COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

COL in the Commonwealth

2018–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

RWANDA

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TARGETS 2021	ACHIEVED BY 2020
Improved sustainable livelihoods **300,000 PEOPLE**	**257,484** people
470 **ORGANISATIONS** Improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL	Target EXCEEDED **654** organisations
1.4 million **PEOPLE** Increased and equitable access to, and use of, quality learning opportunities	**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

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.

RWANDA

COL works with partners in Rwanda to expand access to quality education and lifelong learning for all. Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL's Board of Governors, and Mr Théogène Kayumba, Director of ICT, Ministry of Education, is COL's Focal Point for Rwanda.

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

The following are the highlights from 2018 to 2020.

Programmes

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 (QA) mechanisms for blended learning courses at Kigali Independent University, the University of Rwanda, the Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur (INES) Ruhengeri, Kibogora Polytechnic, and the University of Technology and Arts of Byumba.

In April 2018, COL co-organised a workshop in Nairobi, Kenya on *Quality Assurance*, under the aegis of PEBL. The workshop aimed to build the capacity of 29 senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

A PEBL meeting in Kigali in May 2019 brought together 50 participants from six partner and 12 participating universities from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zanzibar. COL's Adviser: Education and Education Specialist: Higher Education led QA training

sessions for the PEBL project and carried out the first phase of the institutional QA review at six institutions, including one from Rwanda.

A *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning* workshop was hosted in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2019 as a continuation of capacity-building efforts being facilitated by COL under the aegis of PEBL. The focus was on creating a course development and sharing network among universities in East Africa, and participants included senior administrators and faculty from 21 universities located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. As well, 39 QA practitioners from 18 universities in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda have benefited from a four-week online course on *Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa.*

Through PEBL, COL is also supporting the University of Rwanda to develop QA mechanisms for blended learning courses.

COL has supported the development of a national open and distance learning (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 the University of Rwanda to develop an institutional QA policy and QA guidelines for ODL.

TEACHER EDUCATION

The Teacher Education initiative works with partner institutions to improve teacher quality and achieve better learning outcomes for students. Through the Teacher Futures model, it works with governments, teacher education institutions, schools and other partners to deliver quality learning opportunities through in-service, technology-enabled teacher professional development.

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 the University of Rwanda.

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.

OPEN AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

OIS increases access to secondary education, especially for out-of-school youths. COL's approach focuses on training teachers in eLearning, using OER, improving the management of open schools and supporting the use of appropriate technologies in teaching and learning.

In May 2019, SADC-CDE with support from COL hosted a workshop to sensitise participants about open schooling and introduce COL's OIS model in Kigali. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

TVSD supports partners in harnessing ODL to increase access to demand-driven, competency-based skills training. TVSD is increasingly focused on innovative models that use ODL for theory, with practical skills development organised in workplaces and communities.

Recently, COL's Skills Online initiative entered into partnership with the Rwandan Telecentre Network to promote skills among youths, especially women/girls 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 Rwanda. Some 1,000 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.

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.

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 37 learners from Rwanda benefited from the third and fourth course offerings, in 2018–2019.

Events and Special Activities

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 Théogène Kayumba, Director of ICT, Ministry of Education, represented Rwanda 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*, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in November–December 2019, attracted 1,317 participants from Rwanda.

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.

COL sponsored three delegates from Rwanda to attend the forum. Mr Emmanuel Murenzi, Country Director, Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda, attended the meeting of the Transnational Qualifications Framework Committee, hosted by COL's VUSSC in Edinburgh 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

New Publications and Resources

In 2018–2020, COL produced a number of publications and resources, including:

Knowledge Series: Designing and Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners

As online learning and MOOCs become mainstream, it is important to explore new forms of credentialing. This publication offers a step-by-step guide to plan, design and implement micro-credentials and badges in diverse contexts and provides greater flexibility in the journey of the new learner-earner through a skills and capability framework.

A Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development: SECONDARY

This toolkit is for implementing school-based teacher development as a way to improve the performance of schools and raise the achievement of children. This valuable resource includes a detailed framework, which can be adapted to the context of a particular country, region, district or school, and offers practical daily activities for teachers.

Guidelines on the Development of Open Educational Resources Policies

This new publication provides specific tools to analyse current contexts and policy environments, understand issues related to copyright and licensing, and align policy in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The guidelines present a systematic process for designing and implementing OER policies and measuring their impact.

A Guide to Integrating Employability in Higher Education Institutions: The Commonwealth of Learning's Employability Model

This publication provides clear guidelines on how to integrate employability pathways into instructional systems. From career counselling to career support, the guide demonstrates how institutions can prepare graduates for employment or entrepreneurship.

Gender Scorecard 2.0: Instructions and Templates

This is a tool to audit the capacity of institutions to mainstream gender. It helps with analysing existing policies and practices and developing clear steps for the effective promotion of gender equity.

All COL publications can be found on its open-access repository at **oasis.col.org**.

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