



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING



*Learning for
Development*

Summary of COL's Three-Year Plan

*Learning for
Development*

2012-2015

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COL's Three-Year Plans provide the strategic direction and overall framework that guide the work of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The current plan for 2012–2015, like its two predecessors, is titled *Learning for Development*.

Learning for Development remains the overarching theme that best captures both the focus and the scope of COL's work during 2012–2015.

This brochure provides a summary of the plan. The detailed plan and accompanying Logic Model are available at www.col.org/3yp.



Learning for Development

COL is committed to holding the course during 2012–2015 with an approach of thinking globally and acting locally. COL's vision and goals are embedded in the principles of development. COL believes that ODL can enhance access to education and training and thereby enable Commonwealth citizens — particularly women, youth and marginalised poor communities — to lead productive and healthy lives.

COL's mission is translated into a comprehensive Logic Model that specifies the strategic goals, outcomes and impacts COL aims to achieve over the medium and long terms, through activities in key initiatives within two programme sectors – *Education* and *Livelihoods & Health*. Success is measured against a set of clearly identified performance indicators.

While COL works within the framework of the Logic Model, it remains flexible and responsive to new needs as they arise.

Mission:

COL's mission is to help governments expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using appropriate technologies, particularly those that support “open and distance learning” (ODL).

Strategic goals:

- Quality education for all Commonwealth citizens
- Human resource development in the Commonwealth
- Harnessing ODL and technologies to achieve development goals

Impact statement:

- A substantial and equitable increase in the number of Commonwealth citizens acquiring the knowledge and skills for leading productive and healthy lives, through formal and non-formal open and distance learning opportunities

Wide Consultation

Although continuity in programme direction and activities are clear in the new plan, the Three-Year Plan 2012–2015 also reflects how COL has made adjustments in response to consultations with stakeholders and to the findings of its own monitoring and evaluation.

During the next three years, COL will direct attention to:

- i. skills development in both of the two programme sectors, Education and Livelihoods & Health;
- ii. the education and training of girls and women; and
- iii. the promotion of the use of open educational resources.

Under the two sectors, COL will pursue seven programme initiatives instead of eight as in the Three-Year Plan 2009–2012.

The Education sector will continue to help countries improve the scope, scale and quality of formal instruction at all levels through the use of learning technologies.

The Livelihoods & Health sector works in both formal and non-formal learning environments. Under the new plan, this programme sector will continue to help communities, civil society and institutions improve the livelihoods and health of their members by using various technologies to enhance skills, share knowledge and develop new economic opportunities.

Integration of eLearning and Gender are the two cross-cutting themes in this plan that underpin and complement all seven of the core initiatives.

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) is COL's regional agency in Asia that promotes appropriate and low-cost technology options.

COL's eLearning for International Organisations initiative responds to the capacity enhancement needs of international organisations through fee-for-service arrangements. COL has developed and delivered courses in effective communication, report writing, operational data and debt management, gender mainstreaming and youth development.

Programme-level Intermediate Outcomes and Performance Indicators (PIs)

1. EDUCATION

Initiatives: Open Schooling, Teacher Education, Higher Education, and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

Outcome: Target institutions improve the accessibility and quality of their formal education systems at all levels through the use of ODL.

Performance Indicator: 60 secondary and post-secondary institutions in 4 regions of the Commonwealth improve the quality and diversity of their provision to reach 100,000 learners.

2. LIVELIHOODS AND HEALTH

Initiatives: Technical and Vocational Skills Development, Lifelong Learning for Farmers and Healthy Communities.

Outcome: Partners and development organisations offer better and more non-formal learning opportunities for women, youth and resource-poor communities to improve their livelihoods through the use of ODL.

Performance Indicator: 80,000 citizens acquire better skills and knowledge to enhance their income and health.

COL will also carry out monitoring and evaluation at two levels:

- undertaking an impact evaluation of its work from 2006 to 2015 to determine the extent to which its interventions in “learning” have led to “development”, and
- monitoring and evaluating the outcomes achieved during 2012–2015.

The results of these evaluations will help COL better understand which initiatives are working and which aren't, and this information will be shared with policy makers and development practitioners at appropriate forums.

Achieving Results

Although achieving sustainable and self-replicating development goals takes time, most of the initiatives COL has pursued through its last two triennial plans are now showing demonstrably positive results — from expanding and improving education and training opportunities to building healthier communities, contributing to skills development, and generally helping rural people achieve greater prosperity. Some examples:

- After a decade of commitment to open schooling, COL is now the world's leading source of practical expertise on this ODL approach. This continues to be a vital contribution to formal education, because coping with the “secondary surge” — a result of the steady progress in achieving universal primary education — is now a major preoccupation of many Commonwealth governments.
- Commonwealth governments are also concerned with developing the skills of their people. For this reason, skills development, which already permeates COL's programme, will be given even greater emphasis in the next phase of implementation.
- After a decade of work on the Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative in several countries, COL has shown the model to be a practical and effective means of helping poor people earn livelihoods and become empowered. Other stakeholders, having observed this success, are now replicating the model in a number of countries.
- During its second decade, COL also became increasingly adept at incorporating the principles of results-based management into its work. That process continues, which means that assertions about COL's impact can increasingly be backed by an expanding body of evaluation data.

Looking Ahead

In its third decade, COL must achieve even greater impact in a new environment. Persistent economic difficulties in richer countries and the rapid emergence of China and other developing countries have rendered the traditional paradigm of development aid obsolete.

This plan takes COL to 2015, the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). COL will not only support developing countries in their efforts to achieve the MDGs but will also



position itself for the post-2015 world. Developing countries will likely be largely on their own in addressing the considerable challenges of expanding schooling and learning that they will still face.

COL will be a preferred partner in helping these countries maximise the impact of their efforts for three reasons:

- The key imperative for education systems will be to achieve scale with quality and equity at low cost. Open, distance and technology-based approaches, which are the only way of achieving this, will come into their own. COL is a world-class source of expertise for these approaches.
- COL has always worked from the grassroots upwards by refining models of development that tap into the entrepreneurial spirit of local people and the dynamism of community and institutional leaders.
- Where external bodies, private or public, are ready to invest in education and skills development in particular countries, COL can help them achieve impact for their investment by adapting to local contexts its proven models for expanding both formal and informal learning.

Learning for Development continues to be the theme of COL's work. Following the ideas of development economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, COL understands development as freedom. Increasing the freedoms that men and women enjoy is a definition of development, and greater freedom empowers people to be more effective agents of development.

COL uses the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, the Education for All goals and the Commonwealth priorities of peace, democracy, equality and the rule of law as its framework for action and pays special attention to opportunities for girls and women and the significant potential of open educational resources (OER) and innovations in technology.

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.

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