



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



COL in the Commonwealth

• NAURU | 2015–2021

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2015–2021



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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.



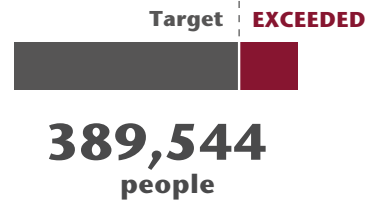
Professor Asha S. Kanwar
President and Chief Executive Officer
Commonwealth of Learning

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.

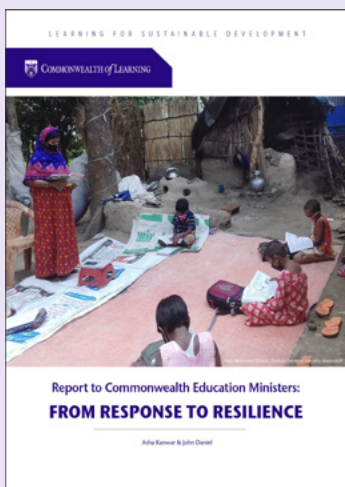
COL's response to COVID-19

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.

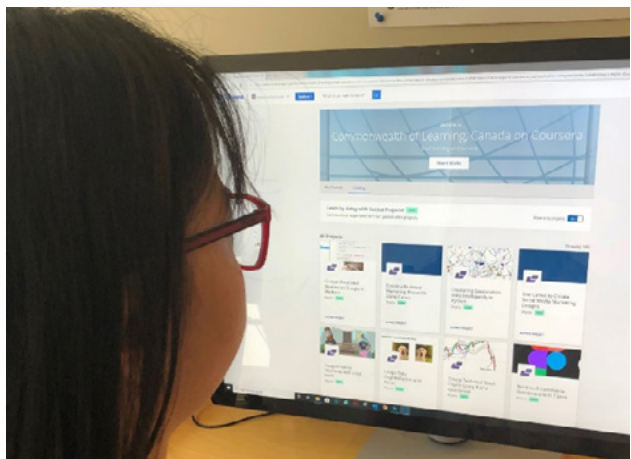
Outcomes

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 PACIFIC

Open, online and distance learning (ODL) has always played a key role in providing access to education to remote and rural students and disadvantaged groups in the Pacific. In fact, it could be argued that without ODL, the levels of educational attainment in this region would be much lower. However, there is work to be done, as some countries in the region still have infrastructure problems, such as insufficient Internet connectivity and availability, which directly impact access to online and distance learning. For example, while only about 50% of the global population has access to the Internet, the percentage is even lower in the Pacific (33%). Access to mobile subscriptions is higher and stands at 85.5% in the Pacific, presenting an opportunity to build a system of teaching and learning that is cloud based and mobile friendly, supported with other affordable and accessible technologies (*Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience 2020*).

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 Pacific 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. 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.

On 6 September 2018, the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, announced a package of NZ\$ 9 million to make it easier for Pacific students to access education.

As part of the package, the Prime Minister also announced a partnership with USP and COL to expand open, distance and flexible learning opportunities at the secondary and tertiary levels. "We are pleased to be able to draw on the considerable expertise of the University of the South Pacific and the Commonwealth of Learning to increase access to high-quality secondary and tertiary education in the Pacific," Ardern said.

The Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), based in Fiji, is a centre for capacity building in ODL in the region. COL and the University of the South Pacific (USP) work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, which is hosted by USP. The centre's priorities include: advocacy and capacity building for flexible and open learning for sustainable development; the development of regional and national policies on open, distance and flexible learning; and research in flexible and open learning.



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 Pacific Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2020 are outlined below.

- More than 1,500 learners signed up for a MOOC titled *Climate Change and Pacific Islands*, developed by COL in partnership with USP and UNESCO and made available to learners globally in August–October 2015. Approximately 70% of participants were from countries in the Pacific.
- An eLearning workshop co-facilitated by COL, on eLearning pedagogies and materials development using ODL and OER, was held in May 2016 at USP and attended by participants from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.
- A regional workshop for participants from nine Pacific countries, on OER course design for TVET, was held in June 2017 in Suva, Fiji. The workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute at USP and aimed to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states. Twenty-six TVET educators from 12 partner institutions attended.



- COL supported a workshop organised at USP in May 2017 to enable the university to develop an OER policy. The two-day workshop was attended

by 28 staff members from various faculties and disciplines.

- A three-day *OER Integration in Courses* workshop was held at USP in August 2017. This was organised by the Centre for Flexible Learning, USP, as a follow-up to the OER policy developed in May 2017. USP has incentivised OER integration in its courses, with 30 teachers to date supported in this project.
- The Pacific OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for delegates to learn more about OER in the lead up to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2017.



- COL's Aplus, a low-cost, off-grid, offline device that allows teachers to create a classroom without walls, has undergone trials at local institutions in Fiji and is being used in Fiji, Kiribati and Samoa. A total of 20 devices have also been shipped to Vanuatu and another 40 devices were delivered to Kiribati. Shortly after cyclone Gita hit Tonga in February 2018, 25 Aplus devices were deployed to help restore classroom teaching in the country's schools and colleges.
- The Pacific regional meeting of the COL Focal Points took place on 16 and 17 February 2018 in Nadi, Fiji 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. On 26 May 2020, COL held online consultations with Focal Points from the Pacific as part of the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).



- *The Capacity-Building Workshop on Professionalising Youth Workers* was held at USP's Laucala Campus, in Suva, in June 2019. There were 37 participants from eight Pacific island countries present. Based on outputs from this engagement, COL partnered with Lakehead University, Canada, to develop a series of six MOOCs for Youth Work in the Pacific. The first module was delivered in the last quarter of 2020 with 331 learners.
- COL, in partnership with USP and New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, commissioned a situational analysis to inform the implementation of open, distance and flexible learning in the Pacific. The analyses were presented and deliberated over in stakeholder meetings, including regional consultations in Fiji, and in the UK at PCF9, as well as national consultations in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Kiribati. These consultations (organised in July–October 2019) have informed COL's response to Member States in the Pacific who have requested support for online and distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between COL and USP was signed in December 2020 to support PACFOLD in building capacity in open, distance and flexible learning and TEL within the region. This includes higher education, secondary schooling, teacher education, and technical and vocational skills development and activities that will align with the strategic plans of both COL and USP.
- COL and PACFOLD ran a series of activities to sensitise constituents to TEL in Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga. In particular, participants were encouraged to employ TEL for course development and to use COL's Aptus device.
- COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. In 2018–2020, COL supported 52 students from Pacific island countries to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting.
- The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is being implemented in Kiribati. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice as well as school-based training. A total of 334 teachers and teacher educators have been reached.
- In response to a request from the Ministry of Education in Fiji for support for teachers engaged in remote teaching due to school closures, COL, in partnership with PACFOLD, developed and implemented a short course called *OER for Online Learning: An Introduction*. The course reached over 820 teachers in most of the Pacific island countries.
- 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), *OER for Online Learning* and *Teaching Mathematics with Technology*, among others. These have attracted over 290 participants from nine countries in the Pacific.
- COL supported Fiji National University to build teacher capacity in problem-based learning and in facilitating online and blended learning, leading to the development of 33 blended courses. COL supported the National University of Samoa to develop and implement a technology-enabled learning policy.

A research report on student learning and teacher pedagogical transformation at the National University of Samoa after the adoption of a technology-enabled learning framework and a series of capacity-building workshops with COL's support indicated that blended learning offered the instructors an opportunity to cater to different learning styles. As a result of COL's interventions, students were more engaged, contributed more, and had access to all the course resources.

– The Impact of Technology-Enabled Learning Implementation at the National University of Samoa

- With COL's assistance, a TEL policy has been developed at the University of Papua New Guinea, and teachers have increased their capacity to integrate TEL in teaching and learning.
- In Tonga, COL developed courses aimed to improve the financial inclusion of farming communities, particularly women, in the economy.
- COL has been working in PNG and Solomon Islands to leverage ICT to provide timely and relevant information about available social services, especially for women's safety.
- Fiji National University, the National University of Samoa, the University of Papua New Guinea, USP, the Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand, the OERu network in New Zealand and the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand are all members of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19 (OpenDoor).



- Dame Carol Kidu (PNG), Letuimanu'asina Dr Emma Kruse Va'ai (Samoa), Dr Caroline Seelig (New Zealand) and Professor Belinda Tynan (Australia) are mentors in COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen programme, aimed at developing the leadership potential of women and girls in the Commonwealth.
- More than 600 learners from the Pacific 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. They earned over 450 certificates, boosting their employability in the face of COVID-19.
- A video-on-demand platform, www.pacificregionalchannel.org, with over 800 curated OER targeting local curriculum needs, was launched in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island states. Fiji, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga have already joined the initiative.



- With funding from New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, COL launched the Pacific Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning. The five-year project aims to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the Pacific education sector through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology, and it is implemented in partnership with PACFOLD.



Introduction

Nauru (population: 12,581 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 93.7% (2016) and a secondary school completion rate of 71.8% (2016). Nauru is a member of the regional [University of the South Pacific \(USP\)](#), which supports public efforts to increase access to affordable and relevant tertiary educational services within the region. The USP campus in Nauru offers courses for primary teacher education, and the [Nauru Vocational Training Centre](#) offers formal classes in technical skills.

Internet connectivity is available to 62% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 95 (2017) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Nauru. The Nauru [National Sustainable Development Strategy 2005–2025](#) includes goals to develop an ICT sector delivering a range of services that are responsive to changes in technology, and plans to provide all libraries with ICT facilities.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. Shortly after the pandemic struck, USP Nauru campus, in partnership with COL and the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development offered an [online course to support teachers with teaching online](#).

COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Minister of Education and Training, Kingdom of Tonga, represents the Pacific Region on COL’s Board of Governors.

COL FOCAL POINT

Mrs Darrina Kun, Secretary for Education and Training, Department of Education, is COL’s Focal Point in Nauru.





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

COL's current work in Nauru is primarily in the area of technical and vocational skills development. Nauru is a member of the Virtual University for Small States of

the Commonwealth. Learners from Nauru have also benefited from COL's open online courses and other resources.



Education Sector Overview

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 so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

COL aims to promote and enrich national capacities in good governance. Through the School of Law at USP, COL has supported one student from Nauru to complete the Professional Diploma in Legislative Drafting.

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



Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

In June 2017 in Suva, Fiji, COL welcomed participants from nine Pacific countries to a regional workshop on open educational resources (OER) course design for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Designed to address the needs and priorities of the Pacific island states, the four-day workshop was hosted by the Pacific Technical and Further Education Institute at USP and aimed to strengthen TVET in the region through the use of OER. Twenty-six TVET educators from 12 partner institutions attended, including Ruka Reweru from Nauru Secondary School and Floria Detabene from the Department of Education.

In December 2018, COL's Education Specialist: TVSD held meetings with key stakeholders in Nauru, including the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, to learn about the country's skills training needs and identify potential projects for TVSD's Skills in Demand model.

Nauru's Department of Education and Department of Commerce, Industry and Environment agreed that the priority project would be using mobile learning to supplement the Taiwan Technical Mission project – helping Nauruans learn to grow their own kitchen gardens, reducing Nauru's dependence on expensive, imported fresh food and improving people's diets. COL has facilitated a participatory design process to gather information on the needs, user requirements and perspectives around a proposed mobile app



Calling the COL–Coursera initiative “a lifeline” for those affected by the pandemic, the Honourable Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister of Education, Nauru said it has contributed to Nauru’s aspirations of achieving inclusive and equitable access to quality education for all.

for encouraging community behaviour change and building gardening skills. COL also worked with the Taiwanese Technical Mission (TTM) to develop technical content for the app, funded its development, and trained Nauruan government officials and TTM

staff to be able to use and maintain the app. The formal launch is planned in the first half of 2021.

A total of 52 learners from Nauru have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, supported by the Ministry of Education, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. On 17 March 2021, COL and Coursera hosted a virtual convocation to celebrate the achievements of 127 learners from the Pacific who had earned certificates through this initiative, including from Nauru. The Honourable Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister of Education, gave a special address at the event.

Skills development to boost Nauru’s food security

In 2019–2020, COL facilitated a series of in-country workshops to explore the design, technology options and functionalities of an app that will share information on how to grow plants effectively, offer cooking tips and recipes, and enable local extension officers to answer questions from the community of backyard farmers. According to Marissa Cook, Director of the Department of Agriculture, the workshops reached a wide range of stakeholders, and everyone is looking forward to the app.

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 Nauru were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

GENDER

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



REGIONAL CENTRE

THE PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT (PACFOLD)

COL and USP in Fiji work collaboratively in supporting PACFOLD, and Nauru is one of the key beneficiaries.

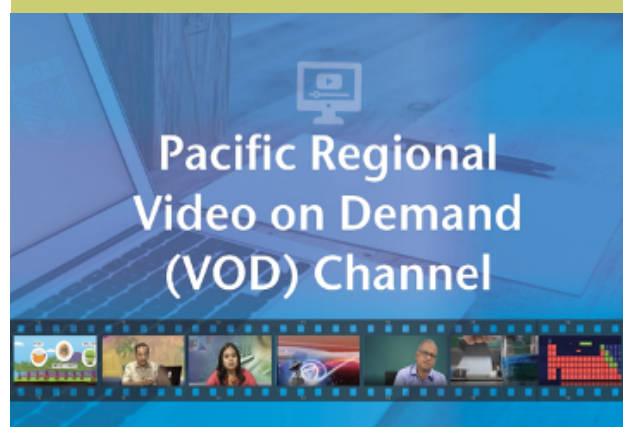
The online community PACFOLD Learn was launched in early 2017. It is a joint endeavour of COL, USP and James Cook University and serves as an online space for sharing and collaboration in learning for sustainable development through flexible, technology-based approaches. In 2017, PACFOLD offered an online *Flexible Skills Development* course, attracting participants from across the region.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths in the South Pacific region, PACFOLD created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Nauru.

In November 2020, PACFOLD launched *Engaging Pacific Youth in their Communities*, a series of micro-courses developed for those who wish to support youths in taking meaningful action in their communities. It brought together 295 participants from 20 countries, including Nauru.

From August to December 2020, PACFOLD, with support from the Regional Centres (RCs) and Open/Innovative Schooling initiatives at COL, conducted a study on the status of out-of-school children in the Pacific. Nauru filled out a comprehensive survey, which was supported with desk research and interviews with some of the country participants. The publication *Out-of-School Children: A Contemporary View from the Pacific Island Countries of the Commonwealth* was released in 2021.

The [Pacific Regional Channel](#) video-on-demand platform was established in response to a request from partners in the Pacific island Member States. Fiji, Nauru, Samoa and Tonga have already joined the initiative. Over 800 OER, carefully curated from worldwide OER repositories and targeting the countries' specific curriculum needs, populate the platform, which has the capacity to accommodate requirements from other states as well. At an online ceremony in November 2020, COL was joined by the Honourable Rosy Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji, Mr Richard-Hyde Menke, Deputy Minister for Education, Nauru, and the Honourable Loau Keneti Sio, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, Samoa, all of whom delivered special remarks at the platform's launch.



From October to November 2020, PACFOLD and the RC initiative conducted a study on the status of television broadcasting in the Pacific. Nauru filled out a comprehensive survey, and a report on this work will be published in 2021.

Special Events and Activities

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL's Focal Points from the Pacific met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in February 2018 in Nadi,

Fiji, where the late Dr Maria Gaiyabu, Secretary for Education, Department of Education, represented Nauru. Ms Darrina Kun, Secretary for Education, Department of Education, participated in the virtual meeting held in May 2020.

COL'S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

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

Participants from Nauru benefited from the June 2020 offering of the *Using Open Educational Resources for*

Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL) MOOC and the online course on planning family and intergenerational literacy and learning, offered by COL in partnership with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning in October–November 2020.

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 Nauru include:

- Department of Education
- Department of Commerce, Industry and Enterprise
- Taiwanese Technical Mission
- USP Nauru Campus

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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