

Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors

April 21, 2020

Report of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Context

With an increasing number of countries closing institutions of learning as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 90% of the world's students are not attending school (UNESCO, 2020). This has led to a huge demand for open, distance and online learning as countries try to keep the doors of learning open. COL is being requested to i) help make this transition effectively through technical advice; ii) provide relevant content for learning, particularly for schools; and, iii) support the capacity building of teachers in online provision.

Because COL's field of competence is distance, online learning and technology, it has been able to respond quickly to the needs of Member States and to adapt its way of working to the changed reality of COVID-19. COL has been quick to respond to the urgency of the situation and the evolving needs by a) initiating relevant projects and b) joining global coalitions. To help Member States address the crisis, COL has:

- Put together a repository of curated content and tools, which is updated regularly;
- Created an online consultation on OER and provided a free web conferencing tool for educators under its OER4COVID initiative, which has already generated a response from 67 countries, including 30 Commonwealth Member States;
- Developed Commonwealthswomen.org, a mentorship service to foster leadership among women and girls in the remotest regions of the Commonwealth. Twenty-five eminent women from around the Commonwealth have lent their support;
- Initiated the 'International Partnership of distance and online learning for COVID-19' which has attracted over 40 partners such as UNESCO (Paris), UNESCO-IITE (Moscow), the World Bank, and several open universities and associations around the world.

Several countries are requesting COL for targeted support. For example, COL has been requested to provide curriculum content for school children in **Namibia, Papua New Guinea** and **Trinidad & Tobago**. **Samoa** has sought advice with setting up assessment mechanisms for online delivery systems. COL has adopted a two-pronged approach—providing generic content in the first instance, followed by a response tailored to a particular context.

As the only intergovernmental organisation established to promote distance and technology enabled education, COL's role has become more important than ever before. Its future will depend on its ability to use its expertise and demonstrate its relevance and responsiveness to the needs of Member States.

Background

1. Created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987, COL is the world's only intergovernmental organisation with a mandate to promote open, distance and technology-enabled learning in support of development.
2. COL's mission is to help governments expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open and distance learning (ODL) and appropriate technologies. It assists governmental, non-governmental and community partners in developing policy, building capacity, refining models, creating materials and nurturing collaborative networks.
3. "Learning for Sustainable Development" is the title of the Strategic Plan 2015-2021, which began in July 2015. COL believes that learning is the key to sustainable development. Learning must lead to opportunities for economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.
4. COL's strategic goals are:
 - a. human resource development in the Commonwealth;
 - b. harnessing ODL/Open Educational Resources (OER) and technology to promote equitable access to learning for sustainable development; and
 - c. promoting Commonwealth cooperation.
5. COL's priorities are:
 - a. development and promotion of OER; and
 - b. education and training for women and girls.
6. Over the course of six years, COL aims to improve the capacity of 470 organisations to leverage technology for education and training, increase quality learning opportunities for 1.4 million learners, mostly from marginalised communities, and strengthen the sustainable livelihoods of 300,000 people. COL believes that these activities will become reference points for governments and institutions to strengthen learning for sustainable development. As a small and specialised intergovernmental agency, partnerships underpin all of COL's work. COL promotes cooperation and collaboration among Member States, Commonwealth bodies, multilateral organisations, educational institutions, civil society, and the private sector.
7. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 lockdowns, COL has made significant progress towards achieving the corporate targets. As of April 15, 2020, COL has reached over one million learners. It has helped to substantially build the capacity of 692 organisations. Evidence shows that COL's interventions have helped over 2700000 Commonwealth citizens improve their livelihoods.



Reporting to Governments

8. In addition to annual reporting to the Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors and its own Board, COL presents its strategic plan, along with individual country reports, to Commonwealth education ministers when they meet triennially.
9. “COL in the Commonwealth,” a compendium of individual Country Reports, is published at the end of each triennium and was presented to Education Ministers at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM) in **Fiji**.
10. COL has a network of Focal Points, nominated by Education Ministers, in each Member State and keeps them apprised of its work on an ongoing basis.
11. COL participates in Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and presents its progress report to Foreign Ministers. During the 25th CHOGM in London in April 2018, COL highlighted at various forums the paradigm shifts required to secure ‘our common future’.

Six-Year Plan 2015-2021

12. The Strategic Plan 2015-2021 is titled “Learning for Sustainable Development.” COL is committed to realising its vision of achieving development goals through universal access to learning. The process for developing COL’s next Strategic Plan 2021-2027 has begun and an external evaluation of the current Strategic Plan is underway. The evaluation will provide useful recommendations for COL to deliver effectively on its mission and mandate.

13. COL's mission is translated into a comprehensive Logic Model that specifies the outcomes COL aims to achieve through its activities. These activities are divided into two programme sectors – Education and Skills, with gender as a cross-cutting theme. The Education sector has five initiatives: Open/Innovative Schooling (OIS), Teacher Education, Higher Education, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and GIRLS Inspire.

The Skills sector works in both formal and non-formal learning. The initiatives in this sector are: Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD), Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F), and Technology-enabled Learning (TeL). A new Skills Online initiative has been introduced under TVSD. Gender is a crosscutting initiative which supports all COL programmes, as well as implements standalone projects.

14. The **Education** sector initiatives are as follows:

Open/Innovative Schooling (OIS): Due to progress made in achieving universal primary education, secondary schools are now unable to absorb the surge of pupils completing primary schooling. Open/Innovative schooling is increasingly recognised as a viable solution to the growing demand for equitable access to secondary education, especially for girls and marginalised groups, particularly in remote locations. Governments are seeking to redefine the way secondary education addresses societal needs by diversifying the curriculum. This means making technical and vocational programmes available alongside academic offerings – something that open schools are well positioned to do (www.col.org/OpenSchooling). OIS currently works in **Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Guyana, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Trinidad & Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia.**

Teacher Education: One of the targets of SDG4 seeks to “substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.” Governments and the education sector seek to increase teacher supply and improve teacher quality. COL's Teacher Education initiative is focused on school-based, in-service training models, which can cut costs and achieve scale. It has emphasised the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and OER in teacher training to improve the quality of teaching (www.col.org/TeacherEducation). COL is working with institutions in **The Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.**

Higher Education: COL continues to support policy makers, institutions and leaders in higher education to harness the potential of ODL and technology and enable them to cope with the increasing demand for quality higher education, rising costs and diminishing public funding. COL has developed action plans aligned to the priorities of specific countries to increase access to quality higher education and forges partnerships with international and regional organisations to leverage its impact (www.col.org/HigherEducation). Institutions in **Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zambia** partnered with COL in this initiative.

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC):

Strengthening and improving the quality and scope of existing tertiary institutions is a key priority for small states. The VUSSC partnership represents **30 small states of the Commonwealth** dedicated to expanding access to tertiary education. VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the sharing of educational resources using collaborative and multi-institutional partnerships. COL's emphasis is now on the delivery of VUSSC courses and programmes and in promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) (www.col.org/VUSSC). VUSSC was active in small states in Africa (**Botswana, Mauritius, Seychelles**); the Caribbean (**The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana**); and the Pacific (**Fiji, Solomon Islands**).

GIRLS Inspire: This project aims to provide schooling and skills development to some of the hardest-to-reach girls in the Commonwealth. Research shows that education lowers the probability of early marriage for girls. COL is working in **Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania** to provide education and training to 90,000 girls to equip them for employment and entrepreneurship. This project is supported by Global Affairs Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia.

15. The **Skills** sector initiatives are as follows:

Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD): COL has demonstrated that using ODL and learning technologies can increase access to quality technical and vocational skills development equitably. The role of TVSD in creating a skilled workforce of lifelong learners for the informal and formal economies is constantly challenged by urban-rural and gender divides that exclude large numbers of learners from skills training systems. COL is working with institutional partners, industry, and governments in **Bangladesh, Barbados, Fiji, Ghana, Grenada, Kenya, Nauru, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zambia** to create contextualised, high-quality flexible and blended learning approaches to scale up skills development (www.col.org/TVSD). The Skills Online initiative is a collaboration between COL, its partners in **Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda**, and Udemy Inc., an online learning and teaching marketplace. This pilot initiative aims to provide job-oriented skills to unemployed youth, combining the power of online learning with offline mentorship.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F): COL's L3F programme helps rural communities find appropriate technology-based solutions to improve their livelihoods. L3F empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning process, organise themselves to solve the challenges of food security and improve their living conditions. Under the L3F model, COL is a catalyst in bringing together institutions, civil society and the private sector to build the capacity of communities through gender-sensitive learning (www.col.org/L3F). Eleven countries, **Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda and Zambia** are implementing the L3F model.

Technology-enabled Learning (TeL): This initiative aims to encourage more governments and institutions to integrate technology-enabled learning and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. COL

believes that for technology to have a transformative effect in teaching and learning, a focus on policy-technology-capacity is needed and practice must be based on research evidence (<http://www.col.org/programmes/technology-enabled-learning>). This initiative is being implemented in **Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Fiji, Grenada, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.**

Gender: Gender is a cross-cutting theme that underpins and complements all initiatives. COL recognises that the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to its agenda of learning for sustainable development. As a cross-cutting theme, gender equality requires that both women's and men's views, interests and needs shape COL's programmes. Gender mainstreaming is an organisational strategy for COL. A gender equality perspective is taken at all stages of the programme cycle – planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – to ensure that the initiatives offer equal opportunities, benefits and participation to girls/women and boys/men. COL has a Gender Policy, a Gender Action Plan and its website provides links to resources and research on gender and ODL and ICT (www.col.org/Gender). Projects are being implemented in **Botswana, Ghana, Guyana, India, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad & Tobago.**

16. Recognising that the Commonwealth has diverse and geographically dispersed populations, COL has established regional centers to support capacity building in the field. Through an agreement signed with the Government of **India**, COL established a regional office, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in New Delhi. CEMCA works in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. COL also supports the Research and Training Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) hosted by the National Open University of **Nigeria** (NOUN); the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) located in the **Botswana** Open University (BOU); the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) at the University of the South Pacific (USP), **Fiji**; and, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning (CCCL) in **Malta**.
17. To adapt its programme to the unique needs of each country, COL develops individual Country Action Plans after extensive consultations with Focal Points and partner institutions. These are monitored and updated regularly (www.col.org/FocalPoints).
18. COL adds strength to its professional network by working with a group of eminent education and development professionals from across the Commonwealth. COL Chairs have been appointed to work in specific research areas related to ODL and OER (<https://www.col.org/about/col-chairs>).
19. COL is results-oriented and strives to achieve 'value for money'. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are key components of COL's Results-Based Management practice. COL's 'Theory of Change' helps to define the roadmap to achieve its goals. A Risk Management Matrix is reviewed regularly by COL's senior management and Executive and Audit Committees, and annually by its Board of Governors.

Examples of COL's work

Some examples of COL's work at the Pan Commonwealth level and in the four regions over the past year are presented as follows:

Pan Commonwealth

20. As a response to the COVID-19 crisis COL is engaging in international partnerships and coalitions to help keep the doors of learning open. The 'International Partnership for Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19' has **35 initial partners** including the World Bank, UNESCO (Paris), UNESCO-IITE (Moscow), ALESCO and several open universities and associations. COL and the OER Foundation (OERF), **New Zealand** joined forces to establish an Open Educational Resources for COVID (OER4COVID) community, to assist education institutions around the world, especially in the Commonwealth, to transition to online learning. This initiative has registered educators from **67 countries** including 30 Commonwealth Member States. COL has also joined partners from across the globe to support countries in scaling up their best distance learning practices and reaching children and youth who are most affected by COVID-19 via the Global Education Coalition, launched by UNESCO. The CommonwealthWiseWomen.org initiative has attracted 25 eminent women from around the Commonwealth to provide mentorship for girls in six countries.
21. The 9th Pan Commonwealth Forum in Open and Distance Learning (PCF9) was held in Edinburgh, Scotland during 9 to 12 September 2019 (<https://pcf9.org/>). COL partnered with The Open University, UK to co-host the Forum and celebrate the 30 and 50 years of their respective commitment to quality education and lifelong learning. The Forum brought together 541 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from **61 countries**.
22. COL has begun a series of regional consultations to update Focal Points on COL's work, and to consult with them on their priorities for COL's next strategic plan. The Caribbean Focal Points meeting was held in **St Lucia** with representatives from **Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, and St Vincent and the Grenadines**. Due to COVID-19, the consultation with **African** Focal Points has been moved online.
23. The L3F initiative has contributed to the improved livelihoods of more than 140000 people (more than 60% female) in **10 countries**. In both **Africa** and **Asia** partners are moving toward macro-level expansion through partnerships with governments and national banks. The innovative mobiMOOC approach has increased access to learning using basic mobile phones.
24. Ministries of Education in **Belize, Malawi, Mozambique, Trinidad & Tobago, Vanuatu** and **Zambia** are continuing the integration of the open/innovative schooling (OIS) model, with **Nigeria** commencing activities this year. More than 16,000 learning resources have been developed to date.
25. COL's GIRLS Inspire model is being implemented in **Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka** and **Tanzania** to provide education and training to

92,000 girls for employment and entrepreneurship. This project is supported by Global Affairs **Canada** and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, **Australia**. To date 82,943 women and girls have been trained. This has resulted in 18,209 girls accessing income generating opportunities and has contributed to the prevention of 1,181 child marriages.

26. The school-based teacher development model ‘Teacher Futures’ is under way in **The Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa** and **Sri Lanka**. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice, and more than 1500 teachers have been reached.
27. Through the Technology-enabled Learning (TeL) initiative, the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) online platform (<https://cdelta.col.org>) has 6,457 registered users, and the Understanding Open Educational Resources (OER) platform (<https://learnoer.col.org>) has 5,946 registered users.
28. The ‘Skills in Demand’ model, which links educational institutions and industry partners, was introduced in Africa and Asia. COL supported partners in **Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria** and **Zambia** to develop business models for TVET training in the informal sector and is working with partners in **Bangladesh** on a project for women in the ready-made garment sector.
29. The Bachelor of Youth Development Work is an online programme made available through The Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work. By making the degree available as OER and building capacity to offer it in online, the Consortium is increasing access to education for aspiring and practising youth workers. The Consortium is led by COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and The University of the West Indies, with 17 universities from **15 Commonwealth countries** as implementing partners.

Africa

30. COL has launched a project in **Mauritius** with the Global Rainbow Foundation (GRF) to build the capacity of service workers, teachers and volunteers who work with people with disabilities (PWD). With COL support, the GRF has developed short, interactive, online courses for these practitioners.
31. Through the **Ghana** Library Authority, **Rwanda** Telecentre Network and Programme for Capacity Development in Africa in **Kenya** there were 12889 enrolments in Udemy courses, and 1966 certificates have been issued.
32. The Open/Innovative Schooling (OIS) model in **Zambia** is being piloted in 15 schools, reaching 914 learners. The Universal Basic Education Commission **Nigeria** has commenced activities to address the needs of out-of-school children in six northern states through open schooling.
33. Content from the COL supported Green Teacher programme has been integrated into **Nigeria**’s National Certificate of Education and General Education Studies curriculum.

Enrollment in these programmes, offered by the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) Kaduna, has surpassed 20,000. COL, in collaboration with The Open University, UK is also supporting the **Kenya** Institute of Special Education to implement a school-based teacher development programme in 20 regular and special schools in Kenya.

34. An institutional trial audit of the University of **South Africa** (Unisa) conducted by COL marked a critical milestone in a year-long collaborative project. Initiated to prepare Unisa for its institutional review by South Africa's Council of Higher Education, it supported South Africa's largest university in reviewing its policies and practices, with a focus on teaching and learning, and student success.

Asia

35. In **India**, an audio-only MOOC on corporate literacy, using basic mobile phones, was offered, and 2493 farmers (50% female) enrolled. A second offering of the course is expected to reach an additional 2500 learners.
36. Facilitated by COL, the south-south collaboration between **Bangladesh** Open University (BOU) and the National Institute for Open Schooling, **India** resulted in the development of an Inclusive Education Policy for the Open School at BOU, to give greater access to children with disabilities.
37. The partnership with Better Future for Women (BfW), **Bangladesh** led to 4475 enrolments in online Udemy courses and 448 certificates were issued. BfW collaborated with community-based organisations to establish learning centres in Rohingya refugee camps.
38. In **Pakistan**, the Society for Protection and Rights of the Child (SPARC) trained 4898 women and girls in skills for livelihoods.
39. COL has supported Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), **Bangladesh** to implement technology-enabled learning. COL has built institutional capacity to develop blended courses, and 20 courses have been finalised by AUST.
40. The Women's Development Centre (WDC) in **Sri Lanka** trained 2430 women in skills for livelihoods and established an Entrepreneur Association to provide increased access to micro-loans.

Caribbean

41. More than 30 representatives from **14 countries in the Caribbean** gathered in **Saint Lucia** for the regional Capacity-Building Workshop on Open Educational Resources (OER), organised by COL in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The workshop raised awareness about OER, prepared participants to advocate for OER, and supported them in their efforts to develop and implement OER policies. COL's OER work has had a substantial impact in the region: The Ministry of Education, **Guyana** has saved thousands of dollars by adopting open textbooks for schools, and **Antigua & Barbuda** and **St Lucia** have integrated OER in national ICT in Education policies. Other countries have come forward to seek COL

support and the need for OER will become even more pressing in the post-COVID Caribbean.

42. In **Dominica**, COL supported the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development to develop and launch a national public education campaign to encourage behaviours that promote disaster prevention and preparedness, under the theme *Update, Upgrade for a More Resilient Dominica*.
43. At the request of the Ministry of Education, **Belize**, COL expedited the sharing of open schooling content on an online platform, as a response to the COVID-19 crisis.
44. COL is working with the **Caribbean** Association of National Training Agencies to build the capacity of TVET practitioners through online training. COL is supporting six experts from **Grenada** National Training Agency, **Barbados** TVET Council, and the National Training Agency of **Trinidad & Tobago** to create OER for the online Caribbean Vocational Qualification Verifier Training.
45. COL has partnered with the Joint Board of Teacher Education, **Jamaica** for a project on teaching Mathematics and English in 35 secondary schools, which is expected to reach over 2000 teachers and 37000 students, including children with disabilities. The programme uses eLearning and videoconference platforms for delivery of learning resources.
46. Facilitated by COL and hosted by the Ministry of Education in **The Bahamas**, a regional workshop on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education was held for women from tertiary institutions across the **Caribbean**. The workshop explored current AI technologies and trends in education and provided hands-on training chatbots using AI.

Pacific

47. COL, in partnership with **New Zealand's** Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and University of South Pacific, commissioned a situational analysis to inform the implementation of open, distance and flexible learning in the **Pacific**. The analyses were presented and deliberated in stakeholder meetings, including regional consultations in **Fiji** and in Scotland at PCF9, as well as national consultations in **Papua New Guinea** and **Kiribati**. These consultations are informing COL's response to Member States in the Pacific who have requested support for online and distance learning during the COVID-19 crisis.
48. In partnership with **Solomon Islands** National Council of Women and University of Wollongong, **Australia**, COL supported the development of a mobile app for citizens, particularly women, to access information on social protection. The collection of resource materials, consultations and acceptance testing has commenced in local communities.
49. COL continued to support at the University of **Papua New Guinea** in technology-enabled learning implementation, and the development of blended courses. Twenty blended courses have been developed.

50. COL is working with **Nauru's** Ministries of Education, and Industry and Environment, Taiwan's Technical Mission, community leaders and farmers to use mobile learning to develop skills in growing their own gardens.
51. Fulton Adventist University College in **Fiji** and COL are working together to develop and deliver an online version of Fiji's National Certificate in Teaching TVET program. Following a face-to-face learning design workshop, Fulton staff have commenced module development and undertaken a market analysis, with support from COL.
52. Eighteen COL-sponsored students from **Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga** and **Vanuatu** graduated from the Legislative Drafting Programme through the **Fiji** campus of the University of the South Pacific.
53. As part of the ongoing school-based teacher development programme in **Kiribati**, Lecturers at Kiribati Teachers College were remotely supported to develop five flagship courses for the programme, and 20 courses were significantly improved.
54. A Functional Numeracy MOOC was launched by COL's Regional Centre in the **Pacific**, PACFOLD, with 400 people enrolled and 70 certificates awarded.
55. COL supported 25 delegates from the **Pacific** to attend the 9th Pan Commonwealth Forum (PCF9) in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Technology and Innovations

56. COL is recognised as one of the foremost sources of knowledge on open, distance and technology-enabled learning. A wide range of start-up guides, toolkits, research reports and other resources are freely available on COL's website (<https://www.col.org/resources>).
57. The *Journal of Learning for Development* (JL4D) is an open online scholarly journal which provides a forum for practitioners and academics working in education and international development to share knowledge and experience (www.jl4d.org). The Journal is indexed in several online sources including ERIC, BASE Search Engine, WorldCat, and Directory of Open Access Journals.
58. As a key player in the fast-evolving field of knowledge management, COL continues to develop its internal systems to organise information of its own work and to support partners. COL has an advanced intranet service that supports eLogframes for Results Based Management (RBM) while enabling access to a large repository of professional reports and publications. COL's institutional repository (<http://oasis.col.org>) contains COL publications from the past 20 years.
59. The Directory of Open Educational Resources (DOER) is a widely acknowledged repository of free resources in the Commonwealth in higher education, teacher training, secondary schooling and skills development (<http://doer.col.org>). The top providers of materials are **India, the United Kingdom and Australia**.

60. COL is present in many forums that explore the leading edge of new media. COL's formal communications media such as its website and newsletter, *Connections*, are supported by other electronic communications such as broadcast messaging, Facebook, Twitter, videos and blogs.
61. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, many face-to-face training events and meetings have had to be moved online. COL is using various technology tools, including webinar and videoconferencing platforms, to deliver training and consult with stakeholders.

Funding

62. COL's core budget comes from voluntary contributions of Commonwealth Member States.
63. COL's financial strategy is based primarily on two sources of revenue. Voluntary contributions from approximately 45 Commonwealth Member States provide the resources for over 80% of the annual budget. While the seven largest major donors are **Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa and the United Kingdom**, COL appreciates the financial support that it receives from all contributing Commonwealth countries. Additional contributions from grants and fee-for-service work accounts for close to 17% of total revenues. On the expenditure side, a minimum of 87% of the budget is directed to the programme and the balance to organisational management and governance.
64. As of the middle of April, **41 countries** have contributed this fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2020. In the previous fiscal year, COL received financial contributions from 46 countries.

Conclusion

65. COL is a small but well-respected organisation. It continues to: i) be responsive and relevant to the needs of Member States; ii) be results-oriented and demonstrate value for money; and iii) leverage partnerships to achieve a high impact. COL's expertise in ODL and responsiveness will become increasingly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. COL will complete the fifth year of the current Six-Year Plan and will focus on supporting Member States in their ongoing efforts to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all' (SDG 4).

Further Information

Web: www.col.org.

Twitter: [@COL4D](https://twitter.com/COL4D).

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/COL4D/>.

Blog: www.col.org/blog.

Videos: www.col.org/videos.

Six-Year Plan 2015-2021: <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/826>.

Board of Governors: www.col.org/board /Staff: www.col.org/staff.

Publications: <https://www.col.org/resources>.

Speeches and presentations: <https://www.col.org/news/speeches-and-presentations>.

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