



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **AFRICA**



Botswana

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 African member countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of Africa 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 in Africa (Botswana, The Gambia, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles) 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 African member country. These are:

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

INTRODUCTION

Botswana is a nation in Southern Africa with a population of more than 2.6 million people ([World Bank, 2022](#)).

COL's work in Botswana is primarily focussed in the areas of [higher education](#), [open schooling](#), [lifelong learning for farmers](#), [skills for work](#) and [gender equality](#) and is part of the [Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth \(VUSSC\)](#) network. COL's regional centre, the [Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education \(SADC-CDE\)](#) is supported by the Ministry of Education and hosted by Botswana Open University (BOU). Learners from Botswana are also benefitting from COL's free, open online courses and other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Botswana include:

- Ministry of Basic Education
- Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoTE)
- Botswana Open University (BOU)
- Human Resource Development Council (HRD-C)
- Nursing and Midwifery Council of Botswana

KEY CONTACTS

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Mmabaledi Seeletso
Director
Southern African Development
Community – Centre for Distance
Education (SADC-CDE)
Botswana Open University

REGIONAL CENTRE

The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) is hosted at BOU and supports ODL capacity building in the eleven Commonwealth states in the southern African region or Southern African Development Community (SADC).

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- Botswana Open University (BOU) implemented COL's institutional employability framework.
- The Open Schooling Portal was launched to improve access of different learners to quality education.
- 11,150 nurses/midwives in Botswana successfully completed one or more professional development courses.
- A TEL strategy has been developed for the College of Open Schooling, BOU.

- The Assistant Minister, Ministry of Education and Skills Development attended PCF10 in Calgary, Canada (14 to 16 September 2022), including the Ministerial Roundtable.
- The Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Botswana, to be represented by Botswana Open University (BOU), will co-host the Eleventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF11) with COL in Gaborone in the latter half of 2025.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

COL participated in the 2021 Global Education Summit through an online panel on 'Getting Girls into and Back to School'. COL President & CEO moderated the discussion which included Hon Unity Dow. Open schools were proposed as a cost-effective and flexible option to ensure girls return to school, mitigate the impact of learning loss and provide safe spaces.

Discussions facilitated with Ministry staff on Open Educational Resources (OER) and were referred to courses available on oercommons.org.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

BOU staff members trained on how to develop an institutional Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) strategy. BOU College of Open Schooling (BOU COS) have submitted their strategy to the University Executive for approval.

An online capacity building workshop on transforming course materials for online provision was conducted for 22 BOU COS staff in late 2021.

BOU is implementing COL's institutional employability framework.

Dr Daniel R.Tau, Vice Chancellor, BOU 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.

COL facilitated a workshop on ODL research in November 28-30, 2022, for 37 participants (15m/22f)

COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) Programme delivers high quality learning and professional development opportunities – with our Commonwealth Partner Institutions – that complement existing MBA/MPA programmes. BOU is a partner institution. In mid-2022, nine course materials 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. COL supported Botswana Open University (BOU) to launch an Open Schooling Portal to improve access of different learners to quality education. While the primary purpose of this new e-portal is to enhance skills training for out-of-school children, youth and adults, the content will also be used in conventional government schools. BOU content developers are being trained to find and revise or remix relevant OER and then to mediate active engagement with this content within the BOU Open Schooling Moodle platform. Forty-seven lessons were created in three subjects – Accounting, Commerce and Office Procedures. COL has also approved support for Phase 1 of a two-phase intervention to improve retention, pass rates and progression for the e-portal courses. As part of this new agreement, a bootcamp for three new e-tutors was conducted in September - October 2021.

COL successfully supported girls, children, and young women in the Kang Region in the Kgalagadi District in the southwest of the country. The project focused on improving access to learning resources for learners struggling to use the e-learning portal, by providing resources on CD instead and orientating learners to their use. This project ran from January 2022 to May 2022 and received strong support from the community such as the chief of Kang, Kgosi Basadi Seipone, who participated in some sessions with students. She took part in counselling the students and encouraged them to use the teaching and learning resources seriously.

COL's Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) initiative signed an agreement with BOU to support the design, development and implementation of a 120-credit one-year competency-based programme in Digital Entrepreneurship. The programme is now available online and targets aspiring and practising entrepreneurs who do not meet University requirements for admission to undergraduate degree programmes.

- First course, 'Faculty Designing a Competency-based Curriculum' developed in late 2021. 40 BOU participants completed course and 30 faculty members converting competency-based courses for online delivery.

130 learners from Botswana signed up for COL MOOCs on inclusive teaching and learning and cybersecurity training for teachers.

Botswana Open University College of Open Schooling convened a workshop in March 2023 to enhance the capability of 9 (5M/4F) participants with respect to curriculum mapping, content review and the development of two new courses.

COL in collaboration with the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) conducted a workshop to validate the competency framework and standard for a blended TVET trainer; developing learning outcomes for COL's exemplar course for a blended TVET trainer, and benchmarking for the establishment and operationalisation of ODeL centers. The workshop was attended by 11 (6M/5F) key TVET trainers from various African institutions, including Botswana Open University.

REGIONAL CENTRE: SADC-CDE

26 senior officials comprising representatives from universities participated in the high-level workshop on developing effective OER policies for the SADC region, in 20-21 June 2022 in Gaborone.

In February 2022, a seminar organised on "The Future of open and distance e-learning (ODEL) in higher education institutions in the 21st Century: Challenges and opportunities" to sensitize the institution staff at 16 SADC member states (including 11 Commonwealth countries).

40 staff members at BOU received training in research methods in Open and Distance e-Learning (ODEL) in November 2022.

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

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

COL supported the second run of the massive open online course (MOOC) "Inclusive Teaching and Learning (ITL)" in September 2022. Among the participants was Ms Maggie Motsage, who is the head of department responsible for learning difficulties at Mokhomma Primary School in Botswana. She commented on her course experience, *"I am very ready to sensitise learners on inclusive education. In fact, I have already started using inclusive education in my classroom and ensuring that all learners are included through supervision and monitoring."*

During the programme term (December 2021-December 2022) 11,140 nurses and midwives in Botswana successfully completed one or more online continuing professional development courses thanks to a partnership between COL, the Nursing and Midwifery Council Botswana (NMC-B) and the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA). The programme provides context-specific modules enabling nurses and midwives to gain extra skills and higher levels of competencies. [May2023]

In November 2022, public lecture delivered by COL's Education Specialist of Open Schooling to promote open schooling for girls in the country.

During 2021-2022, 84 students graduated from the 2-year CEMBA/MPA programme at BOU and 295 new students enrolled in the programme.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Formal **launch of BOU's Open Schooling Portal** took place at a virtual ceremony in July 2021, with participation from Ms Bridget John, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic Education along with BOU Vice Chancellor Dr Daniel Tau and other university representatives.

Dr Daniel Tau from BOU participated in the **High Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors & Heads of ODL Institutions** from 29 - 30 July 2022 in Penang, Malaysia.

Boipelo Kesamang from BOU was invited 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.

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Seven delegates from Botswana 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. Three were sponsored by COL. Dr Aubrey Lesaso, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Education and Skills Development was in attendance and joined the discussions at the Ministerial Roundtable on how governments had addressed the educational disruptions during the pandemic. Other participating delegates included Dr Daniel Tau, BOU; Ms Jane Dikinya, BOU (invited participant in COL pre-conference workshop for open schooling); Mr Freeson Kaniwa, BOU; Mr Ishmael Magare, BOU; Mr Oupa Masesane, Ministry of Education and Skills Development; Ms Deborah Sanoto, BOU.

The **Regional Focal Points Meeting for Africa and Europe** was held in Seychelles from 20-21 February 2023. Official representatives from 20 Commonwealth countries in the region participated in the two-day meeting, including Dr Mmabaledi Kefilwe Seeletso.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

Developing Partnerships to Acquire Impact: The Role of Three Regional Centres' Capacity Building Efforts for ODL Adoption in the Emerging World (United Kingdom, South Africa, Nigeria, Botswana, Fiji, Malta) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3901>

The Influence of Covid-19 on Students' Learning: Access and Participation in Higher Education in Southern Africa (Botswana, South Africa, Zambia) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3988>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting - Africa and Europe <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5316>



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