



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



# COL in the Commonwealth

2018–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

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**SRI LANKA**

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## TARGETS 2021



Improved sustainable livelihoods  
**300,000 PEOPLE**



**470**  
**ORGANISATIONS**  
Improved organisational  
capacity to leverage ODL

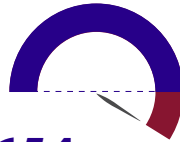


**1.4 million**  
**PEOPLE**  
Increased and equitable  
access to, and use of, quality  
learning opportunities

## 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.



# SRI LANKA

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COL works with partners in Sri Lanka 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, and Dr Madura M. Wehella, Additional Secretary, Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education, is COL's Focal Point for Sri Lanka.

COL's current work in Sri Lanka is primarily in the areas of girls' and women's education and training, higher education, teacher education, lifelong learning for farmers, and technology-enabled learning. Sri Lanka benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, and learners 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 the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Professor Anbathan Ariadurai, OUSL Vice Chancellor, serves on the CEMBA/CEMPA Executive Governing Board, while Mr V. Sivalogathasan and Dr Nalin Abeysekera from OUSL are Academic Board members. The 29<sup>th</sup> Academic Board meeting and 13<sup>th</sup> Executive Governing Board meeting of the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes were held in Penang, Malaysia in May 2018. The meetings were hosted by Wawasan Open University and attended by board members from Sri Lanka.

A high-level roundtable for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 2018. Thirty-one VCs and representatives from 19 countries participated, including Sri Lanka. 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 Sri Lanka, were in attendance.

### VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Initiated by ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth, VUSSC supports the collaborative development and sharing of OER to promote learning for sustainable development.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, VUSSC has repurposed and made available online certificate, diploma and undergraduate degree programmes in Youth Work Development to universities that are members of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work. OUSL is a member of the consortium. COL's Education Specialist: VUSSC facilitated sessions on institutional readiness and the Transnational Qualifications Framework at a technical workshop hosted by the partners in London, UK in June 2018.

In November 2019, the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work hosted a technical workshop at Botswana Open University in Gaborone, with the participation of youth work experts from Sri Lanka. The event was part of a series designed to prepare partner institutions to develop and deliver the BA in Youth Work in blended and online environments.

### 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.

Following a meeting in Colombo between COL's President and CEO, Professor Asha Kanwar, and Sri Lanka's Minister of Education, COL pledged assistance to Sri Lanka's teacher education programmes by focusing on school-based, in-service models.

As a follow-up, a four-day Stakeholder Forum on School-Based Professional Teacher Development was held in May–June 2018. A total of 31 participants from the Ministry of Education, teacher centres, the National Institute of Education and the National College of Education attended the forum, which aimed to identify the entry point for intervention in the teacher development process while avoiding any overlaps or contradictions with the existing school-based teacher development programme.

In May 2019, COL organised a sensitisation workshop on *School-Based Professional Teacher Development (SBPTD)* at the Construction Equipment Training Centre, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka. The workshop was attended by 16 participants, including the Chief Commissioner and the Director of Education (Teacher Education Administration). A Teacher Competency Framework has been drafted.

### 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 Sri Lanka, COL finalised an agreement with the National Institute of Education (NIE) regarding the development of a gender policy framework for the country. An initial background study was completed and then used as a working document to inform a workshop facilitated in partnership with India's National Institute of Open Schooling. This led to the development of a draft guiding framework, which was subsequently ratified by NIE's management.

### GIRLS INSPIRE

GIRLS Inspire is a COL initiative funded by the Government of Canada through the Global Affairs Canada office and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), with the aims of ending the cycle of child, early and forced marriage and addressing the barriers that prevent women's and girls' economic participation.

In the framework of GIRLS Inspire, Sri Lanka has been benefiting from the Reaching the Unreached scaling-up project funded by DFAT.

In Sri Lanka, COL has been working with the Women's Development Centre (WDC), which has trained over 2,500 women and girls in life skills and vocational skills. As well, WDC identified 51 women and girls with access to mobile devices and trained them in online business.

In addition, 17 young girls from the Nuwara Eliya and Kandy districts were referred to the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority and the Vocational Training Authority for additional six-month training.

WDC launched a spoken English class for members of the women entrepreneur association. Through self-help group activities, women and girls engaged in these activities became more vocal, and started their own savings hubs and small-scale revolving funds to support home-based livelihoods such as home gardening, poultry and cattle rearing, and the sale of food items.

One of the main cross-cutting themes of WDC's programmes is environmental justice. Training on recycling provided women entrepreneurs with knowledge on how to reuse waste for profit, and techniques for organic farming.

As well, WDC has trained close to 90 boys and men in gender awareness. Through its community awareness-raising events, WDC has reached over 2,000 community members.

## 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 collaboration with Sri Lanka's University Grants Commission, COL conducted a three-day train-the-trainers workshop on *Gender Mainstreaming in Higher Education* in Colombo in June 2018. The workshop aimed at supporting the country's universities with developing an effective draft action plan to strengthen gender mainstreaming in their institutions.



In February 2018, COL's Education Specialist: Women and Girls held meetings with MOBITEL and MAS Holdings to introduce the Gender initiative. In 2018–2019, COL partnered with MAS Holdings to help 50 disadvantaged women improve their English language proficiency via a blended learning model.

As well, with the goal of upskilling underprivileged girls in ICT, COL organised a train-the-trainers workshop in August 2018. A total of 25 individuals learned how to conduct training programmes on mobile app development.

In the framework of the Gender initiative, COL hosted in Malaysia the Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL. Dr Sepalika Welikala, OUSL, participated in the 2018 session, while Dr Iresha Udayangani Atthanayake, OUSL, participated in the 2019 programme session.

### LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

L3F is a proven approach that aims to establish ICT/ODL-based systems for continuous learning among marginalised farming communities, particularly women, leading to sustainable livelihoods and empowerment. The model embodies a holistic approach to human resource development that integrates social capital, financial capital and human capital to implement a self-sustaining and self-replicating development process. In Sri Lanka, COL works with OUSL and the University of Ruhuna (UR) to implement L3F, and Sri Lanka's L3F Consortium has been extended to include officials from the Ministry of Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure.

With COL's support, OUSL reached over 2,000 L3F participants in 23 villages of the Galle, Kaluthara, Kandy, Kegalle, Kilinochchi, Kurunegala, Mathale and Rathnapura districts to set up computer/information centres.

Financial literacy programmes via mobile phones were launched in October 2018, and UR built the capacity of 120 farmers in the use of interactive voicemail services for learning.

In the framework of L3F, COL facilitated the production of Guidelines for Developing a Business Plan for Small Entrepreneurs and a booklet titled *Empowering and Attracting the Modern Woman to be Engaged in the Floriculture Industry*. As well, ODL resources on ginger, turmeric, pepper and cinnamon production have been completed.

In partnership with RU, COL supported workshops at new help centres on developing apps for mushroom growing, floriculture and organic farming. Since April 2019, training programmes have been conducted in a blended learning mode for 120 farmers.

### 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 Sri Lanka, COL has supported OUSL to launch the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme. A three-day workshop on C-DELTA was organised in July 2018 for 41 teachers from 39 schools around the country. The project aims to develop the capacity of schoolteachers and promote the adoption of digital education in schools. Following the workshop, OUSL continued to scale up C-DELTA. Dr Shironica P. Karunanayaka, OUSL, participated in the *C-DELTA Training of Trainers* workshop, held in New Delhi, India in December 2018.

With COL's support, the Faculty of Education at OUSL conducted a research project on C-DELTA implementation in Sri Lankan schools. Upon the project's completion, OUSL launched a website, which captures reflections from teachers on their journeys. Following the implementation of C-DELTA in schools, OUSL adopted it as a non-credit course for its learners. A follow-up training-of-trainers workshop was organised in January 2020, with the participation of 40 teachers from across the country and staff from seven OUSL faculties.

Under the aegis of TEL, COL has been offering a MOOC on *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning*, in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada. Three learners from Sri Lanka benefited in September–October 2019 from the fourth course offering.

### 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 works in seven Commonwealth countries of 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. In Sri Lanka, CEMCA works with OUSL and the University of Peradeniya.

CEMCA supported OUSL to develop a MOOC on *Adopting Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP)* for educational leaders, policy makers, teachers and students. This course, which has four modules developed using a scenario-based learning approach, was offered in 2018–2019.

At a regional workshop hosted by the e-Learning Centre, University of Hyderabad, India in February 2019, a Quality Assurance Toolkit for ODL institutions was finalised. The workshop brought together 24 participants from 12 higher education institutions in Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Two faculty members from the distance education centre of the University of Peradeniya attended the workshop.



## 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. Dr Madura M. Wehella, Additional Secretary, Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education, represented Sri Lanka at the meeting.

### GIRLS INSPIRE STAKEHOLDER MEETING

In February 2019, COL, in collaboration with Tanzania's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, co-hosted the GIRLS Inspire end-of-project meeting for preventing child, early and forced marriage. It was attended by representatives from the ministries of gender of four countries, including Sri Lanka. The outcomes of the project and lessons learned were shared, along with a roadmap on how to engage policy makers and partners to integrate this initiative into national programmes for preparing women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship.

## 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 20 participants from Sri Lanka.

## 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 nine delegates from Sri Lanka to attend the forum. As well, two participants from Sri Lanka attended the Technology-Enabled Learning Partners meeting organised ahead of PCF9, and there were two participants from Sri Lanka at the L3F pre-forum session.





## 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](https://oasis.col.org).



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