



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



COL in the Commonwealth

2018–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

MALAYSIA

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TARGETS 2021



Improved sustainable livelihoods
300,000 PEOPLE



470
ORGANISATIONS
Improved organisational
capacity to leverage ODL



1.4 million
PEOPLE
Increased and equitable
access to, and use of, quality
learning opportunities

ACHIEVED BY 2020



257,484 people



Target
EXCEEDED

654 organisations



880,039 people



Introduction

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

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



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

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

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

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



Highlights

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

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



MALAYSIA

COL works with partners in Malaysia to expand access to quality education and lifelong learning for all. Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, President, Academy of Sciences, Malaysia, and Chairperson, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, represents Asia on COL's Board of Governors. COL's Focal Points for Malaysia are Mr Mohammad Sanusi Abdul Karim, Under Secretary, International Relations Division, Ministry of Education, Ms Shahira Nur Zolkepli, Deputy Under Secretary, International Relations Division, Ministry of Education, and Ms Sureena Mohd Isa, Assistant Secretary, International Relations Division, Ministry of Education.

COL's current work in Malaysia is primarily in the areas of higher education and technology-enabled learning. Learners from Malaysia have also benefited from open online courses and other COL resources.

The following are the highlights from 2018 to 2020.



Programmes

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Higher Education initiative works with ministries and higher education institutions to increase equitable access to tertiary education and to address the needs of industry and national development through the use of policies, systems, models and gender-responsive learning resources.

COL continues to work with Wawasan Open University (WOU) to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master in Business Administration and Master in Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Professor Zoraini Wati Abas, WOU Acting Vice Chancellor, serves on the CEMBA/CEMPA Executive Governing Board, while Mr Prakash V. Arumugam, Senior Lecturer, School of Business and Administration, WOU,

serves on its Academic Board. The 29th Academic Board meeting and 13th Executive Governing Board meeting of the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes were held in Penang, Malaysia in May 2018. The meetings were hosted by WOU and attended by board members from ten countries, including Malaysia.

A high-level roundtable for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of open and distance learning (ODL) was held in Kuala Lumpur in May 2018. Thirty-one VCs and representatives from 19 countries participated, including three from Malaysia. The meeting was co-hosted by Asia eUniversity.

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.

GENDER

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 the framework of the Gender initiative and in partnership with WOU, COL has 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 programme 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.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

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

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, Dr Sanjaya Mishra, COL's Education Specialist: eLearning, facilitated a visioning workshop on developing a UMS policy for the systematic implementation of TEL. A workshop on *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.

Professor Soon Fook Fong, UMS, Mr Ariel Aaron Schen 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 Schen Schatenstein 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.

Under the aegis of TEL, COL has been offering a MOOC on *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning*, in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada. A total of 27 learners from Malaysia benefited from the third and fourth course offerings, in 2018–2019.

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 operates in seven Commonwealth countries in Asia: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka. CEMCA works in two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. Ms YBhg. Datin Paduka Ir. Dr Siti Hamisah Binti Tapsire, Director, Ministry of Education, is a member of its Advisory Council.



Events and Special Activities

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

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 about developments related to learning for sustainable development. Ms M. Nithiya Ruby, Principal Assistant Director, Academic Management Division, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, represented Malaysia at the meeting.

MOOC ON INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS

The second offering of COL's MOOC on *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business*, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in November–December 2019, attracted six participants from Malaysia.

PCF9

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

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

At 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, University Sains Malaysia. 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 the Open University Malaysia for its chatbot-driven course *Object-Oriented Programming*.

COL sponsored seven delegates from Malaysia to attend the forum. As well, Professor Dr Soon Fook Fong, UMS, participated in the Technology-Enabled Learning Partners meeting organised ahead of PCF9.





PCF9 Edinburgh Statement

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

1. **Accomplishment at scale**

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

2. **Skills for productive lives**

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

3. **Creating new digital dividends**

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

4. Teachers as skilled agents of change

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

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

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

5. Positively disrupt higher education

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

6. Challenging assessment

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

Our ambition is to achieve this through:

Bold inclusive collaboration;

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

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

Sustaining the momentum;

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

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



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