 2021.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Canada.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Canada* is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators in the Commonwealth, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

**GIRLS Inspire**

Girls and women continue to be seriously disadvantaged across the Commonwealth. The Canadian government’s international advocacy efforts to prevent child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) are already drawing attention to this major challenge. Such efforts will help developing countries achieve Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, which the global community has adopted.

Thanks to funds from the Government of Canada through GAC, COL has partnered with community organisations in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Pakistan...
and Tanzania to implement GIRLS Inspire and support schooling and skills development for some of the world’s most vulnerable and hard-to-reach women and girls, using open, distance and technology-enabled learning. Focusing on the barriers to education and economic participation that women and girls face, such as early marriages, distance to school, security concerns, cultural values and the costs of schooling, the project emphasised three pillars: communities, learning institutions and the girls themselves. As a result, over 370,000 community members in the target countries have been reached, more than 30,000 women and girls have been trained, over 6,500 women and girls have been provided with sources of income generation, and more than 1,100 child marriages have been prevented. Some examples of the achievements of partners in these countries are described below.

In Bangladesh, COL’s partner Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha used solar-powered boat schools and floating libraries, equipped with Internet-linked laptops, multimedia projectors and educational materials, docking at villages to provide on-board training. Without the boat schools, the girls in these villages would have had no chance of an education or employment opportunities.

Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo and Associação Progresso in Mozambique have helped establish community-agreed safe learning environments, enabling women and girls to complete skills training and be reintegrated into formal schooling, thus setting them on the path to greater earning ability. In addition, through life-skills workshops on sexual and reproductive health, family planning and HIV/AIDS, girls learned about young mothers who had experienced complications in early pregnancies.

One of COL’s partners in Pakistan, the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), reached out to girls in their homes to register them in mobile and stationary training centres. SPARC provided life-skills and vocational-skills training to the girls for up to six weeks. Job fairs, career counselling and referrals to banks for financial aid have helped girls secure microloans and engage in income-generating activities.

In partnership with the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) and Kiota Women’s Health and Development (KIWOHEDE), both in Tanzania, GIRLS Inspire was implemented in three regions where the prevalence of child marriage is 40–51%. IAE and KIWOHEDE worked directly with communities to shift perspectives on CEFM and girls’ education, paving the way for the reintegration of women and girls into education through ODL.

As well, since 2017, undergraduate students from UBC’s Political Science faculty have been interning with GIRLS Inspire to develop recommendations for best practices based on consultations with COL’s NGO partners, and undertaking secondary research into other cases and academic literature on topics aligned with their studies.

Canadian Deputy Minister of International Development Ms Diane Jacovella visited GIRLS Inspire project sites in Mozambique in December 2017. The Deputy Minister had the opportunity to meet with women and girls undergoing training in a variety of vocational courses and attended a presentation on the plight of the girl child and the root causes of CEFM. Ms Jacovella noted that the interventions by the GIRLS Inspire project had contributed to changing the lives of these women and girls and empowered them to have a voice within their communities.

At PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, GIRLS Inspire hosted a panel discussion with the participation of partners from GAC and DFAT. The session demonstrated how gender equality was mainstreamed into development. Participants shared successes and lessons learned, and showcased how learning had resulted in women’s social, political and economic empowerment.
HIGH COMMISSIONERS’ LUNCHEON
In May 2016, COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, was invited to be a speaker at a luncheon for Commonwealth High Commissioners organised by His Excellency Dr Sulley Gariba, the Ghanaian High Commissioner to Canada in Ottawa. While in Ottawa, Professor Kanwar briefed Ms Diane Jacovella, Associate Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sarah Fountain Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister for Global Issues and Development, and their colleagues on COL’s impact.

REGIONAL OER CONSULTATIONS
Professor Rory McGreal, UNESCO/COL/ICDE Chair in OER at the Centre for Distance Education, AU, attended the regional consultation for the Caribbean and the Americas organised in São Paulo, Brazil in April 2017 ahead of the 2nd World OER Congress in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Mr Paul Stacey, Executive Director of Open Education Global, attended the regional Capacity Building Workshop on OER in Saint Lucia in January 2020.

WORLD CONFERENCE ON ONLINE LEARNING
In October 2017, Professor Kanwar made a plenary presentation at the opening of the World Conference on Online Learning, in Toronto, Canada. The event was organised by Canada’s Contact North and the ICDE.

CANADA HOUSE RECEPTION
On 12 March 2019, members of the learning and diplomatic communities gathered for a PCF9 pre-launch reception at Canada House in London, UK. Welcoming remarks were made by host Ms Sarah Fountain Smith, Deputy High Commissioner for Canada to the United Kingdom, and by Professor Asha Kanwar, COL’s President and CEO, and Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho, Chancellor of The Open University.

BC CONSULAR CORPS BRIEFING
On 3 April 2019, COL’s President and CEO and the Director of Finance, Administration and HR participated in the Consular Corps Briefing hosted by the Government of British Columbia in Victoria. Participants included the Honourable John Horgan, Premier of BC; the Honourable Bruce Ralston, Minister of Energy, Mines, and Petroleum Resources; the
Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training; as well as the consul generals of several countries. The event helped raise COL’s visibility with the host province and the consular corps.

**ICT DAY FOR GIRLS CELEBRATION**

At the invitation of GAC, COL’s Senior Adviser: Women and Girls attended special celebrations in Ottawa on 25 April 2019. The event created an opportunity to share COL’s experiences of using ICT to widen access to education for girls to achieve gender equality, and of connecting girls to employment.

**WOMEN DELIVER CONFERENCE**

On 3–6 June 2019, COL participated in the Women Deliver Conference in Vancouver, hosting a side event that focused on the GIRLS Inspire project. The session was livestreamed.

**AU HONORARY DEGREE CONFERRED ON COL’S CEO**

On 8 June 2019, COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, received an honorary doctorate from AU in recognition of her global leadership in open and distance learning.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

With a total of 26 participants, Canada was well represented at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. At the forum, Sir John Daniel delivered the signature Asa Briggs lecture.

A total of 33 delegates from Canada attended PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with the Commonwealth education ministers. Another forum roundtable brought together vice chancellors to discuss the current status and future direction of higher education in the Commonwealth, with AU’s then President Dr Neil Fassina among the participants. At the forum, AU was recognised with an Award for Excellence in Distance Education Materials for courses that form part of the Bachelor of Science programme in its Faculty of Science and Technology.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

A total of 43 learners from Canada participated in the October–November 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 70 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–November 2020. Twenty Canadian learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

As well, five learners from Canada joined the first MOOC in the Youth Work series, offered by COL in partnership with its regional centre in the Pacific, PACFOLD, in November–December 2020.
Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

In Canada, COL’s partners include:
- Global Affairs Canada
- Athabasca University
- Lakehead University
- Royal Roads University
- University of British Columbia

Looking Ahead: 2027

COL looks forward to its continued partnership with Canada, working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and providing Commonwealth citizens with greater access to quality education and training through open, distance and technology-enabled learning. COL will continue to work in countries and regions that have been identified as priorities for Canada, i.e., Bangladesh, the Caribbean, Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

COL has identified several relevant international priorities for Canada in the next triennium, based on its Feminist Foreign Policy and the GAC Departmental Plan for 2020–2021. This includes ensuring that all girls, adolescent girls and women have equal access to quality education and learning opportunities.
Dominica

95.4% Primary net enrolment rate

87.7% Secondary school completion rate
Introduction

Dominica (population: 71,808 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.4% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate of 87.7% (2016). Dominica State College, a publicly funded institution, offers programmes leading to GCE A levels, certificates and associate degrees, plus a large and diverse programme of continuing education for mature students. Dominica is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 70% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 106 per 100 people (2018). There is infrastructure available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Dominica. The Strategy for Implementing the National ICT in Education Policy in the Commonwealth of Dominica: 2004–2009, drafted by the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth Affairs, articulates the vision for integrating ICT into the education system.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence started providing psychological support to students in all schools and to their parents, and produced the Psychosocial Aspects to COVID-19 booklet.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mrs Chandler Hyacinth, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence, is COL’s Focal Point for Dominica.
Current work in Dominica is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Dominica also continue to benefit from COL's open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION

In partnership with the Joint Board of Teacher Education, COL has developed diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs, to be used in the Caribbean region.

A total of 32 participants from Dominica benefited from the MOOC Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL).

Sixty-eight learners from Dominica participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 53 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

At the request of then COL Board Member His Excellency Ambassador Hubert Charles, COL organised a stakeholders meeting in Dominica in September 2018 to explore ways to strengthen Dominica’s education system against climate change-related threats. Twelve people attended, representing local radio stations, the Office of Disaster Preparedness, a regional telecommunications provider, the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Planning, Vocational Training and National Excellence, and Dominica State College. COL subsequently partnered with the ministry to educate citizens about mitigating climate change risks and becoming better prepared for future disasters. Five locally produced public education messages have been broadcast on Dominica’s radio stations. As well, as part of the public education campaign, a multimedia message with the theme “Update, Upgrade for a more Resilient Dominica” was produced. A local multimedia piece developed by the ministry in 2020 seeks to raise awareness about climate change and how individual and community action can contribute to solutions.

COL has signed a contribution agreement with the Climate Resilience Execution Agency for Dominica to strengthen their capacity to leverage technology for better access to knowledge and information about disaster preparedness.
Learners from Dominica have benefited from the online course titled *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, offered since April 2020, as well as the *Designing and Developing Online Assessments* course.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Dominica were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

Since 2018, COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: *Facilitating Online Courses*, *Flexible Skills Development* and *Blended Learning in the Classroom*. In 2020, two staff members from Dominica’s secondary schools completed the *Flexible Skills Development* course.

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification* (CVQ) Assessor Training course, and the development of online CVQ Verifier Training and CVQ Instructor Training courses. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Dominica is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

A total of 204 learners from Dominica have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

Dominica was represented at the Open Textbook Forum held in October 2015, which focused on developing OER policies and strengthening open-textbook initiatives in the Eastern Caribbean region. One of the forum outcomes was the development of two courses on entrepreneurship, with COL’s support.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Dominica were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.
**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Dominica* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation and decision making.


**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported Dr Donald Peters, President, Dominica State College, and Mr J. Michael Greene, Dominica State College, to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

In September 2019, PCF9 was held in Edinburgh, UK. COL sponsored Dr Peters to attend the forum, as well as the pre-conference Interlocutors’ Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Dominica.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, and the three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted participants from Dominica.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Dominica include:

- Climate Resilience Execution Agency of Dominica
Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Grenada

95.9% Primary net enrolment rate
87.7% Secondary school completion rate
Introduction

Grenada (population: 112,003 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.9% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 87.7% (2017). T.A. Marryshow Community College was established in 1988, when Grenada National College merged with several other tertiary institutions, including Grenada Teachers College, Grenada Technical and Vocational Institute, and the Institute for Further Education. Grenada is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 59% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 104 per 100 people (2018). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Grenada. In *Information and Communication Technology (ICT) 2006–2010: A Strategy and Action Plan for Grenada*, the government has committed to providing computer labs and networks in all schools.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information announced the launch of the M-STAR platform for online learning. On 29 July 2020, the ministry issued an official invitation to the citizens of Grenada to join the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Kade DeCoteau, Information Technology Officer, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information, is COL’s Focal Point for Grenada.

**COURTESY VISIT TO PM**

On 24 May 2019, Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President and CEO, met with Dr The Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada. Prime Minister Mitchell was briefed on the various activities COL has undertaken with the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information, as well as other institutions in the country.
Current work in Grenada is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, as well as technical and vocational skills development and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Grenada continue to benefit from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION

In partnership with the Joint Board of Teacher Education, COL has developed diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs, to be used in the Caribbean region.

There were participants from Grenada in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020, as well as in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 41 participants from Grenada.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Ms Pauleen Finlay of the Grenada National Accreditation Board (GNAB) currently serves on the VUSSC Management Committee.

In the framework of a partnership with GNAB to support its capacity building, an operational manual and accreditation toolkits have been developed. As well, GNAB hosted a two-day consultation forum in October 2018 to review Grenada’s existing Accreditation Act and solicit stakeholder feedback on proposed revisions. The proposed revisions to the legal framework reflect the most recent international guidelines for higher education quality assurance practices and take into account growth areas such as transnational education and online learning. Currently, Cabinet approval is sought to amend the Act. In June 2019, GNAB staff attended a train-the-trainers workshop aimed at strengthening the structures and processes for administering quality assurance.
A total of 23 participants have benefited from the online course *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, offered since April 2020. As a result, a total of 15 participants have received certificates of completion and one attendee has received a certificate of participation. Survey feedback indicates general satisfaction with the course.

In September 2020, VUSSC launched the course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two course offerings attracted 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including two participants from T.A. Marryshow Community College.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Grenada were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

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**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: *Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development* and *Blended Learning in the Classroom*. Staff from T.A. Marryshow Community College, secondary schools, government agencies and training providers have benefited from the three courses, with more than 140 certificates awarded.

COL has supported a regional initiative to standardise training across the region and increase the number of qualified TVET assessors, verifiers and instructors. Staff from the Grenada National Training Agency (GNTA) contributed to developing and delivering an online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training* course and developing the online *CVQ Verifier Training* and *CVQ Instructor Training* courses. Between 2016 and 2019, COL supported five workshops to develop materials for the online programmes and to train staff in Moodle administration. Grenada hosted two workshops, in August 2017 and January 2019, with participants from GNTA, the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago, and the TVET Council Barbados.

Ten participants from Grenada have completed the online assessor training. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Barbados is a member, to offer the three CVQ courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

The TVSD initiative has been supporting capacity building in online learning at T.A. Marryshow Community College. The college has a strategic objective to use technology in open, distance and flexible learning approaches to increase access to and improve the quality of its programmes.

In February 2015, two individuals from Grenada participated in a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET. In June 2018, TVSD held a regional workshop titled *Sustainable Development in TVET* in Barbados. There were 19 participants from seven countries, including attendees from T.A. Marryshow Community College and GNTA.

A total of 4,294 learners from Grenada have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions.
caused by COVID-19. In September 2020, the first cohort of graduates from Grenada, who had earned 732 certificates of completion, were recognised at the virtual COL–Coursera Convocation for the Caribbean region. The Honourable Emmalin Pierre, Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information, delivered special remarks at the convocation.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

Teachers from Grenada participated in the Open Textbook Forum, held in October 2015, which focused on developing OER policies and strengthening open textbook initiatives in the Eastern Caribbean region. COL has supported the creation of Caribbean Community Standards for Teaching and Teacher Education, ICT policy development, a regional ODL policy framework and a national ODL policy for T.A. Marryshow Community College.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Grenada were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Grenada.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Grenada report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation and decision making.

In June 2019, Ms Caundi Sollian Joseph from T.A. Marryshow Community College attended the regional workshop Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Nassau, The Bahamas.

Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the attendance of Mrs Pauleen Finlay, GNAB Executive Director, at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

PCF9 was organised in September 2019, in Edinburgh, UK. Under the forum auspices, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers, including the Honourable Emmalin Pierre, Minister of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information. In addition, COL sponsored the participation of Ms Nicole Welsh and Mrs Pauleen Finlay in the forum. Mrs Finlay also participated in the Transnational Qualifications Framework Committee Meeting and the Interlocutors’ Meeting, both of which were hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

In 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points met twice for regional consultations. Mr Andrew Augustine, Senior Human Resource Development Officer, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Religious
Affairs and Information, attended in 2018, and Mr Kade DeCoteau, Information Technology Officer, Education, Human Resource Development, Religious Affairs and Information, attended in 2020. Mr DeCoteau also attended the COL-hosted regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER in Saint Lucia in January 2020.

**16th Conference of the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education**

In October 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education delivered a presentation on the various forms of transnational education and the implications of quality assurance to some 120 representatives of national accreditation bodies and higher education institutions from ten Caribbean countries, at the 16th conference of the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education.

**COL’s International MOOCs**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Grenada.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered in September 2020, attracted learners from Grenada.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Grenada include:

- Grenada National Accreditation Board
- T.A. Marryshow Community College

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**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Guyana

93.1% Primary net enrolment rate

82.3% Secondary school completion rate
Guyana (population: 782,766 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.1% (2012) and a secondary school completion rate of 82.3% (2012). The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training was established on 22 July 2004 and is focused on “the provision of a Guyanese workforce with requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes contributing to increased productivity and economic development.” The University of Guyana Institute of Distance & Continuing Education provides equal access to education and offers a relevant and effectively organised education service for adults and out-of-school youths.

Internet connectivity is available to 37% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 83 per 100 people (2017). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Guyana. In the Guyana Education Sector Plan 2014–2018, the Ministry of Education has committed to improving access to information and communication technologies (ICT).

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education provided access on their website to National Grade Six Assessment practice test papers in the four core areas (English, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics), as well as textbooks and other learning materials.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Olato Sam, Education Specialist, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Guyana.
Current work in Guyana is primarily in the areas of higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, open/innovative schooling, gender, and technology-enabled learning. Guyana offers COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and serves on the programmes’ academic and executive governing boards. Learners from Guyana also continue to benefit from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

The initial visit to the Ministry of Education in August 2018 to present the OIS model was followed by another visit to Guyana in October 2019. COL has subsequently partnered with the Adult Education Association to strengthen open schooling in Guyana.

An OIS workshop in November 2019 focused on technology-enabled learning, features of a learning management system, the comparison of proprietary and open-source platforms, the development of a template for the creation of interactive resources that use OER and can be shared as OER, and the creation of gender-sensitive and culturally sensitive examples of OER, using the template.

Ten courses are being migrated online using Moodle and are to be piloted with up to 100 students, in partnership with the Adult Education Association of Guyana.

TEACHER EDUCATION

COL, partnering with the Joint Board of Teacher Education in the Caribbean region, has developed diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs. Ms Allison Blair, from Cyril Potter College of Education, participated in a consultative meeting to discuss the development of the diagnostic tools.

Guidelines for Online Assessment for Teachers and Teacher Educators are being finalised for the Caribbean region.

There were 22 participants from Guyana in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

A total of 47 learners from Guyana participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 22 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Twenty learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, which was organised in November–December 2020.

Seven participants from Guyana joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, which was offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

The University of Guyana (UG) is a partner institution in the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes. A total of 178 persons graduated from the programmes between 2015 and 2019.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Professor Paloma Mohamed-Martin, Vice Chancellor, currently serves on the EGB, while Dr Emanuel Cummings, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, serves on the AB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

Guyana was also represented at the high-level roundtable for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions, hosted by COL in Malaysia in May 2018.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted participants from Guyana.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In June 2018, COL provided support to UG to plan and organise a Symposium on Boys’ Education with the theme “Bridging the Gender Divide: Stemming the Tide of Male Underachievement in the Education System.”

In July 2018, COL hosted a two-day workshop in Georgetown entitled *Evidence to Action*. The workshop provided an opportunity for educational professionals and other governmental, agency and community stakeholders to generate ideas on how to improve the educational experiences and completion rates for male students in Guyana. Arising from the workshop and as part of its thrust to strengthen its connections to the student community in British Columbia, Canada, COL linked a group of students from the University of
British Columbia (UBC) with four beginning teachers in Guyana to learn about their experience as males in the system. Based on their findings, UBC students created a video, *The Value of Education: The Journey of Four Male Guyanese Teachers*. As a result of this interaction, the Guyanese teachers are pursuing continuing education courses on the UBC edX platform.

As part of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL is supporting UG in strengthening staff capacity to deliver the BA in Youth and Community Development as an online and blended degree. The project provides training for approximately 30 lecturers in instructional design, including assessment, effective use of learning technologies, use of OER, and online facilitation. The programme comprises 20 courses and is expected to enrol approximately 25 students per year.

During a visit to UG in February 2020, COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated a training workshop for faculty titled *Creating Quality Online Learning Experiences*. COL also made available the VUSSC course *Developing and Teaching Online Courses (DTOC)*, and 47 faculty took it through the UG Moodle platform managed by the university’s Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Learning.

In 2020, COL began working with the National Accreditation Council Guyana (NAC-G) to strengthen their technical capacity to quality assure tertiary educational institutions offering online and blended programmes of study. The project provides training to 100 quality assurance (QA) personnel drawn from 40 post-secondary institutions across Guyana, to adopt and implement QA guidelines for online and blended learning.

COL also signed two agreements with the Ministry of Education in 2020. The first agreement provides support to the Cyril Potter College of Education to expand access to online education for student teachers. The project will strengthen institutional capacity to offer online and blended courses. This will be achieved through training in online course design, development and facilitation for teacher educators, and provision of a hosted Moodle platform to facilitate the development and delivery of courses. Seventy-five lecturers are currently converting 28 courses for delivery online to student teachers. A total of 355 students are now accessing their courses online. The second agreement provides support to the Ministry’s National Centre for Educational Resource Development to customise existing VUSSC Master’s in Educational Leadership courses to develop short, competency-based online training courses for Education Officers.
COL has signed an agreement with NAC-G to train over 100 QA personnel drawn from 40 post-secondary institutions across the country to adopt and implement QA guidelines for online and blended learning.

As well, 18 learners from Guyana have joined the online course Quality Assurance in Blended Learning, offered by VUSSC since April 2020.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including eight from Guyana.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC also offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Guyana were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

In February 2015, two individuals from Guyana participated in a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET. Through the TVSD initiative’s Moodle Implementation Course, a team made up of decision makers as well as academic and IT staff from Cyril Potter College of Education was able to co-develop a plan to implement Moodle.

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training course, and the development of online CVQ Verifier Training and CVQ Instructor Training courses. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Guyana is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**


In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Guyana were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

A total of 36,619 learners from Guyana have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by the Ministry of Education, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. In September 2020, the first cohort of graduates from Guyana, who had earned 2,108 certificates of participation, was recognised at the virtual COL–Coursera Convocation for the Caribbean region. The Honourable Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education, Guyana, participated in the virtual event and delivered special remarks.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including eight from Guyana.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC also offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Guyana were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Learners from Guyana were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.
COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Guyana report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators in the Commonwealth, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In November 2019, COL signed an agreement with Youth Challenge Guyana (YCG) to train and mentor boys and young men from South Georgetown to enhance their self-efficacy and livelihood skills. COL engaged YCG to train and mentor 110 individuals — in West Ruimveldt, South Turkeyen, Guyhoc Park, East La Penitence, Lodge, Werk-En-Rust and Costello Housing Scheme — in market-driven technical skills and life skills and to place them in internships. YCG has since launched a training programme for 43 young men in electrical installation and life skills. In February 2020, YCG organised the Introductory Electrical Installation training programme. In-person instruction was put on hold due to COVID-19, but internships were secured for seven trained boys at industrial, electrical and security firms. A representative from YCG joined COL’s Gender Community of Practice and attended the Online Gender Meeting.

In 2018 and 2019, women aspiring to assume leadership positions in ODL and ICT-based fields gathered in Malaysia for the COL-hosted Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL. Ms Paulette Andrea Henry and Ms Nikki Taundrea Cole, both from UG, participated in this intensive workshop.

In June 2019, Dr. Jacqueline Murray from UG attended the regional workshop Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Nassau, The Bahamas.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Guyana. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. In November 2020, COL organised a training on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, with four participants from Guyana in attendance.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWiseWomen (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Paulette Henry, Head, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, UG, is a mentor in the programme. As well, the Ministry of Education confirmed the establishment of a CWW chapter in the country to cater to specific needs across the Caribbean region.

### Special Events and Activities

#### Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF)

COL supported Ms Kim Spencer, Ministry of Education, to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Ms Charmaine Bissessar, UG, was sponsored to participate in PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019.

#### Regional Meetings of COL Focal Points

In 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points met twice for regional consultations. Ms Patrice LaFleur represented Guyana at the 2018 meeting.

#### COL’s International MOOCs

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Guyana.

As well, the Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Guyana.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Guyana include:
- Ministry of Education
- Adult Education Association
- National Accreditation Council
- The University of Guyana

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:
1) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
2) invest in innovations and research;
3) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
4) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
5) promote gender equality.
Jamaica

81% Primary net enrolment rate

73.9% Secondary school completion rate
Introduction

Jamaica (population: 2,948,279 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 81.0% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 73.9% (2018). The National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training promotes quality outcomes in training, and provides assessment and certification for TVET in response to labour market requirements and national development. Jamaica is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 55% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 103 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Jamaica. As per Jamaica’s Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy 2011, the roles of the Ministry of Education are to increase the use of technology as a tool for enhancing teaching, and to implement an eLearning Project. Subsequently, the Jamaica ICT Task Force produced Vision 2030 Jamaica: Information and Communications Technology ICT: Sector Plan 2009–2030.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information launched an eHomeSchool Network, which delivers live and recorded educational classes to students across the island on both television and the Internet.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Phylicia Marshall, Assistant Chief Education Officer, Tertiary Unit, Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, is COL’s Focal Point for Jamaica.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Dr Nancy George is an Honorary COL Adviser.

Dr Marlene Hamilton is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

The late Dr Dennis H. Irvine was a COL Honorary Fellow.

The Honourable Sir Alister McIntyre is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

The Honourable Burchell Whiteman, OJ is a COL Honorary Fellow and former Chair of the COL Board of Governors.
Current work in Jamaica is primarily in the areas of higher education, Lifelong Learning for Farmers through partnership with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority, teacher education, technical and vocational skills development, and technology-enabled learning. Jamaica is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Jamaica continue to benefit from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**JAMAICA HIGH COMMISSIONER’S VISIT TO COL**

On 10 September 2018, Her Excellency Janice Miller, High Commissioner for Jamaica to Canada, visited COL headquarters to learn more about COL’s work. COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, provided an overview of COL’s initiatives and projects, including L3F and VUSSC. Her Excellency was accompanied by Dr Michael Vaughan, Honorary Consul for Jamaica in British Columbia.

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**Education Sector Overview**

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

In October 2015, 30 teachers from the University of Technology, Jamaica participated in workshops on the monitoring and evaluation of OER.

In March 2016, a COL Education Specialist participated in a consultative meeting with teacher educators to discuss the development of diagnostic tools that would help teachers identify children with special needs. The development of the assessment instruments aimed to contribute to the provision of relevant materials for teachers and for teacher training, and it will promote greater integration of ICT in teaching and learning. Diagnostic instruments for children with special needs were subsequently developed in partnership with the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) in the Caribbean region.

In 2017, the Caribbean Assessment Battery for reading, language and mathematics was piloted in Belize and Jamaica.

In October 2019, COL signed an agreement with JBTE to implement Teacher Futures – Jamaica. The project aims to introduce differentiated instruction to improve teacher quality and learning outcomes in secondary schools in Jamaica through school-based mentorship. The focus is on teaching Mathematics and English in upgraded secondary schools for students in the alternative pathway to secondary education.

Subsequently, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MoEYI) reviewed the list of schools participating in the project and suggested the inclusion of other schools that were more appropriate
and resourced for the project’s objectives. Tools for the baseline study were also developed in consultation with MoEYI.

There were 116 participants from Jamaica in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

A total of 137 learners from Jamaica participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 197 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Nineteen learners joined the MOOC Teaching Mathematics with Technology, organised in November–December 2020.

Six participants from Jamaica joined an online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

As well, eight educators from Jamaica are part of the facilitation team for the Inclusive Teaching and Learning and Creating an Inclusive School courses developed by COL and the UK’s Open University, which were offered in early 2021.

HIGHER EDUCATION

COL is collaborating with 12 higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. The University of the Commonwealth Caribbean (UCC) is a member of this initiative. There were 230 UCC enrolments in CEMBA/CEMPA in 2015–2019, with 111 persons graduating.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over its administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Dr Yvonne Dawkins, Associate Vice President, and Mrs Dianne Boyd, Director of Administration and Student Services at UCC’s College of Graduate Studies and Research, are members of the AB, and Professor Dennis Gayle, Chairman of the University and Foundation Boards, and University Executive Chancellor, represents UCC on the EGB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 106 participants from Jamaica.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In August 2018, a COL delegation comprised of the Vice President and the Education Specialist: VUSSC had meetings with the Caribbean Maritime University and the National College for Educational Leadership to identify the possible scope of COL’s engagement in the areas of the blue economy, resilience management and educational leadership. Another meeting was held with the team of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona to identify specific areas in which they need support to transition from traditional classroom to online delivery of its MSc in Development Studies.

This led to a partnership between COL and SALISES to strengthen staff capacity to develop and deliver an online MSc in Development Studies. The purpose of the project is to expand access to the MSc in Development Studies through facilitating the conversion of learning materials for the online delivery of the programme. Sixty-seven faculty, coaches and
administrators from the three SALISES locations — Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago — participated in face-to-face and online training activities held between May and August 2019.

A total of 27 participants from Jamaica have benefited from the online course on *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, offered since April 2020, with 15 participants receiving certificates of completion.

In September 2020, COL launched the course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including from Jamaica.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Jamaica were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

In response to COVID-19, HEART Trust/NTA and the Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica (CC CJ) reached out to COL for assistance. Some of the immediate needs of both organisations included repurposing programmes and courses for online delivery while ensuring continuous engagement with students. A team from CCCJ participated in COL’s *Moodle Implementation* course and were able to host COL’s OER for the three capacity-building courses. Subsequently, COL has provided online training to CCCJ senior administrators and implemented a “train-the-trainers model” for 240 educators. As well, eight HEART officers have been trained to train 185 TVET teachers using COL’s existing *Blended Learning in the Classroom* course.

A total of 246 learners from Jamaica have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

Since 2014, COL has partnered with the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) to implement the L3F programme.

COL’s Education Specialist: Agriculture and Livelihoods visited Jamaica in August 2016 to assess the progress of L3F implementation and consider strategies for scaling up. Discussions were held on the need to strengthen RADA’s capacity in the development and delivery of quality gender-sensitive L3F approaches.
so that it could take a lead in increasing the use of L3F in other Caribbean countries. As a result of this visit, a greater number of government, civil society and private organisations recognised the value of L3F, new partnerships were created, and marginalised communities were able to access learning. RADA staff have been empowered to facilitate farmer learning in the areas of land preparation, pest management, seedling transplant, weed control, spraying and harvesting. The farmers have registered higher yields and profitability and learned how to do farming as a business, delivering quality products to the market.

In the latter half of 2017, RADA facilitated the skills development of 647 farmers in Irish potato production and marketing, through the use of text messaging. Stakeholder workshops connected eight farmer groups with the agribusiness industry. The Agri-Business Certificate, launched in collaboration with UWI, was completed by 20 RADA extension officers. RADA also held training for ten of its officers in instructional design and ODL.

Through a new agreement with RADA, COL has extended its support for L3F in Jamaica. The focus is now on further strengthening RADA’s capacity as a resource agency in ICT/ODL-based extension in the Caribbean region. The contribution is also enabling RADA to get quality learning resources to more farming communities.

Sixty departmental and parish managers from RADA have undergone capacity building for integrating gender strategies in the planning of agricultural programmes. RADA has also developed 50 new text-based messages on agribusiness and sustainable agricultural practices, which have been delivered to 1,600 farmers of onions and Irish potatoes.

As well, RADA has established their own Moodle platform by acquiring a server, and through COL’s support it has conducted the necessary configurations to host the established courses. The 20 extension officers trained in agribusiness management are now fully equipped with the necessary knowledge to deliver information to L3F participants. A course entitled Financial Literacy and Enterprise Development was developed by the trained officers.

RADA has continued to use COL’s Aptus as a support device to conduct training sessions for farmers in areas where the Internet is not reliable. Aptus generated a lot of interest among farmers, with some of them wishing to know how they could access the device for their groups’ purposes.

In February 2020, the Jamaica L3F Scaling Programme Design and Planning Workshop was conducted at RADA headquarters to (i) review the work of L3F implementation, (ii) engage multiple stakeholders from government, NGOs and the private sector in planning
and designing the scaling activities, as well as (iii)
strongen the monitoring of the learning outcomes.
As a result, a decision was reached to involve more
stakeholders in L3F programme implementation.

In June 2020, the Good Agricultural Practices MOOC
was delivered by The Bahamas Ministry of Agriculture
and Marine Resources and The Bahamas Agricultural
Health and Food Safety Authority in partnership with
COL. This seven-week MOOC attracted 673 learners
from 35 countries, including participants from
Jamaica.

Most recently, 6,431 farmers across Jamaica have been
reached with 154,975 messages on COVID-19 safety
precautions/preparations, cassava and hot pepper
production, as well as farming as a business.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL’s Vice President gave a keynote speech at EduVi-
sion’s ICT in Education Conference 2016, in Ocho Rios,
Jamaica, increasing COL’s visibility and strengthening
existing partnerships.

Dr Phylicia Marshall, COL Focal Point and the Assistant
Chief Education Officer of the Tertiary Unit in the
Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, partici-
pated in the Caribbean Regional Capacity-Building
Workshop on OER: Policies and Practices in Saint Lucia
in January 2020, together with Ms Gennette Clacken,
Instructional Designer at the Caribbean Examinations
Council, and Noel Brown, Acting Deputy President
and Vice President at the Caribbean Maritime
University.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada,
COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction
to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and
Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for
teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational
education across the Commonwealth and beyond.
Learners from Jamaica were among the 24,000
participants in these courses.

GENDER

A baseline data report on at-risk boys in Jamaica was
completed in 2015, and a project was undertaken
to develop strategies to address the specific learning
needs of at-risk boys in order to improve their life
chances in two communities in Jamaica. A subsequent
environmental scan in 2015–2016 mapped which
development stakeholders were working on targeted
interventions that addressed the learning needs of
at-risk boys in Jamaica and what each stakeholder was
specifically undertaking. Gender activities have been
mainstreamed in RADA since 2014, when they started
to collect sex-disaggregated data and a Gender Focal
Point was appointed. In 2016, with the help of COL,
gender was officially mainstreamed within RADA via a
Gender Equality Policy Statement.

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Jamaica is a compilation of
current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic
indicators in the Commonwealth, namely in the areas
of health, education, economic participation, and
decision making.

In 2018 and 2019, women aspiring to assume leader-
ship positions in ODL and ICT-based fields gathered
in Malaysia for the COL-hosted Pan-Commonwealth
Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL.
Mrs Elizabeth Ann Sinclair, UWIOC, participated in this
intensive workshop in 2018.

In June 2019, Ms Karlene Black, University of Tech-
nology, Jamaica, and Mrs Erica Simmons, Caribbean
Maritime University, attended the regional workshop
Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial
Intelligence (AI) in Nassau, The Bahamas.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-
Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change
by empowering girls and women to become leaders
and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Nancy
George is a CWW mentor.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the attendance of Dr Phylicia Marshall, Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, and Ms Michelle Desguottes, Spring Village Development Foundation and Training Institute, at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored four delegates from Jamaica to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Dr Schontal Moore, UWI, Mrs Roslyn Jackson-Richards, RADA, Dr Phylicia Marshall, Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, and Joan Spencer-Ernandez, UWI. Ahead of the forum in Edinburgh, Ms Jackson-Richards also joined a workshop hosted by L3F, Joan Spencer-Ernandez attended the Teacher Education workshop, and Dr Phylicia Marshall attended the Interlocutors’ Meeting hosted by VUSSC.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

In 2018–2020, COL’s Focal Points met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place on 30 and 31 August 2018 in Kingston, Jamaica 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. The meeting was inaugurated by Senator the Honourable Ruel Reid, Minister of Education, Youth and Information, Government of Jamaica. Dr Phylicia Marshall, Assistant Chief Education Officer, Tertiary Unit, Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, represented Jamaica at the meeting. COL reconvened its Caribbean Focal Points in January 2020 in Saint Lucia to further finetune its activities in the region and inform the development of a new strategic plan. Dr Phylicia Marshall was in attendance.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Jamaica.

The experience was most exciting, rewarding and memorable. The information provided a new and interesting field that made me want to explore. The hands-on exercise, which I knew in theory, came to life when our groups created our own chatbot. The added benefit of attending this workshop was the almost immediate bond formed with the other participants.

– Ms Karlene Black, on her participation in the Women in ICT course
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Jamaica include:

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Information
- Christiana Potato Growers Cooperative Association
- Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica
- Frazer-Cascade Producer and Marketing Organisation
- HEART Trust/NTA
- Jamaica Constabulary Force
- Joint Board for Teacher Education
- Rural Agricultural Development Authority
- The University of the West Indies, Mona
- University of the Commonwealth Caribbean
- University Council of Jamaica

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
St. Kitts and Nevis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary net enrolment rate</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school completion rate</td>
<td>98.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

St. Kitts and Nevis (population: 52,823 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.8% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate of 98.0% (2016). The Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Enhancement Project aims to improve the quality, relevance and efficiency of the TVET system. St. Kitts and Nevis is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 81% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 148 per 100 people (2017). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in St. Kitts and Nevis. In the National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategic Plan 2006, the government committed to supporting the establishment of an Education Management Information System for managing education at the school and ministry levels.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education supported students through the FLOW Study Platform and teachers via Microsoft Teams.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Mr Francil Morris, Deputy Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for St. Kitts and Nevis.

COL’s Work in St. Kitts and Nevis: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

Current work in St. Kitts and Nevis is primarily in the areas of tertiary education, through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, technology-enabled learning, and technical and vocational skills development. Learners from St. Kitts and Nevis have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
**Education Sector Overview**

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

In partnership with the Caribbean region’s Joint Board of Teacher Education, COL has supported the development of diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs.

Participants from St. Kitts and Nevis benefited from the Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from St. Kitts and Nevis were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses. Learners from St. Kitts and Nevis have also benefited from the online course titled Quality Assurance in Blended Learning since April 2020.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL is working with the national training authorities of countries in the region to develop the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training curriculum. St. Kitts and Nevis is a member of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), which is key to these developments. The first cohort was completed in 2017, and it aims to improve the efficiency and affordability of the basic training that all teachers and trainers working in CVQs are required to have. Key officers from the national training agencies have been trained in Moodle administration, and the CANTA eLearn Moodle is now hosted by UWI at St Augustine.

COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom, which are available to educators from St. Kitts and Nevis. Four staff from Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC) successfully completed Facilitating Online Courses.

In partnership with CFBC and several other Caribbean institutions, TVSD organised courses on facilitating online learning. As well, two participants from CFBC attended a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET, in February 2015, and two attended the Sustainable Development in TVET regional workshop, organised in Barbados in June 2018.
A total of 41 learners from St. Kitts and Nevis have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. In September 2020, the first cohort of graduates from St. Kitts and Nevis, who had obtained 48 certificates in total, was recognised at the virtual COL–Coursera convocation for the Caribbean region.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

Mr Darryl Lloyd, COL Focal Point, and Ms Debbie Isaac, Senior Education Officer from St. Kitts and Nevis, participated in the Open Textbook Forum held in St John’s, Antigua and Barbuda in October 2015. The forum included a series of workshops focused on the development of OER policies and the strengthening of open textbook initiatives in the region.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from St. Kitts and Nevis were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

In October 2015, COL’s Gender Equality Manager met with representatives from the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, other government agencies and community-based organisations to explore possibilities for addressing the learning needs of at-risk boys in St. Kitts and Nevis.

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: St. Kitts and Nevis* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.


In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Susan Sarah Owen, Director of UWIOC’s Centre for Continuing and Professional Education, is a CWW mentor.

Special Events and Activities

COL supported the participation of Mr Darryl Lloyd at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Mr Lloyd attended PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, where he also participated in a pre-forum meeting hosted by VUSSC. Mr Lloyd also attended the regional Caribbean Focal Points meeting, as well as the regional *Capacity Building Workshop on OER*, both organised in Saint Lucia in January 2020.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

The offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, as well as the Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from St. Kitts and Nevis.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in St. Kitts and Nevis include:
• Ministry of Education
• Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:
1) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
2) invest in innovations and research;
3) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
4) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
5) promote gender equality.
Saint Lucia

95.4% Primary net enrolment rate

81.3% Secondary school completion rate
Saint Lucia (population: 182,790 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.4% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 81.3% (2018). The Saint Lucia Council for Technical Vocational Education and Training was formally established by an Act of Parliament in November 2007 to co-ordinate and monitor formal, informal and non-formal TVET programmes at the national level. Saint Lucia is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 51% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 102 per 100 people (2018). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Saint Lucia. In January 2019, the Cabinet adopted the framework of the ICT in Education Policy and Strategy for Saint Lucia 2017–2020. The policy represents the commitment of the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development (MOEIGRSD) to have in place a strategic approach to the integration of ICT in education for Saint Lucia, and its development reflects a strategic partnership between MOEIGRSD and COL.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education rolled out its COVID-19 Education Response for the third term, which commenced 20 April 2020.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Germain Anthony, Curriculum Specialist for ICT Integration, MOEIGRSD, is COL’s Focal Point for Saint Lucia.
COL’s Work in Saint Lucia: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

Current work in Saint Lucia is primarily in the areas of technology-enabled learning, technical and vocational skills development, and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Saint Lucia have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

TEACHER EDUCATION
COL, partnering with the Caribbean region’s Joint Board of Teacher Education, has developed diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs.

There were 15 participants in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020. Participants from Saint Lucia joined the October 2020 offering of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia (MLM1) MOOC and the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers (CTT1) MOOC, also offered in October 2020.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)
In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Mr Germain Anthony, Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, serves on the VUSSC Management Committee.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including Saint Lucia. As well, there were participants from Saint Lucia in the online course Quality Assurance in Blended Learning, offered by COL since April 2020.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Saint Lucia were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)
COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth, including to learners in Saint Lucia, via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom. Learners from Saint Lucia, the majority of whom were from Arthur Lewis
Community College, participated in these courses, with 38 certificates awarded.

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training course, and the development of online CVQ Verifier Training and CVQ Instructor Training courses. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Saint Lucia is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

In February 2015, two individuals from Saint Lucia participated in a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET. In June 2018, one participant from MOEIGRSD attended a regional workshop titled Sustainable Development in TVET, organised in Barbados.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

Saint Lucia participated in the Open Textbook Forum, held in October 2015 in Antigua and Barbuda. The forum included a series of workshops that focused on

A total of 6,990 learners from Saint Lucia have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. In September 2020, the first cohort of graduates from Saint Lucia, who had earned 590 certificates of completion, was recognised at the virtual COL–Coursera Convocation for the Caribbean region. The Honourable Dr Gale T. C. Rigobert, MOEIGRSD, delivered special remarks at the event.
the development of OER policies and the strengthening of open textbook initiatives in the region. In March 2016, COL conducted a three-day workshop on OER and open textbook creation at the Saint Lucia Ministry of Education. The workshop focused on the development of an open textbook to support the Grade 5 Mathematics syllabus as described in the Saint Lucia curriculum, through the use of free, quality resources. The Status of ICT in Education in Saint Lucia (2017) formed the basis of discussions to develop a national policy and strategic plan for ICT in education. The study involved the examination of desk literature, followed by a survey of teachers, principals and students; 52 principals, 107 teachers and 15 students participated in the online surveys. The ICT in Education Policy and Strategy 2019–2022, developed with COL’s support, was adopted by the Cabinet on 19 January 2019.

The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform was launched with a training programme for teachers in Castries, Saint Lucia in May 2018. These teachers will provide support and training to students and teachers in their respective schools to adopt C-DELTA. A workshop for teachers on implementing C-DELTA was organised in November 2019, with 26 participants from various schools in attendance.

Mr Royston Emmanuel from Sir Arthur Lewis Community College participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice meeting and the C-DELTA Training of Trainers workshop, both held in New Delhi, India in December 2018.
Since its launch, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Saint Lucia.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Saint Lucia were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

The **Caribbean Regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER: Policies and Practices**, co-hosted by COL and MOEIGRSD, with financial support from UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, took place in January 2020 in Castries. Attendees from MOEIGRSD included Fiona Mayer, Chief Education Officer, Dawson Ragunan, Deputy Chief Education Officer, and Germain Anthony, Curriculum Specialist for ICT Integration. Royston Emmanuel, eLearning Specialist, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, also attended.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: St Lucia* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators in the Commonwealth, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.


**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the participation of Mr Germain Anthony, MOEIGRSD, at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016 and at PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. He also participated in the pre-forum meeting hosted by VUSSC, and the TEL Partners gathering, both of which were hosted by COL in Edinburgh.
REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Caribbean and the Americas regional consultation was held in São Paulo, Brazil in April 2017. Mr Germain Anthony, Curriculum Specialist for ICT Integration, MOEIGRSD, attended.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Caribbean met twice for regional consultations. Mr Germain Anthony, MOEIGRSD, represented Saint Lucia at both meetings, held in Jamaica (2018) and Saint Lucia (2020).

At the meeting in Castries, Saint Lucia in January 2020, eight Caribbean countries were represented: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and The Bahamas. Two representatives from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation were also present as observers. The meeting set out to update Focal Points on COL’s work in the region and the wider Commonwealth, and to consult with them on regional and national priorities that should inform COL’s new strategic plan 2021–2027.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

Learners from Saint Lucia participated in the October–November 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020. A total of 68 learners participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–November 2020.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including Saint Lucia.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, garnered interest in Saint Lucia.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 25 participants from Saint Lucia.

The first module in the Youth Work MOOC Series, titled Engaging Pacific Youth in Their Communities, was offered by PACFOLD in November–December 2020, attracting learners beyond the Pacific, including from Saint Lucia.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Saint Lucia include:

- Ministry of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development
- Sir Arthur Lewis Community College

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

93.6% Primary net enrolment rate

89.5% Secondary school completion rate
Introduction

St. Vincent and the Grenadines (population: 110,589 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.6% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 89.5% (2018). St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 21% (2016) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 93 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the ICT Strategy and Action Plan 2011–2015, the government committed to promoting modern software technology for efficiency in education, skills development and professional capacity building.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information expressed a commitment to strengthening its eLearning modalities to provide home-based learning for thousands of students throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Elizabeth Walker, Chief Education Officer (Ag.), Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information, is COL’s Focal Point for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Current work in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is primarily in the areas of technology-enabled learning, technical and vocational skills development, and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from St. Vincent and the Grenadines have benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**Education Sector Overview**

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

In partnership with the Caribbean region’s Joint Board of Teacher Education, COL has developed diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs.

There were 32 participants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

Learners from St. Vincent and the Grenadines participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Participants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines also joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and

The Honourable St. Clair Prince, Minister of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information, represented the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines at PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. He also attended a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers, hosted by COL under the forum auspices.
promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Participants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines have benefited from the online course titled Quality Assurance in Blended Learning since April 2020.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. Two offerings have brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from St. Vincent and the Grenadines were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL has worked with the national training authorities of countries in the region to develop the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training curriculum. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a member of the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities, which is key to these developments. The training programme, launched as an online course in February 2017, aims to improve the efficiency and affordability of the basic training that all teachers and trainers working in CVQs are required to have.

COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom. Learners from St. Vincent and the Grenadines have benefited from these courses, with 32 certificates awarded. A team from St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College successfully completed COL’s Moodle Implementation course, and the college has been using Moodle to administer all its examinations online.

A representative from St. Vincent and the Grenadines was among the teachers/managers to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, from the Open Polytechnic in New Zealand, with support from COL.

In February 2015, two individuals from St. Vincent and the Grenadines attended a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET. Two representatives of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College and one representative from the Sector Skills Development Agency’s National Qualifications Department attended a regional workshop on Sustainable Development in TVET, organised in Barbados in June 2018.

A total of 76 learners from St. Vincent and the Grenadines have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines participated in the Open Textbook Forum, held in October 2015 in St. John’s, Antigua and Barbuda. The forum included a series of workshops that focused on the development of OER policies and the strengthening of open textbook initiatives in the region. With COL’s support, St. Vincent and the Grenadines developed an open textbook on chemistry.
Mrs Harriette Da Silva, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College, participated in the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) Training of Trainers workshop held in New Delhi, India in December 2018.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mrs Elizabeth Walker, Chief Education Officer (Ag.), Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information, represented St. Vincent and the Grenadines at the meeting of the Focal Points in Saint Lucia in January 2020. Ms Walker and her colleague Ms Semonique Harry also attended the regional Capacity-Building Workshop on OER, organised by COL in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in January 2020.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from St. Vincent and the Grenadines were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: St. Vincent and The Grenadines report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the attendance of Mr Nigel Scott, Director, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College, at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored The Honourable St. Clair Prince, Minister of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information, and Mr Nigel Scott, Director, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College, to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. Mr Nigel Scott also participated in the pre-forum meeting hosted by VUSSC.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in September 2017. The Caribbean and the Americas Regional Consultation was held in São Paulo, Brazil in April 2017. Ms Beverly Neptune, the COL Focal Point for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, participated.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Ms Beverly Neptune, Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information, represented St. Vincent and the Grenadines at the regional meeting of Caribbean Focal Points in Jamaica in August 2018. Mrs Elizabeth Walker, the Ministry’s Chief Education Officer (Ag.), participated in the January 2020 meeting of Focal Points in Saint Lucia.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including 45 from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 24 participants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in St. Vincent and the Grenadines include:

- Ministry of Education, National Reconciliation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Information
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Trinidad and Tobago

95.3%  
Primary net enrolment rate

72.6%  
Secondary net enrolment rate
Trinidad and Tobago (population: 1,394,973 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.3% (2010) and a secondary net enrolment rate of 72.6% (2004). The Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme is an agency of the Ministry of Education with the core mandate of providing technical and vocational skills training to various at-risk nationals between the ages of 15 and 60 to enhance their chances of securing wage employment or self-employment. Trinidad and Tobago is a member of The University of the West Indies Open Campus (UWIOC), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 77% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 155 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Trinidad and Tobago. In ICT Blueprint: National ICT Plan 2018–2022, the government committed to advancing ICT training and infrastructure in primary and secondary schools.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education launched an Online Learning Platform providing online classes, eLearning materials, assessments, and other resources for K-12 education. As well, in September 2020, the ministry made 70 laptops available for the use of early childhood care and education teachers, while 98 laptops were made available to public special schools for the use of children with special educational needs.

At the request of the ministry, COL expedited the open sharing of content on an online platform as a response to the COVID-19 crisis.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mrs Amia Conrad Christopher, Head of Teaching and Teacher Development Division, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Trinidad and Tobago.
Working in two sectors, Education and Skills, with Gender as a cross-cutting theme, COL uses pioneering models and approaches to achieve impact. Current work in Trinidad and Tobago is primarily in the areas of technical and vocational skills development, open/innovative schooling, gender, technology-enabled learning, and higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Trinidad and Tobago continue to benefit from open online courses and other resources offered by COL.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

COL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education to implement the OIS model in Trinidad and Tobago. In August 2017, representatives from the ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia — who have signed agreements with COL to work together to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream and open schools through eLearning, and to broaden access to schooling for out-of-school youths — met in Singapore to share experiences in the implementation of COL’s OIS model in mainstream and open schools. This provided an opportunity for these participants to align their countries’ implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges and identify innovative ways to increase the momentum of the programme.

In February 2017, COL trained 24 technical personnel identified by the Ministry of Education to use Aptus, an offline server developed by COL.

The Catholic Education Board of Management, the Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development
Institute and COL launched an open school to focus on practical skills training for students in Matelot, Trinidad. The Matelot Innovative Community Open School, which officially opened in November 2015, targets young people who have dropped out of school, offering them training and certification in boat engine repairs, fish handling/processing and net mending. Courses and training were developed following consultations with Matelot residents who showed an interest in fields related to the fishing industry. The open school celebrated its first graduating class in April 2017. Several community leaders, including the Archbishop Joseph Harris and COL’s Senior Adviser: Open Schooling, attended the ceremony, where 20 graduates received certificates.

In February 2019, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, COL enabled training for 36 teachers to develop ICT-integrated lessons for use in all schools, based on the secondary and primary school curricula.

In October 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: Open Schooling visited Trinidad and Tobago and met with 20 representatives from the Ministry of Education, who had been involved in the development of open schooling content. Key takeaways for participants included learning about creating interactive and multimedia content, mastering relevant software, and becoming familiar with OER and copyright issues. Over 1,300 resources have been created in Trinidad and Tobago to pilot the OIS model. The OIS initiative has been presented to Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, who has approved the pilot and related monitoring and evaluation.

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

Partnering with the Caribbean region’s Joint Board of Teacher Education, COL developed diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs. Dr Elna Carrington Blaides from UWI, Trinidad and Tobago, participated in a consultative meeting to discuss the development of the diagnostic tools.

A total of 8,334 participants from Trinidad and Tobago benefited from the Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC. The Ministry of Education is using this course as a foundation for its subsequent more in-depth training.

A total of 398 learners from Trinidad and Tobago participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 459 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Sixty-six learners joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

OER4OL supports teachers during school closures caused by COVID-19. According to Ms Aneisa Singh, Teacher Development Specialist at the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, the course “has proven both informative and beneficial” in light of fostering a blended approach to education and has been added as a prerequisite for teacher training in preparation for the reopening of school campuses.
Participants from Trinidad and Tobago also joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Dr Ruby Alleyne, University of Trinidad and Tobago, and Mr Michael Bradshaw, The University of the West Indies, are representatives for the Caribbean region on the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Committee. In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Thirty-three participants from Trinidad and Tobago (from the Caribbean Public Health Agency, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Public Administration, Public Service Academy, and Trinidad and Tobago Policy Academy) took part in an online course, Developing and Teaching Online Courses, during October–December 2015. This was developed by COL to support instructors in designing and implementing quality online and blended learning experiences. Nominated by the Ministry of Education, a representative from the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago participated in a review workshop on the Environmental Management for Sustainable Development programme, in June 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The purpose of the workshop was to review and update the course materials to reflect the context of Commonwealth small states.

A total of 33 participants have benefited from the online course titled Quality Assurance in Blended Learning, which has been offered since April 2020.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The two offerings have brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including four participants from Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Trinidad and Tobago were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL has supported a regional initiative to standardise training across the region and increase the number of qualified TVET assessors, verifiers and instructors. Staff from Trinidad and Tobago’s National Training Agency (NTA) contributed to developing and delivering an online Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training course, and the development of online CVQ Verifier Training and CVQ Instructor Training courses. Between 2016 and 2019, COL supported five workshops to develop materials for the online programmes and to train staff in Moodle administration. Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Moodle administrator training workshop in December 2017, with participants from the Grenada National Training
Nine participants from Trinidad and Tobago have completed the online assessor training. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member, to offer the three CVQ courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA’s capacity to implement Moodle.

COL has partnered with the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP), a vocational training organisation in Trinidad and Tobago, to establish a flexible and blended technical and vocational education and training model for more efficient delivery of quality training. The blended online CVQ Life Skills programme was launched in 2017 with more than 100 learners. Online Life Skills and Manicure & Pedicure courses have been developed and are being offered. COL’s TVSD initiative and YTEPP have also partnered with the National Centre for Persons with Disability (NCPD) to train persons with disabilities in food preparation, using a blend of online learning and hands-on training in kitchens. Joint workshops were held in May 2018 and September 2018 at YTEPP to plan the programme, build capacity in Universal Design for Learning approaches in blended learning, and develop materials.

In May 2017, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD met with Trinidad and Tobago’s Minister of Education, the Honourable Anthony Garcia, to brief him about COL’s activities supporting TVET institutions in the country.

In February 2015, two individuals from Trinidad and Tobago participated in a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET. In June 2018, TVSD held a regional workshop in Barbados on Sustainable Development in TVET. There were nine participants from Trinidad and Tobago, from YTEPP, the NCPD and the NTA.

COL supported TVET teachers and managers from five Commonwealth countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

As well, TVSD has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom. Staff from across Trinidad and Tobago’s TVET system have built their capacity in flexible and blended learning, with 180 certificates awarded.

A total of 10,740 learners from Trinidad and Tobago have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, in partnership with YTEPP, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by
COVID-19. In September 2020, the first cohort of graduates from Trinidad and Tobago were recognised at the virtual COL–Coursera convocation for the Caribbean region.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL encourages the integration of TEL supported by OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. Trinidad and Tobago participated in the Open Textbook Forum, held in October 2015 in Antigua and Barbuda. The forum included a series of workshops that focused on the development of OER policies and the strengthening of open textbook initiatives in the region.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Trinidad and Tobago were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action...
(C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Trinidad and Tobago.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Trinidad and Tobago* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2018 and 2019, women aspiring to assume leadership positions in ODL and ICT-based fields gathered in Malaysia for the COL-hosted *Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL*.

Ms Hilary Marie Hyacinth Drakes-Morris, UWIOC, participated in this intensive workshop in 2019.

Ms Tricia Selisha Stewart from the Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute attended the regional workshop *Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)* in June 2019 in Nassau, The Bahamas.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Emily G. Dick-Forde, UWIOC, is a CWW mentor.

**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the participation of Dr Steve Warner, UWI ROYTEC, at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2016. COL also sponsored three delegates from Trinidad and Tobago to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019; ahead of the forum, Dr Ruby Alleyne, The University of Trinidad and Tobago, and Mr Michael Bradshaw, UWI, also participated in the Transnational Qualifications Framework Committee meeting, hosted by VUSSC, and Mrs Lystra Sampson-Ovid participated in the Gender meeting.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Caribbean and the Americas Regional Consultation was held in April 2017 in São Paolo, Brazil. Ms Saleema Hyatali, Teaching and Teacher Development Division, Ministry of Education, attended.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Trinidad and Tobago.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted 447 participants from Trinidad and Tobago.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 203 participants from Trinidad and Tobago.
Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Trinidad and Tobago include:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Labour and Social Enterprise Development
- Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities
- Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute
- Catholic Education Board of Management
- Metal Industries Company Limited
- MIC Institute of Technology
- National Training Agency
- The University of Trinidad and Tobago
- The University of the West Indies, St Augustine
- Youth Training and Employment Placement Programme Limited

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
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.

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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 Education Ministers, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and PCF10**.
COL in the Commonwealth

EUROPE
2015–2021
The Europe region of the Commonwealth comprises three Member States: Cyprus, Malta and the United Kingdom.

In a world marked by pandemics, natural disasters and economic uncertainties, COL continues to promote ‘learning for sustainable development’.

**COL is an enabler:** COL was established specifically to help ministries, institutions and organisations to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches. As an acknowledged leader and innovator in ODL, OER and TEL, COL supports Member States to create enabling environments for building robust and resilient systems of education and training.

**COL is a capacity-builder:** COL harnesses the potential of ODL and technologies to build the capacity and capability of institutions and individuals in formal, non-formal and informal environments for reaching the unreached with lifelong learning opportunities.

**COL is a catalyst:** By developing innovative models, COL catalyses the transformation of education and training systems. As a catalyst for collaboration within the Commonwealth and beyond, COL promotes partnerships for enhanced impact.

Through its regional centres, COL promotes the development of leadership and expertise in the fields of ODL and TEL.

In Europe, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning (3CL) operates as a knowledge hub for a global network of groups, agencies, institutions and educators interested in the rapid deployment of programmes for connected learning in the Commonwealth and the European Union. 3CL is an international foundation set up by the Ministry of Education and Employment in Malta in collaboration with COL, presently hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. COL’s President and CEO chairs 3CL’s International Advisory Board.

Cyprus and Malta are members of COL’s Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

*Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021* concluded that COL’s activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women’s and girls’ empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.
COL’s major regional initiatives in the European countries between 2015 and 2021 are outlined below.

• The European OER Regional Consultation was organised in preparation for the 2nd World OER Congress, which was held in Slovenia in September 2017. The Regional Consultations were organised in partnership with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia with the generous support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. They followed a central theme of “OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action,” reflecting a strong focus on the role of OER in achieving SDG4. They explored strategies and solutions to the challenges of mainstreaming OER. The Europe Regional Consultation was held in Valletta, Malta in February 2017. Ministers, officials and experts from 24 countries participated in this important consultation, which was co-hosted by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta.

• COL and 3CL organised a two-day conference titled “Blockchain, Credentials and Connected Learning” in May 2018 in Valletta. The purpose was to generate an overview of emerging practices and associated technology providers as well as the concerns and interests of leaders in the education and skill-development sectors. The conference brought together 115 experts in blockchain technology from 17 countries.

• In June and July 2020, COL and 3CL organised an online webinar series entitled Blockchain and Gaming in Education. A total of 291 registrants were tabulated, and four partners were identified to pursue an institutional blockchain activity with COL and 3CL. Since then, COL and 3CL have been in touch with three institutional partners in Botswana, Namibia and Mauritius to pilot interventions using blockchain technology.

• From September to October 2020, COL and 3CL delivered a MOOC entitled Digital Literacy Lab for Educators. It attracted 1,685 learners, and 361 certificates were awarded.

• In consultation with the Ministry of Education and Employment, Government of Malta, COL developed a draft national OER policy for Malta. COL also facilitated the development of the University of Malta’s open access policy through the provision of technical advice from a senior expert based in Canada.
• Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teacher capacity in responding to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include Cybersecurity Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), OER for Online Learning and Teaching Mathematics with Technology, among others. These have attracted participants from six countries in Europe, including two Commonwealth nations.

• In partnership with The Open University, UK, COL launched a project aimed to build capacity in inclusive education. As part of the project, two MOOCs on inclusive education have been offered: Inclusive Teaching and Learning and Creating an Inclusive School.

• 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 related to learning for sustainable development. On 28–29 April 2020, COL held online consultations with Focal Points from the region as part of the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).

• COL partnered with The Open University, UK to organise the Ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, held in Edinburgh in September 2019. Close to 550 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from across the Commonwealth and beyond came together to discuss the role of open and distance learning in meeting the challenges of the changing world.

• Experts from UK-based Diversity and Ability (DnA) built the capacity of staff at the Global Rainbow Foundation in Mauritius to deliver a three-month online course on Conducting Disability Needs Assessments and Assistive Technologies.

• Professor Brenda Gourley (UK) and the Right Honourable Patricia Scotland QC (UK) are mentors in COL’s CommonwealthWiseWomen programme, aimed at developing the leadership potential of women and girls in the Commonwealth.

• Close to 130 learners from Europe joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world.
Cyprus

- **97.5%** Primary school enrolment
- **95.3%** Secondary school completion rate
Cyprus (population: 1,198,575 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 97.5% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 95.3% (2017).

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is the main provider of in-service training for secondary education teachers. The Open University of Cyprus is the first and only higher education institution in Cyprus that provides open and distance education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Internet connectivity is available to 86% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 144 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Cyprus. In the 2012 Digital Strategy for Cyprus, the government committed to ensuring all public schools have computer networks, including datacentres with high-speed physical connections, and to installing computers and multimedia labs in every school.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus decided to promote the use of eLearning via subsidised training providers, a move also aimed at achieving faster adoption of ICT in vocational training.

COL FOCAL POINT

Professor George Papadopoulos, Dean, Department of Computer Science, University of Cyprus, is COL’s Focal Point in Cyprus.

COL’s Work in Cyprus: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s work in Cyprus is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth and in technology-enabled learning. Participants from Cyprus have attended regional and international events hosted by COL, and learners have benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
COL IN THE COMMONWEALTH: 2015–2021

Education Sector Overview

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Cyprus is a member of VUSSC, with Professor George Papadopoulos, University of Cyprus, as the VUSSC Interlocutor.

Initiated by ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth, VUSSC is currently supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Over 40 courses are available to partners at www.colvee.org.

In September 2019, Professor Papadopoulos participated in the Interlocutors Meeting organised by COL ahead of the Ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF9) in Edinburgh, UK. The meeting focused on identifying individual country priorities and the ways in which VUSSC could add value.

As well, COL has held discussions with CyprusInno, the largest bi-communal digital platform connecting all Cypriot entrepreneurs, about offering VUSSC entrepreneurship courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Cyprus are among the nearly 24,000 who have participated in these courses.

One learner from Cyprus participated in the Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, co-hosted with the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning, in Malta.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Cyprus report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

Special Events and Activities

VISIT OF CYPRUS HIGH COMMISSIONER TO CANADA

COL welcomed the Cyprus High Commissioner to Canada, His Excellency Pavlos Anastasiades, at their headquarters in Metro Vancouver, Canada in May 2016.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the attendance of Professor George Papadopoulos, Dean, Department of Computer Science, University of Cyprus, at both PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016, and PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. As well, Professor Papadopoulos was invited to participate at the Interlocutors Meeting hosted by VUSSC ahead of each forum.
**2ND WORLD OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES CONGRESS**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Europe Regional Consultation was held in Valletta, Malta in February 2017. Mr Thanasis Hadzilacos, Professor of Educational Technology and Director of the Educational Technology Lab, Open University of Cyprus, attended.

**BLOCKCHAIN, CREDENTIALS AND CONNECTED LEARNING**

COL and the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning organised a two-day conference titled “Blockchain, Credentials and Connected Learning” in May 2018 in Valletta, Malta. The purpose was to generate an overview of emerging practices and associated technology providers, and an awareness of the concerns and interests of leaders in the education and skill-development sectors. The conference brought together 115 experts in blockchain technology from 17 countries, including Professor Soulla Louca, University of Nicosia.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place on 24-25 September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana, where Dr Georgia Kapitsaki, Assistant Professor, Department of Computer Science, University of Cyprus, represented Cyprus. Professor George Papadopoulos, Dean, Department of Computer Science, University of Cyprus, joined the second meeting virtually in May 2020 to share national priorities.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Cyprus include:

- Ministry of Education and Culture
- University of Cyprus

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**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Malta

99.5% 
Primary school enrolment

92.9%
Secondary school completion rate
Malta (population: 502,653 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 99.5% (2017) and a secondary school completion rate of 92.9% (2017).

The University of Malta is the leading higher education institution in the country. The Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology offers a very wide range of vocational and professional courses and programmes.

Internet connectivity is available to 86% (2019) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 144 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Malta. In the National Digital Strategy 2014–2020, the government stated it would work with educational institutions, community organisations and industry to develop a Lifelong Learning Programme, with eSkills at its core.

**Building Education Resilience in the Face of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the government launched an eLearning training scheme for the tourism industry.

**COL Focal Point**

Dr Alexander Grech, Senior Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is COL’s Focal Point for Malta.

**Notable Mention**

The Reverend Professor Peter Serracino Inglott was a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.
COL’s Work in Malta: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

COL’s work in Malta has been in the area of OER policy development. Malta hosts the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning and is a member of COL’s Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Participants from Malta have attended regional and international events hosted by COL, and learners have benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Initiated by ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth, VUSSC is currently supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes while promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Over 40 courses are available to partners at www.colvee.org.

COL and Malta signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November 2015. One of the objectives of the MoU is to use the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Framework for the recognition of digital learning. Since then, Malta has been a member of VUSSC, with Mr Jesmond Xuereb, Chief Executive Officer, Fondazzjoni Temi Zammit (FTZ) currently serving as the VUSSC Interlocutor.

Mr Jesmond Xuereb, CEO, FTZ, attended the VUSSC Interlocutors Meeting, hosted by COL in September 2019 in Edinburgh, UK ahead of the Ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. The meeting focused on identifying individual country priorities and the ways in which VUSSC could add value.

As well, the University of Malta is a member of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, which helps aspiring or untrained youth workers to obtain a professional qualification. An MoU was signed by COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus to convert UWI Open Campus’ Youth in Development Work programme to OER.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In consultation with the then Ministry for Education and Employment, COL facilitated the development of the National OER Policy for Malta.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Malta were among the nearly 24,000 participants.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over over 13,500 registered users, including from Malta.
On 25 November 2015, an MoU was signed by Mr Joseph Caruana, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE), and Professor Asha Kanwar, President and CEO of COL, at a formal ceremony at MEDE. The agreement provided the framework for the establishment of 3CL. The Honourable Minister Evarist Bartolo and Dr Linda Sissons, then Chair, COL Board, participated in the ceremony.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Malta report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

REGIONAL CENTRE

COMMONWEALTH CENTRE FOR CONNECTED LEARNING (3CL)

The Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning is hosted by Malta’s Ministry for Education. Set up as a foundation in 2017, it operates as a knowledge hub for a global network of groups, agencies, institutions, educators and activists interested in the rapid deployment of programmes for connected learning in the Commonwealth and the EU. COL serves in an advisory capacity on the centre’s International Advisory Board.

In January 2017, COL’s Director of Technology and Knowledge Management was invited to participate in a plenary panel of the EU Presidency Conference on Digital Education, organised in partnership with 3CL.

Also in 2017, COL facilitated the development of an open access policy for the University of Malta through the engagement of Professor Stevan Harnad, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada.

COL and 3CL organised a two-day international workshop titled Blockchain, Credentials and Connected Learning in May 2018 in Valletta, Malta. The purpose was to generate an overview of emerging practices and associated technology providers, and an awareness of the concerns and interests of leaders in the education and skill-development sectors. The event brought together 115 experts in blockchain technology from 17 countries.

Inaugurating the workshop Blockchain, Credentials and Connected Learning, Malta’s Minister of Education and Employment, the Honourable Evarist Bartolo, stressed that blockchain can help guarantee trust in certification, proof of learning and transparency in education.
COL hosted Dr Alexander Grech, 3CL Executive Director, and Professor John Portelli, 3CL Board Chair, for a visit on 20 November 2018. During the visit, Dr Grech made a presentation to COL staff on the merits of using blockchain for educational purposes, including the ability to access and secure a range of materials, such as digitised credentials and OER.

In June 2020, COL trained three members of the 3CL staff in monitoring and evaluation.

In 2020, 3CL and COL co-hosted the four-part webinar series Blockchain and Gaming in Education, which attracted 20 participants from Malta. 3CL and COL also co-ordinated the delivery of a MOOC entitled Digital Literacy Lab for Educators. Enrolment was 1,685, including 64 learners from Malta.

In early 2021, 3CL published a book entitled Media, Technology and Education in a Post-Truth Society, written by Dr Alexander Grech.

Special Events and Activities

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING (CHOGM), 21–29 NOVEMBER 2015

The then Chair of the COL’s Board of Governors, Dr Linda Sissons, led the COL delegation to CHOGM, held in Malta in November 2015. At the two meetings of Commonwealth foreign ministers during CHOGM, COL’s President reported on COL’s work, made three presentations at the Women’s Forum and Business Forum, and held key meetings with ministers and senior officials from Australia, Canada and the UK. COL’s Vice President made two presentations, at the Women’s Forum and Youth Forum.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Europe regional consultation was held in Valletta, Malta in February 2017. Malta was represented by the Honourable Mr Evarist Bartolo, Minister for Education and Employment; Mr Joseph Caruana, Permanent Secretary, MEDE; Dr Alexander Grech, Executive Director, 3CL; Mr George Borg, Director General, Educational Services, MEDE; Mr Martin Debattista, Institute for Tourism Studies; and Mr Godfrey Baldacchino, Pro Rector, University of Malta.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the attendance of Dr Alexander Grech, Executive Director, 3CL, and Mr Jesmond Xuereb, Chief Executive Officer, FTZ, at PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016, and at PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. In addition, Dr Grech was an invited speaker at a PCF9 workshop that explored the affordances offered by blockchain technology for transforming the education sector, focusing on praxis, and Mr Xuereb participated at the VUSSC Interlocutors Meeting held in Edinburgh ahead of the forum.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place on 24–25 September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana, where Ms Gabriella Cassola, Acting Director, Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs, represented Malta. Dr Alexander Grech, Executive Director, 3CL joined the second meeting virtually in May 2020 to share national priorities.

COL’s INTERNATIONAL MOOCs


Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Malta include:

- Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs
- former Ministry of Education and Employment
- Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning
- National Commission for Further and Higher Education
- University of Malta

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
United Kingdom

101.0% Primary school Gross Enrolment Ratio

120.8% Secondary school Gross Enrolment Ratio
Introduction

UK has high gross enrolment rates at the primary (101.0%), secondary (120.8%) and tertiary (61.4%) levels (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020), and the vast majority of its young people (aged 15–24 years) are involved in work, study or a combination of both (89.5%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020).

Most of the UK’s universities have an online presence. The Open University (OU) is a public research university and the largest university in the UK for undergraduate education. COL and OU have enjoyed a long and fruitful partnership, including in co-hosting PCF9, which led to the Edinburgh Statement in September 2019.

FutureLearn, a massive open online course (MOOC) learning platform, included 175 UK and international partners as of June 2020.

As of 2017, there were 61.8 million Internet users in the UK, constituting 92.5% of the population (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020). Information and communication technology (ICT) capability is built into the UK school curriculum to strengthen citizens’ digital literacy skills.

A major contributor to COL's budget, the UK has been providing support and expertise to COL's initiatives, which promote learning for sustainable development across the Commonwealth. COL's Journal of Learning for Development (JL4D) has had Professor Alan Tait (OU) and Anne Gaskell as Editor Emeritus and Chief Editor, respectively. COL shares a link with OU, as its former President and CEO, Sir John Daniel, was the Vice Chancellor of OU for 11 years. In 2017, OU conferred a DLitt (honoris causa) on COL's current President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar. COL regularly commissions UK experts to provide expertise and advice to various COL partners. The erstwhile Department for International Development (DFID) has supported the integration of results-based monitoring, gender and value for money into COL’s organisational processes.

COL has contributed a number of outputs and outcomes to address the UK’s international development priorities. Lifelong Learning for Farmers is an example of how COL helps with tackling extreme poverty and empowering the world’s most vulnerable persons (for example, assetless women in rural areas of developing Member States). It has promoted employability and entrepreneurship development as major outcomes in higher education, as these can contribute to boosting global prosperity. All of COL's activities, internal as well as with partners, are well founded on the priority of value for money, and evidence is carefully assembled for evaluation.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and OU have joined the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19.

Responding to the global COVID-19 crisis, and with a view to mitigating the disruption of activities at various institutions, COL hosted a series of webinars on online learning in April–May 2020. Professor Allison Littlejohn, University College London, was one of the international experts facilitating the workshops.
COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- Mr Philip Parham, CMG, UK Commonwealth Envoy, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, represents the UK Government on the COL Board of Governors.
- Dr Joanna Newman, Secretary General, Association of Commonwealth Universities, UK serves as a Board Member nominated by the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

- Dame Jocelyn Barrow is a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.
- Mr Desmond Bermingham is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Dr Chris Berry is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Dr Felicity Binns is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Ms Jo Bourne is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- The late Right Honourable Lord (Asa) Briggs of Lewes was a COL Honorary Fellow and the Founding Chair of the COL Board of Governors.
- The late Dr Anastasios Christodoulou was a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.
- The late Lord (Michael) Young of Dartington was a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Dr Marshall Elliott is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Ms Louise Ellis is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Ms Anne Gaskell is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Professor Brenda M. Gourley is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Dr Myra Harrison is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Mr Steven Hillier is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Dr Roger O. Iredale was a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.
- Ms Janet Jenkins is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Dr David Levesque is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- Professor Stephen Matlin is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- The late Dr Roger Mills was a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Dr Roslyn Morpeth is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Dr Hilary Perraton is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Lord David Terence Puttnam is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.
- The late Professor Donald F. Swift was a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Professor John Tarrant is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- The late Mr Rod Tyrer was an Honorary COL Adviser.
- The late Right Honourable Lord (Walter L.M.) Perry of Walton, is a COL Honorary Fellow.
- Mr Rob Whitby is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

Some of COL’s activities related to UK’s international development priorities are highlighted below.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

In April 2017, COL engaged NotesMaster UK to implement a project to develop open educational resources (OER). The project’s overall goal is to provide open secondary school and vocational education to out-of-school youths and adults in Belize, Malawi, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia through virtual or blended classrooms.

As well, COL has been working with Knowledge Acquisition Limited, based in London. The organisation acts as the Online Community Manager for the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association, through its website COMOSAConnect.
TEACHER EDUCATION

In 2016, COL commissioned OU’s Emeritus Professor of Education Bob Moon and Charmaine Villet of the University of Namibia to produce a report titled *Digital Learning: Reforming Teacher Education to Promote Access, Equity and Quality in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The report provides an overview of the present and future impact of digital learning on teacher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. It focuses on student-teachers and teachers, and its central argument is that existing institutional structures will be insufficient to meet the scale of demand for well-prepared, qualified teachers. The report describes digitally enhanced programme innovations that can be identified in many institutions across the region, as well as three phases to the full-scale adoption of new digital technologies.

In collaboration with OU, COL supported Kenya’s Ministry of Education and the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) in hosting a *Learning Design Workshop* in November 2019. This activity is part of KISE’s implementation of COL’s Teacher Futures model, which aims to improve teacher quality and learning outcomes through innovative school-based teacher development. Staff from the OU’s Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme facilitated the training, which focused on adaptation and integration of relevant OER in the teacher development programme on inclusive education. Micro-learning resources and a draft training handbook were developed, along with an outline of a future MOOC on inclusive pedagogies.

In November 2020, in collaboration with OU, COL organised an online co-design workshop to initiate the development of two MOOCs — *Inclusive Teaching and Learning* and *Creating an Inclusive School*. This event brought together decision makers, teachers and practitioners from Jamaica, Kenya and Uganda with classroom experience in the area of inclusive education.

The Inclusive Teaching and Learning MOOC was offered by COL and the team from The Open University’s TESSA programme in February-March 2021, and it brought together 328 participants from across the Commonwealth.

One participant from the UK joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

Two learners from the UK participated in the October–November 2020 offerings of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and four participated in the *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC, also offered twice in October–November 2020. One UK learner joined the *Teaching Mathematics with Technology* MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In November 2017, as part of its Youth Dialogues series, Wilton Park — an executive agency of the erstwhile Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK — organised a conference on higher education and employability, in collaboration with ACU, the Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC), the University of Pretoria and the National Research Foundation. The conference was attended by several higher education specialists from the region, including vice chancellors of universities, as well as staff from Oxford University. COL’s Education Specialist: Higher Education presented a paper on the role of technology in higher education.

COL is involved in the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) project, funded by DFID under the Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education Innovation and Reform initiative (SPHEIR). PEBL is led by ACU in partnership with COL, the Staff and Educational Development Association and the University of Edinburgh. The project seeks to enhance institutional capacity to deliver blended learning. This occurs through training and other supports focused on teaching quality, student outcomes, employability and research output. In a larger context, PEBL aims to address the critical academic staff shortages faced in many East African universities. Amongst other areas, COL is responsible for developing and strengthening the university quality assurance (QA) systems within the partner and participating universities to robustly assure the quality of blended learning courses.
Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions were organised by COL in Malaysia — in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including from the UK. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

A total of seven participants from the UK joined the three offerings of the Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, co-organised by COL and the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020.

Professor Martin Weller, Institute of Educational Technology, OU, serves as a COL Chair. Most recently, he offered fellowships to three Commonwealth researchers specialising in different areas of open education.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

During the 19th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers in June 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between COMSEC, COL and the University of the West Indies (UWI) Open Campus to co-operate on converting the UWI undergraduate degree and diploma in Youth Development Work into OER. The trio also agreed to facilitate the development of a consortium of academic institutions to increase access to youth work education and training resources in the Commonwealth, and to facilitate the process of sharing resources and enhancing capacity among members. The Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work (CHEC4YW) was formally launched by the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, at the opening ceremony of the 9th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, in Kampala, Uganda in August 2017.

In the framework of CHEC4YW, a series of workshops were designed and delivered to prepare partner institutions to develop and deliver the Bachelor’s in Youth Work in blended and online environments. In June 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualification Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London.

Experts from UK-based Diversity and Ability (DnA) conducted needs assessments and stakeholder consultations with members of the persons with disabilities community, practitioners who work with them, and other stakeholders. They also trained staff of the Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius in needs assessment and assistive technologies to enable them to deliver the three-month online course Conducting Disability Needs Assessments and Assistive Technologies.

In 2020-2021, COL organised four MOOCs on the blue economy. Learners from the UK were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

SKILLS SECTOR OVERVIEW

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from the UK were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative

Close to 130 learners from the UK enrolled in the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining access to over 4,000 free online courses aimed to upskill those whose livelihoods had been disrupted or destroyed by COVID-19.
In advance of PCF9 in Edinburgh, COL hosted the Technology-Enabled Learning Partners Meeting. Dr Leigh-Anne Perryman from OU’s Institute of Educational Technology was in attendance.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in the UK.

**GENDER**

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: United Kingdom report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. The Right Honourable Patricia Scotland, QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, and Professor Brenda Gourley, former OU Vice Chancellor and President, serve as CWW mentors.

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**Events and Special Activities**

**THE EUROPEAN OER REGIONAL CONSULTATION**

In preparation for the 2nd World OER Congress in Slovenia in September 2017, COL co-hosted six regional consultations in partnership with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia, with the generous support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Regional Consultation for Europe was held in Valletta, Malta in February 2017. Ministers, officials and experts from a total of 24 countries participated in this important consultation, which was co-hosted by the Ministry of Education and Employment, Malta. Mr Joe Wilson, Co-founder, Open Scotland, Glasgow, attended the Regional Consultation.

**COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING (CHOGM) 2018**

On 18 April 2018, COL President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, briefed Commonwealth foreign affairs ministers on COL’s work at a pre-CHOGM meeting in London. She highlighted COL’s 30-year history, mission and activities supporting Sustainable Development Goal 4 – to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030.

At PCF9, Commonwealth education ministers had an informal lunch with the Right Honourable Nick Gibb, Minister of State (Minister for School Standards).

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL partnered with OU to organise PCF9 in Edinburgh on 9–12 September 2019. With 135 delegates in attendance, the UK was the country with the largest participation in the forum. At PCF9, Lord Puttnam of Queensgate delivered a thought-provoking Asa Briggs Lecture. Ms Sarah Brown, Executive Chair, Global Business Coalition for Education, and Professor Rose Luckin, University College London Knowledge Lab, presented special keynote addresses.

Under the auspices of PCF9, COL and OU co-hosted a ministerial roundtable with the Commonwealth education ministers. Another forum roundtable...
brought together vice chancellors to discuss the current status and future direction of higher education in the Commonwealth.

At PCF9, COL conferred the title of Honorary Fellow on Ms Anne Gaskell in recognition of her outstanding contribution to learner support and the promotion of research and scholarship in open and distance learning.

**MEETINGS**

COL’s President and CEO has been presenting COL’s work at annual induction programmes for newly appointed diplomats in London, co-hosted with COMSEC and the Commonwealth Foundation. These meetings are an opportunity to strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders. The President also presents COL’s annual report to the annual meetings of the COMSEC Board of Governors and the Education Ministers’ Action Group via teleconference.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

In the UK, COL’s partners include:

- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- Association of Commonwealth Universities
- The Open University
- University of London

COL is also working with two London-based IGOs: the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

COL looks forward to its continued partnership with the UK, working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and providing Commonwealth citizens with greater access to quality education and training through open, distance and technology-enabled learning. COL will continue to work in regions where the UK has development, security and economic interests, including Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indo-Pacific.

COL has identified several relevant international priorities for the UK in the next triennium, based on information outlined in the November 2020 statement by the Foreign Secretary. This will include prioritising girls’ and women’s education.
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 Education Ministers, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and PCF10.**
COL in the Commonwealth

PACIFIC
2015–2021
Open, online and distance learning (ODL) has always played a key role in providing access to education to remote and rural students and disadvantaged groups in the Pacific. In fact, it could be argued that without ODL, the levels of educational attainment in this region would be much lower. However, there is work to be done, as some countries in the region still have infrastructure problems, such as insufficient Internet connectivity and availability, which directly impact access to online and distance learning. For example, while only about 50% of the global population has access to the Internet, the percentage is even lower in the Pacific (33%). Access to mobile subscriptions is higher and stands at 85.5% in the Pacific, presenting an opportunity to build a system of teaching and learning that is cloud based and mobile friendly, supported with other affordable and accessible technologies (Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience 2020).

COL focuses on adding value to the countries’ efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions of the Pacific in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education include emphasising quality and inclusive secondary and higher education and strengthening teacher development programmes. In the area of skills, COL supports the expansion of access to technical and vocational education, the reinforcement of non-formal education in agriculture, and technology-enabled learning (TEL). These initiatives have been designed to achieve socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at low economic and environmental costs.

On 6 September 2018, the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, announced a package of NZ$ 9 million to make it easier for Pacific students to access education.

As part of the package, the Prime Minister also announced a partnership with USP and COL to expand open, distance and flexible learning opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels. “We are pleased to be able to draw on the considerable expertise of the University of the South Pacific and the Commonwealth of Learning to increase access to high-quality secondary and tertiary education in the Pacific,” Ardern said.

The Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), based in Fiji, is a centre for capacity building in ODL in the region. COL and the University of the South Pacific (USP) work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, which is hosted by USP. The centre’s priorities include: advocacy and capacity building for flexible and open learning for sustainable development; the development of regional and national policies on open, distance and flexible learning; and research in flexible and open learning.
The Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021 concluded that COL’s activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women’s and girls’ empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.

COL’s major regional initiatives in the Pacific Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2020 are outlined below.

- More than 1,500 learners signed up for a MOOC titled Climate Change and Pacific Islands, developed by COL in partnership with USP and UNESCO and made available to learners globally in August–October 2015. Approximately 70% of participants were from countries in the Pacific.

- An eLearning workshop co-facilitated by COL, on eLearning pedagogies and materials development using ODL and OER, was held in May 2016 at USP and attended by participants from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

- A regional workshop for participants from nine Pacific countries, on OER course design for TVET, was held in June 2017 in Suva, Fiji. The workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute at USP and aimed to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states. Twenty-six TVET educators from 12 partner institutions attended.

- COL supported a workshop organised at USP in May 2017 to enable the university to develop an OER policy. The two-day workshop was attended by 28 staff members from various faculties and disciplines.

- A three-day OER Integration in Courses workshop was held at USP in August 2017. This was organised by the Centre for Flexible Learning, USP, as a follow-up to the OER policy developed in May 2017. USP has incentivised OER integration in its courses, with 30 teachers to date supported in this project.

- The Pacific OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for delegates to learn more about OER in the lead up to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017.

- COL’s Aptus, a low-cost, off-grid, offline device that allows teachers to create a classroom without walls, has undergone trials at local institutions in Fiji and is being used in Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa. A total of 20 devices have also been shipped to Vanuatu and another 40 devices were delivered to Kiribati. Shortly after cyclone Gita hit Tonga in February 2018, 25 Aptus devices were deployed to help restore classroom teaching in the country’s schools and colleges.

- The Pacific regional meeting of the COL Focal Points took place on 16 and 17 February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji to strengthen the effectiveness of COL’s work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region, and to share information related to learning for sustainable development. On 26 May 2020, COL held online consultations with Focal Points from the Pacific as part of the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).
• The Capacity-Building Workshop on Professionalising Youth Workers was held at USP’s Laucala Campus, in Suva, in June 2019. There were 37 participants from eight Pacific island countries present. Based on outputs from this engagement, COL partnered with Lakehead University, Canada, to develop a series of six MOOCs for Youth Work in the Pacific. The first module was delivered in the last quarter of 2020 with 331 learners.

• COL, in partnership with USP and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, commissioned a situational analysis to inform the implementation of open, distance and flexible learning in the Pacific. The analyses were presented and deliberated over in stakeholder meetings, including regional consultations in Fiji, and in the UK at PCF9, as well as national consultations in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Kiribati. These consultations (organised in July–October 2019) have informed COL’s response to Member States in the Pacific who have requested support for online and distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis.

• A Memorandum of Understanding between COL and USP was signed in December 2020 to support PACFOLD in building capacity in open, distance and flexible learning and TEL within the region. This includes higher education, secondary schooling, teacher education, and technical and vocational skills development and activities that will align with the strategic plans of both COL and USP.

• COL and PACFOLD ran a series of activities to sensitise constituents to TEL in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga. In particular, participants were encouraged to employ TEL for course development and to use COL’s Aptus device.

• COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. In 2018–2020, COL supported 52 students from Pacific island countries to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting.

• The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is being implemented in Kiribati. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice as well as school-based training. A total of 334 teachers and teacher educators have been reached.

• In response to a request from the Ministry of Education in Fiji for support for teachers engaged in remote teaching due to school closures, COL, in partnership with PACFOLD, developed and implemented a short course called OER for Online Learning: An Introduction. The course reached over 820 teachers in most of the Pacific island countries.

• Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teacher capacity in responding to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include Cybersecurity Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), OER for Online Learning and Teaching Mathematics with Technology, among others. These have attracted over 290 participants from nine countries in the Pacific.

• COL supported Fiji National University to build teacher capacity in problem-based learning and in facilitating online and blended learning, leading to the development of 33 blended courses. COL supported the National University of Samoa to develop and implement a technology-enabled learning policy.
A research report on student learning and teacher pedagogical transformation at the National University of Samoa after the adoption of a technology-enabled learning framework and a series of capacity-building workshops with COL’s support indicated that blended learning offered the instructors an opportunity to cater to different learning styles. As a result of COL’s interventions, students were more engaged, contributed more, and had access to all the course resources.

– The Impact of Technology-Enabled Learning Implementation at the National University of Samoa

• With COL’s assistance, a TEL policy has been developed at the University of Papua New Guinea, and teachers have increased their capacity to integrate TEL in teaching and learning.

• In Tonga, COL developed courses aimed to improve the financial inclusion of farming communities, particularly women, in the economy.

• COL has been working in PNG and Solomon Islands to leverage ICT to provide timely and relevant information about available social services, especially for women’s safety.

• Fiji National University, the National University of Samoa, the University of Papua New Guinea, USP, the Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand, the OERu network in New Zealand and the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand are all members of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19 (OpenDoor).

• Dame Carol Kidu (PNG), Letuimanu’asina Dr Emma Kruse Va’ai (Samoa), Dr Caroline Seelig (New Zealand) and Professor Belinda Tynan (Australia) are mentors in COL’s CommonwealthWiseWomen programme, aimed at developing the leadership potential of women and girls in the Commonwealth.

• More than 600 learners from the Pacific joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world. They earned over 450 certificates, boosting their employability in the face of COVID-19.

• A video-on-demand platform, www.pacificregionalchannel.org, with over 800 curated OER targeting local curriculum needs, was launched in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island states. Fiji, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga have already joined the initiative.

• With funding from New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, COL launched the Pacific Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning. The five-year project aims to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the Pacific education sector through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology, and it is implemented in partnership with PACFOLD.
Australia has high gross enrolment rates at the primary (100%), secondary (150%) and tertiary levels (113%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020), and the vast majority of young Australians (aged 15–24 years) are involved in work, study or a combination of both (92%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020).

Most of Australia’s universities have an online presence, and Open Universities Australia, a consortium of 20 universities, is a platform that helps students explore hundreds of degrees available online from leading Australian universities.

As well, Australia has a number of dual-mode institutions, such as Swinburne Online, Charles Sturt University Online and Monash University Online, as well as TAFE NSW and TAFE Queensland — providers of technical and further education. The Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia is a professional association of educators, instructional designers, educational researchers, education consultants, and administrators from across Australia and overseas dedicated to the advancement of research, practice and support in education.

As of 2019, there were 21.74 million Internet users in Australia, constituting 87% of the population.

Mobile cellular subscriptions were at 110.62 per 100 people (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020). Information and communication technology (ICT) capability is built into the Australian school curriculum to strengthen citizens’ digital literacy skills.

Through its Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia is a major contributor to COL’s budget, including by providing support and expertise to COL’s initiatives promoting learning for sustainable development in the Pacific and beyond. COL has contributed to several relevant international priorities for Australia, especially in the areas of gender equality and climate change. DFAT funding has contributed to COL’s work to end the cycle of child, early and forced marriage and address the barriers to women’s and girls’ economic participation in the most hard-to-reach places across the Commonwealth. COL has also supported a series of online courses on the blue economy and has developed a comprehensive protocol for data resilience in education for smaller Member States.

Experts from Australia have provided technical advice related to ODL, OER and curriculum design for institutions in Commonwealth Member States.
BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment supports Australia’s state and territory governments by providing Coronavirus (COVID-19), an information site with educational, skills and employment resources for students, parents and education providers. Other established national learning platforms include ABC TV Education, which has been broadcasting lessons for over 40 years. Educational content is also available online. Education Services Australia hosts Scootle, a national repository that provides Australian schools with digital resources aligned to the Australian curriculum.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Professor Belinda Tynan, Provost, Australian Catholic University, is Deputy Chair of the COL Board of Governors.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Mr Martin Bean, CBE, Vice Chancellor and President, RMIT University, is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

Professor Clifford D. Blake is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

Ms Ali Gillies is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

Professor Richard Johnson is a former member of the COL Board of Governors.

Professor Som Naidu is an Honorary COL Adviser.

The late Professor James A. Maraj was COL’s Founding President and CEO.

Professor Malcolm Skilbeck is a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.

Professor James Taylor is a COL Honorary Fellow.

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Amy Prosser, Policy Officer, UN Political and Commonwealth Section, International Organisations Branch, Multilateral Policy Division, DFAT, is COL’s Focal Point for Australia.

Some of COL’s activities related to Australia’s international development priorities are highlighted below.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING

In 2015–2018, COL facilitated a twinning arrangement between Open Access College (OAC) in Marden (South Australia) and the Ministry of Education and Training in Vanuatu. In the framework of this agreement, OAC hosted three education practitioners from Vanuatu, who are involved in the Curriculum Content and Development Project. The purpose of the study visit was to learn about conducting eLearning through open and mainstream schooling as well as to get a better understanding of how the schools implement ODL.

HIGHER EDUCATION

In February 2016, COL published Open and Distance Learning Quality Assurance in Commonwealth

Universities: A Report and Recommendations for QA and Accreditation Agencies and Higher Education Institutions, based on research conducted by the late Professor Emeritus Colin Latchem, Curtin University, in Perth. Following an overview of the different policies, systems and practices of ODL quality assurance in national QA and accreditation agencies, as well as universities in the Commonwealth, Professor Latchem made recommendations on QA standards and procedures for policy makers and senior decision makers responsible for ODL at national and institutional levels.

A total of 11 participants from Australia joined the three offerings of the Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, co-organised by COL and the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020.
**Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD)**

In 2017, Professor Latchem edited *Using ICTs and Blended Learning in Transforming TVET*, published jointly by COL and UNESCO. The book is the outcome of fruitful co-operation between the two organisations and brings together the work of several leading experts, presented as a series of case studies from around the world showcasing the use of ICT and novel forms of open, flexible and technology-enhanced learning in TVET.

With Australia’s support, COL is facilitating quality improvements at the Department for Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology (DHERST) in Papua New Guinea through the introduction of blended online learning. In the framework of this initiative, COL supported DHERST in selecting a TVET provider to deliver a formal Australian Project Management Qualification programme, using online learning for theory, and work experience for practising skills.

Three learners from Australia enrolled in the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining access to more than 4,000 free courses aimed at upskilling those whose livelihoods had been disrupted or destroyed by COVID-19.

**Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)**

Professor Michael Sankey of the Learning Futures Programme at Griffith University has provided invaluable contributions for the success of the TEL initiative. In 2019, he co-authored the *Benchmarking Toolkit for Technology-Enabled Learning*, which helps educational institutions implementing TEL to assess and benchmark their practices in comparison with other institutions, and provides a framework for self-assessment and reporting based on ten areas and detailed indicators to measure quality. Professor Sankey participated in the TEL Partners’ Meeting and PCF9 in 2019, both held in Edinburgh, UK.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Australia were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**Gender**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Australia* is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators in the Commonwealth, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Professor Tynan, ACU, is a CWW mentor. In the framework of this initiative, in May 2020, she led the webinar *Leadership during the Time of COVID-19*.

**Girls Inspire**

Australia’s support has enabled COL to train over 97,000 of the most vulnerable women and girls in unreached locations across the Commonwealth.

Thanks to a grant from DFAT for the implementation of the Reaching the Unreached project in 2015–2017, COL used ODL and technology to support the schooling and skills training of girls and women in...
Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The project’s aim was to provide educational opportunities to women and girls who had either never attended school or dropped out due to barriers such as child, early and forced marriage, distance to school, cultural barriers, security concerns and the cost of schooling. These efforts have improved the livelihoods of girls and women and given them a sense of agency and empowerment. In communities throughout Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, 25,284 women and girls completed life-skills and vocational-skills training, with 4,724 of the participants successfully moving into income-generating activities after the training.

The Reaching the Unreached Scaling-Up Project, Training and Technology for the Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls in Poor Rural Communities in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which ran through to early 2021, aimed at (i) improving the livelihoods of 45,000 women and girls, (ii) increasing community participation and support by engaging at least 10% of the local population in target countries and (iii) engaging governments in strategies connected with policy change. Over 41,000 women and girls benefited from life-skills and vocational-skills courses, with close to 10,000 successfully gaining employment. More than 98,500 community members have raised their awareness about the benefits of women’s empowerment, and close to 10,000 men and boys have been trained in gender equality.

At PCF9 in Edinburgh, in September 2019, GIRLS Inspire hosted a panel discussion with the participation of partners from Global Affairs Canada and DFAT. The session demonstrated how gender equality was mainstreamed into development. Participants shared successes and lessons learned, and showcased how learning had resulted in women’s social, political and economic empowerment.

**PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)**

COL and the University of the South Pacific (USP) work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, a regional centre located in Fiji. The centre’s priorities include: advocacy for and capacity building in flexible and open learning for sustainable development; the development of regional and national policies on open, distance and flexible learning; and research in flexible and open learning.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. A collaboration between COL, USP and James Cook University, it serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development.

On 10 May 2018, the Australian High Commissioner to Canada, Her Excellency Ms Natasha Smith, visited COL to learn more about its work. Ms Smith was particularly impressed by COL’s Aptus, a low-cost device that allows educators and learners to connect to digital learning platforms and content without the need for grid electricity or Internet access. “I see the great potential in this device being deployed, even in remote areas in Australia and Canada that lack Internet access, for connecting learners,” she said.
development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course titled *Flexible Skills Development*, with participants from across the region.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched *Engaging Pacific Youth in Their Communities*, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including 11 learners from Australia.

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### Events and Special Activities

#### 2016 INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION PRESIDENTS’ SUMMIT

In November 2016, COL sponsored the International Council of Open and Distance Education Presidents’ Summit, hosted by Charles Sturt University in Sydney in November 2016. The conference, which was attended by 115 delegates from over 32 countries, was themed “A New Era of Leadership and Quality: The Business of Open and Distance Learning 2020.”

#### 2017 OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE

COL’s Vice President gave a keynote address at the conference of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia in Melbourne in February 2017, which explored the possibilities for innovation, openness and community in the ever-changing and expanding world of ODL. He spoke about lifelong learning and called on the ODL community to give more attention to non-formal learning.

#### REGIONAL OER CONSULTATION FOR THE PACIFIC

Dr Carina Bossu, ASCILITE Fellow Lecturer – Learning and Teaching, Tasmanian Institute of Learning and Teaching, University of Tasmania, and Ms Robin Wright, Copyright Manager, Swinburne University of Technology, attended the Regional Consultation for the Pacific, co-hosted by the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand in Auckland from 29 to 30 May 2017.

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#### FOCAL POINTS MEETING

Ms Peta Compton, Policy Officer, UN Political and Commonwealth Section, International Organisations Branch, Multilateral Policy Division, DFAT, represented Australia at the Pacific regional meeting of COL Focal Points, which took place on 16 and 17 February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji.

#### COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

One learner from Australia participated in the October 2020 offering of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and one joined the November 2020 offering of COL’s *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC.

#### PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

A total of 15 delegates from Australia attended PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. At the forum, Mr Martin Bean, Vice Chancellor and President, RMIT University, delivered a keynote address, looking at the future of educational technology and what that means for open, distance and online learning. Mr Bean also received the title of COL Honorary Fellow for his leadership in technology and higher education.

Two delegates from Australia attended PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. Support provided by the Government of Australia made it possible for many policy makers and practitioners from the Pacific to attend the forum to develop their capacity. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from Commonwealth education ministers.
Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic
technologies allow COL to broaden its reach and engage
at global, regional and national levels, while implement-
tion partners support COL’s work in communities
and institutions across Commonwealth Member States.
Partners include multilateral organisations, regional
bodies, national governments, government agencies,
foundations, civil society organisations, public and
private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.
COL partnerships assist in improving and extending
teaching and learning services to people in the devel-
oping Commonwealth.

In Australia, COL’s partners include:

• Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
• Charles Sturt University
• James Cook University
• The Open and Distance Learning Association of

Australia

Looking Ahead: 2027

COL looks forward to its continued partnership with
Australia, working towards achieving the Sustainable
Development Goals and providing Commonwealth
citizens with greater access to quality education and
training through open, distance and technology-
enabled learning.

For the next triennium, COL has identified several
relevant international priorities for Australia, based
on information outlined in Partnerships for Recovery:
Australia’s COVID-19 Development Response. This
includes working in the Indo-Pacific countries to
enable children and young people, particularly girls
and children with disabilities, to gain the skills they
need to obtain work, go on to further study and lead
productive lives.
Fiji (population: 889,953 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 96.8% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate of 84.5% (2012). The main campuses of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP) and Fiji National University (FNU) are in Suva. Both provide technical and teacher education, and support public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region. USP hosts the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD).

Internet connectivity is available to 50% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 118 (2017) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Fiji. The Ministry of Economy’s 5-Year & 20-Year National Development Plan includes goals to improve telecommunications infrastructure, provide equal access to ICT and expand their digital literacy programme to the entire education system. The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts Strategic Plan 2019–2023 priorities include embracing digital learning and improving digital literacy.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts developed educational television programmes for Fijian children home due to COVID-19.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mr Timoci Bure, Head of National Education Services Delivery, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, is COL’s Focal Point for Fiji.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Professor Rajesh Chandra is a COL Honorary Fellow. Leatuaolevao Ruby Vaa is a former Honorary COL Adviser.
Current work in Fiji is primarily in the areas of technical and vocational skills development and technology-enabled learning. Fiji is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Fiji have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**MEETING WITH FIJI’S EDUCATION MINISTER**

Under the auspices of the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, held in Nadi, Fiji in February 2018, COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, met with the Fijian Attorney-General and Minister for Education, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum. They explored a range of initiatives that COL could undertake in partnership with the Fijian government to strengthen learning for sustainable development in the country.

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**Education Sector Overview**

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

In 2016, COL supported Matai Naisa Tagicaki from USP to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, through the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, as well as to visit COL in June 2016.

In partnership with Asia e University, COL organised two high-level roundtables in Malaysia for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions — in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including from Fiji.

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 208 participants from Fiji. In their feedback, many MOOC participants commended the course’s design, high-quality content and timeliness.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In August–October 2015, COL supported USP to offer the Climate Change and Pacific Islands MOOC.

In May 2016, COL co-facilitated an intensive week-long workshop on eLearning pedagogies and materials development using ODL and OER, with the support
of the Teachers’ Educational Resource and E-learning Centre (TEREC) at USP. Participants hailed from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

Receiving a COL scholarship to study in the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting Programme was both an eye-opener and a good experience that I needed to further enhance my knowledge in regards to the practice of law.

– Edward Eterika, graduate

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. In 2018–2020, COL supported 14 students from Fiji to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting through the School of Law at USP.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Fiji were among close to 6,000 participants in these courses.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including Fiji.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

In June 2017, COL welcomed participants from nine Pacific countries to a four-day regional workshop in Suva on OER course design for TVET. Created to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states, the workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute at USP and aimed to strengthen TVET in the region through the use of OER. Twenty-six TVET educators from 12 partner institutions attended.

TVET teachers and managers from Fiji were among those supported by COL to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

In 2018, Mr Tze Foon Foong, CEO of Nanyang Polytechnic International, Singapore, conducted a review of the TVET sector in Fiji at the request of the Fiji Higher Education Commission. While finalising his report, he led a series of workshops. His engagement with Fiji was sponsored by COL.

In December 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD visited Fiji to identify a Skills in Demand project that would contribute towards the implementation of the recommendations from the August 2018 Fiji TVET Rapid Review (which provided an analysis and roadmap for priority actions to strengthen the TVET sector). She met with the Permanent Secretary, Education, Heritage and Arts, and various members of the TVET team at the Fiji Higher Education Commission.

Fulton Adventist University College (FAUC) and COL have been working together to develop and deliver an online version of Fiji’s National Certificate in Teaching TVET programme. In May 2019, a consultant visited FAUC to facilitate a project design workshop, and in September 2019, a second consultant facilitated a learning design workshop to build the institution staff’s capacity to design and develop fully online courses. The COL consultant then worked with the FAUC team to complete the first module for the fully online course.

COL’s TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom. Learners in these courses participate online via Moodle; this assists teachers with incorporating ICT in their TVET courses and moving towards a blended learning model that integrates online digital resources with classroom teaching. Participants from Fiji regularly join in.
A total of eight learners from Fiji have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, with support from FNU, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including from Fiji.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

Through Fiji’s Higher Education Commission, COL’s Aptus technology, an off-grid, offline virtual classroom, has undergone trials at local institutions for use as a platform for OER in Fiji’s secondary schools and as a “library-on-the-go” to serve students in rural or remote locations enrolled in distance learning programmes at FNU.

COL assisted USP in developing a policy for OER, through a workshop organised at the university in May 2017. The workshop was attended by 28 staff members from various faculties and disciplines. In August 2017, COL supported a three-day OER Integration in Courses workshop at USP. This was organised by USP’s Centre for Flexible Learning as a follow-up to the OER policy developed in May 2017 with COL’s support. USP has funded 30 teachers to develop OER-based courses.

Working with Fiji’s Higher Education Commission, COL has also provided technical advice for the development of a national OER policy.

The capabilities that Aptus had to offer Fiji just blew me away. It was dynamic [and] at the same time user friendly.
– Matai Tagicaki, Education Specialist, Fiji Higher Education Commission
Dr Deepak Prasad, FNU, participated in a Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice meeting, and Dr Shikha Raturi, USP, participated in the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) Training of Trainers Workshop, both hosted by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018. Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Fiji.

COL continues to support FNU in TEL implementation. In March 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning visited Fiji and delivered a public lecture at FNU on “OER in the Pacific.” As well, assistance has been provided in the development of blended courses, and FNU has signed an agreement to develop a Community of Practice for TEL; this aims to provide space for all institutions throughout the Commonwealth to collaborate, learn from and interact with each other. In collaboration with FNU, COL launched the TEL Community of Practice online platform to develop a network of teachers across the Commonwealth who are adopting technology-enabled and blended learning practices in their teaching.

In June 2019, COL supported a workshop for 40 FNU educators, with a focus on designing, implementing and facilitating problem-based learning experiences. As part of the efforts by FNU to mainstream TEL, COL also supported a two-day workshop on eModeration in October 2019. The aim was to build the capacity of Mrs Nazmeen Raju is the acting Head of the Social Science Department at Sabeto College in Fiji. According to her, completing COL’s course on Using Open Educational Resources: An Introduction has been “the best decision” taken so far in 2020. Mrs Raju credits the course with enhancing her teaching through tools and knowledge that will greatly benefit her learners. She is now using SMS to contact her students and is ready to launch Google Classroom when they have access to email. “If you want to say that this COVID-19 era was not a waste, you can only do this by taking up this course. I feel like telling all the teachers to take this opportunity to learn and pass on the best to our students,” she says.

PACIFIC REGIONAL CHANNEL

The Pacific Regional Channel video-on-demand platform was established in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island Member States. Fiji, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga have already joined the initiative. Over 800 OER, carefully curated from worldwide OER repositories and targeting the countries’ specific curriculum needs, populate the platform, which has the capacity to accommodate requirements from other states as well. At an online ceremony in November 2020, COL was joined by the Honourable Rosy Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji, Hon Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister for Education, Nauru, and the Honourable Loau Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Samoa, all of whom delivered special remarks at the platform’s launch.
teachers in facilitating blended and online courses. As well, FNU developed 18 online/blended courses that have been available to students since the September 2020 semester.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Fiji were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Fiji* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In the framework of this initiative, COL hosted the *Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL*, in Malaysia. Dr Adi Atelate Eci Kikau Nabalarua, FNU, and Ms Sujlesh Sharma, USP, participated in the workshop in 2018, while Dr Zakia Ali-Chand, FNU, and Ms Charlotte Anne Taylor, USP, attended the 2019 session.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)

COL and USP work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, a regional centre located in Fiji. The centre’s priorities include: advocacy for and capacity building in flexible and open learning for sustainable development; the development of regional and national policies on open, distance and flexible learning; and research in flexible and open learning.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. A joint endeavour between COL, USP and James Cook University, it serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online *Flexible Skills Development* course, with participants from across the region.

From April to July 2018, COL and PACFOLD organised a series of capacity-building workshops in four countries in the region. Teachers and officials in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga were trained in TEL, OER and the use of Aptus.

In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji on *Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific* in June 2019. Thirty-two participants from ministries as well as local and regional youth organisations gathered to discuss regional priorities and challenges related to youths in the Pacific. The main objective of the workshop was to draw upon participants’ knowledge of youth work and familiarisation with the youth work courses developed by The University of the West Indies. Participants collaborated to devise competencies and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. From Fiji, 15 representatives from ten institutions participated in the workshop.

A regional workshop to identify priority activities in skills development was organised at Shangri-La’s Fijian Resort from 13 to 15 August 2019 by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand. The focus was on...
resilience education, youths and gender. The workshop was attended by Mr Jone Nemani, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Government of Fiji, and Mr Tom Haig, Senior Advisor, MFAT.

In partnership with USP’s Centre for Flexible Learning, PACFOLD, and MFAT, COL organised two in-country consultations in October 2019 in Papua New Guinea and Kiribati. The purpose of the consultations was to present proposed initiatives to key stakeholders and experts, validate areas of focus, and ensure these efforts would meet the needs of learners in the two countries. The consultations sought feedback and helped to build consensus around the initiatives, aimed at providing educational opportunities through open and flexible learning.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created the Functional Numeracy MOOC. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, with 257 learners from Fiji.

In June 2020, COL trained four members of PACFOLD staff in monitoring and evaluation.

A total of 785 learners from Fiji benefited from the June 2020 offering of the Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities, a series of micro-courses developed for those wishing to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including 225 from Fiji.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and Open/Innovative Schooling initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Fiji filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth was released in 2021.

From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Fiji filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted 39 learners from Fiji.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

At PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016, COL conferred the designation of COL Honorary Fellow on Professor Rajesh Chandra, Vice Chancellor and President of USP, in recognition of his contributions to ODL in the Pacific. COL also sponsored two additional participants from Fiji to attend the forum: Mr Hasmukh Lal and Mr Ian Thomson, both from USP.

COL sponsored seven delegates from Fiji to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. Several also participated in the various COL pre- and post-forum meetings, such as the Regional Centres’ Directors meeting, the Technology-Enabled Learning Partners’ Meeting and a meeting hosted by TVSD. The delegates included: Mr Deepak Bhartu, Ms Sharishna Narayan, Mr Mohito Jioni, Dr Bibhya Sharma and Mr Vineet Singh, all from USP; Dr Deepak Prasad, FNU; and Mrs Akanisi Lanyon, FAUC. At PCF9, New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Pacific Regional Consultation was held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017 and was attended by three participants from Fiji: Mr Laisiasa Merumeru of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Mr Matai Tagicaki of PACFOLD and Dr Ian Thomson of USP’s TERECC. COL supported the participation of Dr Som Naidu, Director of PACFOLD, in the congress.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, with PACFOLD staff representing Fiji at the meeting. Professor Richard Coll, Deputy Vice Chancellor, USP, attended the meeting as a special guest. Mr Timoci B. Bure, Head of National Education Services Delivery, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, joined the May 2020 meeting virtually to share Fiji’s national priorities.
**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

Thirty-four learners from Fiji participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and 58 participated in the *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Thirteen learners joined the *Teaching Mathematics with Technology* MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Fiji include:

- Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts
- Fiji National University
- Fulton Adventist University College
- Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development
- University of the South Pacific

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**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Kiribati (population: 117,606 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 94.7% (2017), a secondary net enrolment rate of 69.1% (2005) and a gross enrolment rate of 86.9% (2008). The Kiribati Institute of Technology offers courses in technical and business education, and teacher education is offered by Kiribati Teachers College. Kiribati is member of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 15% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 47 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Kiribati. The Kiribati National ICT Policy 2019 lays out plans to develop teacher skills and eLearning applications as well as to introduce comprehensive ICT instruction throughout the school curricula. Kiribati’s Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016–2019 includes embedding ICT into curriculum and school operations, developing and training teachers in ICT technology, and providing secondary schools with relevant ICT equipment and technology.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education adopted the Education Sector Contingency Plan for COVID-19 in Kiribati.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Bwakura Metutera-Timeon, Secretary, Ministry of Education, is COL’s Focal Point for Kiribati.

NOTABLE MENTION

The Honourable Teima Onorio is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
Current work in Kiribati is primarily in the areas of teacher education and higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Kiribati have also benefited from COL's open online courses and other resources.

**TEACHER EDUCATION**

In collaboration with the Kiribati Teachers College (KTC), COL launched the Teacher Futures – Kiribati programme in November 2017 at an event with the participation of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Mrs Kaaro Neeti and the Principal, KTC, Mr Aberaam Tebitaki. This was followed by a capacity-building workshop to sensitize KTC staff on the tenets of the Teacher Futures programme and prepare the attending teacher-educators for participation in a global community of practice.

A baseline study on teacher e-readiness was finalised in March 2018. The study revealed that 64% of those surveyed had Internet access on their mobile phones or through a computer. While 54% of the participants had attended at least one professional development programme, only 10% had participated in a programme delivered through computers and the Internet.

In March–April 2018, 25 staff from KTC participated in an e-facilitation workshop to acquire skills in basic online teaching and community participation. Lecturers who had successfully completed the workshop started facilitating new online courses offered to 73 pre-service students and 254 in-service teachers.

A learning design workshop was held in May–June 2018 for 31 KTC staff and secondary school teachers, to provide them with the skills to develop an online course or course component that would be meaningful, inspiring and engaging for their students.

A seven-week e-workshop was held in October–December 2018 for Kiribati in-service teachers to introduce them to effective classroom practice and
problem-based learning, as part of a four-credit Teaching Essentials I course that they need to complete within their teacher qualification programme.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, COL hosted a five-day workshop on technology-enabled teacher professional development in February 2019 at KTC. Additional training resources for Teacher Futures were adapted from COL’s Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development (SBTD) and developed into two seven-week online workshops, titled Teaching Essentials Part 1 and Teaching Essentials Part 2. Modules on problem-based learning, climate change and WebQuests were added to the workshop.

In March 2020, KTC lecturers were remotely supported to complete the development of five flagship courses as models. A further 20 courses were significantly improved as a result of this capacity-building activity.

To promote the co-creation of audio-based resources for learning in low-resource settings, in January 2021 COL launched Educational Podcasting for Innovative Classrooms (EPIC). The new platform supports online podcast streaming as well as collaboration spaces for in-country teacher communities of practice. Currently, EPIC has groups for three countries, including Kiribati.

Participants from Kiribati benefited from the June 2020 offering of the Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC.

A total of 49 learners from Kiribati participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 45 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

Learners from Kiribati joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020, as well as an online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships.

The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

A number of participants from Kiribati joined a MOOC on climate change, offered by USP in collaboration with COL and UNESCO in August–October 2015.

In May 2017, COL launched a MOOC titled Understanding the Blue Economy. The ten-week course attracted 243 participants from 47 countries and was of particular interest to small island states, such as Kiribati.

In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative, in partnership with the University of Seychelles, offered four MOOCs on the blue economy. Learners from Kiribati were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL in 2018–2020 supported three students from Kiribati in completing the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting.
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

In June 2017, COL welcomed participants from nine Pacific countries to a regional workshop on OER course design for technical and vocational education and training (TVET) held in Suva, Fiji. The workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education institute at USP and aimed to strengthen TVET in the region through the use of OER. It was the third in a series designed to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states. Twenty-six TVET educators, including two from Kiribati Institute of Technology, attended the workshop, which covered the following areas: instructional video production for online courses and MOOCs; using free and open-source software to repurpose various types of OER media formats; and understanding the Moodle learning management system through Moodle Cloud.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL’s open-source hardware Aptus, an offline, off-grid device for “classrooms without walls,” was deployed extensively by the Ministry of Education in 2016. Aptus enables learners in remote locations with limited or no connectivity to access high-quality digital OER using their own mobile devices. The content in Aptus was customised to suit the requirements of secondary schools in Kiribati.

From April to July 2018, COL and the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development organised a series of capacity-building workshops in four countries in the region. Teachers and officials in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga were trained in TEL, OER and Aptus use.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Kiribati were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Kiribati* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

REGIONAL CENTRE

PACIFIC CENTRE FOR FLEXIBLE AND OPEN LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)

COL and USP Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Kiribati is among the key beneficiaries.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course on *Flexible Skills Development*, attracting participants from across the region.

The Pacific Regional Channel video-on-demand platform was established in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island Member States. Over 800 OER, carefully curated from worldwide OER repositories and targeting the countries’ specific curriculum needs, populate the platform.

Pacific Regional Video on Demand (VOD) Channel
In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji titled *Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific* in June 2019. Participants collaborated to devise competencies and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. Three representatives from Kiribati’s Ministry of Women, Youth, Sports and Social Affairs participated in the workshop.

In August 2019, the Principal of KTC and the Senior Curriculum Resource Officer, Ministry of Education attended the Pacific regional workshop titled *Capacity Building in Skills Development in the Pacific with Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, convened in Fiji by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand.

An in-country consultation was held in October 2019 in Kiribati under the auspices of COL, the Centre for Flexible Learning, PACFOLD and MFAT. The purpose of the consultation was to present proposed initiatives to key stakeholders and experts, validate the areas of focus, and ensure these efforts would meet the learners’ needs. The consultation sought feedback and helped to build consensus around the initiatives, aimed at providing educational opportunities through open and flexible learning.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a *Functional Numeracy* MOOC. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Kiribati.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched *Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities*, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including learners from Kiribati.

From August to December, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and Open/Innovative Schooling initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Kiribati filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication *Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth* was launched in 2021.

As well, from October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RCs conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Kiribati filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020 garnered interest from Kiribati.

### Special Events and Activities

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL sponsored three delegates from Kiribati to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. In the framework of the forum, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers, where the Honourable David Collins, Minister for Education, Kiribati, was present. In addition, Mr Aberaam Tebitaki and Mr Tekonnang Timee, both from KTC, participated in the *Teacher Education* workshop hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of the forum. At PCF9, MFAT, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. Education ministers from Kiribati and Samoa, along with their officials, joined the event with Dr Linda Sissons, the then COL Board Chair, and Professor Asha Kanwar. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.
**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress. The Pacific Regional Consultation was held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017. The Honourable David Collins, Minister for Education, and Mrs Kaaro Neeti, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, participated. The Honourable Minister also participated in the 2nd World OER Congress in Ljubljana, Slovenia in September 2017.

**REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Mrs Kaaro Neeti, Ministry of Education, represented Kiribati at the Regional Focal Point meeting in Nadi, Fiji in February 2018.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs**

The three offerings of COL's Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted ten participants from Kiribati.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Kiribati include:

- Ministry of Education
- Kiribati Institute of Technology
- Kiribati Teachers College
- USP Kiribati Campus

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**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Nauru (population: 12,581 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.7% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate of 71.8% (2016). Nauru is a member of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region. The USP campus in Nauru offers courses for primary teacher education, and the Nauru Vocational Training Centre offers formal classes in technical skills.

Internet connectivity is available to 62% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 95 (2017) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Nauru. The Nauru National Sustainable Development Strategy 2005–2025 includes goals to develop an ICT sector delivering a range of services that are responsive to changes in technology, and plans to provide all libraries with ICT facilities.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, USP Nauru campus, in partnership with COL and the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development offered an online course to support teachers with teaching online.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

The Honourable Hu’akavameliiku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mrs Darrina Kun, Secretary for Education and Training, Department of Education, is COL’s Focal Point in Nauru.
COL’s current work in Nauru is primarily in the area of technical and vocational skills development. Nauru is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Learners from Nauru have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.

**Education Sector Overview**

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL has supported one student from Nauru to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting.

In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Nauru were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

In June 2017 in Suva, Fiji, COL welcomed participants from nine Pacific countries to a regional workshop on open educational resources (OER) course design for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Designed to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states, the four-day workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute at USP and aimed to strengthen TVET in the region through the use of OER. Twenty-six TVET educators from 12 partner institutions attended, including Ruka Reweru from Nauru Secondary School and Floria DetaBene from the Department of Education.

In December 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD held meetings with key stakeholders in Nauru, including the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, to learn about the country’s skills training needs and identify potential projects for TVSD’s Skills in Demand model.

Nauru’s Department of Education and Department of Commerce, Industry and Environment agreed that the priority project would be using mobile learning to supplement the Taiwan Technical Mission project — helping Nauruans learn to grow their own kitchen gardens, reducing Nauru’s dependence on expensive, imported fresh food and improving people’s diets. COL has facilitated a participatory design process to gather information on the needs, user requirements and perspectives around a proposed mobile app.
for encouraging community behaviour change and building gardening skills. COL also worked with the Taiwanese Technical Mission (TTM) to develop technical content for the app, funded its development, and trained Nauruan government officials and TTM staff to be able to use and maintain the app. The formal launch is planned in the first half of 2021.

A total of 52 learners from Nauru have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by the Ministry of Education, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including from Nauru. The Honourable Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister of Education, gave a special address at the event.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Nauru were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Nauru report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.
REGIONAL CENTRE

THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)

COL and USP in Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Nauru is one of the key beneficiaries.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online Flexible Skills Development course,吸引t participants from across the region.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Nauru.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including Nauru.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from the Regional Centres (RCs) and Open/Innovative Schooling initiatives at COL, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Nauru filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth was released in 2021.

Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, where the late Dr Maria Gaiyabu, Secretary for Education, Department of Education, represented Nauru. Ms Darrina Kun, Secretary for Education, Department of Education, participated in the virtual meeting held in May 2020.
COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

The three offerings of COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted participants from Nauru.

Participants from Nauru benefited from the June 2020 offering of the *Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL)* MOOC and the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Nauru include:

- Department of Education
- Department of Commerce, Industry and Enterprise
- Taiwanese Technical Mission
- USP Nauru Campus

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

New Zealand has high gross enrolment rates at the primary (101%), secondary (114%) and tertiary levels (83%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020), and the vast majority of young New Zealanders (aged 15–24 years) are involved in work, study or a combination of both (89%) (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020).

Most of New Zealand’s universities have an online presence, and The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand or Open Polytechnic (Māori: Kuratini Tuwhera) operates as the specialist national provider of open and distance learning (ODL). As well, New Zealand has a number of dual-mode institutions, such as Massey University Study by Distance and University of Otago Distance Learning.

The National Centre for Open Education Practice (coep.nz) provides leadership, networking and support to higher education institutions and practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. It aims to accelerate the adoption of open educational resources (OER) and open educational practices (OEP) for the benefit of learners.

OER Universitas (OERu) is a collaboration of post-secondary educational institutions aiming to provide opportunities to learn from OER and gain credit at costs lower than traditional degrees.

The Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand (FLANZ) is made up of individual and institutional members, mainly from within New Zealand but also from the Pacific Rim.

As of 2017, there were 4.4 million Internet users in New Zealand, constituting 91% of the population (World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2020). Information and communication technology (ICT) capability is built into New Zealand’s school curriculum to strengthen citizens’ digital literacy skills.

A major contributor to COL’s budget, New Zealand has been providing support and expertise to COL’s initiatives that promote learning for sustainable development in the Pacific and beyond. Experts from New Zealand have offered technical advice on ODL, OER and curriculum design to institutions in Commonwealth Member States.

COL’s work in the developing Commonwealth countries of the Pacific in skill development, gender and youths addresses the Pacific development priorities of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), which are presented through the Pacific Reset Approach.

On 6 September 2018, the Honourable Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, announced a package of NZ$ 9 million to make it easier for Pacific students to access education. As part of the package, the prime minister also announced a partnership with USP and COL to expand open, distance and flexible learning opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels, saying: “We are pleased to be able to draw on the considerable expertise of the University of the South Pacific and the Commonwealth of Learning to increase access to high-quality secondary and tertiary education in the Pacific.”
BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The OER Foundation, based at Otago Polytechnic, has partnered with COL to establish an Open Educational Resources for COVID (OER4COVID) community, with the goal of assisting educational institutions around the world to transition to online learning in the face of the pandemic. OER4COVID is a needs-driven community collaboration in which participants identify and prioritise initiatives. Since March 2020, these have included two consultation webinars for multiple regions: Asia; the Pacific and Caribbean; Africa; and Europe. “Office hour” support sessions have been offered, as well as free online courses promoting capacity development. OPNZ and FLANZ have joined the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

Ms Shona E. Butterfield, CNZM is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Dr Robin Day is an Honorary COL Chair.

Mr William L. Renwick is a member of COL’s Founding Board of Governors.

Dr Caroline Seelig is a COL Honorary Fellow, former COL Advisor and CommonwealthWiseWomen mentor.

Dr Linda Sissons, CNZM, is a COL Honorary Fellow and a former Chair of COL’s Board of Governors.

Sir Lockwood Smith is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Ms Jenny Williams is a former COL Advisor.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Dr Caroline Seelig, Chief Executive, OPNZ, represents the government of New Zealand on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Ms Eva Laurenson, Policy Officer, Multilateral Partnerships, Humanitarian, and Multilateral Division, MFAT, currently serves as COL’s Focal Point for New Zealand.

Some of COL’s activities related to New Zealand’s international development priorities are highlighted below.

Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

In October 2017, COL’s Senior Adviser: Open Schooling visited the Te Kura Correspondence School to explore the possibility of using COL’s Aptus device for the K-12 online learning content to be made available to communities in New Zealand, as well as in the Pacific islands where connectivity and bandwidth are poor. He also discussed possible regional co-operation between distance schools in Australia and New Zealand and the Open Schooling initiative of Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education and Training.

Following these discussions, COL has facilitated the study visit of three open schooling practitioners from Vanuatu to New Zealand and Australia. The purpose of the study visit was to learn about conducting eLearning through open and mainstream schooling, as well as to gain a better understanding of how the schools implemented open and distance learning.

COL maintains an ongoing relationship with the Te Kura open school in New Zealand, whose chief executive officer is the regional chapter chair for COMOSA and the co-author of a chapter in COL’s most recent open schooling publication.

In partnership with the University of the South Pacific (USP), COL’s Regional Centres and OIS initiative recently completed a desktop study on out-of-school children and youths in the Pacific region. The study is currently being edited.
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors and heads of ODL institutions were co-organised by COL in Malaysia — in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries were in attendance, including from New Zealand. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

Two participants from New Zealand joined the *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, co-organised by COL and the Open University of Mauritius in November–December 2019.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

In December 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD met with representatives of OPNZ and The Skills Organisation to discuss their involvement in sharing case studies of as-distance-as possible TVET models, which aim to decrease costs while maintaining quality. The Skills Organisation also demonstrated innovative industry training technologies that could be relevant to the TVSD Skills in Demand model.

Capacity-development consultants from New Zealand have supported TVSD projects across the Commonwealth. Skills International, a New Zealand-based leader in vocational education, has provided support to the National Human Resource Development Council in Botswana to develop policy and guidelines for a reformed work-based learning system within their country.

A New Zealand consultant has been helping build the capability of African partners in COL’s Skills in Demand model, specifically in learning design for workplaces, as well as online learning and competency-based assessment; the consultant has also been assisting the National University of Samoa to move assessments for TVET courses online.

In Fiji, consultants from New Zealand have been supporting the Fulton Adventist University College to develop a Skills in Demand model that blends workplace-based and online learning to train TVET educators.

Another consultant is assisting Nauru’s Department of Education and Department of Commerce, Industry and Environment to develop a web-based app that helps local populations achieve food sustainability by learning how to grow their own kitchen gardens.

As well, four learners from New Zealand enrolled in the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining access to more than 4,000 free courses aimed at upskilling those whose livelihoods had been disrupted or destroyed by COVID-19.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In March 2016, COL signed a Memorandum of Agreement with OPNZ to provide opportunities for participants from across the Commonwealth to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating E-Learning (Level 5) offered by OPNZ. This agreement continued until December 2018, with COL offering scholarships to learners nominated by partners from Africa, Asia, Caribbean and the Pacific.

In 2017, COL became a partner of OERu.

Dr Cheryl Lee Brown and Dr Joanna Lim from the University of Canterbury have provided ongoing support to COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education
Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA). In December 2018, they attended the C-DELTA Training of Trainers workshop in New Delhi, India. Dr Brown also participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Partners Meeting from 7 to 8 September 2019, organised by COL ahead of PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK. Since its launch in May 2018, the C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in New Zealand.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning* (TEL) since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from New Zealand were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: New Zealand* is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators in the Commonwealth, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dr Caroline Seelig, CEO of OPNZ and member of the COL Board of Governors, serves as a CWW mentor.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)**

COL and USP work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, a regional centre located in Fiji. The centre’s priorities include: advocacy for and capacity building in flexible and open learning for sustainable development; the development of regional and national policies on open, distance and flexible learning; and research in flexible and open learning.

A regional workshop to identify priority activities in skills development was organised in Fiji from 13 to 15 August 2019 by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and MFAT. The focus was on resilience education, youths and gender. It was attended by Mr Jone Nemani, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Government of Fiji, and Mr Tom Haig, Senior Advisor, MFAT.

In partnership with MFAT and PACFOLD, COL organised two in-country consultations in October 2019 in Papua New Guinea and Kiribati. The purpose of these consultations was to present proposed initiatives to key stakeholders and experts, validate the areas of focus, and ensure they will meet the needs of the two countries’ learners. The consultations sought feedback and helped to build consensus around the initiatives, which aim to provide educational opportunities through open and flexible learning.

In November 2020, the Memorandum of Understanding with USP for hosting PACFOLD was renewed for a period of five years. COL launched [www.pacificregionalchannel.org](http://www.pacificregionalchannel.org), a video-on-demand platform established in response to requests from partners in the Pacific island states. The platform currently has over 800 OER supporting curriculum needs in Fiji, Nauru and Samoa — the three nations that have already joined the initiative. It has the capacity to grow with curated content from other states. At the launch, COL’s President and CEO Professor Asha Kanwar was joined by the Honourable Rosy Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji, the Honourable Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister for Education, Nauru, and the Honourable Loau Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Samoa. PACFOLD will be co-ordinating the implementation of this initiative in the region.
Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL OER CONSULTATION FOR THE PACIFIC

The regional OER consultation for the Pacific, co-hosted by OPNZ in Auckland from 29 to 30 May 2017, was attended by Ms Karina Bird, Senior Professional Adviser, New Zealand Educational Institute, Dr Robin Day, Lead Assessor, OER Foundation, Otago Polytechnic, Ms Mandy Henk, Public Lead, Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand, Dr Wayne Macintosh, Director, International Centre for Open Education, Otago Polytechnic, Ms Amy McAteer, Principal Development Manager, Education, Sustainable Economic Development Division, Pacific and Development Group, MFAT, Dr Caroline Seelig, CEO, OPNZ, and Dr Linda Sissons, Chief Executive, Primary Industry Training Organisation, then Chair of COL’s Board of Governors.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

Ten delegates from New Zealand attended PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. The generous support provided by the Government of New Zealand made it possible for policy makers and practitioners from the Pacific, who would benefit the most, to attend the forum to develop their capacity. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from Commonwealth education ministers.

At PCF9, MFAT, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. Education ministers from Kiribati and Samoa, along with their officials, joined the event with Dr Linda Sissons, COL Board Chair, and Professor Asha Kanwar. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

FOCAL POINTS MEETINGS

Mr Matthew Allen, Development Manager, Multilateral Partnerships, Humanitarian, and Multilateral Division, MFAT, represented New Zealand at the Pacific regional meeting of the COL Focal Points, which took place on 16 and 17 February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji. Mr. Nathan Hollis, Policy Officer, Multilateral Partnerships, Humanitarian, and Multilateral Division, MFAT, and Ms Amy McAteer, Principal Development Manager, Education, Sustainable Economic Development Division, Pacific and Development Group, MFAT, participated in the virtual consultations with Focal Points from the Pacific on 26 May 2020.
Partnerships

Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

In New Zealand, COL’s partners include:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- OER Foundation
- Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
- Skills International

Looking Ahead: 2027

In November 2020, with funding from MFAT, COL launched the Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning in the Pacific. The five-year project aims to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the Pacific education sector through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology. This new initiative will support young people, women and persons with disabilities to build skills in ways that allow them to be engaged and productive workers and citizens. It will also improve education resilience in the region. It is being implemented in partnership with PACFOLD.

With MFAT’s support, COL will organise activities aimed to overcome the impact of COVID-19, such as creating targeted repositories of online OER and building the capacity of local teachers in distance learning.

The new initiative will also support youth employment in the region through the professional development of TVET providers, as well as skills and leadership training for young people, with special emphasis on young women and persons with disabilities.

In addition, the partnership will help build resilience in Pacific education systems through data storage in cloud services and the development of open, distance and flexible learning resources and training for teachers and local officials. Another focus area will be supporting the development and management of regional tools, such as the eLearning for Science Resources Repository.
Papua New Guinea (population: 8,776,109 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 73.7% (2016) and a gross secondary school completion rate of 47.5% (2016). Papua New Guinea has four public universities and several private universities: the University of Papua New Guinea offers open and distance education through The Open College, the University of Goroka offers teacher training, the University of Natural Resources and Environment trains people for agriculture and natural resource management, and Papua New Guinea University of Technology is one of several tertiary institutions offering courses in technical and vocational education.

Internet connectivity is available to 11% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 48 per 100 people (2017). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Papua New Guinea. The National Department of Education’s National Education Plan 2015–2019: Quality Learning for All aims to develop an eLearning and infrastructure adaptation programme to provide access to learning through the use of technology, and plans to provide teacher training in ICT and eLearning technology.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the National Department of Education adopted the Papua New Guinea COVID-19 Education Emergency Response and Recovery Plan.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINTS**

Mr Anthony Rayappan, Deputy Principal Services, Flexible Open and Distance Education, Department of Education, and Ms Leah Margis, Executive Manager, Innovation and Digital Education, Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, are COL’s Focal Points for Papua New Guinea.

**NOTABLE MENTIONS**

The Honourable Dr Dame Carol Kidu is a COL Honorary Fellow and former member of COL’s Board of Governors.
COL's current work in Papua New Guinea is primarily in the areas of technical and vocational skills development and technology-enabled learning. Papua New Guinea is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, and it receives support from the Pacific Centre for Open and Flexible Learning for Development. Learners from Papua New Guinea have also benefited from COL's open online courses and other resources.

In February 2018, COL's Education Specialist: TVSD visited Papua New Guinea and had a meeting with the Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, the Honourable Pila Niningi, who expressed appreciation for COL's support and looked forward to a strong partnership. The ministry’s Secretary, Dr Fr. Jan Czuba, and 30 staff from the department attended the meeting. COL used this unique opportunity to provide an overview of relevant programmes.

### Education Sector Overview

#### OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)
COL's OIS Initiative has launched the development of open educational resources (OER) and content development for Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE), Department of Education, with the participation of the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE). Following initial discussions between SAIDE and FODE, training has been scheduled for spring 2021. COL has created a Moodle installation for this purpose. There were 60 participants from Papua New Guinea in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

#### HIGHER EDUCATION
COL supported five faculty members from the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) to complete the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning, through the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

#### VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)
The three offerings of COL's Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 42 participants from Papua New Guinea.

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships.
The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In 2020-2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Papua New Guinea were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

In September 2020, COL launched the course Designing and Developing Online Assessments. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including three from Papua New Guinea.

Skills Sector Overview

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

In June 2017, COL welcomed participants from nine Pacific countries to a regional workshop on OER course design for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), held in Suva, Fiji. The four-day workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute at the University of the South Pacific (USP) and aimed to strengthen TVET in the region through the use of OER, to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states; 26 TVET educators, including representatives from Papua New Guinea, attended the workshop.

In February 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD visited Papua New Guinea and met with staff and senior management of the Department for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST) to discuss their strategic objectives for achieving quality improvements through the introduction of blended online learning.

Ancilla Yendi is Executive Manager, Monitoring and Evaluation, DHERST. She works for a new project management unit that has been tasked with monitoring large infrastructure projects at colleges and universities. As one of DHERST’s staff who has assumed a new role, Ancilla managed to grow her capacity to perform M&E through collaboration with COL.

“Many of the project-management instruments are new to us, and COL’s course helped me understand the key elements in the project-management cycle,” she says. Ancilla completed the online course in six weeks and has already started putting the new knowledge into practice.

“I can now be more effective in the new big project that I have just been assigned to build infrastructure for a new institute, and it will also help me develop M&E frameworks for other projects in the higher education sector,” she notes.
In 2018, DHERST was supported via a visioning exercise workshop, with a view to upgrading four TVET institutions as Centres of Excellence. With input from COL, Papua New Guinea stakeholders created FOLIC — the Flexible Open Learning Implementation Committee — to guide new developments. FOLIC members participated in a workshop in June 2018 to help Papua New Guinea TVET institutes start implementing flexible and open learning.

Subsequently, DHERST requested COL’s support for a Skills in Demand model, which blends workplace-based and online learning, to build their employees’ skills in project management. In February–March 2019, COL’s Skills in Demand facilitated a series of activities to develop a learner journey map, a monitoring and evaluation plan, and a project plan that outlines next steps to implement the training. In the framework of the project, 20 staff members have completed initial online training. COL supported DHERST to develop a tender document. DHERST then selected a TVET provider to deliver a formal Australian Project Management Qualification programme, using online learning for theory, and work experience to practise and provide evidence of skills. COL and DHERST plan to extend the “workplace plus online learning” model to solve other skills development challenges facing PNG.

As well, TVSD has been offering ongoing online training courses in *Facilitating Online Courses and Flexible Skills Development* to learners across the Commonwealth, and participants from Papua New Guinea regularly join in.

A total of 55 learners from Papua New Guinea have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by the Department of Education, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including those from Papua New Guinea.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

COL supports UPNG in implementing TEL. A baseline study was completed in 2018 to review the infrastructure and access to technology for teachers and students at UPNG. Dr Janet Rangou, UPNG, participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting held by COL in New Delhi, India in December 2018.

In March 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning visited UPNG to conduct a workshop on developing policy for TEL implementation. He also delivered a public lecture at UPNG on “OER in the Pacific” and had a meeting at DHERST to provide updates on COL’s activities. Following the policy development workshop at UPNG, a three-day workshop on designing blended learning using the Moodle learning management system was organised in May 2019. Further, a workshop titled *Blended Course Development Using*
Moodle was held in November 2019. In March 2020, UPNG organised a workshop on Facilitating Blended Learning Courses as part of its TEL implementation, which was attended by 17 university instructors. UNPG has developed 18 online/blended courses, which it began offering to students in the September 2020 semester.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) since 2017 and Blended Learning Practice since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Papua New Guinea were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from Papua New Guinea.

**GENDER**

COL’s Gender Profile 2017: Papua New Guinea report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

With the expertise of Wageningen University, the Netherlands, a framework for a programme on Social Protection Literacy for the Pacific has been developed. The programme aims to leverage ICT to provide timely and relevant information about available social services, especially for women’s safety.

COL’s Education Specialist: Gender visited Papua New Guinea in November 2019 to explore new partnership opportunities. Subsequently, COL partnered with Servants of St. Joseph (SSJ) to provide skills training for women and girls. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, over 200 women from rural areas in Papua New Guinea successfully built their livelihood skills through sewing and cooking classes in Bereina, Boroko and Port Moresby. As well, SSJ participated in the Community of Practice meetings for the Learning for Resilience and Local Sustainability project for community members in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.

COL hosted the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL, in Malaysia. Dr Janet Bulumaris Rangou, UPNG – Open
Ms Karen Maki Garo, UPNG – Open College, attended the 2019 session.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Dame Carol Kidu is a CWW mentor.

A gender-equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Papua New Guinea. Online meetings were held, and a capacity needs assessment was conducted. The Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment training held in November 2020 for the Pacific region included 16 participants from Papua New Guinea.

In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course titled Flexible Skills Development, attracting participants from across the region.

In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji on Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific in June 2019. Participants collaborated to devise competencies and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. Two individuals from the Department of Education participated in this workshop.

An in-country consultation was held in October 2019 in Papua New Guinea under the auspices of COL, the Centre for Flexible Learning, PACFOLD and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The purpose of the consultation was to present proposed initiatives to key stakeholders and experts, validate the areas of focus, and ensure they will meet learners’ needs. The consultation sought feedback and helped build consensus around initiatives aimed at providing educational opportunities through open and flexible learning opportunities.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, including learners from Papua New Guinea.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities, a series of micro-courses developed for those wishing to support...
youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including from Papua New Guinea.

From August to December, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and OIS initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Papua New Guinea filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth was released in 2021.

From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Papua New Guinea filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted learners from Papua New Guinea.

### Special Events and Activities

#### REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Pacific Regional Consultation was held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017, where COL sponsored the attendance of Mr Charles Mabia, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Policy and Research Wing of DHERST, as Papua New Guinea’s representative.

#### REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, where Mr Anthony Rayappan, Deputy Principal – Services, FODE, Department of Education, and Mr Charles Mabia, Assistant Director, Institutional Development Branch, DHERST, represented Papua New Guinea. In May 2020, Mr Rayappan and Mr Ralph Mosiri, Deputy Principal – Services, FODE, Department of Education, virtually joined another meeting of Focal Points.

#### COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

A total of 14 learners from Papua New Guinea participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 14 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Learners from Papua New Guinea joined the Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.
PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL sponsored the attendance of Mr Michael Pepen from Papua New Guinea at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2016.

COL supported four delegates to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Mr Lonnie Baki, DHERST, Mr Tuai Erapae, UPNG – Open College, Dr Janet Rangou, UPNG and Mr Anthony Rayappan, Deputy Principal – Services, FODE, Department of Education. As well, Mr Baki participated in the TVSD workshop, Dr Rangou attended the TEL Partners meeting, and Mr Anthony Rayappan participated in the VUSSC Interlocutors meeting, all hosted in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9. At PCF9, New Zealand’s MFAT, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

In Papua New Guinea, COL partners with:

- Department of Education
- Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
- Servants of St. Joseph
- University of Papua New Guinea
Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
ii) invest in innovations and research;
iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Samoa (population: 197,097 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 94.4% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 85.5% (2016). The principal tertiary institution within the country is the National University of Samoa (NUS), which offers a range of courses, including teacher education and technical certificates. Samoa is a member of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 34% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 64 (2017) per 100 people. There is infrastructure available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Samoa. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture’s National Information and Communications Technology in Education Policy 2018-2023 aims to establish appropriate ICT literacy skills among all students, teachers and ministry staff; support teaching and learning for all subjects of the curriculum; enhance administrative capacities; and improve communication channels between the ministry, schools and all stakeholders.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture offered online distance educational resources as well as television and radio programmes for early childhood education as well as primary and secondary students and has provided free Wi-Fi for schools.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Muagututia Dr Ioana Chan Mow, Professor, Computing Education, National University of Samoa, is COL’s Focal Point for Samoa.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

The Honourable Fiamé Naomi Mata’afa is a COL Honorary Fellow and former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Letuimanu’asina Dr Emma Kruse Va’ai is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

COL’s Work in Samoa: A Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL’s current work in Samoa is primarily in the areas of technology-enabled learning and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Samoa benefits from the support of the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development. Learners from Samoa have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
**HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted two participants from Samoa.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF). Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via [www.colvee.org](http://www.colvee.org).

Letuimanu’asina Dr Emma Kruse Va’ai, NUS Pro Chancellor, represents the Pacific region on the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Management Committee.

In 2016–2017, COL worked with NUS in response to the university’s request that some of its programmes and qualifications be registered on the TQF. The Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture offered at NUS is registered on the TQF.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Samoa were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL supported 14 students from Samoa in completing the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting in 2018–2020.

In September 2020, COL launched the course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including ten participants from Samoa.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

With the help of COL and other agencies, Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc. (METI) has provided local solutions to national challenges in skills development. COL’s interventions have improved their organisational capacity through support for resource-based, flexible learning, which blends carefully designed materials with collaborative community learning under the guidance of a facilitator. That 636 people were trained in 2016 indicates there has been increased access to quality learning opportunities. Learners have reported that the training is impacting their livelihoods through improvements to health, income and empowerment. Following the programme on life skills and
kitchen gardens, 132 out of 636 learners immediately started a kitchen garden, and all 636 joined village co-operatives — the main vehicle for METI’s continued engagement with the community.

A regional COL workshop in June 2017 on the topic of OER for Skills Training brought together representatives from nine Pacific countries, including Samoa. This capacity-development training, held in Fiji, boosted the skills of technical and vocational education and training educators in designing flexible learning materials incorporating OER.

The TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom. Eight learners from Samoa completed these courses. Through COL’s Moodle Implementation course, a team of decision makers, academics and IT staff from NUS were supported in developing a plan to implement Moodle.

A total of 351 learners from Samoa have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, with support from NUS, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including from Samoa.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL has supported NUS with a project to institutionalise TEL at the university. Policy development and capacity building for integrating technology in teaching and learning at the university were key components. A baseline study was conducted to develop TEL policy. In the framework of the project, COL’s Education Specialist: eLearning facilitated a workshop on TEL policy development in May 2017. As a follow-up to the TEL policy development, and with a view to assisting teachers with planning and developing blended courses for learners, a capacity-building workshop on developing blended learning courses using Moodle was organised in August 2017.

A structured trial of COL’s Aptus technology, an off-grid, offline virtual classroom, was conducted at NUS in 2016. The trial involved 226 students enrolled in a foundation course on computer studies. Given that most students had access only to the public computers in the library, Aptus was expected to increase the reach of library materials, since it can be loaded with a large amount of digital resources and then deployed in classrooms. The research team hailed the possibilities offered by Aptus as a “monumental breakthrough” for education in Samoa. Results from the Aptus trials were presented during Mobile Learning Week 2017 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris by Mose Mose, a faculty member at NUS. His participation was supported by COL.

In March 2018, COL organised a blended course development workshop in Apia to assist NUS
academic staff with developing blended courses for the summer 2018 semester using the Moodle learning management system. COL further assisted NUS in setting up an open-access repository using DSpace (an open-source repository). A workshop to train staff in using the repository effectively was held in June 2018. The repository is now used along with the learning management system to offer blended learning courses. With COL’s support, NUS also finished developing 18 blended courses.

In December 2018, Muagututia Dr Ioana Chan Mow, NUS, participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Community of Practice Meeting organised by COL in New Delhi, India.

In June 2019, COL published *The Impact of Technology-Enabled Learning Implementation at the National University of Samoa*, a research report on student learning and teacher pedagogical transformation at NUS after it adopted a TEL framework and ran a series of capacity-building workshops. Lecturers reported that the training and mentoring offered by the COL consultant were useful, adequate and relevant, helping them prepare and develop their courses.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Samoa were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Samoa* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In September 2016, COL’s Vice President made a presentation at the 11th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministerial Meeting on the role of women’s empowerment in the advancement of business enterprises in Samoa. He also met with the Minister of Women’s Development as well as officials and other stakeholders to brief them about COL’s work. Many Commonwealth women’s development and gender ministries learned about opportunities to collaborate with COL, opening up new avenues for partnership. Some of the women’s development ministries requested COL’s assistance in building their capacity for measuring empowerment and social impact.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Letuimanu’asina Dr Emma Kruse Va’ai, former Deputy CEO of Samoa Polytechnic, NUS Deputy Vice Chancellor, and CEO of the Samoa Qualifications Authority, is a CWW mentor.
**Regional Centre**

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

COL and USP Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Samoa is one of the key beneficiaries.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course titled Flexible Skills Development, attracting participants from across the region.

From April to July 2018, COL and PACFOLD organised a series of capacity-building workshops in four countries in the region. Teachers and officials in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga were trained in TEL, OER and the use of Aptus.

In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji titled Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific in June 2019. Participants collaborated to devise competencies and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. Tevita Simeki, NUS, and Ana Leauvā’asa, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, participated in this workshop.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, including 17 from Samoa.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including from Samoa.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and OIS initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Samoa filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth was launched in 2021.

From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Samoa filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted learners from Samoa.

**Special Events and Activities**

**Regional Consultations on OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Pacific Regional Consultation was held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017. COL sponsored Dr Ioana Chan Mow, COL’s Focal Point, as Samoa’s representative at the consultation.

**PAN-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF)**

COL supported the attendance of Ms Rasela Tufue-Dolgoi and Ms Lineta Tamnikaiyaro from Samoa at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored four delegates from Samoa to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019. COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers, where the Honourable Loau Solamalemalo Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, was present. In addition, Dr Patila
Amosa, NUS, and Mr Molia Taioalo attended meetings organised by VUSSC, and Muagututi’a Dr Ioana Chan Mow, NUS, attended the TEL Partners Meeting, hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9. At PCF9, MFAT, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. Education ministers from Kiribati and Samoa, along with their officials, joined the event with Dr Linda Sissons, the then COL Board Chair, and Professor Asha Kanwar. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, and the second meeting took place virtually in May 2020. Muagututi’a Dr Ioana Chan Mow, Professor, Computing Education, NUS, represented Samoa at both meetings.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

A total of 15 participants from Samoa benefited from the June 2020 offering of the Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC.

Learners from Samoa participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC also offered twice in October–December 2020.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Samoa include:

- Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture
- Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc.
- National University of Samoa
- Samoa Qualifications Authority
- USP Alafua Campus

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Solomon Islands (population: 669,823 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 67.5% (2018), a secondary net enrolment rate of 31.1% (2007) and a gross enrolment rate of 48.3% (2012). Solomon Islands College of Higher Education offers: teacher training; finance; nursing; secretarial studies; a range of technical subjects related to Solomon Islands’ economy, such as marine and fisheries studies, forestry and agriculture; and some first-year university courses. Solomon Islands is a partner in the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 12% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 71 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Solomon Islands. In the National Education Action Plan 2016–2020, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development recognises there is a reliance on the face-to-face model of training and professional development and expresses the intention to explore the use of ICT in delivering training.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education and Training launched a radio learning programme to support home schooling.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mr James Bosamata, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, is COL’s Focal Point for Solomon Islands.
COL’s current work in Solomon Islands is primarily in the areas of gender, technical and vocational skills development, and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Solomon Islands benefits from the activities of the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development. Learners from Solomon Islands have also benefited from COL's open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Ms Christina Bakolo, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, serves on its Management Committee. In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Solomon Islands National University (SINU) has been offering a Bachelor’s in Business Entrepreneurship, one of the most popular programmes developed by VUSSC. The programme, which gives students the choice of three levels — certificate, diploma or degree — is registered on the VUSSC Transnational Qualifications Framework.

Training workshops organised at SINU in May–June 2016 developed staff capacity in converting conventional materials to open and distance learning (ODL) formats and to OER.

As well, COL has been working with SINU's Distance and Flexible Learning Centre to offer second-chance education for students who drop out of the traditional school system after Grade 9. The goal is to improve their knowledge and skills, transit them to tertiary education and, upon graduation, help them become gainfully employed or develop their own enterprises. In the first phase of this project, a needs analysis survey of 200 randomly selected second-chance learners was conducted to identify their reasons for leaving school and to explore how the school system could better support their studies toward school completion. A stakeholder analysis was undertaken with teachers, community leaders, government, and labour market players to solicit their feedback on how to improve the learning experience for potential second-chance learners. Since September 2018, SINU has been offering two Learning Pathway programmes. COL's consultant helped SINU to design a plan for providing a quality framework, a proposed technology mix and a learner support system.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL supported 11 students from Solomon Islands to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting in 2018–2020.

In 2020–2021, COL's VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Solomon Islands were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.
Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD visited Solomon Islands in December 2018 to meet with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, Human Resources and Development, the Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening, the Department of Flexible Learning at SINU, and the Team Leader for the Skills for Economic Growth project, funded by Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

TVSD has been offering ongoing online training through courses titled *Facilitating Online Courses* and *Flexible Skills Development* to learners across the Commonwealth, and participants from Solomon Islands regularly join in.

A total of five learners from Solomon Islands have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including from Solomon Islands.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

The Pacific regional workshop on OER course design for TVSD was held in Suva, Fiji in June 2017. COL’s Adviser: OER conducted the workshop, which covered: instructional video production for online courses and MOOCs; using free and open-source software to repurpose various types of OER media formats; and understanding the Moodle learning management system through MoodleCloud. Ms Doris Riatako Dakei, TVET Curriculum Officer, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and Ms Tracy Waihere, a teacher at Tuvaruhu TVET School, Solomon Islands, participated in the workshop.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Solomon Islands were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including from the Solomon Islands.

GENDER

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Solomon Islands* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

COL hosted the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL, in Malaysia. Ms Placida Christina Misiga, SINU,
participated in the training in 2018, while Ms Ngina Sale, SINU, attended the 2019 session.

With the expertise of Wageningen University, Netherlands, a framework for Social Protection Literacy for the Pacific has been developed. The programme aims to leverage ICT to provide timely and relevant information about available social services, especially for women’s safety.

In November 2019, COL’s Education Specialist: Gender visited Solomon Islands to monitor COL’s work in the country and to explore new partnerships.

In the framework of the Social Safety Nets project, consultations were held with the ministries of Health and Medical Services; Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs; and Development Planning and Aid Coordination. This was followed by a workshop on Social Protection Literacy for stakeholders, with a view to empowering women to prevent domestic violence. As part of the project, training sessions were held for the community and the implementation team, and audio and video materials in the local languages were developed to mobilise the community. As well, the Solomon Islands National Council of Women (SINCW) conducted consultations to gain community insights on the need for social services.

A gender equality capacity-building project was launched with 11 partners in nine countries, including Solomon Islands. A capacity needs assessment has been conducted, and the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment training session held in November 2020 for the Pacific region included six participants from Solomon Islands.
**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)**

COL and USP work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Solomon Islands is a beneficiary of its activities.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches.

A MOOC titled *Climate Change and Pacific Islands*, offered by COL in partnership with USP and UNESCO, attracted more than 1,500 learners. Approximately 70% of the participants were from countries in the Pacific.

From April to July 2018, COL and PACFOLD organised a series of capacity-building workshops in four countries in the region. Teachers and officials in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga were trained in TEL, OER and the use of COL’s Aptus device.


In August 2019, Mr Otto Martin, SINU, attended a Pacific regional workshop in Fiji titled *Capacity Building in Skills Development in the Pacific with Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, convened by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT).

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, with 11 from Solomon Islands.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched *Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities*, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including 11 learners from Solomon Islands.

*The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL and its regional centre in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted one learner from Solomon Islands.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and OIS initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Solomon Islands filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication *Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth* was launched in 2021.

From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Solomon Islands filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the participation of Mr Martin Otto, SINU, and Ms Christina Bakolo, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, to attend PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored Ms Christina Victoria Bakolo, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, to attend PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, as...
well as the Interlocutors Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of the forum. At PCF9, MFAT, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

**REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, where Mr James Bosamata, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, represented Solomon Islands.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 15 participants from Solomon Islands.


**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Solomon Islands include:

- Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development
- Solomon Islands National University
- USP Solomon Islands Campus

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Introduction

Tonga (population: 104,494 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 85.9% (2015) and a secondary school completion rate of 82.1% (2015). The Tonga Institute of Higher Education (TIHE), a tertiary education branch of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), provides several programmes that focus on educating students in a variety of professional aptitudes and vocations. Teacher education is offered by MOET’s Tonga Institute of Education (TIOE). Tonga is a partner in the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 41% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 59 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Tonga.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the government announced it would pay the term 2 school fees for all students in government and non-government secondary schools.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Raelyn Esau, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Tonga Institute of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Training, is COL’s Focal Point for Tonga.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

The late Dr S. Langi Kavaliku was an COL Honorary Fellow.
COL’s Work in Tonga: Six-Year Review
2015–2021

COL’s work in Tonga has been in the areas of Lifelong Learning for Farmers, OER for skills development, technical and vocational skills development, and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Tonga benefits from the support of the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development. Learners from Tonga have also benefited from COL’s offline, off-grid Aptus device, open online courses and other resources.

Education Sector Overview

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Ms Sipola Halafihi, TIHE, serves on its Management Committee. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL supported three students from Tonga to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting in 2018–2020.

In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Tonga were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

The Vice President of COL visited Tonga in September 2016, and from that visit, key areas were identified where COL could assist in Tonga, including: i) building capacity in OER and developing OER courses; ii) supporting MOET in developing a policy framework for OER; and iii) strengthening eLearning, particularly the capability to use Moodle.

As a result, a workshop was organised in collaboration with MOET to build capacity and develop a national OER policy for Tonga. The COL Adviser: OER conducted a workshop in Nuku’alofa titled Strategic OER Implementation at TIOE and TIHE, in collaboration with MOET. In all, 34 full-time teachers, including senior management from TIOE and TIHE, participated in the workshop.

The Pacific regional workshop on OER Course Design, held in Fiji in June 2017, covered: instructional video

“The legislative drafting programme . . . has assisted me in criminal prosecutions, legal advice, legal drafting and legal analysis, allowing me to interpret and analyse the laws differently and in a manner that I never did before. It’s been an eye-opener for me.”

– Joycelyn Sikalu
production for online courses and MOOCs; using free and open-source software to repurpose various types of OER media formats; and understanding the Moodle learning management system through MoodleCloud. Nine Pacific countries, including Tonga, were represented. The workshop was used as a successful field test of a 12-part Instructional Video Production Course and of the new Creating and Repurposing OER Using FOSS: A How-To Guide for Teachers and Learners, developed by the Open University of Sri Lanka. These sessions resulted in participants gaining all the necessary skills to develop more video-based materials on their own using available technologies, such as smartphones and open-source software.

Under the Strategic OER Implementation in Tonga project, 20 teachers from TIOE and TIHE were trained in developing and delivering OER-based online courses. A COL consultant worked virtually with the teachers during the pre-workshop session to develop detailed course blueprints for four OER-based online courses: Thinking and Learning Skills, Working and Social Skills, Information Technology and Restorative Practices in Education.

A hands-on workshop was conducted in November 2017 at TIHE, where the course development teams from the two institutions developed approximately 60–70% of the course materials to be delivered online. COL set up two Moodle platforms for TIHE and TIOE. During the workshop, the teachers were trained in developing and delivering courses online using Moodle. In 2018, TIHE offered two of the online courses they had developed during the workshop — Working and Social Skills and Thinking and Learning Skills — to 30 learners.

The TVSD initiative has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: Facilitating Online Courses, Flexible Skills Development and Blended Learning in the Classroom. Learners in these courses use Moodle via https://tvsd.colvee.org.

A total of 105 learners from Tonga have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by TIHE and MOET, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including from Tonga. The Honourable Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister of Education, delivered a special address at the event.

**LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)**

L3F in Tonga endeavours to improve the financial inclusion of farming communities, particularly women, in the economy. L3F has been implemented in partnership with the Tonga Business Enterprise Centre (TBEC) and the Tonga Chamber of Commerce and Industry. L3F was initiated in Tonga for the first time with guidance from the National Reserve Bank of Tonga, with the pilot phase being directed toward building TBEC’s capacity in the development and delivery of multimedia-based ODL courses. Activities undertaken included training TBEC staff in the development of gender-sensitive ODL courses on financial literacy, packaging the courses in multimedia formats and disseminating them to farming communities. The pilot phase of the initiative reached 200 learners; the aim is to replicate it throughout Tonga.
With COL’s support, TBEC brought together nine partners to support L3F, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Department of Local Government, civil society organisations, exporters and ICT service providers. These partnerships will be helpful as the project progresses to scale. The organisation developed a financial literacy course in both print-based and mobile phone-based formats. The print-based course reached 202 learners (40% of them women), while the mobile phone-based course is being delivered to at least 100 participants via text messages. The messages are transmitted through two mobile service providers: Digicel and Tonga Communications Corporation. The majority of project participants have also expressed a preference for using radios for learning, so these will be integrated in the next project phase. The unique aspect of L3F in Tonga is that it has attracted young people (ages 20–49) on a wide scale and may therefore provide a model for sharing with other Commonwealth regions that are still struggling to attract youths to agriculture.

TBEC uses ODL-based strategies to improve the financial inclusion of marginalised communities, especially women. Staff have been trained in the use of ICT and ODL strategies for capacity building with farmers and other secondary stakeholders, and TBEC is currently offering training in financial literacy, enterprise development, agriculture disaster preparedness and climate-smart agriculture.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

Participants from Tonga joined COL and USP for a week-long workshop on eLearning pedagogies and materials development using ODL and OER, at USP headquarters in Fiji in May 2016.

In collaboration with MOET, COL has worked to mainstream OER at TIOE and TIHE. The vision of the Tongan Minister of Education and Training was to harness the full potential of the country’s new fibre-optic infrastructure to upskill Tongan youths for higher education opportunities and employment in Australia and New Zealand. This project approached the mainstreaming of OER in a systematic manner that included advocacy, policy development, capacity building, course development and TEL.

In the project framework, TIOE and TIHE staff have been trained in the use of OER in course development, instructional video production, as well as developing and delivering OER-based online courses using Moodle. In the process, four life-skills courses were developed: *Thinking and Learning Skills, Working and Social Skills, Information Technology* and *Restorative Practices in Education*. These are now being delivered to Tongan youths as online courses through Moodle.
In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Tonga have been among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Tonga* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

COL hosted the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL, in Malaysia. Mrs Kalolaine Mafi, TIHE, participated in the training in 2018, while Ms Salote Talanoa Selui, TIHE, attended the 2019 session.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)

COL and USP Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Tonga is among the key beneficiaries of its activities.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course titled *Flexible Skills Development*, attracting participants from across the region.

The *Climate Change and Pacific Islands* MOOC, offered by USP in partnership with COL and UNESCO, attracted more than 1,500 learners. Approximately 70% of the participants were from countries in the Pacific.

In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji titled *Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific* in June 2019. Participants collaborated to devise competencies and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. Three representatives from Tonga participated in the workshop, including two from TIHE and one from the Tonga Family Health Association: Seilosehina Fifita, Katherine Mafi and Kiatukimoana Vaea.

**PACIFIC REGIONAL CHANNEL**

The Pacific Regional Channel video-on-demand platform was established in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island states. Fiji, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga have already joined the initiative. Over 800 OER, carefully curated from worldwide OER repositories and targeting the countries’ specific curriculum needs, populate the platform, which has the capacity to accommodate requirements from other states as well.

At an online ceremony in November 2020, COL was joined by the Honourable Rosy Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji; the Honourable Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister for Education, Nauru; and the Honourable Loau Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Samoa, each of whom delivered special remarks at the launch of this platform.
Ms Kauvaka Seluvaia, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Climate Change and Communications, and Mr Kauvaka Sonatane and Mrs Nuku Liumei Maamaloa from MOET attended the Pacific regional workshop titled *Capacity Building in Skills Development in the Pacific with Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, convened by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Fiji in August 2019. The focus was on identifying priority activities in skills development in the areas of resilience education, youths and gender.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, including Tonga.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched *Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities*, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including Tonga.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and OIS initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Tonga filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication *Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth* was launched in 2021.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted learners from Tonga.

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the attendance of Ms Seilose Fifita, TIHE, at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored two delegates from Tonga to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Ms Mele Fonua, TBEC, and Lady Siatukimoana Vaea, MOET. As well, Ms Fonua attended the L3F session, and Lady Vaea participated at the VUSSC Interlocutors Meeting, both organised by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9. At PCF9, New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, COL and USP organised a forum on skills development in the Pacific. A number of senior officials, academics and experts from several countries gave input on a plan of activities developed by COL and USP.

**REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The Pacific Regional Consultation was held in May 2017 in Auckland, New Zealand, where Ms Seilose Fifita, Principal, TIHE, participated.
REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, where Lady Siatukimoana Vaea, Deputy Director, TIHE, represented Tonga. Ms Sipola Halafihi, Principal, TIHE, joined the second meeting virtually in May 2020 to share national priorities.

COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

The three offerings of COL’s Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, attracted 13 participants from Tonga.

Ten participants from Tonga benefited from the June 2020 offering of the Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC.

Learners from Tonga participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC and the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020.

As well, participants from Tonga joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

APTUS RESTORES EDUCATION IN CYCLONE-HIT TONGA

Following a meeting in Fiji in February 2018 between COL’s President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, and Tonga’s Minister of Education and Training, the Honourable Penisimani Fifita, during the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, COL arranged to send Aptus devices to assist the ministry in restoring classroom teaching in Tongan schools and colleges.
In April 2018, COL’s Knowledge Services Manager, Mr Ricky Cheng, conveyed 25 Aptus devices and 250 high-quality tablet computers to Tonga’s Minister of Education and Training. In a specially convened workshop, COL and PACFOLD jointly trained ministry officials and staff on TEL and OER as well as Aptus deployment and essential maintenance.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Tonga include:
- Ministry of Education and Training
- Tonga Business Enterprise Centre
- Tonga Institute of Education
- Tonga Institute of Higher Education
- USP Tonga Campus
Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Tuvalu (population: 11,646 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 76.2% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate 66.7% (2018). The Maritime Training Institute, on Funafuti, was founded in 1979 and provides vocational and technical training for those seeking employment on ships and fishing boats, and in-service training for serving seamen. The Technical Education Centre offers training in building trades. Tuvalu is a partner in the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 49% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 70 per 100 people (2017). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Tuvalu.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. On 21 July 2020, the Government of Tuvalu signed an agreement with Kacific to provide the Pacific island nation with high-speed broadband Internet connectivity via satellite. Kacific provided 60 1.2-metre VSAT terminals (satellite dishes) for schools, medical clinics, government agencies and small businesses for immediate connection.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Neaki Letia, Director, Education Department, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, is COL’s Focal Point for Tuvalu.

**COL’s Work in Tuvalu: Six-Year Review 2015–2021**

COL’s current work in Tuvalu is primarily in the areas of technical and vocational skills development and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Tuvalu benefits from the activities of the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development. Learners from Tuvalu have also benefited from open online courses and other COL resources.
VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Tuvalu were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL conducted an extensive study for the Department of Education, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on the education development challenges and potential for flexible and open learning in Tuvalu. The report provided a baseline and identified key areas in which COL is best placed to support Tuvalu, through collaboration with the ministry.

Following a workshop in Funafuti in August 2016, four pilot courses for TVSD were produced as OER: Working with Concrete, Basic Horticulture, Introduction to Basic Painting Skills and Basic Sewing Skills.

In December 2016, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD visited Tuvalu to engage with the Acting Director of Education and nine teachers working on new TVSD course development. A workshop was held to discuss principles of sustainable development, OER, and TVSD monitoring, evaluation and learning protocols, including tracer studies. The Education Specialist also facilitated a focus group discussion to identify the definition of sustainable livelihoods in Tuvalu.

In 2017, eight out-of-school young people enrolled in a painting course being run at Nauti Primary School. On Nanumaga Island, 18 people began small-scale poultry keeping using existing COL OER, and built new concrete structures on the island as a result of their learning from TVSD courses. This included a new office building for the Kaupule (Island Council).

COL held a further workshop in Tuvalu with ten teachers to continue the development of new courses for the programme. Draft TVSD courses have

Meeting with Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

In March 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD paid a courtesy visit to Dr Tofoua Panapa, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education. She provided an overview of COL’s programmes and talked about the organisation’s work in Tuvalu. Dr Panapa requested further support in developing pathways for students who do not want to follow (or are locked out of) the academic stream.
been produced for English, Maths, Life Skills and Ethics — known as service courses for all technical programmes. Training was provided in the use and development of OER. Tracer studies for the new programmes have been planned.

COL has responded to a request for assistance with developing a full TVSD programme for use in communities and in schools for Grades 7 to 9, in accordance with the new Tuvalu Education Sector Plan 2016–2020. In June 2017, COL welcomed participants from nine Pacific countries to a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji on OER course design for technical and vocational education and training (TVET); 26 TVET educators attended, including two representatives from Tuvalu. COL’s basic trades for the Pacific courses are now included in Tuvalu’s school TVSD curricula.

COL has provided technical advice on how technology and OER can be integrated in education. Eight OER courses developed with COL are being used for Grade 8 school pushouts, as well as community members, in collaboration with the Kaupule.

TVSD is supporting the Tuvalu Atoll Science, Technology and Training Institute (TASTTI) project Skilling the Public Works Department (PWD) Workforce. The aims of the project are to upskill PWD tradespeople to increase their productivity and work quality, and to establish TASTTI as the national provider of Tuvalu TVET qualifications. PWD will use a blend of distance and workplace learning to train their staff. During a visit in March 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD provided technical advice to the senior management and staff of the Ministry of Public Utilities and Infrastructure for the development of TASTTI.

The institute has started training using COL’s Pacific Basic Trades Training OER materials. Five modules cover literacy, numeracy, painting, working with timber and working with concrete. Since 2018, 126 learners have graduated from TASTTI, completing more than four modules on average, with 69 enrolled in 2020.

COL has connected TASTTI to New Zealand’s Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO) to support them through this process. BCITO has trained 11 TASTTI trainers online in workplace assessment and provided distance learning materials. Through the Australian Support to Education in Tuvalu Programme (ASET), funded by Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, two secondary school TVET teachers also attended the training. In March 2021, the programme was officially launched, with the Honourable Ampelosa Tehulu, Minister for Public Utilities and Environment, as the guest of honour. Tuvalu students will be awarded the New Zealand Certificate in Building, Construction and Applied Trades Skills. Forty Public Works Department staff have started training, and Motofoua and Funafuti secondary schools are offering the programme.

COL also worked with ASET to incorporate open and distance learning into Tuvalu’s new TVSD Policy.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Tuvalu* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socio-economic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.
COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2021

REGIONAL CENTRE

THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)

COL and USP Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Tuvalu is one of the key beneficiaries.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course on Flexible Skills Development, attracting participants from across the region.

The Climate Change and Pacific Islands MOOC, offered by USP in partnership with COL and UNESCO, attracted more than 1,500 learners. Approximately 70% of the participants were from countries in the Pacific.

In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji titled Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific in June 2019. Participants collaborated to devise competencies and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. Two representatives from Tuvalu’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports participated in the workshop: Taotao Lagafaoa and Pateni Vakalasi.

Mr Letia Neaki, Director of Education, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, attended the Pacific regional workshop titled Capacity Building in Skills Development in the Pacific with Open, Flexible and Distance Learning, convened by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Fiji in August 2019. The focus was identifying priority activities in skills development in the areas of resilience education, youths and gender.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled Functional Numeracy. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, with 14 from Tuvalu.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. The first course brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including six learners from Tuvalu.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and OIS initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Tuvalu filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth was launched in 2021.

From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Tuvalu filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

The Digital Literacy Lab for Educators MOOC, offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted learners from Tuvalu.

PACIFIC REGIONAL CHANNEL

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported the attendance of Ms Neaki Letia, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, to participate at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

**REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL's Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, and a virtual meeting was held in May 2020. Mr Neaki Letia, Director, Education Department, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, represented Tuvalu at the meeting in 2018.

**COL'S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

The *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised by COL in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius, and COL's *OER for Online Learning (OER4OL)* MOOC attracted participants from Tuvalu.

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**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL's work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL's work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL's partners in Tuvalu include:

- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
- USP Tuvalu Campus

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**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL's experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
Vanuatu (population: 299,882 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 79.8% (2015) and a secondary school completion rate of 48.9% (2015). The Vanuatu Institute of Technology offers courses in business and technical education, and teacher education is offered by the Vanuatu Institute of Teacher Education. Vanuatu is a member of the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 26% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 88 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Vanuatu. The Vanuatu Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan 2020–2030, developed by the Ministry of Education and Training, commits to providing 100% access to broadband ICT infrastructure and IT support at provincial and school levels.

**BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education and Training launched a radio learning programme to support home schooling.

**COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

**COL FOCAL POINT**

Mr Joses Seth, Executive Officer, Office of the Director General, Ministry of Education and Training, is COL’s Focal Point for Vanuatu.

COL’s current work in Vanuatu is primarily in the areas of open and innovative schooling, technical and vocational skills development, and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth. Vanuatu benefits from the activities of the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development. Learners from Vanuatu have also benefited from COL’s open online courses and other resources.
OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

COL has partnered with Vanuatu’s Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) to train teachers in the development of eLearning content and OER in several school subjects and to expand access to quality schooling in the country. In September 2016, the COL Senior Advisor for Open Schooling visited Vanuatu to start negotiations about how COL’s OIS initiative can be more involved in Vanuatu. Later that year, negotiations continued with MoET and with NotesMaster (a freely accessible eLearning network for OER) regarding the training of teachers in technology-enabled learning and the development of eLearning OER content for their schools. The result was an agreement between COL and MoET for 30 teachers/course writers from the ministry to be trained by NotesMaster to develop nine school subjects as eLearning OER over a period of 12 months. A face-to-face workshop initiating the 12-month process took place in March 2017 in Vanuatu.

The ministry nominated two staff for the E-Learning Certificate offered by New Zealand’s Open Polytechnic. These learners were sponsored by COL.

Ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia have signed agreements with COL to work together to improve the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream and open schools through eLearning and to broaden access to schooling for out-of-school youths. COL brought representatives from these five countries together, including two representatives of Vanuatu’s MoET, to Singapore in August 2017 to share experiences in the implementation of COL’s OIS model in mainstream and open schools. This provided an opportunity for the participants to align country implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges and identify innovative ways to increase the programme’s momentum. The five-day workshop in Singapore was conducted by Singapore’s National Institute of Education on behalf of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In November 2017, COL signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Vanuatu’s MoET to support curriculum writers with Internet connectivity. In January 2018, COL signed another MoA with the ministry to provide a stipend for the writers. With COL’s support, MoET is in the process of finalising an open and distance learning (ODL) policy.

MoET is now working with COL to implement the OIS model. Each of the 15 schools involved should be able to support at least 30 learners using the Aptus device to access digital OER. In addition, the OER that have been developed will be available online to all teachers and learners. COL has supported curriculum writers with training in sourcing and revising OER suitable for the school curriculum and has facilitated the study visit of three education practitioners involved in OIS to New Zealand and Australia. The purpose of the study visit was to learn about conducting eLearning through open and mainstream schooling, as well as to get a better understanding of how the schools implemented ODL.
COL commissioned a consultant to assist MoET with finalising a policy on open and distance education in Vanuatu, which was completed in 2018 and approved in 2019.

As well, COL signed an agreement with the University of Mauritius to present a course on Developing and Teaching Online Courses for participants from Vanuatu and other countries involved in OIS.

Following a workshop titled Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy, organised in August 2019, a draft strategy was developed, which then informed a baseline study completed early in 2020. In January 2020, another M&E Strategy workshop was organised. As well, 15 ministry and school managers were trained in January 2020 to launch a pilot on the use of OER content in the Shefa region. The ministry will cascade the training to other regions.

School managers and teachers were trained in the use of the Aptus device for piloting in February 2020.

The ministry has been asked to suggest any additional support that may be needed ahead of enrolment for the pilot.

There were 47 participants from Vanuatu in the OER for Online Learning (OER4OL) MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)**

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

In 2020–2021, COL’s VUSSC initiative offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Vanuatu were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL supported six students from Vanuatu to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting in 2018–2020.

**Skills Sector Overview**

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)**

COL has helped MoET adapt an existing COL OER course in small engine maintenance for the Vanuatu context and has assisted with the process of registering the course as an accredited programme in the newly reformed, competency-based education and training system, the Vanuatu National Qualifications Framework. This registration involves completing course accreditation with new occupational standards and a variety of approval processes with the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority. A COL consultant travelled to Sanma Province to facilitate further materials development in print and guided a local video crew in producing video content for the course.

During a visit to Vanuatu in February 2018, COL’s Education Specialist: TVSD met with representatives from MoET as well as the CEO of the Vanuatu Qualifications Authority. She provided updates on developments in TVET reform to competence-based education and training, and discussed COL’s support for training providers at the Vanuatu Institute of Education and for members of the Vanuatu Association of Vocational Education and Training.

A total of 29 learners from Vanuatu have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by MoET, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual
convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including those from Vanuatu.

**TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)**

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Vanuatu were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

**GENDER**

COL’s *Gender Profile 2017: Vanuatu* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

**REGIONAL CENTRE**

**THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)**

COL and USP Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Vanuatu is one of the key beneficiaries.

The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches.

In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online course on *Flexible Skills Development*, attracting participants from across the region.

The *Climate Change and Pacific Islands MOOC*, offered by USP in partnership with COL and UNESCO, attracted more than 1,500 learners. Approximately 70% of the participants were from countries in the Pacific.

In collaboration with PACFOLD and the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, COL convened a regional workshop in Suva, Fiji titled *Professionalising Youth Work in the Pacific* in June 2019. Participants collaborated to devise competencies.

**PACIFIC REGIONAL CHANNEL**

The Pacific Regional Channel video-on-demand platform was established in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island Member States. Over 800 OER, carefully curated from worldwide OER repositories and targeting the countries’ specific curriculum needs, populate the platform.

Aptus to bring OER to Vanuatu students

In 2015, COL provided 20 Aptus devices to support the roll-out of the Vanuatu Ministry of Education’s tablet project. Mr George Maeltoka, senior official at the ministry and a COL Focal Point, said that he believes the tablet project is well positioned to take advantage of Aptus for the delivery of important OER content. According to Mr Maeltoka, Aptus will also help the tablet project overcome the barrier of limited Internet connectivity. Even where Internet access is feasible, education administrators prefer Aptus because learners cannot be distracted by online diversions.

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and practices to contextualise curricular content and repurpose these courses for consumption in the South Pacific. Three participants from Vanuatu’s MoET attended the workshop: Norah Wells, Jerrol Arnhambat and Priscilla Meto.

Mr Toa Johnson, Acting Director, Ministry of Youth and Sports, attended the Pacific regional workshop titled *Capacity Building in Skills Development in the Pacific with Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, convened by COL in partnership with PACFOLD and New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade from 13 to 15 August 2019. The focus was on resilience education, youths and gender.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw 713 enrolments, with 27 from Vanuatu.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched *Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities*, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. The first course brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including 16 learners from Vanuatu.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from COL’s Regional Centres (RCs) and OIS initiatives, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Vanuatu filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication *Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth* was launched in 2021.

From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Vanuatu filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL and its RC in Malta (the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning) in September 2020, attracted learners from Vanuatu.

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**Special Events and Activities**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)**

COL supported Mr Emmanuel Aru Garaesivi and Mr George Maeltoka, both from MoET, to attend PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

**REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS**

Between 2018 and 2020, COL’s Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji, where Mr Reginald Garoleo, PEO Teacher Education and Development Officer, Teacher Education Directorate, MoET, represented Vanuatu. Mr Joses Seth, Executive Officer, Office of the Director General, MoET virtually joined the second meeting in May 2020 to share national priorities.

**COL’S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS**

COL’s *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted participants from Vanuatu.
A total of 13 learners from Vanuatu participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the Mobile Learning with Multimedia MOOC, and 18 participated in the Cybersecurity Training for Teachers MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. The Teaching Mathematics with Technology MOOC, organised in November–December 2020, also garnered interest from Vanuatu participants.

Participants from Vanuatu joined the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

**Partnerships**

Partnerships are fundamental to COL’s work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL’s work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL’s partners in Vanuatu include:

- Ministry of Education and Training
- USP Emalus Campus

**Looking Ahead: 2027**

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL’s experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, COL will:

i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;

ii) invest in innovations and research;

iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;

iv) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and

v) promote gender equality.
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;

   • **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.

4. **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.

5. **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 Education Ministers, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and PCF10.
LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

VISION: To be the foremost global agency that promotes learning for sustainable development

MISSION: To help governments and institutions to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches

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