



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **AFRICA**



Malawi

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

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

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

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

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

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth, particularly in the small states in Africa (Botswana, The Gambia, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles) and has four initiatives: Open Schooling; Teacher Education; Higher Education and the Virtual University for Small States of The Commonwealth (VUSSC).

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

Malawi is a land-locked country in southeast Africa with a largely rural population of over 20 million ([World Bank](#), 2022).

COL's work in Malawi is in the areas of higher education, open schooling, and GIRLS inspire - gender equality and women's empowerment through skills development for livelihoods and benefits from programmes offered by COL's regional centre, the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE). Learners from Malawi are also participating in COL's free, open online courses and benefitting from other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Malawi include:

- Ministry of Education
- Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI)
- Concerned Youth Organisation (CYO)
- Malawi College of Distance Education
- Mzuzu University
- University of Malawi (UNIMA)

KEY CONTACTS

COL FOCAL POINT

Dr Joshua Valeta

Director

Open and Distance Education
Ministry of Education

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Ministry of Education developed a national policy on ICT in Education that also includes OER, with COL support.
- 3,907 women and girls in Malawi have been trained

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

COL is supporting Malawi for the provision of open schooling. The Ministry of Education held a Joint Sector Review Meeting (JSRM) in November 2022, under the theme 'Transforming Education for Accelerated Human Development Towards Achieving Malawi 2063' where COL's Education Specialist: Open Schooling participated and followed up progress to date. COL also facilitated a workshop with the Malawi College of Distance Education and Ministry staff, which involved a thorough review of work completed, in-process and planned, a review of the policy work currently in process and discussions related to promoting open schooling for girls plus open course and content development.

A video documentary on changing discriminatory social norms was developed for policymakers. Sensitisation and training have been provided to 226 policymakers and senior officials in Gender Equality (GE) and prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV) to increase awareness and promote effective policies and strategies to address these issues.

COL supported the Ministry of Education in developing a national policy on ICT in Education that also includes OER. [Feb 2023]

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

UNIMA is implementing COL's Institutional Employability Framework.

15 schools that have been piloting the use of Aptus to access school-based OER were visited by the Malawi College of Distance Education to monitor enrolment and implementation in early 2022. COL's innovation, Aptus, is a low-cost device that allows educators and learners to connect to digital learning platforms and content without the need for grid electricity or Internet access.

A COL-supported workshop on curriculum mapping and development of open textbooks was held at the Malawi College of Distance Education, which was attended by 44 (27M/17F) course developers in late 2022.

Teachers from Malawi have participated in the COL MOOC on cybersecurity training for teachers.

GIRLS Inspire supports its partners with capacity building in various areas. Activities include:

- monitoring and coordination meetings conducted with 12 District Implementation Team members to review progress and discuss achievements.
- Prior to PCF10, a GIRLS Inspire pre-conference workshop took place with 21 (9m, 12f) participants from 10 countries (Bangladesh, Canada, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda), 15 attended in person and six joined online. The workshop's objective was to develop a Strategy for Digitization of Learning Resources focusing on Climate and Environmentally Responsive Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security through a collective discussion on: 1) Improving learning resources using COL's quality standards and aligning it to climate change and environmental protection; 2) Digitisation of the improved learning resources.; 3) Scaling up the use of digitised learning resources for sustainable livelihood and food security. [Sep 2022]

COL's **Skills for Work initiative**, in collaboration with the Kenya Technical Trainers College (KTTC), held a regional workshop on the use of virtual labs in TVET for practitioners from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia that was held in July 2022. It provided 29 teachers with the necessary skills to incorporate internet-based experimentation in their practice. Learners in science and engineering will have remote access to a real-life simulation-based workshop environment providing them with a deep sense of involvement.

REGIONAL CENTRE: SADC-CDE

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

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

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

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

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

COL's GIRLS Inspire initiative is operational in Malawi and is supporting both the Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI) and Concerned Youth Organisation (CYO) in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through skills development for livelihoods and community sensitisation. To date, a total of 3,907 women and girls have been trained; 161 have accessed financial resources such as loans; 25 have accessed internship opportunities; and 10,557 Community members have been reached through advocacy events conducted. Activities include:

- 105 community representatives trained on CERADI's gender policy conducted in 3 villages.
- 45 males trained from three traditional authorities in GE and prevention of GBV to provide them with skills and knowledge to be champions for women's empowerment.
- 12 community sessions on GE and GBV were conducted, including four social accountability groups that were formed for citizens to come together and discuss issues that are affecting their livelihoods.
- 615 (115M, 500F) women/men, boys/girls trained in the construction of fixed low-cost stoves.
- 30 thirty-minute radio programs on Mudziwathu Radio and 60 short messages on mobile devices developed and disseminated.
- 25 (14M, 11F) learners linked to internship and employment opportunities with industry and private employers.
- 790 (365 male and 424 female) trained in livelihoods and life skills.
- 127 (32m, 95f) learners accessed credit from institutional services through saving schemes created or through social cash transfers for school dropouts.
- CYO supported 75 girls and 22 boys with scholastic materials such as exercise books and pens.
- CERADI organised an engagement meeting between financial institutions and women and girls from marginalised communities; 20 (4M/16F) learners were connected to financial institutions.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Three delegates from Malawi registered for the **Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10)**, the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14-16 September 2022. Two were sponsored by COL. They included Harvey Chimaliro, Executive Director, CYO; Henry Gwede, Malawi College of Distance Education and Bright Lazarus Singini, Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI).

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

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

Practical Guide for WITED Chapters and Individual Champions for Increasing Girls' and Women's Participation in STEM-TVET (Ghana, Malawi, Kenya, The Gambia) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4001>

Social Return on Investment Analysis of Support from the Commonwealth of Learning for the Open and Innovative Schooling Model (Belize, Malawi, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Zambia) <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3934>

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



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