

Energy Literacy to Power a Greener Future



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Professor Asha Kanwar
President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Thank you for the opportunity to share examples of how the Commonwealth of Learning is building capacity to power a greener future. COL is an intergovernmental organization that promotes learning for sustainable development through the use of technologies. COL believes that learning must lead to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

The climate crisis has a major impact on education. The recent floods in Pakistan disrupted education where entire schools were destroyed. The education sector too contributes to both direct and indirect emissions, causing environmental degradation. As Bill Gates has pointed out in his book—How to Avoid a Climate Disaster—cement, steel and plastic, which are essential for construction are the biggest emitters of carbon. What is the solution?

COL has initiated several activities that promote the four R's: reduction in carbon emissions; raising awareness on disaster preparedness; reskilling for a greener future and resilience for the education sector.

First reduction in carbon emissions. COL promotes the use of distance learning, which has been shown to reduce carbon emissions. A COL study in Botswana found that the average carbon footprint of the distance learner is one third compared to that of the campus student.

Second raising awareness. COL leverages technology for building awareness of climate change. Working with the University of Seychelles, COL developed four online courses on the blue economy. Following the hurricane in Dominica, COL, launched a public education project to create locally-produced audio and video clips for educating citizens about disaster preparedness.

Third, reskilling for a green future. COL has collaboratively developed free online programmes such as sustainable tourism, sustainable agriculture and sustainable business to address the specific needs of small states.

Fourth, resilience for the education sector. Teachers are a key stakeholder in this enterprise. In partnership with the National Teachers Institute, Nigeria, COL has developed a 'Green Teacher' programme to help thousands of teachers to integrate environmental concerns in the classroom.

COL's innovation, Aptus, a low-cost server has been deployed in disaster-affected areas in The Bahamas and Tonga, allowing teachers and learners to access without the need for grid electricity or internet access.

COL recently presented a report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education entitled *Transforming Education for Climate Action*. This report provides a road map for how ministers of education can climate proof education systems, implement a green learning agenda that builds skills for blue and green economies, and promote education for climate action. The recommendations also focus on the important issues of quality, equity, and justice.

These are come concrete interventions. It is time to move from ambition to action. The time is ripe and the time is now!