

# Commonwealth of Learning Gender Update

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The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has continued to demonstrate a commitment to gender equality and equity and to ensure that gender is integral to all its work. The Impact Evaluation (2006 – 2015) reports that “COL’s gender work, especially since it began to see this as core to all of its activities, is widely respected. Mainstreaming gender in course materials; focusing on women’s well-being, health and access to education; challenging systems to look at equity ... and ensuring that gender forms part of COL’s “brand position” are having an impact on how COL is perceived and works.” (p. 83). In contrast to statements made in the 2011 external Outcome Evaluation, COL now has a reputation for a strong commitment to gender inclusion among its stakeholders.

The Outcome Evaluation (2012 – 2015) states that “Addressing gender imbalances in access to education and training have been a continuing commitment for COL with gender mainstreaming adopted as an organisational strategy” (p. 21). The report confirms that all the gender PIs were achieved.

During this triennium, the highlights of COL’s gender-related achievements in its programme work include: supporting partners to develop gender policy at the national and institutional levels; building partner institutions’ capacity in gender mainstreaming; leadership training for women in Asia and Africa; and dissemination of its gender-related work and resources to partners. However, COL has been less successful in addressing the issue of boys’ underperformance.

COL conducted an Internal Gender Assessment in 2014. This indicates that COL has instituted various policies and procedures to facilitate gender mainstreaming within the organisation over the past decade. Consequently, many positive changes have ensued, namely: the development of an Internal Gender Committee that plays a catalytic role in building staff awareness and understanding; a corporate gender policy; a gender action plan; and efforts to integrate a gender perspective in the programme cycle. These are examples of the operationalisation of COL’s commitment to gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, areas where COL needs to improve are: increasing staff ownership of gender-related activities; strengthening partner institutions’ capacity in developing gender-responsive policies and programmes; and analysing sex-disaggregated data to inform the development of policies and programmes.

## Future Plans

Drawing from the key recommendations made in the two external evaluations and its own experience, COL will:

1. Continue to work with partners to strengthen their capacity in developing gender-responsive policies and support their effective implementation.
2. Develop focused interventions for boys/men in the Caribbean and where they are most disadvantaged.
3. Improve information and data collection with partners to ensure that sex-disaggregated data is available.
4. Ensure that gender requirements are explicitly included in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans for each Initiative.
5. Improve its partnerships and alliances at a national and regional level with groups committed to gender equality and equity.