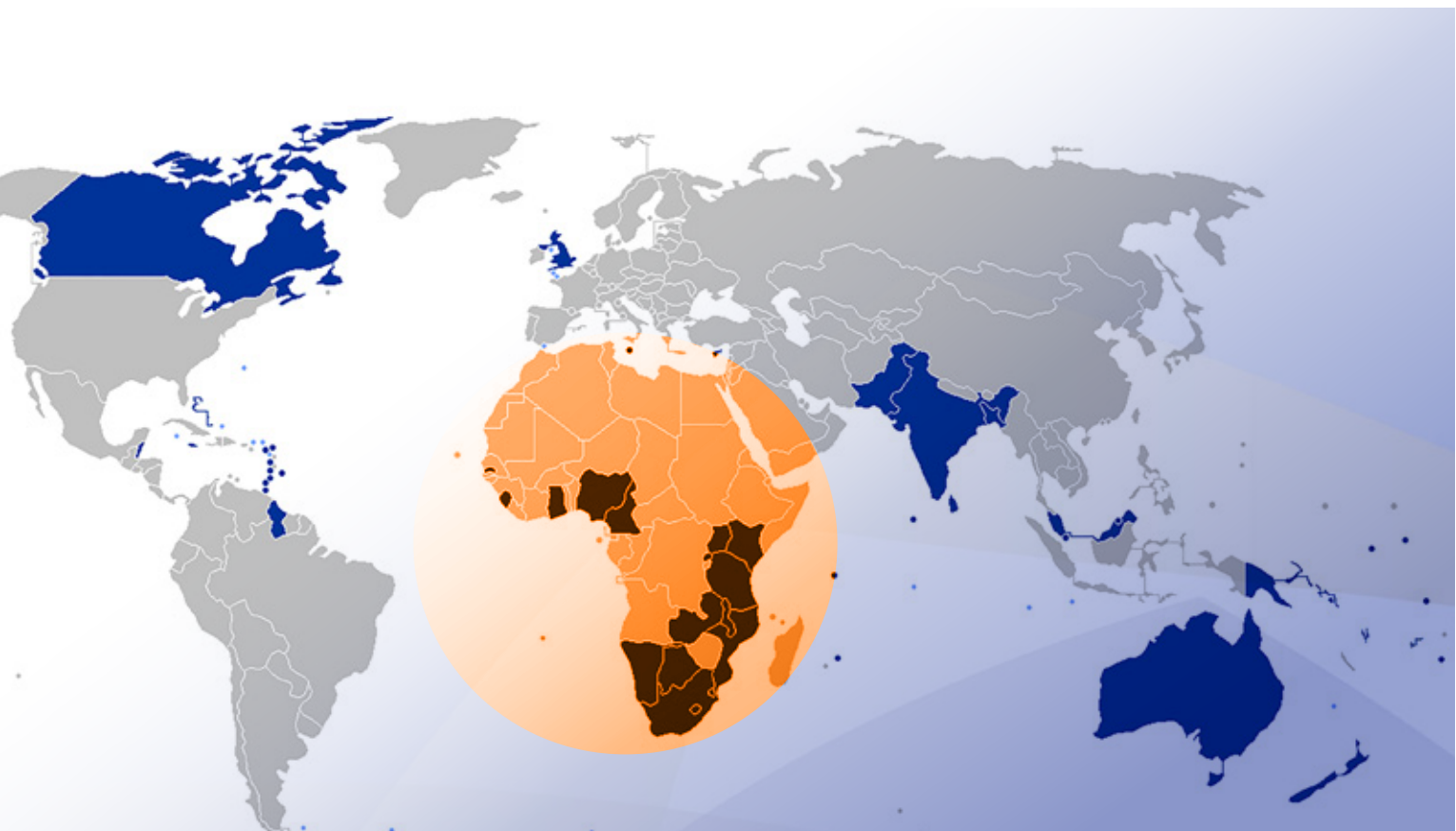




COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



# **COL in the Commonwealth**

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**SIERRA LEONE 2015–2018**



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# Acknowledgements

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Professor Asha S. Kanwar, President and Chief Executive Officer

# Foreword

*COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2018 Country Reports* summarises COL’s activities over the last three years (2015–2018), succinctly detailing what we have achieved in each Member State and across the Commonwealth. The reports describe not only COL’s recent activities in developing countries but also how its work supports the international development priorities of partner countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Bearing in mind the launch of a new set of post-2015 development goals, COL transitioned from “Learning for Development” to “Learning for Sustainable Development” to align itself with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Therefore, COL continues to use its expertise in distance education and technology-based approaches to promote lifelong learning that leads to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

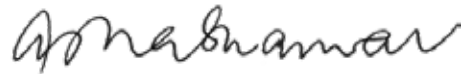
*COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2018 Country Reports* begins with a Pan-Commonwealth section, which describes COL’s initiatives under “Education” and “Skills.” This is followed by a section containing a brief report for each region: Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The third section details COL’s activities for each country within these regions.

COL’s five core strategies to achieve outcomes and impact are: partnerships, capacity, materials, models and policy. Focusing on these core strategies, the

reports for this triennium categorise COL’s activities in education, skills, gender, partnerships and special events, to better present how our work contributes to outcomes.

Most of COL’s recent initiatives and projects are already showing demonstrable results in expanding and improving opportunities for education and training, helping rural communities achieve greater prosperity and contributing to skills development.

The production of *COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2018 Country Reports* was made possible through collective effort and collaboration. Partners on the ground have diligently provided COL with updates. COL staff have tracked and assessed results obtained from partners through a thorough monitoring and evaluation process. COL’s advanced knowledge management systems have enabled us to capture information from numerous sources and synthesise this into the reports that make up this volume. I am very grateful to everyone involved for their valuable input.



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



**370,000+**  
**LEARNERS** Reached  
(Over **50%** Women)



**110+**  
**INSTITUTIONS**  
Adopted COL Models  
and Materials



**280+**  
**PARTNERS**  
in **42** Countries



**A++**  
**RATING**  
by DFID



**2,200+**  
**Learning Resources,**  
Materials and Curricula  
Collaboratively Developed

# PAN-COMMONWEALTH ACTIVITY

## Overview of COL and its activities across the Commonwealth 2015–2018

Located in British Columbia, Canada, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation that serves the education and training needs of the 52 independent states that comprise the Commonwealth and their combined population of 2.4 billion, of whom more than 60 per cent are under the age of 30.

Working collaboratively with governments in all Commonwealth Member States, COL has the mandate to promote the use of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL leverages its impact through a wide range of partnerships that include institutions, national organisations, international development agencies and non-governmental organisations. Partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and UN Women. COL also works with donor agencies such as the World Bank, regional organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), national and regional distance education associations, industry, and private sector foundations such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

COL's overarching approach — especially its focus, scope and types of specific programmes and projects — is directed by its Strategic Plan, which is reviewed at the mid-term and evaluated at the end of the plan period. COL practises results-based management (RBM) and believes in meticulous planning and continuous monitoring and evaluation. COL's "Theory of Change" model identifies the areas to be addressed and defines its roadmap to achieve selected goals.

## COL and the Sustainable Development Goals

In its outcomes-based Strategic Plan 2015–2021, COL articulates its commitment to promoting equitable access to quality lifelong learning for all, believing that access to learning opportunities will lead to progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). COL's theme of promoting "Learning for Sustainable Development" aligns itself with SDG4, a stand-alone goal that aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

The three underlying principles of SDG4 are:

- i. Education is a fundamental human right and an enabling right.
- ii. Education is a public good.
- iii. Gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education for all.

As a Commonwealth intergovernmental organisation, COL also operates within the framework of the Commonwealth Charter, which lays special emphasis on education, the importance of young people, the needs of small states, and gender equality. All these concerns are integrated in COL's initiatives, projects and services.

COL believes that if the global community is to achieve quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030, it will need to adopt innovative approaches and harness the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT). COL uses this approach in its programmes, which are divided into two sectors, Education and Skills, with Gender as a cross-cutting theme.



## Education

The Education sector is working in all regions of the Commonwealth. The stakeholders in this sector range from girls and women in challenging environments to open universities, teacher education institutions and ministries of education. The Education sector is strengthening its comprehensive, project-based approach to achieve systemic impact. There is a strong focus on open educational resources (OER) and the



promotion of gender mainstreaming in all activities. Discussions were initiated with partners to integrate sustainable development approaches into policies and programmes. The GIRLS Inspire project, aimed at preventing child, early and forced marriage and reaching unreached girls and women, is now well established and is having a positive impact on sustainable development.

### OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING

#### Overview

While many Commonwealth countries have made tremendous progress in achieving universal primary education, 100% transition from primary to secondary level has not been possible in several others. Lack of teachers, infrastructure and resources contributes to this challenge. Open schooling has emerged as a viable alternative to supplement and complement secondary education. Not only is this more flexible and cost-effective, but open schooling offers both academic and skills-based curricula. COL has been promoting this approach across the Commonwealth.

The new approach to open schooling at COL is more holistic and focuses on the training of teachers in eLearning, using OER, improving the management of open schools and supporting the use of appropriate technologies in teaching and learning. This involves integrating the open schooling approach into mainstream schools to enable many out-of-school youths to access formal education.

#### Activities

In 2017, the ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia signed agreements to integrate open schooling in their education systems. The Open Schooling initiative has also been working with partners to follow up on the outcomes of COL-supported programmes through research studies, and to promote peer auditing for quality assurance. Another important activity is the strengthening of the the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association, through increased member engagement and social media presence.

### TEACHER EDUCATION

#### Overview

The Teacher Education initiative works with governments, teacher education institutions, teachers and other stakeholders to improve the preparation and development of both teachers and teacher educators. The ultimate beneficiary of teacher education efforts is the learner, through better learning outcomes. The initiative is evolving into a comprehensive package, the “Teacher Futures” model, to stimulate holistic development in school-based, in-service teacher training.





## Activities

Open Educational Resources for English Language Teaching, the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration, diagnostic tools for special needs education in the Caribbean, and capacity building for teacher educators were some of the major activities implemented. As a result, more than 500 teachers were trained in East Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Under the new “Teacher Futures” model, major projects have been launched in Kiribati, Nigeria, Seychelles and Sierra Leone.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

### Overview

The Higher Education initiative works with ministries of education and higher education institutions (HEIs) to increase equitable participation through the adoption of open and distance learning (ODL) policies, systems, models, quality assurance mechanisms and gender-responsive learning resources to address industry and national development needs.

### Activities

The Higher Education initiative provides a holistic model to help HEIs to increase access, enhance quality, integrate sustainability and improve the employability of graduates. The model was launched in Namibia and Zambia in 2017. The initiative continues to support the development of quality assurance policies, frameworks and systems at the institutional and national levels, as well as provide capacity building in ODL and materials development. Through this initiative, COL sponsors learners in legislative drafting and online course design programmes.

Additionally, in collaboration with Asia e University, COL organised a high-level round table of vice chancellors of universities in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific to share insights and experiences in leadership, quality, technology and best practices in higher education.

COL is collaborating with ten HEIs across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master’s in Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. At

the end of 2017, the cumulative student enrolment reached 30,000, of which more than 13,000 learners had already graduated.

## VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH

### Overview

Ministers of education directed COL to develop the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) to promote human resource development and strengthen tertiary institutions.



VUSSC is a consortium of 30 Member States that are collaborating to develop and deliver eLearning materials through their tertiary institutions in order to improve access to quality higher education.

### Activities

The number of learners enrolled in VUSSC-developed full-time courses and programmes continues to grow, with more than 1,800 learners in 23 institutions in 14 countries. A total of 64 new modules were either developed or adapted from existing OER to increase the number of available courses that participating institutions can use. The Transnational Qualifications Framework supports the mobility of students and qualifications across institutions and discipline areas.



## GIRLS INSPIRE

### Overview

GIRLS Inspire is a special project supported by the Governments of Australia and Canada. It aims to break the cycle of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) by increasing access to education and training for girls and women through open, distance and technology-based learning in select Commonwealth countries with a high prevalence of child marriage. It also aims to reach the unreached women and girls in remote rural locations.

### Activities

The GIRLS Inspire project has strengthened the organisational capacity of nine partners in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania. The project developed community awareness about the benefits of girls' education and the harmful impact of CEFM and reached about 72,000 community members in over 180 communities and villages. As a result, GIRLS Inspire has delivered 104 life skills and vocational skills training courses and created 237 safe learning environments for over 32,530 female participants, with over 6,029 successfully transitioning to employment and income opportunities. The project contributed to the prevention of child marriages for 447 girls in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Pakistan.

## Skills

The Skills sector works to improve learning for livelihoods across all Commonwealth regions. Taking both top-down and bottom-up approaches, initiatives within the Skills sector engage with governments,

educational institutions, civil society and community-based organisations to develop policies, capacities and courses that support employability, entrepreneurship and empowerment. COL's interventions are implemented in both formal and non-formal learning settings by mainstreaming holistic models that demonstrate the pathway along the social value chain from learning to development. Its activities are further strengthened through the "OER for Skills Development" project supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

## LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

### Overview

The L3F initiative aims to establish an ICT/ODL-based system for continuous learning among marginalised farming communities, particularly women, leading to improved knowledge, empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. The model embodies a multidimensional approach to human resource development that holistically integrates social capital, financial capital and human capital to spiral a self-sustaining and self-replicating development process.

### Activities

The focus during this triennium has been upscaling L3F to macro institutions and strengthening existing partner initiatives to evolve into self-sustaining



business enterprises, with special attention given to the Pacific and Caribbean regions. L3F created quality learning opportunities for over 370,000 individuals throughout the Commonwealth, leading to higher levels of socio-economic empowerment as well as the ability to run successful business enterprises and practice sustainable farming.

## TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

### Overview

The TEL initiative aims to encourage more institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for innovation and skills development. This will enable more governments and organisations to adopt policies and strategies for achieving speed and scale in learning opportunities.

### Activities

In co-operation with governments and partner institutions, TEL activities included: the development of national and institutional ICT in education and OER policies/strategies; the development of advanced ICT skills courses for employability; capacity building for course writers and curriculum designers; and implementing TEL in three institutions through a systematic approach of baseline study, policy development, technical advice and capacity building.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

### Overview

The TVSD initiative supports partners in all five Commonwealth regions to harness technology so as to increase access to improved quality skills training. COL builds capacity in both formal and non-formal skills training through flexible and blended approaches to achieve quality and scale.

### Activities

TVSD has been supporting partners to develop national and institutional open, distance and flexible learning policies, build capacity and support

eLearning course development. The results of these interventions are tracked through tracer studies carried out by partners. New skills training courses have been developed in the African, Caribbean and



Pacific regions, and more learners are gaining access to non-formal courses. To date, 557 teachers are integrating technology in their practice, and more than 41,000 learners across the Commonwealth have been reached. Training resources for the integration of sustainable development in technical/vocational education and training have been developed.

## OER FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

OER constitute a key priority in COL's Strategic Plan. COL has been actively working with UNESCO and like-minded organisations to implement the ten recommendations from the 2012 Paris OER Declaration. The long-term vision is that more institutions/organisations within the Commonwealth will develop and use OER-based courses and materials to give their citizens access to quality education and training for sustainable livelihoods. With additional funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, COL has strengthened its leadership in OER in this triennium through this project.

## Activities

The activities this year focused on OER policy development/implementation, capacity building and OER course development. Nine provincial OER policies were developed during a national workshop in Sri Lanka, and 20 provincial OER guidelines were developed for provinces in Botswana and Cameroon.



Activities have resulted in 649 policy makers being sensitised to OER, and 17 OER-based skills courses that were developed by partners. Moreover, the initiative has been supporting the development of OER courses in life skills and non-formal/informal OER learning materials for farming communities.

## Gender

### Overview

Gender as a cross-cutting theme aims to harness the potential of ODL to expand access to education and improve learning outcomes for girls/women and boys/men by integrating a gender perspective into ODL practice and delivery. The cross-cutting activities of the initiative focus on building capacity for gender mainstreaming among partners in both formal and non-formal education. COL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UN Women and is working with international partners to develop and implement holistic programmes aimed at addressing issues such as women's empowerment and boys' underperformance.

## Activities

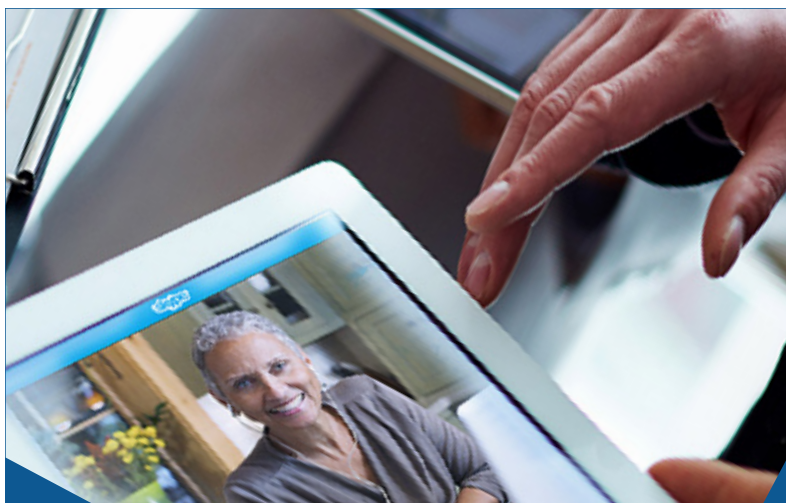
Emphasis was placed on assisting partner institutions with identifying gender gaps and finding ways to address these gaps, using COL's Institutional Gender Scorecard as the key tool for driving this process. Partners were also supported to develop gender-responsive policies and strategies for mainstreaming gender. A Commonwealth-wide study on the current situation of boys' underperformance was completed, and a new model to address the specific challenges and learning needs of at-risk boys was developed. A study was completed on the role of gender in co-operatives.

## Services

### ELEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS (ELIO)

#### Overview

eLIO provides online professional development courses to international organisations on a fee-for-service basis. eLIO has been customising and providing award-winning eLearning since 2006 to organisations such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, among others. This triennium, eLIO expanded its role by developing and offering its own courses and by pursuing externally funded projects.



## Activities

eLIO implemented its new Essential Skills for International Organisations programme. The first six courses were adapted from COL OER and were successfully marketed to the World Bank. Course delivery for international organisations resulted in a record number of 1,707 learners in 31 cohorts with a completion rate of more than 80%. COL entered into an agreement with



Women Deliver, an international NGO, to create an online version of its Young Leaders programme and to develop a massive open online course (MOOC) for its Deliver for Good campaign.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY (KM&T)

### Overview

The KM&T team supports COL programmes with innovations in mobile and learning technologies. Aptus is a multipurpose micro-server designed to enable access to digital learning materials of all kinds, even when connectivity to power or data networks is minimal or non-existent. It was developed at COL as a prototype of open-source hardware. Its current configuration supports the delivery of digital video streams to about 20 users simultaneously and can host a Moodle service as well. KM&T also supports a MOOC management system for institutions in developing countries, as well as MOOCs for the food and agriculture sector.

## Activities

Aptus was deployed by a team of researchers at the National University of Samoa to test for ease of use and overall learning experience. Results showed that it was rated very highly for both aspects. A more powerful version of Aptus was developed and has been deployed in Open Schooling and GIRLS Inspire activities in Mozambique as well as Trinidad and Tobago. Through the portal MOOC4DEV, institutions in Malta and Nigeria were supported to offer courses. MOOCs in agriculture, offered in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK), attracted over 13,000 learners from 62 countries, and a trial MOOC for senior secondary students had an enrolment of 54,150 learners. COL also facilitated a partnership between India and Seychelles for training in MOOCs and ICT.

## Regional Centres

### COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA

### Overview

In response to needs expressed by the Commonwealth countries of the Asian region for more effective utilisation of educational media resources, COL established the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in New Delhi. CEMCA works to devise



appropriate learning solutions that maintain a balance between the aspirations of its diverse stakeholders and available resources. It works in education and skills development, with a special focus on community media, particularly community radio.

## Activities

CEMCA worked with 46 institutions in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to improve the capacity to leverage ODL for increased access to learning. It helped HEIs in two countries to adopt OER and ODL policies. Similarly, technical and vocational institutions were supported to enhance their capacity to reach large numbers of learners through ICT and ODL. Stakeholders in community radio stations were trained in developing audio content related to women's health and nutrition. CEMCA supported India's Ministry of Human Resource Development to generate a discussion paper on OER policy.

## REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING

### Overview

In partnership with the National Open University of Nigeria, COL promotes ODL capacity building by supporting the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), in West Africa. The RETRIDOL mandate includes engaging in and supporting ODL research activities, as well as ODL capacity building, while serving as a centre of expertise for Nigeria and West Africa.

### Activities

RETRIDOL has conducted training in online facilitation and tutoring, as well as policy formulation for dual-mode universities. Its work plan was revised to strengthen ODL in dual-mode universities in West Africa, in alignment with COL's higher education model. Several workshops aimed at supporting dual-mode institutions were held.



## SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY – CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

### Overview

The Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) is supported by the Botswana Ministry of Education and hosted by the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (now Botswana Open University). The centre was established to increase the provision of quality distance education in Southern Africa, support research and undertake and promote training and development in ODL.

### Activities

SADC-CDE has been engaged in various capacity-building activities, including an online project management course and a Master of Education course through the Open University of Tanzania. SADC-CDE presented its draft strategic plan to COL and has launched courses on monitoring and evaluation and on eLearning. An online course on project management was completed by ODL practitioners from Botswana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. A new multilingual website with the three SADC languages (English, French and Portuguese) was launched. Through COL's technical assistance, the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning made a smooth transition to becoming the Botswana Open University, effective 1 December 2017.

## PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

The Pacific Centre for Open and Flexible Learning for Development (PACFOLD) is hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP) and is a “network of networks” to empower Pacific communities through lifelong learning. The centre’s priorities include advocacy and capacity building for flexible and open learning for sustainable development, as well as the development of national and regional ODL policies.

### Activities

During the 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum, stakeholders from the Pacific region discussed strategies to strengthen the role of PACFOLD in achieving learning for sustainable development. PACFOLD Learn, an online community for strengthening flexible and open learning, was launched. PACFOLD participated in several forums organised by the National University of Samoa, USP and the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc., a non-profit organisation in Samoa. An action plan for 2017 was also developed. PACFOLD launched an online course on flexible skills development, with 266 teachers from seven Pacific Commonwealth countries.

## COMMONWEALTH CENTRE OF CONNECTED LEARNING

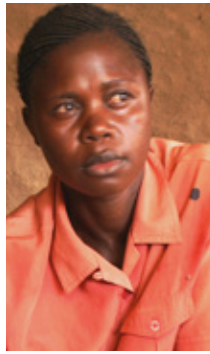
### Overview

COL serves in an advisory capacity on the International Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Centre of Connected Learning (CCCL), a Maltese foundation created in 2017, which facilitates connected learning in Commonwealth and European member states. This purpose resonates with COL’s interest in technology-enabled and connected learning.

### Activities

CCCL facilitated the development of an open access policy for the University of Malta that was formally approved in September 2017. The International Advisory Board (IAB) of CCCL, which is chaired by COL’s President and CEO, held its first meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Malta’s Minister for Education and Employment participated in the meeting as a special invitee. The IAB gave specific advice to CCCL in programme matters, the mobilisation of financial resources and the development of strategic partnerships.







# The Commonwealth of Learning



## AFRICA REGION

COL is actively engaged in 18 Commonwealth Member States across the continent of Africa. The region has a population of approximately 489 million people. Among the 18 Member States, Nigeria has the largest population, with about 173 million in 2013, while Seychelles has the smallest, with approximately 93,000. The populations of the other 16 countries are in the millions.

Almost all of these countries have made positive progress in their education systems in moving toward achieving universal primary education, and they are committed to continuing to improve their education systems under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

COL focuses on adding value to the countries' efforts to reach the SDGs, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions of Africa in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education include emphasis on quality and inclusive secondary and higher education and the strengthening of teacher development programmes. 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. These initiatives have been designed to achieve socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at lower economic and environmental costs.

COL's major regional initiatives in the African Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2018 are outlined below.

- The Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) operates in partnership with the Botswana

Ministry of Education and is hosted by the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (now Botswana Open University). It undertakes and promotes training and development in open and distance learning (ODL), supports research activities in ODL and increases the provision of quality distance education in Southern Africa. COL assisted the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning with transitioning into an open university (effective 1 December 2017) by providing technical advice, reviewing the institution's systems and supporting capacity building.

- In partnership with the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), COL promotes ODL capacity building by supporting the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), located in West Africa. RETRIDOL has been supporting West African higher education institutions in transitioning to dual-mode provision.
- Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) is an initiative that supports the economic improvement of small-scale farmers, who are primarily women. L3F focuses on the economic and social inclusion of farmers, training them in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and assisting them in gaining entrepreneurial skills. L3F is scaling up in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The initiative has contributed to strengthening food security among participating communities and households in these Member States.
- The Innovation in Vocational Education and Skills Training (COL-INVEST) Africa partnership aims to: i) improve the quality of technical and vocational education and training (TVET); ii) achieve better ICT infrastructure management; iii) integrate technology into teaching and learning;

iv) establish new organisational structures to achieve efficiency; v) increase access to skills training for people working in the informal sector so as to improve livelihoods; vi) impact the provision of training for the informal sector through the formal TVET system; and vii) incorporate gender mainstreaming. Institutions in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia are INVEST Africa partners.

- The GIRLS Inspire initiative focuses on girls' education and economic inclusion and works to provide viable alternatives to the early and forced marriages of young women. The initiative is being implemented in Mozambique and Tanzania, as well as countries across the Asia region, raising awareness in communities with a high prevalence of child, early and forced marriage, and providing skills development opportunities to girls and women, equipping them for sustainable livelihoods.
- The Commonwealth Open Schooling Association – African Chapter is a community of practice that supports the introduction and operation of open schooling in African countries of the Commonwealth.
- The Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) are flexible and modular programmes geared towards delivering high-quality learning and professional development opportunities in participating countries. The CEMBA/CEMPA programmes are designed for part-time study by busy working professionals, in response to the growing demand for post-graduate level education in business and public administration. The Kwame Nkrumah University

of Science and Technology, in Ghana, the Open University of Mauritius, Botswana Open University and NOUN offer the CEMBA/CEMPA.

- The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) supports the collaborative development and sharing of open educational resources (OER) to promote learning for sustainable development. Seven small African states – Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Swaziland – are VUSSC members. VUSSC provides resources for educators that include courses, guidebooks, toolkits and a Transnational Qualifications Framework.
- COL and Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs organise workshops to build the capacity of teacher educators and education practitioners in the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning. This annual initiative, under the Singapore Cooperation Programme, was held in Singapore in August 2017 and hosted 18 participants from ten Commonwealth countries, including partners from the Africa region.
- COL in collaboration with the University of Cape Town, South Africa has developed the conceptual framework and seven modules for the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme to build the capacities of teachers and learners to use digital skills for lifelong learning throughout the Commonwealth.
- The Africa OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for African delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World OER Congress, was held in March 2017 in Port Louis, Mauritius.





# Sierra Leone

## Key Facts

-  Joined Commonwealth: **1961**
-  Population: **6,092,000** (2013)
-  Primary enrolment: **99%**
- GDP: **0.5%** p.a. 1990–2013
- UN HDI world ranking: **183**
-  Official language: **English**
- Currency: **Leone**

## Geography

-  Area: **71,740 sq km**
-  Coastline: **402 km**
-  Capital city: **Freetown**
- Population density (per sq km): **85**

Public spending on education was three per cent of GDP in 2012. There are six years of compulsory education, starting at age six. Primary school comprises six years and secondary six, with two three-year cycles in each.

The principal tertiary institutions are Fourah Bay College, in Freetown, and Njala University, with campuses in Bo and Njala. These institutions, together with Milton Margai College of Education and Technology (Freetown), Eastern Polytechnic (main campus in Kenema) and other independent tertiary institutions, are all affiliated with the University of Sierra Leone. The country also has a number of teacher-training and technical/vocational institutions providing certificate and diploma courses. Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 59 per cent (2010).

SOURCE: <http://thecommonwealth.org/member-countries>

## COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Dr Unity Dow, Minister of Basic Education, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Botswana, is a member of the COL Board of Governors as regional representative for Africa.

## COL FOCAL POINT

The COL Focal Point for Sierra Leone is Ms Musu Gorvie, Deputy Director, Higher Education, Science and Technology, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

## Strategic Plan 2015–2021

As outlined in COL's Strategic Plan 2015–2021, COL works in two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. COL has identified five core strategies to achieve outcomes and impact: partnerships, capacity, materials, models and policy. In practice, most COL activities incorporate more than one of these strategies — in some cases, all five.

COL's work in Sierra Leone is primarily in the areas of teacher education and tertiary education.

## Education

### TEACHER EDUCATION

COL's Teacher Education initiative aims to improve the capacity of partner countries to deliver quality learning opportunities for sustainable development through innovative school-based, technology-supported teacher professional development programmes. Under its flagship programme, Teacher Futures, COL works with teacher education institutions, teachers and teacher communities towards scalable national and cross-national teacher development models for improved learning outcomes.

Freetown Teachers College requested support from COL to train junior secondary school teachers in order to improve the quality of learning in schools. A project design workshop took place in June 2017 with 21 participants, facilitated by a consultant provided by COL. A work plan for the implementation of an integrated in-service training programme was developed.

COL is currently providing support to the Freetown Teachers College to implement a school-based in-service teacher training programme for junior secondary school teachers in Sierra Leone, under COL's Teacher Futures programme. Through this programme, COL partners with teacher education institutions to adapt various technologies that support the professional development of teachers. In-service teachers can learn on the go and engage with peers in both local and international networks and communities of practice. During November–December 2017, a COL consultant conducted a baseline study of 13 junior secondary schools' information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructure, their e-readiness and teachers' capacity for eLearning. A survey administered as part of the study revealed that despite the lack of infrastructure, most teachers showed readiness for eLearning.

COL welcomed teacher educators from Njala University at a five-day training workshop on ICT in teaching and learning, held at the Singapore National Institute of Education in May 2016. The training supported teacher-educators in integrating ICT into their programmes as a key strategy to improve quality in education.

## Skills

### TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING

Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL), a massive open online course (MOOC) for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education developed in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, was offered in January–February 2017 and November–December 2017. Three teachers from Sierra Leone participated in both courses.

## Regional Centre

### REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING

COL and the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) work collaboratively to support the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL). The RETRIDOL mandate includes engaging in and supporting open and distance learning (ODL) research activities, addressing capacity-building needs in ODL and serving as a centre for expertise in ODL for Nigeria and West Africa.

## 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 partnerships support COL's work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partnerships 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's partners in Sierra Leone include:

- Freetown Teachers College
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

## Special Events

### 2<sup>ND</sup> WORLD OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES CONGRESS

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The 2017 Ljubljana OER Action Plan provides 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.

The African Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mr Sahr Fillie, Principal of Freetown Teachers College, attended.

### **8<sup>TH</sup> PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF8)**

Under the theme “Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development,” PCF8 brought together the best minds in ODL to discuss issues of common interest, exchange ideas and explore best practices, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in

November 2016. COL supported the attendance of Kaprie J. G. Thoronka from Sierra Leone at PCF8.

A key outcome of PCF8 was the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which presents a set of ten recommendations for governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society related to lifelong learning, access and equity, teacher education, OER and quality. It will be brought to the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting for further consideration and implementation.

## Looking Ahead: 2021

COL is committed to promoting equitable access to quality lifelong learning for all – believing, in effect, that access to learning opportunities will lead to progress in achieving:

- improved sustainable livelihoods;
- increased and equitable access to and use of quality learning opportunities; and
- improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL.

COL looks forward to working with Sierra Leone to address its specific challenges while also supporting broader efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and provide Commonwealth citizens with greater access to quality education and training through open, distance and technology-enabled learning.



# Publications and Resources

COL has issued a number of publications and resources over the past three years, including the following:

*A Baseline Study on Technology-Enabled Learning in the African and Mediterranean Countries of the Commonwealth: Report*, published in September 2015, examines the current status of technology-enabled learning in the African and Mediterranean countries of the Commonwealth, including a country profile for Sierra Leone.

*Gender Profile: Sierra Leone* is part of a series that provides country-specific compilations of gender-related data for a number of indicators, including health, education, economic participation and more.

*Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of MOOCs* provides guidance to four main stakeholder groups: governments, MOOC providers, learners and accreditation agencies. These guidelines are designed to support decision-making about the sorts of quality measures that are appropriate in different contexts.

*Institutional Scorecard for Gender Mainstreaming* is a self-assessment tool that can help with ongoing audits of an organisation's policies and strategies to promote a gender-balanced workplace culture. This comprehensive and systematic tool can be used by all institutions to develop or improve their gender-responsive policies and mechanisms.

*Making Sense of MOOCs: A Guide for Policy-Makers in Developing Countries* is a COL–UNESCO publication designed to raise the general awareness of policy makers in developing countries about how MOOCs might address their concerns and priorities, particularly in terms of access to affordable quality higher education and the preparation of secondary school leavers for academic as well as vocational education and training.

*Measuring Empowerment Toolkit: Using the Commonwealth of Learning's Three-Dimensional Empowerment Framework* is a practical toolkit intended for development practitioners, government officials, academics, monitoring and evaluation specialists, and researchers who are interested in measuring empowerment. It enables practitioners to develop context-appropriate survey instruments to measure empowerment based on COL's Three-Dimensional Empowerment Framework.

*Open Educational Resources: Global Report 2017*, published by COL in 2017 in preparation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World OER Congress, provides state-of-the-art information in the field of OER globally by analysing the responses of representatives of 102 governments and over 600 stakeholders. This authoritative source on the status of OER in the world was produced with the support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The report focuses on mainstreaming OER to achieve SDG4.

*Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016* is the result of a study conducted as part of COL's OER for Skills Development project, supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The objective of the study was to collect baseline data from Commonwealth institutions with respect to the development, use and reuse of OER.

*Open Educational Resources: Policy, Costs and Transformation*, published with UNESCO in 2016, presents 15 case studies contributed by 29 OER researchers and policy makers from 15 countries across six continents and examines the implementation of the 2012 OER Paris Declaration through the thematic lenses of policy, costs and transformation.

*Referencing Tool for the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)* is intended for authorities responsible for quality assurance and for institutions wanting to register their programmes/qualifications on the TQF. Its objective is to facilitate credit transfer and learners' mobility within VUSSC partner countries, comparing qualifications frameworks and establishing relationships between them.

*Using ICTs and Blended Learning in Transforming TVET* (in the Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning series) is a COL–UNESCO 2017 publication presenting a series of case studies from around the world that highlight the use and role of ICT in the transformation of technical and vocational education and training.

For all COL publications, go to: <http://oasis.col.org>.





8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 27-30 November 2016

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## The 2016 Kuala Lumpur Declaration

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### Preamble

The 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8), co-organised by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Open University Malaysia (OUM) in Kuala Lumpur from 27-30 November 2016,

*Mindful of relevant international statements including:*

The Charter of the Commonwealth 2013, which recognises the necessity of affordable education for sustainable development;

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4 of ensuring *“inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”*;

UNESCO’s Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, Education 2030, which sets as target 4.3 that *“by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”* and elaborates that *‘a well-established, properly regulated tertiary education system supported by technology, open educational resources and distance education can increase access, equity, quality and relevance’* (item 43); and

The 2012 UNESCO-COL Paris Declaration on Open Educational Resources (OER) which advocates that States *“facilitate enabling environments for use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)”*.



- A. Recommends that governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society:
1. **Promote lifelong learning** through the widespread availability of appropriate technologies and multilingual opportunities in formal, non-formal and informal learning which are open to people, places, methods and ideas;
  2. **Reinforce market-driven skills development using open and distance learning (ODL) and blended and flexible learning** in collaboration with education, industry, agriculture and service sectors to empower and ensure sustainable livelihoods for all;
  3. **Encourage demand driven and context-specific research and innovation in technology** to promote access, equity and lifelong learning;
  4. **Institutionalise a quality culture** in ODL systems focusing on learners' learning outcomes;
  5. **Support teacher education and in-service teacher training** with ODL and blended and flexible learning, and increase the supply of qualified teachers;
  6. **Mainstream the use of OER** by developing strategies and policies at governmental and institutional levels to enhance quality while potentially reducing the cost of education;
  7. **Emphasise the key role of leadership** in strengthening learner-centred ODL which can widen access, enhance equity and gain respectability;
  8. **Ensure that the education of women and girls** through ODL is given utmost importance with a targeted approach, in support of SDG 5;
  9. **Strengthen ODL** that is inclusive and accessible to all persons with disabilities; and
  10. **Reinforce commitment to small island developing states and small states** in their efforts to advance education and learning with ODL, in tackling their particular economic, energy and climate change challenges, and in building their resilience for the future.
- B. Brings the above recommendations to the next Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEEM) and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) for further consideration and implementation.

Kuala Lumpur, 30 November 2016

## 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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