

COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING



Programme Achievement 2024–25



LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Introduction

With the aim of driving change by building national resilience, strengthening institutions, and enhancing lives and livelihoods through a broad range of initiatives and projects, COL continues to make strong progress toward meeting — and in some cases surpassing — strategic targets. As it concludes the fourth year of its six-year plan, COL has adapted to a Mid-Term Evaluation and amended the programme of work to fit new requirements and Member priorities. We have reviewed and reset some initiative programmes of

work and have introduced new methods to allow us to ask some challenging new questions and drive a faster and more cost-effective transformation of equitable, quality learning in the Commonwealth.

Strong results continue to be accomplished through i) harnessing the potential of innovative learning solutions and new technologies, ii) building on the foundations of existing strengths, iii) careful deployment of available resources and iv) building sustainable joint capacity with our partners in every part of the Commonwealth.

Delivering on strategy

In 2024–25, COL significantly expanded its portfolio through a series of strategic, high-impact collaborative projects designed to “break boundaries” and to advance equity, quality, and relevance in education across the Commonwealth. These programmes reflect COL’s deep commitment to co-creating solutions with national partners, aligning innovation with local priorities, and scaling digital transformation to meet emerging global challenges.

Among the standout new work initiated this year is the Commonwealth Credit Transfer Framework for Micro-credentials, a collaborative undertaking to standardise the recognition and portability of micro-credentials across borders — helping learners accumulate stackable, job-relevant credentials in an increasingly mobile and technology-driven world.

COL has also launched “Beyond Numbers”, a cross-country initiative aimed at addressing the acute shortage of qualified teachers in sub-Saharan Africa. By harnessing open and distance learning (ODL) and digitalisation, this project supports scalable, inclusive professional development while promoting gender equity and context-sensitive training models.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence development, COL is moving with caution to ensure we invest frugally and with care

in this challenging space in a way that our Members can actually use for real benefit. One pioneering pilot project using AI is “Teacher-in-the-Loop AI”, a human-centered approach to generative AI integration. This project equips teachers and trainers to co-create and adapt OER aligned with national curricula, maintaining educator agency while expanding instructional capacity. A sub-component, “Trainer-in-the-Loop AI”, specifically targets technical and vocational education and training (TVET) instructors — fostering innovation in skills-based education and workforce development.

Building on insights from implementation in the African Commonwealth region, COL launched the “Graduate Employability” project in India, partnering with 17 State Open Universities to bridge the gap between higher education and workforce needs. The project supports curriculum alignment, industry engagement, and career services to enhance graduates’ employability and strengthen institutional capacity for skills-focused education.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment continued to be an important priority area for COL. This year, COL developed a comprehensive Gender Strategy and a Gender Action Plan through extensive stakeholder engagement. Further, building the bridge between formal and non-formal, COL made definite



strides towards institutionalisation of its community-based approaches by converting participatory community-based approaches for gender-inclusive, equity-focused skills education for marginalised women and girls into lifelong courses through partnerships with universities.

Working through the Global Affairs Canada (GAC)-supported “Empowering Women and Girls (EWG)” project, COL advanced the agenda by deepening its approaches for livelihood-based skills training for women and girls and institutionalising them through collaboration with local institutions and catalysing calibrated exchange of knowledge for partners and other key stakeholders. The first “Outcome Monitoring” report affirmed the positive movements towards the empowerment goals in five countries across Africa and Asia.

COL works through both formal and non-formal approaches for skills education. While continuing to strengthen agricultural livelihoods through digital learning, institutional partnerships, and gender-inclusive training to equip farmers with practical skills in some countries, COL started a process of reflection, research and evaluation in a few others to be able to consolidate and decide on a new direction after implementing the programme for nearly two decades. Similarly, COL continued to support creation of training opportunities for young boys and men not in education or employment in selected Caribbean countries but also started a process of evidence-building and opinion-making for supporting an institutional solution to the issue of boys’ disengagement with education in certain regions.

In the area of formal skills education, COL continued to build the resilience of TVET systems across the Commonwealth countries through a policy and collaborative practice approach in developing and overseeing the implementation of Open TVET, focusing on blended learning.

Through a combination of new and ongoing initiatives, COL continues to deliver on its strategic priorities by fostering innovation, inclusion, and resilience in learning systems across the Commonwealth.

Whether by supporting policy development, building institutional capacity, raising awareness, or co-creating open educational resources, COL’s collaborative approach ensures that solutions are tailored, scalable, and responsive to local needs. These efforts underscore COL’s unique value as a partner of choice—one that bridges vision with action and opportunity with impact. As we move forward, the projects outlined in the following pages reflect not only our achievements to date, but our unwavering commitment to learning as a driver of sustainable development.

Building national resilience

COL delivers national resilience by enabling governments to support change at a national level to increase resilience in challenging times. At the highest level of impact, working directly with a government to address their national priorities offers an opportunity for the most significant and most sustained change. Government policy and regulation can create, nurture and assure quality in national institutions, driving valuable ‘open’ behaviour.

Governments who work with COL on training and upskilling themselves in new methods can respond more effectively to the changing world. COL supports government and national regulatory staff in updating good governance, aligning to their national priorities.

This year, COL has helped create 10 policies and strategies with 9 governments of the Commonwealth. In a historical context, that’s now 74, working directly with 33 governments over the last 4 years. We have directly supported over 1,200 officials and staff in the governments of 18 countries through training measures connected to the open learning agenda. In context that’s now over 8,300 staff in 35 countries over the last 4 years.

In response to a request from the Chief Executive Officer of the Maldives Qualifications Authority, Ministry of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development, COL conducted a review of their



national e-learning and programme accreditation guidelines and submitted recommendations for considered integration into their National Proctoring System for Online Examinations.

In The Gambia, COL supported the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to implement the ODL programme at the In-Service Education Training Unit. A draft of the “Open, Distance and Technology-Enhanced Learning Policy for In-Service Education and Training of Basic and Secondary Teachers” was validated in September 2024. The National “Quality Assurance Standard for ODL Institutions in The Gambia” and “Quality Assurance Standard for ODL Programmes in The Gambia” were developed by higher education stakeholders in November 2024.

In Kenya, following the development of a roadmap for mainstreaming gender for the County Government of Kisumu last year, COL continued to support capacity-building for gender mainstreaming at all levels. A series of workshops enabled staff members to develop a Gender Mainstreaming Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, and an Implementation and Monitoring & Evaluation Plan.

COL supported the Tertiary Education Commission, Sierra Leone towards the development of quality assurance standards for assessment of ODL institutions and programmes.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Togo, drafted a comprehensive business plan for establishing an open school for English-language education through ODL, which outlined strategies for successful programme implementation, financial viability, and long-term sustainability.

The Zambian Higher Education Authority developed a draft National Policy for ODL.

The National Accreditation Council of Guyana engaged in a policy enhancement workshop which was facilitated by a member of VUSSC’s Transnational Qualifications Framework Management Committee and resulted in the development of a draft policy for Quality Assurance of ODL.

COL continued to support Tonga with the establishment of a virtual open school. The Open Schooling in Tonga plan that sets out a trajectory for the development of open schooling within the Tongan education ecosystem was developed during a 5-day workshop in September 2024.

Under the Open, Distance and Flexible Learning Pacific Partnership (PPODFL) project, following a consultative workshop on the development of a National ODL Policy Framework for Teacher Training organised by the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority last year, a National ODL Policy Framework for in-service Teacher Training in Fiji was developed in October 2024.

Strengthening institutions

COL strengthens institutions by building capacity in national institutions at tertiary, TVET, and school levels. This means working with administrators, teachers and students to co-create resources that can be reused and shared beyond one use; to train staff to use new technologies and systems in innovative ways and to help set up new systems, processes and policies to help drive high-quality learning.

This year COL has worked to develop 9 policies and strategies, helping these educational institutions to regulate and support high quality digital, online and open learning. In context, that’s now 180 policies, in 148 institutions in the last 4 years. In addition, COL has trained over 4,200 institutional staff across the Commonwealth to implement those strategies and improve teaching and learning in a digital age. In context, that is now nearly 43,000 in the last four years. In the process, and true to our model of change, COL has co-created over 150 new and improved courses (now exceeding 1,100) and over 500 learning resources that can be re-used in other courses. In context, that’s now over 10,800 learning resources in the last four years.



Improving lives and livelihoods

Access to learning is a vital pathway to improving lives and livelihoods, particularly for individuals from disadvantaged communities. By reaching beyond traditional institutions, community-driven learning can equip individuals — especially women and girls, youth, and persons with disabilities — with the skills and confidence needed to overcome systemic barriers. Inclusive, flexible, and community-responsive education plays a key role in turning learning into earning and driving meaningful, lasting change.

Over 11,000 learners enrolled in COL courses during this year, which makes the total well over 730,000 over the last four years.

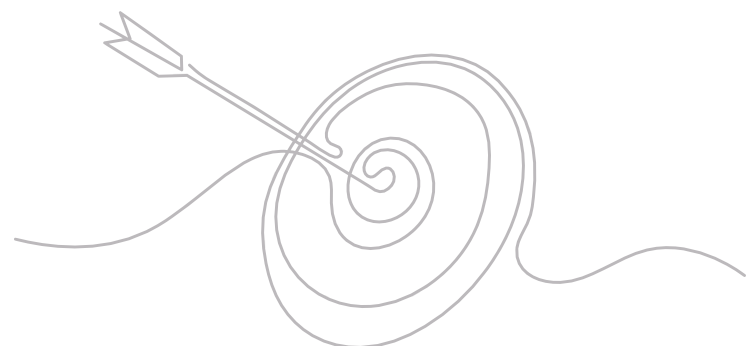
And for an additional over 93,000 learners, most of them in the critical economic activity of agriculture, we have provided training opportunities in various topics in sustainable livelihood and agriculture, through audio/text/video messages delivered to farmers “in the field” through mobile phones and the establishment of linkages with value chain service providers, this being over 1,260,000 learners over the last four years.

Equity is a significant feature of disadvantage, with women, girls and at-risk boys being a very high proportion of our learners, but in addition to the results noted above, in work specifically targeting gender, COL has trained over 28,000 women and girls and 178 men and boys in livelihood skills, including 197 persons with disability. More than 487,000 community members were sensitised on equity matters.

For example, in reaching beyond institutional classes and spaces:

- CEMCA (COL’s centre in Asia, New Delhi), in collaboration with GPAL, developed a MOOC on “AI for Informal Sector Workers”, designed to introduce AI concept to informal workers, particularly farmers.
- In Tanzania, the Youth Alliance for Progress Organisation held two sessions to connect women and girls with advanced skills training to mentors, local government representatives, and employers. As a result, 216 participants secured internships or apprenticeships in hairdressing, catering and tailoring.
- In Uganda, 66 youths improved their livelihoods after completing advanced ICT skills training provided by COL in partnership with KampaBits. Of these, 47 secured internships or employment, while 19 became self-employed or freelancer workers.

Under the PPODFL project, over 1,100 youth — including more than 700 women and 200 persons with disabilities — received skills training in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu last year. Training topics included accounting and basic bookkeeping, computer training, basic literacy, and more. In Vanuatu, 45 of 50 school dropouts secured jobs after completing Phase 2 of the “Empowering Futures” programme, following their participation in Phase 1 from May to July 2024.



Progress against targets

Table 1

A) Building national resilience

| Result | This year 2024–25 | Total 2021–25 | Mid-Strategy 2021–24 | Target 2021–27 |
|---|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Government staff/officials trained or sensitised | 1,215 | 8,098 | 6,438 | 9,784 |
| Support provided for policy or strategy development | 9 | 73 | 60 | 110 |

B) Strengthening institutions

| Result | This year 2024–25 | Total 2021–25 | Mid-Strategy 2021–24 | Target 2021–27 |
|---|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Institutional staff trained | 3,262 | 36,559 | 31,782 | 83,700 |
| Institutional policies/strategies developed | 9 | 180 | 165 | 300 |
| Courses developed or improved | 157 | 1,077 | 858 | 3,000 |
| Resources developed or improved | 515 | 10,729 | 9,612 | 10,000 |

C) Improving lives and livelihoods

| Result | This year 2024–25 | Total 2021–25 | Mid-Strategy 2021–24 | Target 2021–27 |
|---|----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| ODL learning opportunities developed and offered | 11,110 | 728,361 | 711,647 | 1,378,060 |
| Learners mentored and linked to service and financial resources | 621 | 143,246 | 137,592 | 100,000 |
| Partnerships with labour market, finance and service industry | 17 | 368 | 351 | 115 |
| Community members sensitised | 2,980 | 280,874 | 100,000 | 200,000 |

Table 2

| Additional Initiative Results (PPODFL and EWG) | PPODFL 2021–25 | EWG 2023–25 | Total 2021–25 |
|--|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Government staff/officials trained or sensitised | 137 | 94 | 231 |
| Support provided for policy or strategy development | 1 | – | 1 |
| Institutional staff trained | 4,867 | 1,483 | 6,350 |
| Courses developed or improved | 33 | – | 33 |
| Resources developed or improved | 61 | 27 | 88 |
| Gender-responsive ODL learning opportunities developed and offered | 3,202 | – | 3,202 |
| Learners mentored and linked to service and financial resources | 38 | 12,453 | 12,491 |
| Partnership with labour market, finance and service industry established | 11 | 55 | 66 |
| Community members sensitised | – | 565,269 | 565,269 |

Table 1 shows progress against our corporate indicator targets.

Table 2 notes that, in addition to the Table 1 data, COL has two major projects funded by one member country each, in addition to their core COL contributions: (a) the Pacific Partnership for ODFL project (2020–25) supported by the Government of New Zealand; and (b) the Empowering Women and Girls project (2023–26)

supported by Global Affairs Canada.

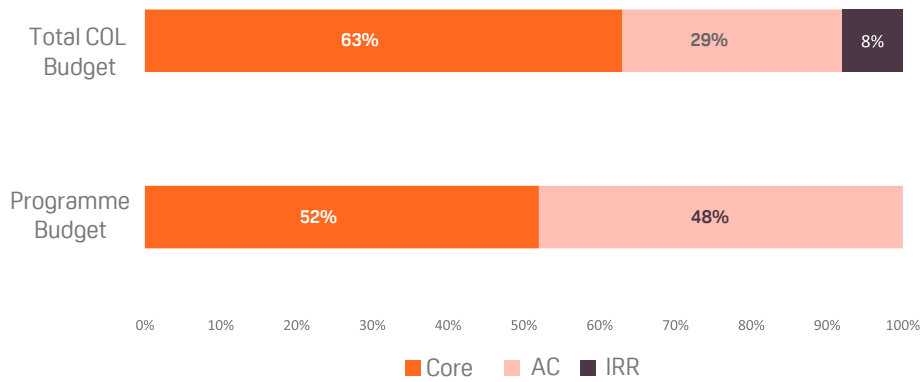
A further small additional project was funded by the UK (Beyond Numbers, 2024–25 only), as discussed below. With respect to targets, only the PPODFL project was included in the 2021 target setting exercise, so we have kept reporting here separate for all such additionally funded work.



Resources

The total programme budget for 2024–25 of \$6.45 million for direct activity costs was resourced with 52% coming from Member Governments core funding and 48% from additional contributions (AC). For the overall budget, the breakdown is 63% coming from Member Governments core funding, 29% from AC and the balance from interest and the Internally Restricted Reserve (IRR).

Resourcing the Budget 2024–25

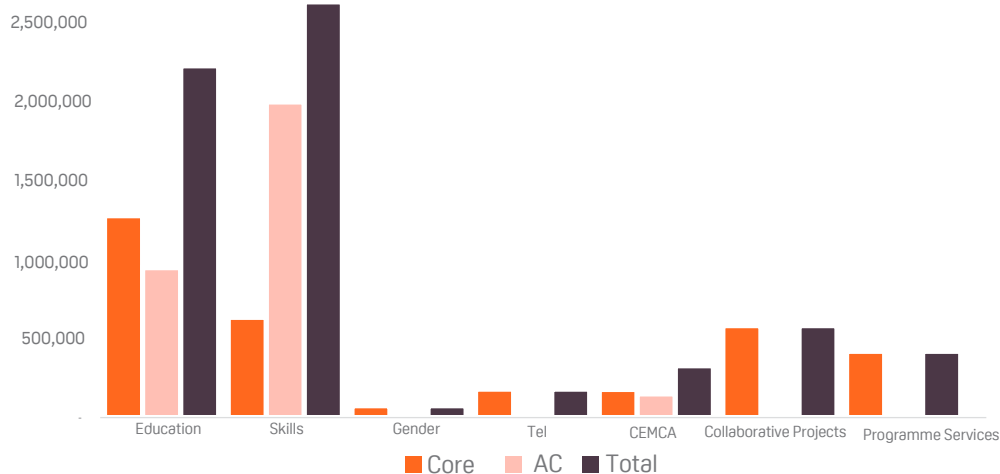


The largest portion of the budget was allocated to the Skills sector (41%) followed by the Education sector (35%) with CEMCA, Gender, Programme Services and Technology Enabled Learning, making up the balance.

Of the budget for additional contributions (AC), 65% was allocated for activities in the Skills sector

and 31% in the Education sector. The main sources of additional contributions for the programme were from Global Affairs Canada, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand and Ministries of AYUSH and Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. In addition, general operating support was provided by Hewlett Foundation.

Programme Budget by Area

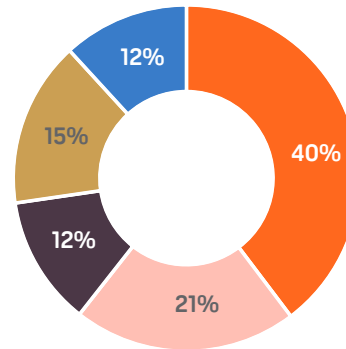


Regions

COL’s activities during the period were spread across 47 countries in all the four regions

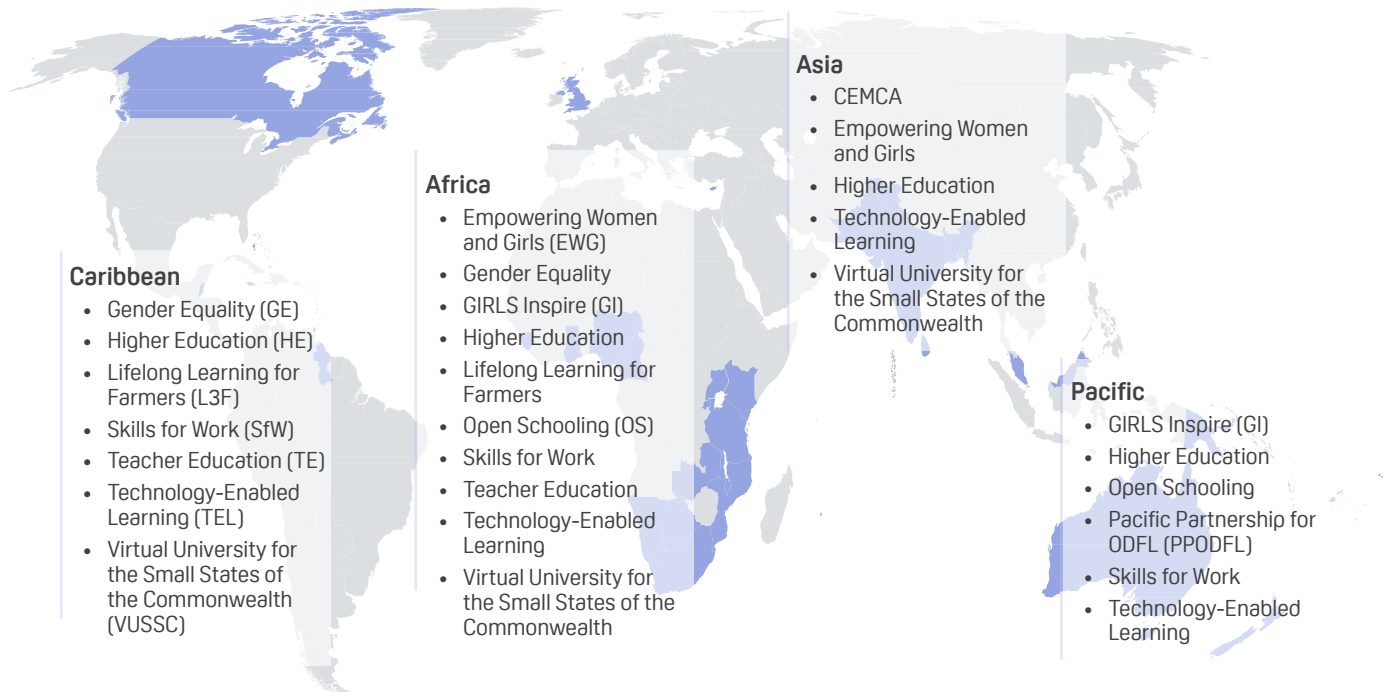
The highest expenditure was in the Africa region at 39% (2023 – 36%) followed by Pan-Commonwealth at 23% (2023 – 30%), and Asia at 20% (2023 – 18%). Expenditure in the Pacific region increased by 3.1% to 11.6% from the previous year while the Caribbean region decreased slightly by 0.7%.

Programme Expenditure by Region



AFRICA ASIA CARIBBEAN PACIFIC PAN COMMONWEALTH

Active Initiatives by Region (2024–25)





A focus on education, skills and equity

Working directly to the priorities of Member States and guided by the broad framework of SDG 4, COL's strategic work drives open learning for sustainable development in three broad areas

Innovating in education with open and distance learning (ODL) is the only viable option to scale quality formal, non-formal and informal learning.

The COL programme delivers in three broad areas:

- Quality education and lifelong learning for all
- Skills development for sustainable livelihoods
- Inclusion and gender equity.

Here, we provide example activities, by area.

Quality education and lifelong learning for all

In the past year, over 10,000 teachers and educators enrolled in C-DELTA and COLcommons micro courses. 800 TVET professionals enrolled in continuing education courses, including "Essential Skills for TVET" and "Preparing for Blended Delivery of TVET". CEMCA, in collaboration with National Council for Education and Research Training, India, conducted 5-hour training webinars on OER for schoolteachers in both Hindi and English in July 2024. These sessions are available on YouTube as well as DIKSHA portal (a government teacher training LMS platform) with the assessments and certification as a course titled "Open Educational Resources (OER) and Licenses." As of December 10, 2024, 53,341 participants registered in this course, with 48,206 in English and 5,135 in Hindi.

Skills development for sustainable livelihoods

Rising youth unemployment, especially for young women, is one of the most significant problems facing economies and societies across the

Commonwealth. At the same time, many industries struggle to find staff with the necessary skills and those who have work-relevant skills need to be retrained. To address this need, COL continues to work on developing the capacity of institutions to offer blended courses for employment and entrepreneurship and continues to promote the capacity-building of TVET staff with about 800 TVET trainers enrolled in the various courses offered.

In partnership with civil society organisations, particularly those working with rural communities, COL has leveraged technology to reach the unreached. Mobile networks have been established to support farmers with weather alerts and to link them to continuous learning and training. In collaboration with local NGOs, COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative reached over 93,000 farmers in Cameroon, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda using basic mobile phones. A range of learning resources were developed for this purpose, including video clips, voice and text messages and audio scripts to train farmers in agricultural practices, including on commercial bean farming and sustainable agricultural practices for smallholder fruit and vegetable farmers. Additionally, COL supported partners in Jamaica and Tanzania to develop training manuals on topics such as bean farming and group dynamics in agriculture.

Gender equality and inclusion

COL's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment course was offered to 381 participants from 38 countries. This course is specifically tailored to enhance the competency of government officials

and organisational staff, empowering them to drive personal and collective transformations in advancing gender equality.

COL continued to support the implementation of the national inclusive OER policies in Malaysia by providing institutional staff capacity-building on the development of open textbooks. Six open textbooks have been developed and released by Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

The Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling, Ghana drafted a gender roadmap following a successful audit process, which engaged over 100 staff members who participated in workshops, completed an internal survey and used COL's [Gender Scorecard](#).

As part of ongoing efforts to promote inclusive education, a series of webinars were organised, focusing on accessibility, specific learning disabilities and inclusion in ODL:

- The EWG project held a webinar in August 2024 on “Designing for Accessibility - Building Inclusive Programs” that introduced the principles of Universal Design for Learning and good practices for enhancing accessibility in educational and training environments.
- The “Advancing Inclusive Education through Collaborative Webinars” project, CEMCA, in

partnership with ChangeInkk, conducted a series of three webinars on Specific Learning Disabilities in October 2024. The first titled “Build Inclusive Higher Education Institutions,” engaged 30 higher education faculty and leaders from India. The second on “Building Capacities of Policymakers and Teachers on Inclusion of Children with Learning Disabilities in Schools in Sri Lanka” was held in partnership with Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Education, bringing together 100 teachers and policymakers to explore inclusive practices in schools. The final webinar on “Building Capacities of Policymakers and Teachers of Maldives” was held in partnership with the Maldives Ministry of Education and involved 94 participants from various institutions.

- The “VUSSC Voices” webinar in January 2025 with 97 attendees, focused on “Disability and Inclusion in ODL: Diversity and Ability”, positioning disability through the lens of intersectionality to highlight its critical role in shaping society’s engagement with disability, especially in ODL spaces.

Enhancing skills for higher income and livelihood security among women has been a priority. In collaboration with civil society organisations, COL has reached the unreached in some of the most remote areas and trained them in industry relevant skills and connected them to the world of work. Through the GIRLS Inspire and the Empowering Women and Girls programmes more than 28,000 women and girls have been trained in vocational skills, in areas such as digital literacy, motorcycle mechanics and tailoring.

Through the EWG project, more than 10,500 women and girls in Bangladesh, Malawi, Pakistan and Sri Lanka received training on financial literacy. Over 2,300 women and girls in Bangladesh,





Malawi, Mozambique and Pakistan were linked to microfinance and bank credits, enabling them to access microloans to fund start-ups in areas such as tailoring and dressmaking.

COL sensitised over 487,000 community members and community leaders on themes such as gender equality, gender based-violence, human rights, reproductive health and the importance of girls' education and has contributed to more than 170 advocacy events in 9 countries in Africa and Asia.

The Malawi College of Distance Education (MCDE) has been implementing a comprehensive strategy to enhance girls' access to and success in education through open schooling. In November 2024, MCDE reported an increase in female enrollment in targeted communities from an average of 38.5% at the start of the intervention to 45%, suggesting that COL and MCDE's efforts are inspiring more girls to engage with open schooling, gradually overcoming the long-standing gender imbalance.

The "Universal Design for Learning" course on the COLcommons platform attracted more than 1,400 enrolments during this year.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education, India, and with support from Changeinkk, CEMCA has developed a series of tutorials for Higher Education stakeholders in India to help foster an inclusive education system. The online modules represent a comprehensive tutorial on inclusive admissions, campus environments and placements.

In the Caribbean, COL supported training aimed at addressing challenges facing men and boys, including disengagement in education. Youth Challenge Guyana trained more than 180 men and boys in topics such as life skills and electrical installation.





Programme

COL's work in the three broad areas of education, skills and equity are presented here as a set of initiatives.



Higher Education

Six policies and strategies (3 national / 3 institutional) developed to support ODL

The Higher Education initiative aims to (1) provide support for national and institutional ODL policies, quality assurance systems and authentic assessment practices; (2) promote the rapid design, development and delivery of quality gender-responsive OER; and (3) assist in the development and implementation of employability frameworks.

THIS YEAR

During 2024–25, the Higher Education initiative worked towards improving the effectiveness of government in leveraging ODL, OER and quality assurance for higher education; improving institutional effectiveness in leveraging ODL; and supporting employability frameworks for improved lives and livelihood. Advocacy activities through national and institutional engagements were facilitated. A major focus was on completing ongoing activities and emphasising long-term outcomes and impact, at both levels.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

COL supported ministries and regulatory agencies in Cameroon, The Gambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zambia on ODL policy,

employability frameworks and learners' support guidelines. This involved the development of policies or frameworks and training of over 400 officials and staff. At institutional level, COL supported universities with the capacity-building of over 500 staff members and the development and implementation of ODL and frameworks in Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Sierra Leone and Tonga. Eight COL Chairs published research outputs and presented workshops and webinars. 34 ODL academics completed the COL Practitioner Research Mentorship Programme. To inform the employability activities, research was conducted on labour market signalling theory, and around ODL activities, a systematic literature review of research and an empirical scoping review of practices were conducted. COL collaborated on the publication of the UNESCO *Global Education Monitoring Report 2024, Pacific: Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?*

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

16 national ODL policies and frameworks, including for learners' support were developed, and 1,800 ministry staff were trained in ODL, with 491 reporting improved capacity to support policy implementation. 53 institutional policies and frameworks in ODL, OER, Graduate Employability and Authentic Assessment were developed and implemented. One country and 6 institutions showed improved effectiveness in leveraging ODL, with 193 courses developed, recording 31,324 enrolments. Capacity-building workshops were provided to more than 6,200 staff from partner institutions. Moreover, over 7,600 students completed courses taught by teachers trained through COL interventions.



Skills for Work

National TVET authorities monitored and accredited blended TVET initiatives in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zambia

The Skills for Work initiative aims to build the resilience of TVET systems across the Commonwealth countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through a policy and collaborative practice approach. Ministries and agencies responsible for TVET and regional TVET bodies are supported in developing and overseeing the implementation of Open TVET policies, strategies, guidelines, quality assurance standards, monitoring and evaluation frameworks at institution-based (IBTVET), enterprise-based (EBTVET) and community-based (CBTVET) TVET centres, focusing on blended learning.

THIS YEAR

During 2024–25, support was provided to Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia to facilitate the monitoring of blended TVET implementation and oversee the quality and standards of blended TVET initiatives carried out at IBTVET, EBTVET and CBTVET. Capacities for Open TVET were enhanced for practitioners at the levels of ministries, TVET agencies, institutions and communities.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

NBTE, TEVETA, and TVETA supported polytechnics and TVET institutions in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia, in implementing blended TVET through policy advocacy and training; the accreditation of programmes, trainers and centres using ODL Standards; and monitoring activities using M&E frameworks.

Through CANTA, practitioners from Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago developed competency-based education and training (CBET) courseware for blended delivery. VTDI in Jamaica designed a strategy for capacity and capability-building of TVET practitioners in the Caribbean for use in all 12 Commonwealth Caribbean countries.

Practitioners from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru and Samoa participated in virtual labs and artificial intelligence in TVET programmes. A strategy for blended TVET in Tuvalu was developed.

Capacity-building across Commonwealth countries was achieved through webinars, online courses, conferences and workshops. Partnerships were formalised via MoUs with the International Vocational Education and Training Association and the Zanzibar Economic Empowerment Agency.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

Over the past 4 years, innovative policies and collaborative practices at IBTVET, EBTVET, and CBTVET have strengthened TVET system resilience in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia. A blended TVET competency framework was developed and piloted over two years at pre-service IBTVET institutions in Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya and Zambia. Additionally, an e-apprenticeship model to foster youth employability was developed in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia, and is now to be scaled up in Namibia and Zanzibar.



Open Schooling

Case studies to support open schooling advocacy developed by authors from 20 Commonwealth countries

Malawi demonstrated improved institutional effectiveness in leveraging ODL based on evidence from internal reporting, COL monitoring and an independent external evaluation, through revised policy and implementation strategies, resulting among other things in an increase in female enrolments from 38.5% to 45% in targeted communities.

97 more learners enrolled in open schooling courses in Tanzania and 23 more learners completed their school subjects in one year.

THIS YEAR

COL supported partners in Eswatini, The Gambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, Tonga and Zambia.

Eswatini developed strategies to improve the delivery of technology-enabled learning and to extend these benefits also to conventional schools across the country.

The Gambia developed 10 OER-based courses for Grade 11 and completed a costing exercise for scaled delivery.

Lesotho developed a suite of institutional policies to enable the creation of the new college of open and distance learning.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

To support advocacy for open schooling provision in developing countries, 18 case studies and 7 reflective essays have been developed by authors based in Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Canada, Eswatini, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia.

Costing exercises have been developed to support providers in Eswatini, The Gambia and Malawi.

Ministries in Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Zambia have been supported to implement or scale ODL provision in support of open schooling and other activities.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

- 34,512 learners have enrolled in courses offered by open schooling partners and 13,284 have completed schooling subjects.
- 2,215 institutional staff and 678 government officials have received training related to open schooling provision.
- 110 school subjects have been developed or improved with COL's support.



Teacher Education

ODL policy and capacity building advanced across 13 countries, reaching educators and policy makers

The Teacher Education initiative advances teacher training and professional development through open, distance and technology-enabled learning, including in underserved regions. It supports ODL policy development, institutional capacity strengthening, and innovation in resource development and delivery. Activities are implemented in partnership with ministries, national teacher agencies, and education institutions to co-create context-relevant and scalable solutions.

THIS YEAR

During 2024–25, the initiative focused on deepening national engagement and institutional support for ODL and TEL. Key achievements included policy development and capacity-building in ten countries, training over 500 staff, and supporting the creation of 40 ODL courses. Partnerships with 10 national agencies and seven teacher education institutions enhanced system-wide adoption of digitalisation. The initiative published the “Innovative Models and Practices in Teacher Development: Case Studies from the Commonwealth” to showcase scalable teacher development innovations.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

In Africa, ODL policy reviews and workshops were conducted in Botswana, The Gambia, Ghana, Malawi,

Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. Highlights include training over 100 staff in Moodle LMS in The Gambia and Malawi, and institutional ODL policy validation in Uganda. Ghana’s TACE held interactive ODL media training for 30 staff. In Botswana, Nigeria, Seychelles and South Africa, national frameworks for teacher development via ODL were developed. Sierra Leone developed micro-courses for teacher training. The NOTES project brought together five institutions from Botswana, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa for OER capacity building.

In the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda structured teacher CPD through a national workshop, and Barbados aligned its activities with the national education transformation agenda.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

The initiative has supported over 7,000 teachers in Sri Lanka and 1,000 in South Africa to complete TEL courses. Twenty-one MOOCs attracted 35,500 learners, while over 1,600 educators were trained across 15+ countries. Partners in The Gambia, Malawi and Zambia trained over 150 staff in Moodle LMS. Overall, 10 national agencies and 7 teacher training institutions were supported, over 70 ODL courses developed, and over 1,000 staff trained. Across countries, over 2,600 educators, ministry officials and institutional leaders participated in project activities.



Technology

Cybersecurity is still in focus

In 2024–25, COL's Technology Services continued to prioritise cybersecurity and equitable innovation by consolidating cloud-hosted assets and piloting affordable artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for institutions in resource-constrained settings. The aim remained enhancing resilience, safeguarding learner data, ensuring business continuity, and promoting equitable access to advanced digital learning tools across Commonwealth member countries.

THIS YEAR

Deployment of Generative AI strengthened collaborative capacity-building initiatives. COL developed AI-supported workflows for adapting Open Educational Resources (OER) under the Teacher-in-the-Loop AI (TiL-AI) project. These tools now directly benefit more than one thousand teachers at partner institutions across Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Cybersecurity continued as a critical operational concern. Increased cyberattack risks, rising costs of cloud services, and new cross-border tax implications have compelled COL to implement rigorous vulnerability assessments, stronger access controls, and multi-factor authentication. High-risk platforms, including PressBooks due to security vulnerabilities

and unsustainable maintenance costs, were phased out. Responsibility for managing resilient learning platforms is gradually transitioning either to capable partner institutions or established third-party providers such as MoodleCloud.

Addressing concerns related to data sovereignty and connectivity challenges, COL significantly advanced its experimentation with offline AI language models. A dedicated offline test environment established last year has been updated with seven newer open-source models, now operable on a single desktop device. This allows institutions with limited resources to safely test and apply generative AI locally, reducing reliance on external cloud services. The latest edition of COL's Aptus has been enhanced to offer generative AI capabilities, albeit at reduced processing speeds, broadening accessibility to AI services in bandwidth-constrained contexts.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

COL's Technology Services provided scalable online learning platforms, reaching over a million learners. The current strategic shift towards third-party managed services seeks to sustain these gains while maintaining innovation, particularly in context-sensitive generative AI solutions for teaching and learning in resource-limited settings.



Technology-Enabled Learning

Supported the Ministry of Education, Fiji in the development of the ICT in Education Policy

The TEL initiative aims to promote the effective use and integration of technology-enabled learning and OER to improve teaching and learning. Activities focus at the micro- (individual), meso- (institutional) and macro- (national) levels. In the year 2024–25, TEL initiative supported activities in seven countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Fiji, Kenya, Maldives, Malaysia, Mauritius and South Africa).

THIS YEAR

The TEL initiative had a significant impact across partner institutions and Commonwealth-wide. A total of 15,356 learners enrolled in quality-assured courses developed by partner institutions with COL support, while 10,310 learners enrolled in COL-run courses (on the C-DELTA and COLCommons platforms). Of those enrolled in COL courses, 5,230 learners (1,767 male and 2,325 female) successfully completed their programmes, while from the partners institutions, we have reports of 11,924 completions as of now. Capacity-building support resulted in development of 69 blended courses at partner institutions, and COL supported the three governments (Fiji, Malaysia, and Mauritius) in developing policies and strategies related to TEL.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

COL supported the Ministry of Education, Fiji in development of an ICT in Education policy. With the support of COL, the Higher Education Commission,

Mauritius developed the policy guidelines on integrating AI in higher education. COL assisted the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia in developing an action plan for implementing the inclusive OER policy. Eight higher education institutions in Kenya and Mauritius, completed the TEL implementation cycle with benchmarking of TEL and development of action plan for mainstream TEL in their universities. All these eight institutions have TEL policies, trained teachers and several blended courses. A total of 69 blended courses were developed this year and 27 were offered to students. The University Malaysia Sabah developed an open textbook platform, which has six courses supported by COL.

COL's C-DELTA platform received 2,577 new registration and recording 1,138 course completions during the financial year. COL supported the Ministry of Education, Fiji in conducting a training-of-trainers workshop on C-DELTA. The COLCommons platform saw strong engagement with 4,092 certificates issued across the 13 courses.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

Supported the implementation of OER and TEL policies in Malaysia and Mauritius and 14 education institutions in Bangladesh, India, Kenya, Malaysia and Mauritius to systematically implement quality TEL. The institutions have offered over 260 blended courses and increased over 38,000 enrolments as a result of the capacity building received. Over 400 teachers trained in partner institutions have demonstrated improved capacities to use TEL. COL's online platforms supported professional development of teachers across the Commonwealth with over 68,000 enrolments and over 33,000 completions.



Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

In a landmark initiative, CEMCA sensitised and trained policymakers and teachers for mainstreaming Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in education in India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives

COL's centre in Asia, CEMCA, promotes the use of appropriate media and technology to serve the education and training needs of Commonwealth Asia. To achieve this, CEMCA builds the capacity of institutions to transition to online and blended learning and supports gender-responsive skills development for livelihoods. In addition, CEMCA is engaged in developing innovations in a range of technologies from Community Radio to AI-based solutions for reaching the last mile.

THIS YEAR

Between July 2024 and March 2025, 42,948 learners completed courses aligned with labour market needs, while 61,451 enrolled in quality-assured courses offered by partner institutions across the Asian region. Additionally, 474 faculty members received training, and 348 community members were sensitised in COL models. CEMCA also supported the development of two courses and six learning resources.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

CEMCA significantly advanced ODL and inclusive practices across Asia. It played a key role in bringing together Indian open universities and forming their Consortium through strategic roundtable meetings and workshops to strengthen ODL, sharing resources, and promoting OER, micro-credentials, and blended learning. Together with the Association

of Indian Universities, multiple Faculty Development Programmes empowered educators in technology-enabled and blended learning across Indian higher education institutions and to school teachers with NCERT. CEMCA also championed inclusive education, launching sensitisation, and training for educators and policy makers to mainstream students with SLD in India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. AI integration in education emerged as a priority in the Asian region with CEMCA organising offline and online training sessions in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It is also promoting AI-integrated TVET in the Asian region through a two-week training for participants from Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Singapore and a national consultation on blended TVET in Bangladesh. Community Radio (CR) awareness workshops have sensitised NGOs and academic institutions in establishing CR stations, and CEMCA courses are now available on the Skill India Digital Hub.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

CEMCA sensitised 44,446 community members and 9,518 faculty members in ODL, OER, TEL, Graduate Employability or COL models. A total of 45,904 learners completed courses aligned with labour market needs, while 101,798 enrolled in quality-assured courses developed and delivered by partner institutions. Additionally, CEMCA supported 24 higher education institutions in developing institutional policies, with 10 more in progress. It also developed 37 courses and 68 learning resources, and collaborated with AIU to create a Draft National Policy on Blended Learning.



Regional Centres

Empowering ODL practitioners across Africa — SADC-CDE and RETRIDOL trained educators, published strategic resources, and hosted webinars over 900 participants

Regional centres enhance open learning visibility within their respective regions and contribute to its corporate results and performance indicators. Their specific activities include advocacy, capacity-building support for regional, national, and institutional stakeholders, as well as research and collaborative initiatives locally connected to the regional Member Nations.

THIS YEAR

The African SADC-CDE and RETRIDOL centres facilitated training to strengthen Open and Distance Learning (ODL) across their regions. Key focus areas included enhancing learner support and authentic assessment, publishing directories of ODL institutions in West Africa and the SADC region and conducting advocacy through webinars and stakeholder meetings. These efforts supported regional stakeholders in improving ODL systems, promoting quality practices, and expanding institutional knowledge and collaboration across participating countries. The Pacific centre (PACFOLD) is core to the Pacific partnership project reported separately below.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Between 2024 and 2025, the Southern African Development Community–Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) in Botswana published a

comprehensive “Directory of ODL Institutions and Programmes in the SADC Region.” It supported capacity-building efforts in 11 SADC countries, training 22 stakeholders on authentic assessment and learner support in ODL, with 14 reporting improved knowledge. Two practical guidelines and two webinars further reinforced learning and advocacy. Similarly, the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) in Nigeria published a “Directory of ODL Institutions and Programmes in West Africa” and convened a regional workshop on authentic assessment in February 2025, engaging 39 participants from five countries. RETRIDOL also hosted seven open education webinars that reached over 900 participants across the Commonwealth and beyond. Through the European 3CL Centre in Malta, we joined work examining frameworks in the EU and British Columbia aimed at advanced advocacy for cross-border recognition systems, supporting alignment with emerging international standards.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

COL’s Africa centres have facilitated numerous capacity-building workshops, webinars, and reports to enhance ODL in West and Southern Africa. Activities focused on authentic assessment, learner support, policy, and quality assurance. Through these centres a total of 1,320 institutional faculty and staff were trained; 28 webinar sessions with over 3,600 attendees conducted; 2 regional directory reports on ODL institutions and programmes were published.



Pacific Partnership for ODFL

Additional support from the Government of New Zealand

Initiated in November 2020, the “Pacific Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning” project receives support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand.

Working in collaboration with the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), the project spans nine Commonwealth countries in the Pacific—Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Its primary goal is to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the education sector through the utilisation of innovative delivery mechanisms and advanced technology.

THIS YEAR

In 2024–25, the project aimed to scale youth training in entrepreneurship and digital skills, expand STEM teacher capacity through OER, and strengthen ministries’ data resilience. It focused on piloting micro-credentials in TVET, deploying AI-powered learner support, and localising the TVET Toolkit across institutions. Continued collaboration with NGOs ensured inclusive outreach, especially for women and persons with disabilities. These efforts support flexible, open, technology-enabled education across nine Pacific countries.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

The “Pacific TVET Online Toolkit” expanded through regional workshops, advocacy, and system enhancements. Associated micro-credentials activities were developed with stakeholders, expanding national uptake through targeted webinars and institutional training in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

Youth training scaled significantly through partnerships with organisations such as FRIEND Fiji, Youth Challenge Vanuatu, Brown Girl Woke, Tonga Women in ICT, and Ginigoada Foundation, providing skills training in entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and trades. Storytelling by Pacific Kids’ Learning supported inclusive education using two local languages.

Data resilience improved through MoodleCloud pilots in Tuvalu and Vanuatu following local crises, complemented by ongoing data training for officials in Kiribati and Vanuatu. AI-driven learner support at the University of the South Pacific and a new digital skills course boosted teacher effectiveness, while OER-based STEM training strengthened educator capacities in Fiji, Samoa and Tonga.

The final external evaluation, assessing project impact and informing future strategies, has commenced.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

Now in its final year, the project has trained over 4,100 youths in skills and leadership and enhanced capacities of more than 5,700 teachers in online learning. The “Pacific TVET Online Toolkit” recorded over 38,000 global visits, reflecting broad regional and international impact.

Additionally, over 130 ministry officials participated in policy workshops focused on advancing open, distance, and flexible learning.



Gender

Gender-responsive mentorship and internship programme successfully launched for disengaged young men in Guyana

The Gender Equality initiative promotes gender equity by removing barriers to education and training for women, girls, men and boys. Working collaboratively with governments and educational institutions, the initiative mainstreams gender equality into policies, programmes and practices. It also addresses specific gender disparities, including boys' educational disengagement, through targeted interventions such as mentoring, blended open and distance learning (ODL), and structured internships.

THIS YEAR

During 2024–25, embedding gender-responsive policies within COL and partner institutions was prioritised, to ensure broader social inclusion alongside gender equality. Emphasis was placed on engaging disengaged young men through tailored mentoring, blended ODL training, and internships in Belize and Guyana - providing holistic skills development and practical experience - leading directly to enhanced employment prospects. The work towards building an institution solution to the issue of boys' disengagement in the Caribbean started with a series of background studies.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

The year marked activities with two major trends. One was to continue with ongoing priorities while the other was to pause and start working on new directions. The targeted training for disengaged

young men, combining industry certifications, life skills education, and structured mentoring continued in countries like Belize and Guyana. In Guyana, 81 individuals completed life skills training, 23 obtained certifications in electrical installation, and eight secured local internships. In Ghana, the Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling developed an inclusive gender, disability, and social inclusion policy through extensive stakeholder consultations, including workshops, surveys, and focus groups. The activities which focused on new directions included the development of a comprehensive COL gender strategy where four strategic directions were identified, along with sub-strategies and detailed activities focused on gender mainstreaming. A Gender Action Plan was also carved out for the remaining two years of the ongoing Strategic Plan. Another new direction was to start base research studies to provide foundation for an innovative institutional solution to the issue of boys' disengagement in the Caribbean region.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

Significant strides were made in gender mainstreaming across five institutions in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through gender audits, policies and strategies. Over 680 individuals received market-relevant skill training. COL produced 59 gender-related publications and trained 436 institutional and government staff in gender mainstreaming. Additionally, 1,600 women and girls were trained in ICT, and 70 learners secured internships. COL's comprehensive gender strategy was also successfully developed.



GIRLS Inspire

Improving educational and livelihoods outcomes for young women

The GIRLS Inspire initiative partnered with credit and non-credit offering institutions, leveraging the policy and academic expertise of the one, and the practitioner skills of the other to develop context specific, labour market-oriented learning resources, utilising participatory community-based approaches to advocate for gender-inclusive, equity focused access to formal and non-formal (livelihoods) education.

THIS YEAR

COL promoted gender equality and empowerment through education and skills for 1,677 women, girls and persons with disabilities from marginalised communities in Botswana, India, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Underpinning the work of the Initiative, a policy brief on “Youth not in Education, Employment or Training in Commonwealth Countries” was published.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Seven eMobile learning resources have been developed by partners in East Africa, used to train trainers of sustainable agriculture, savings and loan group management and reproductive health. A series of mixed media resources was developed to facilitate learning in Financial Literacy and eCommerce.

248 participants from 38 countries earned a completion certificate in the COL-run “Capacity Building for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” course.

60 young mothers were supported to return to secondary school to complete the basic education cycle, while being equipped with vocational skills to enable them to generate an income. 1,677 learners enrolled and 769 participants completed courses offered by partner institutions while 130 learners completed school subjects taught by teachers trained through COL interventions.

Policy advocacy resulted in 1,559 community members sensitised and in the ratification of County Sexual and Gender-Based Violence policy in Kenya.

Collaboration with the Partnership for ODFL in the Pacific project led to the onboarding of eight new partners from seven countries.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

- Two county governments and one institution of higher education were provided with support that led to development of policies and strategies to support gender mainstreaming.
- 18,136 learners completed courses linked to labour market needs leading to 7,199 accessing appropriate financial resources worth CAD 30,818 and 4,644 opening bank accounts.
- 556 staff/ faculty reported improved knowledge and skills in blended learning, policy and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, while 525 communities participated in advocacy efforts for changes in policy or programmes to increase access to learning, especially in sectors that will close gender equality gaps.



Empowering Women and Girls

First Outcome Monitoring assessing activities and impacts across participating countries through 45 case studies and 112 monitoring reports ready

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls are central to COL's mission. The Empowering Women and Girls (EWG) project, funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) under the Canadian Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), advances these goals. Implemented by COL in collaboration with eight local organizations across Bangladesh, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, this initiative prioritises women and girls in international development efforts.

THIS YEAR

In its second year, the EWG project has driven significant changes at village, community, and national levels. These changes are particularly evident across the project's three key pathways of change, reinforcing its holistic approach to enhancing education and skills development, strengthening economic participation and improving health outcomes. By fostering sustainable social transformation, this project is actively contributing to the creation of a more equitable and inclusive society, as evidenced by the outcome monitoring report.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Key highlights include publishing the "Baseline Study Report" (37 downloads) and the "Women's Rights and Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Training Manual". The project reached 460 communities and

villages across Bangladesh, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. 28,119 women/girls including 195 PWDs completed labour market relevant livelihoods and vocational skills. 10,620 women/girls including 261 PWDs completed financial literacy training and 2,246 of them, including 1 PWD opened bank accounts. 485,774 community members (including men, women and girls and people with disabilities) were sensitised on gender equality, human rights and the value of girl's education through 30 advocacy sessions. To enhance institutional capacity, over 800 staff members improved their skills in project management, monitoring and evaluation, communications, gender equality and in preventing GBV in schools. 122 Aptus devices were introduced and used in schools and livelihood training centres, and Moodle platforms were allocated to each partner. Both these measures significantly increased and improved access to digital learning resources.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

The project has made significant strides towards achieving its intended outcomes and has established a strong foundation for sustainable change within the intervention villages. 40,007 women/girls, including 2,424 PWDs, completed labour market relevant livelihood and vocational skills course. 565,269 community members (including men, women and girls and people with disabilities) participated in 315 gender equality and human rights advocacy sessions. To enhance institutional capacity, more than 1,450 staff members improved their skills in project management, monitoring and evaluation, communications, gender equality, in preventing GBV in schools, universal design for learning and in climate change. 12,445 women/girls including 308 PWDs were trained in financial literacy of which 2,246 including 1 PWD opened bank accounts. Furthermore, nine courses and learning resources were developed on Moodle and 30 videos lessons on Climate change were created.



Lifelong Learning for Farmers

More than 90,000 farmers trained across Africa with targeted content on sustainable practices and governance

Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) aims to improve the livelihoods of farmers in developing countries in the Commonwealth by bridging their debilitating business and technical learning gaps and enabling them to form business networks. This approach was scaled out and scaled up in different countries using both governmental and non-governmental channels to attain goals, which include increasing yield and income, food security, youth empowerment, and poverty reduction.

Even as we re-set this initiative work, L3F has continued to strengthen agricultural livelihoods through digital learning, institutional partnerships, and gender-inclusive training to equip farmers with practical skills in some countries while started a process of reflection, research and evaluation in a few others to be able to consolidate and decide on a new direction after implementing the programme for nearly two decades.

THIS YEAR

L3F initiatives continued to support farmers, with tailored training in organic inputs, governance, and market-ready farming practices. Partners in Cameroon, The Gambia, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda developed over 500 learning resources. Strategic alliances with ministries and private actors supported extension services and business linkages. The model proved adaptable to diverse contexts, using MobiMOOCs and multimedia tools to expand access and ensure relevant, locally tailored learning.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Empowering farmers through improved knowledge and market engagement, L3F has enhanced its

footprint further through strong partnerships in Cameroon, The Gambia, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda.

Strategic engagement with ministries and private organisations supported extension services, seed supply, and agribusiness development. In Sierra Leone, CWMPO collaborated with farmer federations and the Ministry of Agriculture to deliver training in maize production and financial literacy. In Uganda, Makerere University led MobiMOOC-based horticulture training, while Matumaini Mapya in Tanzania trained over 86,000 farmers in commercial bean production and governance. Our partner, GYIN in The Gambia trained 2,836 maize farmers using digital content. COL's model continues to inform agricultural lending, with farmers' skills recognised as collateral in select regions.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

In addition to a large direct learning impact, over 51,000 farmers accessed financial services using COL's ODL resources and securing loans worth more than CAD 12.6 million. Over 580 government officials have been trained in policy, ODL, ICT, and gender, while 2,286 institutional staff gained skills in management, business, and group dynamics. Supporting smallholder learning, COL and partners developed and deployed nearly 7,000 customised learning resources aligned with local agricultural and entrepreneurial needs.



Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

Work focusing on Small States has empowered over 220 educators reinforcing national policies for inclusive, future-ready education

COL's work with Small States has evolved into a powerhouse of cross-regional capacity-building, uniting small states around a shared vision of equity, innovation, and educational resilience. through strategic networking, institutional transformation, and inclusive innovation. Serving 33 member countries, the initiative equips partners to respond to local and regional challenges by enhancing open and distance learning (ODL), building micro-credential ecosystems, and supporting AI-integrated pedagogy and policy development. VUSSC fosters equitable access to quality learning, creating communities of practice and enabling sustainable capacity across ministries, universities, and vocational institutions.

THIS YEAR

In 2024–25, VUSSC strengthened both institutional and national capacities by supporting three governments in policy development and training 229 educators in ODL, AI, and micro-credential design. Through projects in countries like Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica and Namibia and, 21 new or improved courses were launched, many of them gender-responsive, while 78 learners enrolled in quality-assured, labour market-aligned programmes. The impact extended beyond classrooms through structured outreach and community engagement, reaching 93 individuals. Additionally, 205 faculty members reported enhanced professional competence in this work.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

VUSSC emphasised regional responsiveness this year through capacity-building for innovation among partners. Dominica State College is poised to launch its enhanced ODL policy, while UWI Mona

in Jamaica, as part of its programme modernisation for literature, has created micro-credentials to upskill teachers of English. The University of Technology advanced institutional ODL policy implementation. In Namibia, 33 academic staff and 31 senior managers at NAMCOL and NOLNet participated in hands-on workshops to integrate AI in policy and ODL.

One of VUSSC's most significant projects is the Advancing Caribbean Teachers in Mathematics, a partnership with the Ministries of Education in St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Through engagement in a dedicated Community of Practice, our learning platform and in-country workshops, 84 teachers, curriculum officers, and math coaches continue to strengthen their competence and confidence in mathematics pedagogy. Additionally, the inaugural VUSSC Voices webinars showcased partner achievements in inclusive education, blue economy, teacher development, and mathematics.

OVER THE PAST 4 YEARS

VUSSC has trained over 1,400 educators, supported the development of more than 160 courses, and enabled 16,000 learners to benefit from ODL. It has facilitated the development or review of at least three national-level policies, with tangible institutional reform achieved in over 20 tertiary institutions.



New Collaborative Work for 2024–25

The Mid-term Evaluation of COL’s 2021–27 Strategy noted that some initiatives were acting in too narrow a silo to be able to recognise major thematic opportunities to work together. In 2024–25 the UK funded one pilot and COL committed to four additional pilot projects to drive COL initiatives to work collaboratively on new thematic challenges

BEYOND NUMBERS

This project was established to scale quality teacher development in sub-Saharan Africa using ODL. The project is being managed in partnership with the African Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities and involves partners based in Botswana, Nigeria, Seychelles and South Africa.

MICROCREDENTIALS

A new collaborative theme for COL building on a significant existing strength brings together the large amount of work on short forms of learning for development created by COL and seeks a common framework for all the Commonwealth.

GenAI KEEPING THE TEACHER-IN-THE-LOOP

Designed as an 18-month AI pilot, this project is exploring how GenAI can be used to help school and TVET teachers make responsible use of GenAI to create teaching and learning resources which can be openly licensed, peer quality assured and shared for re-use by keeping teachers at the heart of the decision-making process.

EMPLOYABILITY

This collaboration brings together five COL initiatives — CEMCA, Higher Education, Skills for Work, Teacher Education and Technology around a common theme to enhance learner employability.

BUSINESS MODELS

Understanding that sustainability of ODL provision requires a sound business model that is appropriate for time and context, this 18-month pilot asks challenging questions about tools for a business model, related business plan and activity-based costing, then field-testing.





Beyond Numbers

COL pilots scaling quality teacher development through ODL

The Beyond Numbers project was funded directly by the UK's FCDO to harness digitalisation to expand the pool of qualified educators in sub-Saharan Africa. Supported financially by the UK's FCDO, it brought together four institutional members of the Africa Federation of Teacher Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA) and teacher education institutions, with AFTRA serving as the coordinating body.

THIS YEAR

The project adopted a participatory approach, with around 200 teachers and government officials from the four participating countries contributing to the project's implementation and evaluation while identifying additional training needs in various aspects of open learning. Representatives from the four countries presented the project outcomes at the AFTRA 12th Conference and 14th Roundtable, held in Lubango, Angola, from 5 to 9 May 2025, which included a briefing for African Ministers of Education or their delegates.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Key project activities included the development of draft scalable ODL frameworks for teacher training and digital literacy training modules by teacher regulatory authorities, including the Botswana

Teaching Professional Council (BOTPECO), the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), the Teaching Council of Seychelles (TCS), and the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

Initially, modules were based on the micro-credentials offered on COL's micro course platform, COLcommons, and, accompanied by guidelines for recognition, to help the participating institutions to develop relevant modules for training.

Additionally, national teaching regulatory authorities collaborated with teacher education institutions, such as Botswana Open University (BOU) and the University of Abuja (UNIABUJA), to curate and adapt short Continuous Professional Development (CPD) online courses. Using resources from the COL course repositories, it was possible to tailor some to local contexts, addressing specific training needs.

PROGRESS

This pilot project was driven by cross-country collaboration, where teacher regulatory authorities and teacher education institutions exchanged knowledge and expertise. Such partnerships strengthen efforts to expand access to quality education through ODL and digitalisation, paving the way for a new generation of qualified teachers. The pilot project has a strong potential of scaling and there were requests to expand on the pilot, even from non-Commonwealth countries that were present.



A Commonwealth Micro-credentials Framework

Five regional consultation meetings saw 185 representatives from 47 Commonwealth countries engaged in the development of a Commonwealth Credit Transfer Framework for Micro-credentials

The aim of this project is to develop a common Commonwealth Credit Transfer Framework for Micro-credentials. Building on the existing frameworks and practices around micro-credentialing internationally, this project intends to review the existing practices in the Commonwealth and provide guidance for further use of micro-credentials by governments, quality assurance agencies, qualification authorities, post-secondary institutions, sector skills councils, and the industry who employ the graduates from the education and training systems.

THIS YEAR

The initial phase of this work has conducted research on existing micro-credential frameworks, relevant policies and literature, and assessing current practices across the Commonwealth. Five regional consultations brought diverse perspectives on to the same page. The consultations aimed at raising awareness, discussing initial findings, understanding existing credit transfer systems, gathering feedback to refine the framework, identifying regional and national needs, and fostering a community of practice to support ongoing collaboration on micro-credentials.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Three research reports were completed: a desktop review of micro-credential frameworks and related policies; an analysis of technologies supporting digital micro-credentials and registries; and a review of micro-credential policies and practices

across Commonwealth countries, based on questionnaires and interviews with government and institutional representatives. To ensure regional relevance and broad engagement, five stakeholder consultation meetings were held across different parts of the Commonwealth. These took place in Southern and Eastern Africa and the Mediterranean (South Africa), the Pacific (Solomon Islands), the Caribbean (Jamaica), Asia (Malaysia), and West Africa (Nigeria) and involved 185 high-level representatives from governments and institutions from 47 Commonwealth countries. The meetings aimed to raise awareness, share initial findings, explore existing credit transfer systems, and gather feedback. This input helped to shape the final output of the project: a draft Commonwealth Credit Transfer Framework for Micro-credentials, designed to support the recognition and transferability of micro-credentials across member countries.

Teacher-in-the-Loop AI

This pilot empowers educators in five partner countries using Generative AI, whilst keeping the teacher at the heart of the new tools

Initiated in July 2024, Teacher-in-the-Loop-AI (TiL-AI) combines teacher expertise with generative AI to adapt OER, ensuring relevance and quality. The UNESCO Consensus on AI in Education, established in 2019, informs this initiative's focus on responsible and inclusive solutions. Teachers remain central to decision-making and content refinement, even as AI streamlines development tasks. This model supports capacity building in developing contexts, addressing resource constraints while advancing equitable, inclusive, and sustainable education.

THIS YEAR

This pilot places teachers at the centre of GenAI-based OER adaptation. In Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, and Nigeria, co-design processes ensure that pre-service, in-service, and TVET educators collaboratively refine open content while preserving pedagogical and contextual relevance. The approach, aided by a GenAI-powered OER platform, fosters adaptation of inclusive, high-quality materials, with teachers playing a decisive role in oversight, peer review, and licensing compliance to ensure alignment to local contexts.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Consultative in-person workshops in Fiji, Ghana, India and Tonga, involving hundreds of teachers, shaped the technology's final development. Feedback was gathered through webinars and virtual workshops with partner institutions in Jamaica, Kenya and Nigeria. TiL-AI now aligns OER with national curricula in secondary mathematics in India and biology in Ghana. It also aligns TVET national occupational standards for Fashion Design in Kenya and Jamaica, and Science Laboratory Technology in Ghana and Nigeria.

Over 80 teachers have participated in bootcamps and workshops in India organised in collaboration with the Central Board of Secondary Education and the National Council for Educational Research and Training. Teachers examined how AI can support inclusive and adaptive learning.

Educators and officials in Ghana participated in the country's first national workshop on AI in teacher education. Hosted by COL partner, the Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling, the workshop introduced participants to GenAI tools for inclusive, curriculum-aligned OER development.

COL designed and developed 4 subject-specific GenAI-powered OER platforms based on requirements and needs provided by various stakeholders. Hands-on sessions enabled co-creation, peer review, and adaptation of teaching resources by various partners using this platform. Presently 100 teachers from Ghana are engaged in adaptation and assessment of OER in biology for secondary schools. An evaluation of existing OER and proprietary resources, a feasibility study and requirements-gathering was conducted to understand the specific needs and preferences of partner TVET institutions.



Institutional Effectiveness for Graduate Employability

17 Open universities in India collaborating for future skills, graduate employability, and open learning innovation through COL-CEMCA initiatives

COL-CEMCA's collaborative initiative is geared towards strengthening institutional effectiveness for graduate employability and emerging skills in India through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). Key objectives include strengthening stakeholders' understanding of employability trends, fostering collaboration among Indian open universities, developing and sharing policy-relevant resources, and facilitating dialogue on integrating employability-focused practices into curricula. The initiative supports evidence-based planning and promotes sustainable approaches to address skills gaps in higher education.

THIS YEAR

The COL-CEMCA collaborative initiative implemented a series of targeted activities to enhance graduate employability. These included stakeholders' engagement meetings, consultative workshops, and capacity-building sessions held across various regions in India. Reports on employability status and emerging skills were published while participants from multiple open universities engaged in knowledge-sharing on best practices. Advocacy events further supported dissemination, and institutional staff reported improved understanding of graduate employability strategies and integration of emerging skills into ODL programmes.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

Between July 2024 and March 2025, a series of coordinated activities were implemented, aimed at strengthening institutional and national capacities in open universities. Key activities included stakeholders'

engagement meetings, regional consultative workshops, and targeted capacity-building sessions. These events were hosted across various parts of India, involving participants from open universities in Northern, Central, and Western regions. Discussions focused on employability frameworks, integration of emerging skills into curriculum design, and institutional planning for graduate outcomes. In total, over 80 faculty and administrators participated in workshops and meetings, with a majority reporting enhanced knowledge in employability strategies. Additionally, two key reports, namely "Status of Graduate Employability and Emerging Skills in India" and "Graduate Employability in Open Universities: A Stakeholders' Consultative Workshop Report" were published to guide future action. The initiative also fostered collaboration among institutions and laid the groundwork for sustainable improvements in employability-focused ODL programming in India.

Business Models

Towards new business models for Open Education

In ODL provision, a business model is concerned with outlining how a provider will sustain quality provision. Open education represents the very best of quality and value, but how much has that cost equation changed relative to the conventional systems, given increased digital and online approaches, more sophisticated learning design and improved eText access? Can we increase the impact of innovation through sharing experience in sustainable costing for sustained success?

THIS YEAR

In response to requests for guidance on sustainable business models from COL partners, a small team was formed to explore the issue. A three-phase process was planned: to undertake a desktop review on the issue (including reports from COL's current and past work in this area); to pilot the emerging guidelines; then to consolidate the learning into a single set of guidelines, principles and/or tools which might be adapted for a wide variety of contexts.

Guidelines emerging from this process were piloted with partners in Jamaica (focused on teacher education) and Malawi (focused on Open Schooling) and will be piloted in Kenya (focused on TVET). It was subsequently decided also to pilot with at least one higher education provider.

Preliminary findings and recommendations will be shared in September 2025 at the Eleventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Botswana, and a final report published thereafter.

SELECTED ACTIVITIES

A consultant based in India was contracted to undertake a desktop review, including of past COL work in this area.

Business plans developed in Togo, Tonga and Uganda, costing exercises completed in Eswatini and The Gambia, and a draft report on the costing of blended TVET practices in Pan-Commonwealth countries were shared with the consultant as part of the review process.



Snapshots

from the Commonwealth regions



Africa

- Six partner institutions in The Gambia, Kenya, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Zambia developed or enhanced 42 courses using open educational resources (OER). The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in The Gambia completed curriculum content for 10 OER-based Grade 11 subjects, such as English, Mathematics, Science and Fisheries.
- Over 2,100 institutional staff in 12 African countries received training in ODL, TEL, OER, authentic assessment, course content creation, online facilitation and other areas.
- To further enhance the quality of teaching materials, teachers and mentors in Ghana are actively adapting curriculum-aligned OER using an AI-powered tool. The same tool is also being used by TVET educators in Nigeria and Zambia to adapt national occupations standards-aligned OER for their respective contexts.
- As part of the TEL implementation in higher education institutions in Mauritius, 60 online and blended courses were developed by six higher education institutions (University of Mauritius, University of Technology, Mauritius Open University, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius Institute of Education and l'Université des Mascareignes).
- More than 800 women and girls were enrolled in vocation skills training programmes in Tanzania. The Youth Alliance for Progress Organisation enrolled a new cohort of 40 young mothers in the Alternative Secondary Education Pathways programme at Gairo Secondary School and enhanced its multi-pronged approach to education and skilling.
- Seven institutional policies relating to ODL, authentic assessment and Gender were developed at institutions in Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia.
- 420 women and girls in Malawi accessed micro loans to fund their startup businesses, some focusing on tailoring and dress making.
- The Global Youth Innovation Network Gambia Chapter trained more than 2,800 farmers in maize farming.
- In Tanzania, over 86,000 farmers completed training on commercial bean farming provided by Matumaini Mapya.



Asia

- COL organised the regional Focal Points meeting for Asia in April 2025 hosted in Malaysia. Focal points from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka participated in the event and discussed regional and national priorities for programme development by COL.
- In Malaysia, COL supported the Universiti Malaysia Sabah in conducting a second workshop on developing inclusive open textbooks using Pressbooks leading to the development of six open textbooks. Following a request from the Ministry of Higher Education, 47 institutional staff members enrolled in the “Developing a Micro-credential” course during October-November 2024, with 13 successfully completing the course.
- A three-day workshop on micro-credentials was organised jointly with Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) in August 2024. 14 open universities were represented to discuss best practices and strategies for implementing micro-credential programmes.
- An international online training programme on AI in technical and vocational education and training is underway in partnership with the National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research (NITTTR), Chennai. Participants from six Asian Commonwealth countries are involved.
- Teacher-in-the-Loop AI Project: Initiated with the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and NCERT, this project supports the development of AI-generated learning aids to improve Grade 9 mathematics instruction and promote teacher-generated OER.
- A large-scale online course on OER is being co-developed with CIET-NCERT.
- A three-day workshop on Blended Learning took place at Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University in Assam. Attended by faculty and administrators from 14 open universities, it aimed to enhance institutional adoption of blended learning approaches in ODL.
- South-South Collaboration: The visit of Professor (Dr) A. B. M. Obaidul Islam, Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Open University, to several Indian ODL institutions (IGNOU, NIOS, and NCERT) was facilitated to enhance knowledge exchange and collaboration across South Asian countries.
- The Graduate Employability project was launched in collaboration with multiple Indian open universities in December 2024 that addresses the alignment of higher education programmes with labour market demands. Four regional workshops have been conducted to develop graduate employability frameworks for 17 state open universities.



Caribbean

- In the Caribbean countries, COL is making an impact by collaborating in the areas of higher education, teacher education, boys' education, TVET and agriculture. VUSSC has been active in the region in the areas of developing policy frameworks and guidelines for open education and strengthening mathematics education while teacher education initiative also focused on developing guidelines and training modules for making open and distance education more effective. The region has also been part of the micro-credentials collaborative project. COL partnered with countries to develop TVET curriculum for blended learning and with government and civil society organisations to organise skills-based training programmes for boys and young men out of education and job market. In agriculture, COL partnered with government and resource agencies in two countries.
- The National Accreditation Council of Guyana engaged in a policy enhancement workshop which was facilitated by a member of VUSSC's Transnational Qualifications Framework Management Committee. A draft policy of the National Accreditation Council of Guyana for the Quality Assurance of ODL was developed.
- In Dominica, a draft policy on e-Learning for Dominica State College was developed at a workshop on Developing and Implementing Policies and Guidelines to govern Quality Assurance Processes applicable to ODL.
- An ODL policy was developed by the University of Technology, Jamaica, in early 2025.
- Workshops on "Advancing Caribbean Teachers (ACT) in Mathematics" were held in three Caribbean countries: St Kitts and Nevis, supported by the Ministry of Education, Saint Lucia, supported by the Ministry of Education, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Science, Technology, Technical and Vocational Training and St Vincent and the Grenadines, supported by the Ministry of Education and National Reconciliation. Over 80 institutional staff and faculty were trained during these workshops.
- The COL-Dominica State College project for strengthening the institution's effectiveness in leveraging ODL and providing quality teaching by developing and implementing policies and guidelines for online teaching and learning commenced in October 2024.
- With support from COL, Rural Agricultural Education Authority (RADA) developed a Group Dynamics Training Manual for agricultural groups in Jamaica. The manual was designed to strengthen the capacity of community-based agricultural groups, equipping them with practical knowledge and tools to enhance group interactions, leadership and conflict resolution.
- TVET educators in Jamaica are receiving training in using an AI-powered tool to rapidly adapt OER aligned to national occupational standards.



Pacific

- COL participated in the Second Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (CPEM2) hosted by the Government of Papua New Guinea and contributed theme papers on teacher quality and micro-credentials for ministerial roundtables. COL also joined the development investors meeting hosted by the Government of New Zealand preceding CPEM-2.
- COL organised the regional Focal Points meeting for the Pacific in March 2025, hosted in the Solomon Islands. Besides the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education in the host country, COL Focal Points from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu participated in the event and discussed regional and national priorities for programme development by COL.
- COL organised three regional meetings during the year in Fiji through its Pacific regional centre, PACFOLD: (1) on improving the quality of teaching materials for STEM educators from Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, using tools such as the AI-powered OER Generator; (2) on the advanced use of the Pacific TVET Online Toolkit for technical and vocational trainers, aimed at the professional development of TVET practitioners. The workshop brought together 22 stakeholders from seven Pacific countries – Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, to co-develop a credentialing framework for micro-learning; and (3) on skilling for resilience for 20 representatives from government, academia and civil society organisations across seven Pacific countries – Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Vanuatu.
- In Fiji, workshops for STEM educators, mostly based in the Outer Islands, were organised in partnership with the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority. A workshop on Technology-Enabled Learning was conducted for college teachers, culminating in a discussion on a draft national policy on the subject. Later in the year, a National ODL Policy Framework for in-service teacher training in Fiji was approved by the Ministry of Education. COL's in-country coordinator for Fiji promoted the Pacific TVET Online Toolkit with TVET institutions, industries, and forums.
- In Nauru, capacity-building efforts were advanced through COL's regional TVET initiatives, including the updated Pacific TVET Professional Development Toolkit.
- In Papua New Guinea, Awest, an NGO, trained over 100 youth in Early Childhood Education, Basic Accounting and Bookkeeping. A new partnership with the Ginigoada Foundation was established to continue training youth. COL's in-country coordinator in Papua New Guinea conducted webinars and reached over 11 TVET institutions.
- Almost half of the youth trained in the Pacific island countries are women. Many of COL's extensive activities in the region are carried out as part of a project supported directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand.



Commonwealth of Learning

505 Burrard Street, Suite 1650, Box 5
Vancouver, BC V7X 1M6
Phone + 1 604 775 8200 / Fax + 1 604 775 8210

 info@col.org

 www.col.org

 [@col4d](https://twitter.com/col4d)

 facebook.com/COL4D/

 instagram.com/commonwealthoflearning

 <https://www.youtube.com/@CommonwealthofLearning>