



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



COL in the Commonwealth

• **BELIZE** | 2015–2021

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2015–2021



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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2021 Country Reports summarise COL's activities over the last six years, detailing what we have achieved in each Member State and across the Commonwealth. The reports describe not only how COL has addressed country needs in education and training but also how its work supports the priorities of its development partners: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the global community to embrace distance and online delivery to keep the doors of learning open. The current crisis has highlighted, yet again, the uneven development of technology across the Commonwealth. COL has been promoting the use of a range of technologies, from print, radio and TV to the Internet, to reach learners in different contexts. As an intergovernmental organisation established by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote distance learning and technologies for human resource development, COL's role has never been more important.

COL's Strategic Plan 2015–2021 was based on the conviction that learning leads to sustainable development. COL has continued to use its expertise in distance education and technology-based approaches to promote lifelong learning that leads to sustainable development, which means economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation. This aligns COL's work with SDG4, which aspires to provide equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning for all.

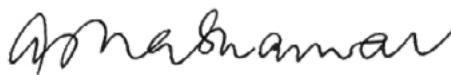
To accelerate progress towards this goal and enhance impact, COL has been fostering partnerships, building capacity, supporting the development of materials and replicable models, and enabling policy. Focusing on these core strategies, this compendium begins with a Pan-Commonwealth section, which describes COL's initiatives under Education and Skills, with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. This is followed by a section containing brief regional overviews for Africa, Asia, the

Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The regional summaries are followed by individual country reports, which highlight some of the results achieved.

You will be pleased to note that COL has exceeded the targets identified for the six-year plan. External evaluators, who conducted a meta-evaluation to assess the impact of the Strategic Plan 2015–2021, concluded that "COL programming over the period assessed... was relevant, effective, and efficient. COL is having an impact in many dimensions and across several initiatives; and in many cases, where government has taken interest and is assuming more leadership, there are good reasons to believe some of the changes at the institutional and government levels are sustainable."

This success has been possible through the support that COL has received from ministries of education as well as partner organisations and experts. *COL in the Commonwealth* is also the result of collective effort and collaboration. Partners on the ground have diligently provided COL with updates, while COL staff have tracked and assessed results obtained through meticulous monitoring and evaluation. I am very grateful to everyone involved for their valuable inputs.

Pandemics, natural disasters and widening inequalities will continue to challenge our systems. The lessons learned in the past will help shape a better future. COL will support Member States in their efforts to rebuild robust and resilient systems of education and training by providing bold and imaginative solutions to address future risks and uncertainties. Your continued support will be key to achieving these goals.



Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning

TARGETS 2021

ACHIEVED by April 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



Pan-Commonwealth Activity

Located in British Columbia, Canada, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation that serves the education and training needs of the 54 independent states that comprise the Commonwealth and their combined population of 2.4 billion, of whom more than 60% are under the age of 30. COL was established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government specifically to help ministries, institutions and organisations expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches.

COL participates in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and presents its progress report to foreign ministers. During the 25th CHOGM, in London in April 2018, COL highlighted at various forums the paradigm shifts required to

secure “our common future.” As well, at the triennial Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) and the meetings of the Commonwealth Education Ministers’ Action Group, COL reports on its progress in promoting learning for sustainable development.

At the 20th CCEM, in Fiji in 2018, the Commonwealth Education Ministers commended COL “for its emphasis on Lifelong Learning for employment, entrepreneurship and empowerment which supported the ongoing efforts of Member States to achiev[e] SDG4... [and] its global leadership in Open Educational Resources (OER) and innovations in educational technologies.”

2nd World OER Congress

COL partnered with UNESCO, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the government of Slovenia to organise the 2nd World OER Congress, in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 18 to 20 September 2017. The ensuing 2017 Ljubljana OER Action Plan provided recommendations to stakeholders in five strategic areas: building the capacity of users to find, reuse, create and share OER; language and cultural issues; ensuring inclusive and equitable access to quality OER; developing sustainability models; and developing supportive policy environments.



COL leverages its impact through a wide range of partnerships that include institutions, national organisations, international development agencies and non-governmental organisations. Inter-governmental partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women, UNESCO and UNESCO’s Institute for Information Technologies (IITE) and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). COL also works with donor agencies such as the World Bank, regional organisations such as the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation, national and regional distance education associations, industry, and private-sector foundations such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

COL assists governmental, non-governmental and community partners in developing policy, building capacity, refining models, creating materials and nurturing collaborative networks.

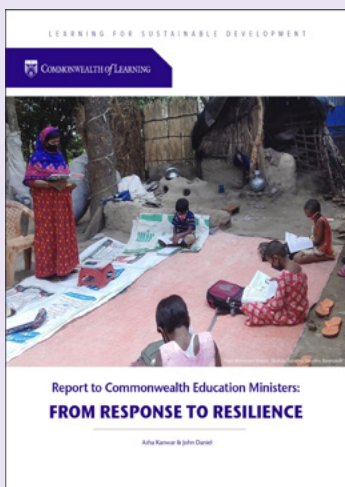
COL's response to COVID-19

COL has been quick to respond to the urgency of the situation and the evolving needs across the Commonwealth by initiating relevant projects and targeted country interventions and joining global coalitions.

COL has joined the UNESCO Global Education Coalition and “Combat COVID-19: Keep Learning”, spearheaded by IITE. COL also initiated the International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19, commonly known as [OpenDoor](#), bringing together over 60 organisations and institutions around the world. COL's online repository of curated content and tools became a

go-to resource for educators across the world. The COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative has provided access to free online courses to almost 150,000 Commonwealth citizens, many of whom have lost their livelihoods due to COVID-19.

In an effort to help young women and girls become successful in their fields of interest and build future generations of leaders, COL has launched [CommonwealthWiseWomen](#). This new mentoring programme offers unique networking opportunities to women and girls from underserved communities across the Commonwealth by pairing them with successful and influential women in leadership roles.



Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience

“What lessons can be drawn from the COVID-19 experience to make education systems more resilient in future? This policy brief provides examples of how governments and institutions made it possible for people to continue their education during the pandemic and identifies factors that contributed to success. The responses required are reviewed from social, pedagogical, technological and psychological perspectives.”



COL's Programmes



Education and Skills are COL's two programme sectors, with gender as a cross-cutting theme.

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Open/innovative schooling is increasingly recognised as a viable solution to the growing demand for equitable access to secondary education, especially for girls and marginalised groups, and particularly in remote locations. Governments are seeking to redefine the way secondary education addresses societal needs by diversifying the curriculum. This means making technical and vocational programmes available alongside academic offerings — something that open schools are well positioned to do.

Activities

OIS currently works in Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Eswatini, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia. COL also supports the information-sharing activities of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association.

COL has supported the development of policies and strategies in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Tanzania; developed and enhanced open schooling models in Belize, Malawi, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia; and promoted quality OER, including for persons with disabilities, in Bangladesh, Botswana, Eswatini and Namibia. It also



COL's activities and projects are relevant to achieving SDG4, to the priorities of the Commonwealth countries COL works in, and both relevant and appropriate to achieving the aims of the current Six-Year Plan.

- COL is accepted and seen as a leader in ODL. It has the mandate, over 30 years of experience, a large repository of OER materials, tools and highly skilled international experts on staff and at the governance level.
- COL's innovative approaches to teacher development, blended learning, and institutional capacity building in ODL, OER and TEL are at the cutting edge.
- COL is committed to learning from doing and adapts its work based on the evidence coming from M&E and internal studies.

Key Evaluation Findings. *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*

has been building capacity in course development, delivery and assessment in Guyana and Papua New Guinea.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the current model for OIS is relatively new and involves developing, piloting, scaling and mainstreaming OER, ODL, eLearning methods and open educational practices in order to have a large-scale systemic impact. Since the implementation of this model started in 2017, educators in six countries have developed curriculum-based OER and have piloted or are close to piloting their use. The pilots in Mozambique and Zambia are currently reaching about 800 formerly out-of-school youths per year, and both countries are now looking towards scaling. In addition, as part of their response

to the pandemic lockdowns, participating countries shared some of the OER they had in development, and these were downloaded more than 26,000 times in 2020. In a similar vein, curriculum-based resources created for use by learners in Kenya were viewed on YouTube more than 20,000 times in the first eight weeks and, it is estimated, were viewed by more than 150,000 learners in Kenya and Tanzania when first broadcast.

TEACHER EDUCATION



Teaching quality is considered to be the most important factor affecting learning in schools in most Commonwealth countries. COL's focus is on improving teacher quality through school- and technology-based training models, which can cut costs and achieve scale. Working in partnership with government agencies and teacher education institutions, COL supports capacity development in the integration of technology and OER into pre- and in-service training.

Activities

COL is working with ministries of education as well as non-governmental organisations and teacher education institutions in The Gambia, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Uganda to develop capacity and resources for school-based teacher development.

In response to partner needs and emerging pedagogies, the initiative has also developed online courses, including MOOCs and webinars for educators and education leaders.

COL's Educational Podcasting for Innovative Classrooms is a response to the increased need for practices, processes and systems for effective last-mile teaching and teacher professional development in partner countries.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the model has been replicated in ten countries. The findings from the evaluations and interviews with key actors at institutional and government levels suggest that the model is succeeding in West Africa, particularly The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and it shows potential for scale, with the strategic selection of institutions by governments.

HIGHER EDUCATION

COL continues to support policy makers, institutions and leaders in higher education to harness the potential of ODL and technology and enable them to cope with the increasing demand for quality higher education in the face of rising costs and diminishing public funding. COL has developed action plans aligned to the priorities of specific countries to increase access to quality higher education, while also forging partnerships with international and regional organisations to leverage its impact.

Activities

Institutions in Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka,



Uganda and Zambia have partnered with COL in various projects.

COL is collaborating with 12 higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master in Business Administration and Commonwealth Executive Master in Public Administration programmes.

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning project, led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

Outcomes

The evaluation of Higher Education initiatives in the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021* found that student performance had improved and student satisfaction had increased. There is evidence that systemic investments in technology, staff training, materials development and quality assurance policies have all had a positive impact.

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

Strengthening and improving the quality and scope of existing tertiary institutions is a key priority for small states. The VUSSC partnership represents 32 small states of the Commonwealth dedicated to sharing educational resources and expanding access to tertiary education. VUSSC works with ministries of education and their agencies, post-secondary institutions and non-governmental organisations to build capacity in online course development, pedagogy and assessment. It promotes technology-enabled learning through the provision of a learning platform and enables the transfer of credits across small states through the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework.

Activities

VUSSC has been active in small states across three regions – Africa (Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles), the Caribbean (The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana) and the Pacific (Fiji,



Solomon Islands) – promoting eLearning, supporting the development of OER and providing learning opportunities at certificate, diploma and degree levels.

VUSSC has supported the development of a series of blue economy MOOCs in which close to 6,000 learners from across the world have participated.

In response to the increasing need to transition to online delivery, VUSSC has supported institutions in Africa and the Caribbean to manage and use learning management systems to create and offer courses.

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 an online undergraduate degree programme in Youth Work Development to universities that are members of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, there is strong support from ministers of education in the small states of the Commonwealth, and COL offers a variety of courses responding to the unique needs of small states in areas such as the blue economy, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, disaster management and port management. VUSSC has played a major role in the development of OER that have led to educators' pedagogical development and students' improved educational performance. The Transnational Qualifications Framework, which allows for the recognition of qualifications earned in one nation by 31 other nations, is a major strength.



The Skills sector addresses the needs of both formal and non-formal learning. The initiatives in this sector are: Technology-Enabled Learning, Lifelong Learning for Farmers, GIRLS Inspire, and Technical and Vocational Skills Development, including Skills Online.



TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

This initiative aims to encourage more governments and institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. COL believes that for technology to have a transformative effect in teaching and learning, a focus on policy–technology–capacity is needed, and practice must be based on research evidence.

Activities

This initiative is being implemented in Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Fiji, Grenada, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Samoa, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Since its launch in 2018, COL's Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training

in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users. Over 24,000 learners have benefited from MOOCs organised in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada. Since 2018, COL's online course *Understanding OER* has been used by over 13,000 people worldwide; in 2020, it won a prestigious Brandon Hall Group Silver Award.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, TEL demonstrates the systematic use of technology to offer quality education at scale. The C-DELTA (seven modules) and Online Course on Open Education Resources (LearnOER) platforms are examples. TEL provides peer-reviewed and quality-assured tools and resources to help any educational institution integrate technology in teaching and learning so as to improve the quality of



PCF8

PCF8 was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 27 to 30 November 2016. More than 500 participants from 59 countries joined COL and host partner Open University Malaysia for four days of speeches, presentations and discussions on the theme *Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development*. In the framework of the forum, education ministers from five countries held a Ministerial Roundtable, where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. Forum delegates adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration with a set of ten recommendations for governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society, on topics that included lifelong learning, ODL, access and equity, teacher education, OER, education of women and girls, research and innovation.

student learning and success. The Advanced ICT Skills Development Project has developed 26 OER courses to make the teaching and learning of advanced ICT skills affordable. These courses are developed as OER textbooks that can be adapted by institutions to offer courses. In addition, this initiative works to improve TEL policies.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

This programme empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning processes, and organise themselves to solve the challenges of lack of access



to credit and finance to improve their livelihoods. In this model, COL is a catalyst in bringing together institutions, civil society and the private sector to build the capacity of communities through gender-sensitive learning.

Activities

Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda and Zambia are currently implementing the L3F model. Nearly 800,000 farmers, more than half of them women, have participated in L3F learning activities. COL has also trained over 100,000 learners across several countries of the Commonwealth using MOOCs - to scale up L3F through building capacity in agricultural extension. During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, about 42,000 learners were trained using innovative mobiMOOCs. Banks in various countries collaborate with L3F, including NABARD, a large agricultural bank in India, and Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank. COL has been building the capacity

of staff at the Bank of Tanzania through a visit to India and subsequent follow-up training workshops.

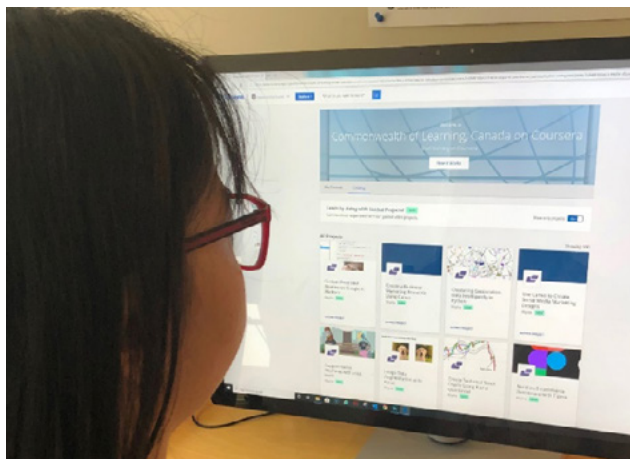
Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, since being piloted in 2006, the L3F programme has been demonstrated to enhance crop productivity, household incomes and empowerment, not simply through learning but also by linking small-holder farmers to sources of financing and to other actors in the supply chain. Participants invest their incomes in children’s education, better food and improved housing, as well as increasing their assets and diversifying their income-generating activities, which multiplies the development impact. COL’s ability to broker partnerships is a key strength: the L3F model links participants with microfinance, agricultural extension workers and agricultural supply chains using a social-capital approach.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL is building the capacity of TVET government agencies and institutions to increase access to quality TVSD through using ODL and learning technologies. COL is supporting selected partners to implement Skills in Demand projects, which blend online learning with learning in the workplace or community. Tapping into the physical and human resources in these contexts helps overcome TVET-specific challenges of how to develop practical skills while still reaching marginalised learners in informal sectors and remote locations.





Activities

Since 2015, COL has trained more than 3,000 TVET educators across the Commonwealth in flexible and blended learning. COL is supporting government agency partners in The Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Zambia to implement national change strategies for flexible and blended TVET. COL has seven Skills in Demand projects underway in Kenya, Nauru, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Zambia, and across the Caribbean in partnership with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies. Skills being developed are project management, gardening, construction, computer and mobile phone repair, furniture making, and teaching and assessment for TVET teachers and workplace trainers.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, more than 100 partners are implementing flexible and blended (FaB) learning approaches to varying degrees, and there is evidence that organisations are moving toward more flexible TVSD. COL has online OER to build capacity in flexible skills development, allowing countries to cost-effectively scale up institutional capability through training trainers to use COL’s OER. COL’s new Skills in Demand model was found to meet the needs of national TVET agencies and bring government support that allowed work to scale rapidly across institutions and workplaces. TVSD also promoted learning networks: the INVEST Africa Community Learning Network has more than 2,000 members, and the African Foundation for Quality e-Learning for TVET (AFQueT) was founded in 2019 by nine individuals

from five African countries who have had their capability in eLearning built through COL.

As well, Skills Online aims to support the efforts of Member States to disseminate skills required for employment and entrepreneurship. Through hybrid models that apply ODL techniques, it helps women, girls, youths, persons with disabilities, entrepreneurs and the unemployed to acquire relevant 21st-century skills and access in-country mentorship support. It enhances the ODL capabilities of both TVET institutions and other non-governmental organisations involved in skills development.

The COL–Coursera partnership has been offered in 50 Commonwealth countries, resulting in over one million course enrolments and over 182,000 certificates. In addition, COL has collaborated with UdeMy Inc., facilitating access for vulnerable youths in Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda to 4,000 highly curated online courses that have benefited over 8,100 learners. In India, COL has helped reskill 2,100 auto-technicians, tailors and beauticians to become sanitation hygiene entrepreneurs and train 5,000 women digital entrepreneurs to meet new demands created by COVID-19.

GENDER

Gender is a cross-cutting theme that underpins and complements all COL initiatives. COL recognises that the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment is central to its agenda of learning for sustainable development. COL supports partners in mainstreaming gender and in implementing holistic projects to address specific gender issues. Targeted programmes 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.

Activities

Projects are being implemented in Botswana, Ghana, Guyana, India, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago. Through a variety of skills-building activities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, COL has been empowering women to achieve sustainable livelihoods. In Sri Lanka and Tanzania, COL has trained girls and young women in ICT, and in the Caribbean, it has helped address issues of boys' underachievement. In 2020, COL launched a gender-equality capacity-building project with the participation of 11 partners in nine countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.



As well, a special project, GIRLS Inspire, has aimed to provide schooling and skills development to some of the hardest-to-reach girls in the Commonwealth. COL has worked in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania to provide education and training to almost 100,000 girls to equip them for employment and entrepreneurship. This project has been supported by Global Affairs Canada and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, COL has the ability to influence as well as support partners, and its long

history and relationships give it credibility. Three of the gender projects — the Social Safety Net project, Lifelong Learning for Mothers, and the Gender Mainstreaming project — have developed strategies and mechanisms for implementation that can be scaled up. The Gender Mainstreaming model has clear guidelines, and the three phases of the gender mainstreaming strategy are logically connected and relevant. In addition, COL has developed tools, including a Gender Audit Tool and a Gender Road Map template. A social protection mobile application has also been developed for Solomon Islands.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

COL's regional office in Asia is based in New Delhi, India. CEMCA promotes the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of media and technology to serve the education and training needs of the Commonwealth Member States of Asia. CEMCA works in education and skills development, with a focus on community media, particularly community radio.

Activities

Through activities with partners in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka, CEMCA has helped institutions improve their capacity to leverage ODL for increased access to education. During the COVID-19 lockdown in the region in 2020, CEMCA offered training to faculty and leaders in ODL institutions to help with the transition to online learning. Recently, virtual labs have been introduced.



Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, CEMCA operates with a small academic staff and well-developed networks. Its advocacy efforts and technical support have led to the successful adoption of institutional OER policies. Similarly, capacity building with institutions has created improvements in knowledge, changes in attitude, and changes in systems and practices, leading to the increased use of OER to create learning materials. In a few cases, partner institutions have shared their experience with other universities, creating a multiplier effect. CEMCA has also been able to obtain additional contributions from other donors or development agencies.



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 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.

REGIONAL CENTRES



COL supports regional centres in Western and Southern Africa, Europe and the Pacific. These are hosted by ODL institutions (in Botswana, Fiji and Nigeria) or ministries (in Malta). They carry out activities that are aligned to COL's mandate and programmes.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the regional centres are centres of excellence focused on advocacy and research in ODL. They have generated activities that can be replicated by new partners. In addition, they have well-developed networks of consultants to help them expand activities. The evaluation found that the regional centres are becoming increasingly relevant in their respective regions. The more established ones have developed networks and partnerships, significantly increasing ODL capacity in their regions.

SERVICES

COL's eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO) is a service initiative that works with international organisations on a fee-for-service basis to develop and deliver professional development courses and projects. Over the past 20 years, eLIO has progressively diversified its services to provide innovative solutions to meet the needs of globally dispersed staff and enable learning for sustainable development.



COL IN THE CARIBBEAN AND THE AMERICAS

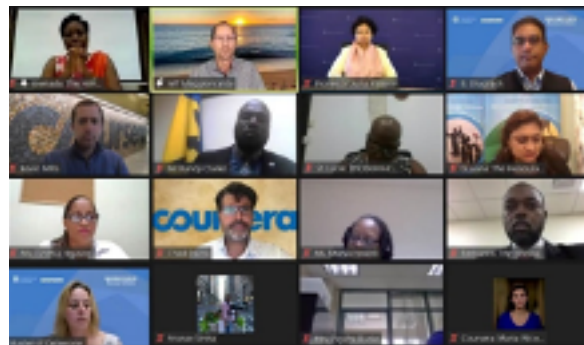
Affordable and accessible technologies are vital for building resilient education systems. While only about 50% of the global population has access to the Internet, in the Caribbean region, the percentage exceeds the global average (61%). Access to mobile subscriptions is much higher and stands at 113%, presenting an opportunity to build a cloud-based and mobile-friendly system of teaching and learning (*Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience*).

The Region, through its collaborations with the OER repositories of Commonwealth of Learning, is developing its national and regional policies, models and approaches for embracing OERs and Open Learning as innovative ways to democratize access and delivery of inclusive quality education.

– CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy

COL focuses on adding value to the countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions of the Caribbean in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education include emphasising

quality and inclusive secondary and higher education and strengthening teacher development programmes.



COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative boosts employability in the Caribbean

Over 105,600 learners from the Caribbean and the Americas joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world. In Guyana, the initiative reached more than 10% of the country's population aged 15 to 35, leading the Ministry of Education, Guyana and the Private Sector Commission to sign an MOU recognising the credentials earned under this programme for employment purposes.





In the area of skills, COL supports the expansion of access to technical and vocational education, the reinforcement of non-formal education in agriculture, and technology-enabled learning (TEL). These initiatives have been designed to achieve socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at low economic and environmental costs.

The *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021* concluded that COL’s activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women’s and girls’ empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.

COL’s major regional initiatives in the Commonwealth Caribbean countries and the Americas between 2015 and 2021 are outlined below:

- All the Commonwealth states in the Caribbean are members of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and COL is providing support to build their capacity and expertise in open distance learning (ODL). VUSSC courses are currently offered by the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, the University of Belize, the University of Guyana, and the Guyana Ministry of Education’s in-service teacher education agency.
- Through VUSSC, COL supported CARICOM in revising its regional ODL policy for the

Caribbean, in alignment with the CARICOM Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy.

- The Open Textbook Forum was held in October 2015 in Antigua and Barbuda, and representatives from Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines participated. The forum included a series of workshops that focused on the development of OER policies and the strengthening of open textbook initiatives in the region.
- The Caribbean and the Americas OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in April 2017 in Brazil. Representatives of seven Commonwealth countries from the Caribbean were in attendance.
- In June 2018, in partnership with UNICEF, CARICOM and the Ministry of Education, Guyana, COL organised a two-day symposium with the theme “Bridging the Gender Divide: Stemming the Tide of Male Underachievement in the Education System,” aimed at developing approaches to address the underperformance of boys in the education system. Also, as part of its thrust to strengthen its connections to the student community in British Columbia, Canada, COL linked a group of students from the University of British Columbia with four beginning teachers in Guyana to learn about their experience as males in the system.

- In November 2019, COL signed an agreement with Youth Challenge Guyana (YCG) to train and mentor boys and young men from South Georgetown to enhance their self-efficacy and livelihood skills. YCG has since launched a training programme for 43 young men in electrical installation and life skills. In February 2020, YCG organised the Introductory Electrical Installation training programme.



- COL has partnered with UWI's Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) to strengthen staff capacity to develop and deliver an online MSc degree in Development Studies. Sixty-seven faculty, coaches and administrators from the three SALISES locations, in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, participated in face-to-face and online training activities held between May and August 2019.
- Since April 2020, VUSSC has been running an online course on *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, designed to build the capacity of quality assurance practitioners and learning designers in higher education institutions and of specialists from quality assurance agencies.

COL has been supporting the CTO to increase access to skills training in key areas related to tourism and sustainability. This ongoing collaboration with COL allows both our organizations to fulfill mutual objectives in seeking to deliver training and tools for knowledge and skills enhancement, and capacity building to contribute to human resource development.

– Neil Walters, Acting Secretary General, Caribbean Tourism Organization

- In Dominica, VUSSC supported the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to develop and launch a national public education campaign to encourage behaviours that promote disaster prevention and preparedness, under the theme “Update, Upgrade for a More Resilient Dominica.”
- VUSSC is also supporting the Caribbean Tourism Organization to facilitate the development of online courses in the Caribbean Sustainable Tourism Policy and Development Framework, and a Multi-Hazard Risk Management Guide for the tourism sector.
- COL is also collaborating with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies to offer a joint qualification in youth development. This initial partnership has now expanded to include 17 institutions around the Commonwealth, one of which – the University of Guyana – is in the Caribbean.

COL's interventions facilitating the adoption of the open textbook at the Antigua State College revealed that (i) the use of an open textbook resulted in a modest savings of ECD 64.5 per student [and] (ii) the students who used the open textbook materials along with the traditional textbook showed an approximately 5.5% increase in their scores.

– Evaluation of Technology-Enabled Learning Initiative (2019)

- COL partnered with the Joint Board of Teacher Education in the Caribbean region to develop diagnostic instruments for children with special learning needs. Subsequently, the Caribbean Assessment Battery for reading, language and mathematics was developed and piloted in Belize and Jamaica.
- As well, the University of Guyana and the University of the Commonwealth Caribbean are among the higher education institutions benefiting from COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration programmes.
- A partnership between COL and SALISES seeks to strengthen staff capacity to develop and deliver

an online MSc degree in Development Studies in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

- COL has been working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA) to build the capacity of TVET practitioners through online training. COL supported the development of digital materials to enable CANTA members to train assessors, verifiers and instructors for the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications. COL is supporting CANTA so that it can run these online programmes on its own learning management system.
- In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL developed a MOOC on TEL for over 15,000 learners worldwide. COL and AU have also collaborated on the development of the *Blended Learning Practice* MOOC, benefiting close to 9,000 learners in the Commonwealth and beyond.
- In 2020–2021, Lakehead University, Canada, in partnership with COL and the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development led the design and development of six micro-courses on Youth Work in the Pacific.
- In June 2018, COL's Technical and Vocational Skills Development initiative held a regional workshop on Sustainable Development in TVET for participants from Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

- Lifelong Learning for Farmers activities have taken place in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas and Jamaica, leading to improved capacities among farmers as well as extension personnel.



- In June 2019, mid-career women from tertiary institutions across the Caribbean came together for the workshop *Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of AI*. Facilitated by COL and hosted by the Ministry of Education, The Bahamas, the event explored current technologies and trends in education, such as OER, and the role of AI in enhancing these technologies.
- In January 2020, over 30 representatives from 14 countries in the Caribbean gathered in Saint Lucia for the regional *Capacity-Building Workshop on OER* organised by COL in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
- During 2015–2020, Focal Points met twice for regional consultations to strengthen the





effectiveness of COL's work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region and to share information related to learning for sustainable development. The first meeting took place in August 2018 in Kingston, Jamaica, and COL reconvened its Caribbean Focal Points in January 2020 in Saint Lucia to further finetune its activities in the region and inform the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).

- The Caribbean Examinations Council is a member of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19. As well, COL has been helping develop teacher capacity in online and blended learning via the course *OER for Online Learning*, which has been regularly offered in the region since June 2020.
- The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is being implemented in Jamaica. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice as well as school-based training.
- In the aftermath of Cyclone Dorian, COL extended support to The Bahamas for restarting schools by providing 30 Aptus devices and 300 tablets. Aptus, a COL innovation, is a low-cost micro-server for digital learning materials that does not require grid power or data connectivity to support tablet-based learning.
- Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teacher capacity in responding to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include *Cybersecurity*

Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), and *Teaching Mathematics with Technology*, among others. These have attracted over 1,800 participants from 13 countries in the Caribbean.

- In December 2018, a ministerial delegation from Belize visited three distance education schools and the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, Canada, with a view to learning about open schooling in Canada and strengthening the international community of practitioners. COL sponsored the visit.



- In 2020, at the request of the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago, COL offered the course *OER for Online Learning* to over 8,000 teachers to develop their capacity in online and blended learning and enable them to provide effective pedagogical support to learners in the face of COVID-19.
- Professor Mohammed Ally, Centre for Distance Education, Athabasca University, serves as a COL Chair. Professor George Veletsianos, School of Education and Technology, Royal Roads University, is another COL Chair from Canada.

Belize



95.9%

Primary net
enrolment rate



71.1%

Secondary school
completion rate



Belize



Introduction

Belize (population: 390,353 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 95.9% (2018) and a secondary school completion rate of 71.1% (2018). [The Education and Training Act \(2010\)](#) stipulates the establishment of the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It outlines the planned composition of the TVET Council and directives for the Council's constitution. Belize is a member of [The University of the West Indies Open Campus \(UWIOC\)](#), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region.

Internet connectivity is available to 47% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 65 per 100 people (2019). Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Belize. In its [Education Sector Strategy 2011–2016: Improving Access, Quality and Governance of Education in Belize](#), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (formerly Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture) recognises that ICT has a potentially important role to play in providing a wider and better education service, and the ministry commits to examining feasibility and initiating pilot programmes that, if successful, can be taken to scale.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. On 21 April 2020, shortly after the pandemic struck, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MOECST) expressed its commitment to providing access to quality education online, and on 27 April 2020, the ministry started the first educational radio broadcast. Subject areas include language arts, math and general topics. Social media platforms, especially Facebook, have been widely used.

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Senator the Honourable Kay S. McConney, Minister of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology, Barbados, represents the Caribbean region on COL's Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Yvonne Palma, Director of Tertiary and Post Secondary Education Services, Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, is COL's Focal Point for Belize.

NOTABLE MENTION

Professor Clement Sankat, President, University of Belize, is a COL Honorary Fellow and former member of COL's Board of Governors.



COL's Work in Belize: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

Current work in Belize is primarily in the areas of higher education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, open/innovative schooling, gender, OER, technical and vocational skills

development, and technology-enabled learning (TEL). Learners from Belize have also benefited from COL's open online courses and other resources.



Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Belize has embraced the OIS model, and recent activities have included institutional and faculty capacity building through developing curricula and resources and establishing cost-effective models of schooling. Other areas include training teachers in how to use TEL and how to develop eLearning OER content for schools. COL regularly consults with MOECST on the model's progress and has initiated discussions about a monitoring and evaluation strategy. Through the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association, Belize works to promote relevant policies and strategies among governments and organisations to enhance quality learning.

In March 2017, COL organised a workshop on open schooling management and policy for the directors of all evening division schools and institutes for TVET.

As well, COL supported the development of 14 school subjects as OER. A resource development workshop enabled 39 staff to build their capacity in TEL and the creation of eLearning OER content for their schools.

In August 2017, representatives from the ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia — who had signed agreements with COL to work together to improve

the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream and open schools through eLearning, and to broaden access to schooling for out-of-school youths — met in Singapore. They shared their experiences in the implementation of COL's OIS model in mainstream and open schools and had the opportunity to align country implementation strategies, find common solutions to challenges and identify innovative ways to increase the programme's momentum.

Learners from Belize successfully participated in several intakes of an online course titled *Developing and Teaching Online*, organised in partnership with the University of Mauritius.

In December 2018, a ministerial delegation from Belize visited three distance education schools and the Ministry of Education in British Columbia, Canada, with a view to learning about open schooling in Canada and strengthening the international community of practitioners. COL sponsored the visit.

In October 2019, COL's Education Specialist: Open Schooling visited Belize to discuss the development of digital content and plans for piloting that content in selected schools or distance outreach centres. He also visited several evening schools that support out-of-school children, youths and adults.



Most recently, at the request of MOECST, COL expedited the open sharing of content on an online platform as a response to the COVID-19 crisis. Quality assurance and rewriting of English-language OER have been initiated, and training for the next phase of OIS implementation in Belize is expected to commence in spring 2021.

TEACHER EDUCATION

In 2017, COL partnered with the University of the West Indies to develop the Caribbean Assessment Battery for reading, language and mathematics — which comprises diagnostic tools for special-needs students. It was piloted in Belize and Jamaica.

There were participants from Belize in the *OER for Online Learning (OER4OL)* MOOC organised by COL in 2020.

A total of 66 learners from Belize participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and there were 61 participants in the *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Learners from Belize joined the *Teaching Mathematics with Technology* MOOC, which was organised in November–December 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION

COL is collaborating with 12 higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. The University of the Commonwealth Caribbean (UCC) is a member of this initiative. There were 230 UCC enrolments in CEMBA/CEMPA in 2015–2019, with 111 persons graduating.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role



of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Dr Yvonne Dawkins, Associate Vice President, and Mrs Dianne Boyd, Director of Administration and Student Services at UCC's College of Graduate Studies and Research, are members of the AB, and Professor Dennis Gayle, Chairman of the University and Foundation Boards, and University Executive Chancellor, represents UCC on the EGB.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia,

“Professionally, I feel better equipped to make decisions on behalf of my school. I feel the programme is preparing me to move up to a higher office and contribute to the future of education in Belize.”

– Jacklyn Burns, *Master's in Educational Leadership candidate*

in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

The three offerings of COL's *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 106 participants from Jamaica.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF). Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

A meeting with Belize's Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture and institution officials took place in 2015 to strengthen the National Qualifications Framework and link it with the TQF. The eLearning programme *Developing and Teaching Online Courses* attracted 26 participants, including teachers and educational managers.

Since 2018, COL has been providing support to the University of Belize (UB) to expand access and strengthen capacity to deliver the Master of Educational Leadership online. In September 2018, UB aligned the VUSSC Master of Educational Leadership

programme with national professional standards for educational leaders and with UB regulations. In November 2018, a capacity-building workshop was held at UB with 23 participants to strengthen staff capacity to deliver online graduate education. In February 2019, 38 students enrolled in a *Master of Educational Leadership* course customised from VUSSC materials. In February 2020, COL facilitated workshops with staff and students involved in a programme on thesis supervision. UB is aiming to increase its graduate programmes and build a culture of research, and COL is providing support to strengthen faculty competencies for serving as research supervisors of graduate students from a distance.

Learners from Belize have benefited from the online course titled *Quality Assurance in Blended Learning*, offered since April 2020, as well as the online professional development course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*.

In September 2020, COL launched the course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two offerings have brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including Belize.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of Seychelles. Learners from Belize were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.



Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

TVSD has been offering ongoing online training across the Commonwealth via three courses: *Facilitating Online Courses*, *Flexible Skills Development* and *Blended Learning in the Classroom*. Twelve staff representatives from three of Belize's institutes for technical and vocational education and the Cayo Centre for Employment Training completed the *Flexible Skills Development* course.

In 2015, one person from Belize attended a Caribbean regional workshop on developing flexible TVET.

As part of a regional initiative, COL has supported the development and delivery of an online *Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) Assessor Training* course, and the development of online *CVQ Verifier Training* and *CVQ Instructor Training* courses.

Four participants from Belize completed the online assessor training offered by the TVET Council Barbados. COL is working with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), of which Belize is a member, to offer these courses across the region. COL is hosting a Moodle installation for CANTA and building CANTA's capacity to implement Moodle.

The COL report *Boys' Underperformance in Education: Revisiting the Issue in the Commonwealth* examines the factors that continue to contribute to boys' underperformance in education in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda and Zambia.



A total of 308 learners from Belize have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs – *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 – for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Belize were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

COL supported MOECST to develop the *Belize ICT in Education Strategy (2017–2022)* in 2018.

COL has entered into an agreement with MOECST to implement the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform. In November–December 2020, an online training of trainers workshop on C-DELTA was organised for teachers from 40 schools in Belize.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL's C-DELTA platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Belize.

GENDER

COL's *Gender Profile 2017: Belize* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2018 and 2019, women aspiring to assume leadership positions in ODL and ICT-based fields gathered in Malaysia for the COL-hosted *Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL*. Ms Francine Leannie Sabal and Ms Karen Benita Waight, both from UB, participated in this intensive workshop.

In June 2019, Mrs Beverly Faber, UB, and Mrs Sharmayne Saunders, UWIOC, attended the regional workshop *Women in ICT: The Future of Work in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)* in Nassau, The Bahamas.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Ms Karen Bautista Waight, Microbiology Lecturer in the Faculty of Science and Technology, UB, is a mentor in the programme.



Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

In April 2017, COL supported Dr Yvonne Palma from MOECST to attend the Caribbean and the Americas regional consultation, held in Brazil in the lead-up to the 2nd World Open Educational Resources Congress.

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the attendance of Dr Lorna McKay, UB, to attend PCF8, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016.

COL sponsored six delegates from Belize to participate at PCF9 in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019, including Dr Priscilla Lopez, UB; Dr Maxine McKay, UB; Yvonne Palma, MOECST, who also attended the Interlocutors' Meeting hosted by VUSSC in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9; and Dr Sheldon Samuels, MOECST, who joined COL's pre-forum Open Schooling workshop. At PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable

with participation from six education ministers, where Ms Deborah Domingo, CEO, MOECST was nominated to represent the minister.

In addition, at PCF9 COL conferred the title Honorary Fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning on Professor Emeritus Clement Sankat, President, University of Belize, in recognition of his outstanding service to the advancement of quality higher education, which has made a difference to the lives of many learners in the Commonwealth.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Dr Yvonne Palma also represented Belize at the two regional consultations of Focal Points in 2018 and 2020, as well as the COL-hosted regional *Capacity-Building Workshop on OER* in Saint Lucia in January 2020.

COL'S INTERNATIONAL MOOCs

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including 122 from Belize.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered in September 2020, attracted participants from Belize.

The three offerings of COL's *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 30 participants from Belize.

Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL's work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL's work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions

and the private sector. COL partnerships assist in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL's partners in Belize include:

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (formerly Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture)
- University of Belize

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 by 2030. COL's experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, 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) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
- v) promote gender equality.

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 Education Ministers, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and PCF10.*

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

VISION: To be the foremost global agency that promotes learning for sustainable development

MISSION: To help governments and institutions to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches



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