



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **ASIA**



Pakistan

Helping Commonwealth Member States and institutions use distance learning and technologies for expanding access to education and training.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is focused on adding value to member states' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of the Commonwealth in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development.

During its current plan (2021-2027), COL will:

- i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
- ii) invest in innovations and research;
- iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
- iv) promote gender equality; and
- v) implement a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan.

COL's work is organised into two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender Equality and Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) as cross-cutting initiatives.

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth, particularly in the small states (Brunei Darussalam and Maldives) and has four initiatives: Open Schooling; Teacher Education; Higher Education and the Virtual University for Small States of The Commonwealth (VUSSC).

The Skills sector supports formal, non-formal and informal education and training to equip learners for livelihoods and has three initiatives: Skills for Work; Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and GIRLS Inspire.

The work in these sectors complement the three pathways of change COL is focusing on in achieving impact for each member state in the Commonwealth. These are:

1. Building National Resilience
2. Strengthening Institutions
3. Improving Lives and Livelihoods

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan has a population of over 235 million people ([World Bank, 2022](#)).

COL's work in Pakistan is primarily in the areas of higher education and girls' and women's training for livelihoods and benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). Learners from Pakistan are also participating in COL's free, open online courses and benefitting from other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Pakistan include:

- Higher Education Commission
- Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)
- Bedari
- Fatima Jinnah Women University
- Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC)
- Virtual University of Pakistan

KEY CONTACTS

FOCAL POINT

Currently vacant

REGIONAL CENTRE

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) is located in New Delhi, India and was established to promote cooperation and collaboration in the creation and use of multiple media resources for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and skills development in the Commonwealth countries of Asia. Its activities revolve around COL's Strategic Plan 2021-27, but at the same time, CEMCA retains its regional focus, keeping in view the challenges and requirements of Asian Commonwealth countries.

CEMCA's Advisory Council meets annually and functions as an advisory body on CEMCA's affairs and is responsible for broad policy formulation in the programme areas. The Council meets once a year and membership is rotated among the members in Commonwealth Asia.

During the 2021-2027 plan, CEMCA will:

1. Build the capacity of institutions to transition to online and blended learning;
2. Support gender-responsive skills development for livelihoods; and
3. Develop innovations in a range of technologies, from Community Radio to AI-based solutions for reaching the last mile.

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- Workshop to build the capacity of policymakers, parliamentarians and law enforcement officials to change discriminatory social norms was held.
- A strategy for digitising learning resources, focusing on climate-responsive sustainable livelihoods and food security has been developed.
- 6,879 certificates have been issued to learners from Pakistan under COL's Skills Online programme.
- 5,388 women and girls trained in Pakistan

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL is working with governments to use gender-responsive ODL policies and strategies for increasing equitable access to quality learning.

Sensitisation and training have been provided to 247 policymakers and senior officials in Gender Equality (GE) and prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV) to increase awareness and promote effective policies and strategies to address these issues.

COL invited Wajeeha Shahid from the National University of Modern Languages to participate in the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022, in Penang, Malaysia, including an online workshop earlier in the year. The workshop theme was 'Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world' with three sub-themes-Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL is supporting partner institutions to strengthen its ODL systems and capacities for providing quality education and training.

COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) Programme's goal is to deliver high-quality learning and professional development opportunities – with our Commonwealth Partner Institutions – that complement existing MBA/MPA programmes. AIOU is a partner institution. In mid-2022, nine courses were redeveloped. They include Enterprise Information Systems and Digital Strategy, Management in Organization, People and Talent Management, Operations Management, New Public Management and Governance, Data Analysis for Decision making, Marketing Management, Accounting Issues and Financial Management for Business Decisions, and Disaster Management.

Professor Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and Professor Dr Arshad Saleem Bhatti Virtual University of Pakistan both participated at COL's fourth edition of the Vice-Chancellor's Roundtable, which focused on "Quality Higher Education for Sustainable Development in July 2022. This two-day event held in Malaysia provided an opportunity to share and learn from peers and develop collaborative action plans.

A short, asynchronous introductory course on Artificial Intelligence designed to remove the fear factor from AI was developed in collaboration with the Virtual University of Pakistan; Two offerings of the course (November 2021 and April 2022) attracted 1,352 learners with 200 learners from Pakistan completing it. A third offering started in May 2023.

COL's GIRLS Inspire initiative organised a pre-conference workshop at PCF10 which was attended by COL's partners from Pakistan. The workshop's objective was to develop a Strategy for Digitization of Learning Resources focusing on Climate and Environmentally Responsive Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security through a collective discussion on: 1) Improving learning resources using COL's quality standards and aligning it to climate change and environmental protection; 2) Digitisation of the improved learning resources.; 3) Scaling up the use of digitised learning resources for sustainable livelihood and food security. [Sep 2022]

40 (18m, 22f) staff members from COL's civil society partner, Bedari were trained on Human rights, Gender Equality, protective legislation and available legal services and tools to deal with rights violations and gender-sensitive practices. [Oct 2022]

To improve COL's GIRLS Inspire's partners' effectiveness in implementing the initiative, the team held the April Gender Liaisons Session #9 on the theme: Marginalization and inclusion. 12 partners participated. [May2023]

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

COL continues to provide learners, especially from disadvantaged groups, access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods.

During 2021-2022, 187 students graduated from the two-year CEMBA/MPA programme at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) and 41 new students enrolled in the programme.

COL's partnerships with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google continue to offer nominated learners this vast range of courses – a pathway for lifelong learning and growth and enhancing skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Since July 2021, 6,879 certificates have been issued to learners from Pakistan.

COL's GIRLS Inspire initiative is operational in Pakistan and is supporting both Bedari and the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through skills development for livelihoods and community sensitisation. To date, a total of 5,388 women and girls have been trained; 625 have accessed financial resources such as loans; 580 have opened bank accounts; 567 have accessed internship opportunities; and 5,209 Community members reached through advocacy events conducted. Activities include:

- 20 wall murals developed to change discriminatory social norms impacting women's education, justice, and economic development in two union councils in Pakistan. [Mar2022]
- 32 girls supported in project villages through collaboration with the Girls International Education fund. [Sep2022]
- MoUs signed with 3 Universities in Pakistan to collaborate in enhancing gender mainstreaming. [Sep2022]

- reached 1,200 community members on STAND Up Against Street harassment (Sep 2022)
- partnership entered with Sanatzar Chakwal who will assist Bedari in expanding the entrepreneurship and skills training; providing a joint diploma upon completion of courses and linking the women and girls with financial resources and market opportunities. [Jan 2023]
- 18 advocacy sessions conducted on Gender-Based Violence, Health & Social Rights and Entrepreneurship [Mar 2022]
- 17 awareness-raising campaigns held on the importance of girls' education, the impacts of gender-based violence, available legal services and tools to deal with rights violations, community dialogues to revising gender roles, ending GBV and fostering women's empowerment. [May 2022]
- project implemented in 20 marginalised communities in Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Multan, Peshawar, Hyderabad, Karachi and Islamabad. [Oct 2022]
- Over 50 women and girls have opened bank accounts.
- 210 women and girls accessed credit from institutional services for livelihood and self-employment or through saving schemes. [Feb 2023]
- 460 women and girls were linked to financial resources, internships and farm inputs, and agricultural technology from government extension. [Feb 2023]
- 1,135 community members, including traditional leaders, were sensitised/trained/reached through various awareness raising/public advocacy campaigns in Pakistan. [Feb 2023]
- Four savings schemes were created with SPARC's support allowing 160 women and girls to access financial resources in Pakistan. [May 2023]
- 304 women and girls were linked to farm inputs and agricultural technology from government extension and financial resources mobilised for livelihood and employment; additionally, 171 women and girls were linked with internship opportunities. [May 2023]
- SPARC established partnerships with 4 banks, namely: Bank Alfalah, MBC Bank, Habib Bank Limited, and Allied Bank. [May 2023]

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Eight delegates from Pakistan registered for the **Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10)**, the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14-16 September 2022. Five of these registered delegates were sponsored by COL, who were also invited to participate in COL pre-conference meetings. Participants included: Anbreen Ajaib, Bedari; Sabeen Almas, SPARC; Nasir Mahmood, AIOU; Zahid Majeed, AIOU; Muhammad Saleem, Human Rights Defender; Salima Sewani, National Ideal Government Boys Primary School; Mubeshera Tufail, AIOU; Zia Ul-Qayyum, AIOU.

CEMCA held their **22nd Advisory Council Meeting** in New Delhi on 26 December 2022, with members from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka in attendance. A major concern expressed was that even though distance learning had been embraced globally during the pandemic, the negative perceptions relating to the quality of this mode of delivery continue to persist. Council members noted CEMCA's contribution to ODL in the region and outlined the priorities for the future.

The **Regional Focal Points Meeting for Asia** was held in New Delhi, India, on 27-28 December 2022. Representatives from six of eight Asian Commonwealth countries (Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, and Sri Lanka) participated in the two-day meeting.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

Reaching the Unreached: Scale-Up Empowerment Study <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4006>

Commonwealth Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) Annual Report: 2021-2022
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5301>

Blended Learning Policy: Templates for Higher Education Institutions in Commonwealth Asia (CEMCA) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5319>

Handbook on Online Education in Commonwealth Asia (CEMCA) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5259>

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) Achievement Report: July - November 2022 <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5345>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Asia <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5228>



4710 Kingsway, Suite 2500
Burnaby, BC V5H 4M2
Canada

Tel: +1.604.775.8200
Fax: +1.604.775.8210
E-mail: info@col.org
Web: www.col.org