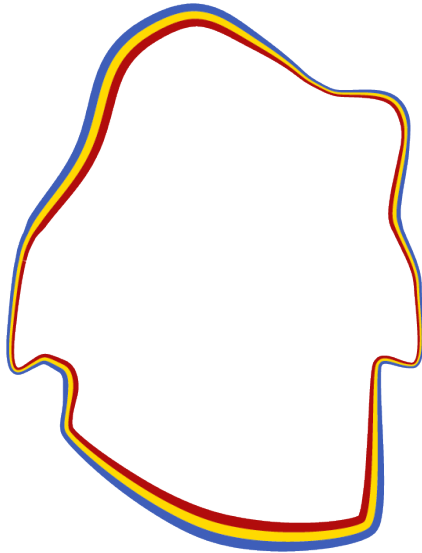




FOCUS ON ESWATINI

2021-24



COL's work in Eswatini is focused primarily in the areas of higher education and open schooling. It is part of the network and benefits from programmes offered by COL's regional centre, the Southern African Development Community's Centre for Distance Education. Learners from Eswatini are also benefitting from COL's free online courses and other openly available resources.

HIGHLIGHTS

- With the ICT Augmentation support and related activities facilitated by COL, Emlaladini Development Centre is progressively able to offer blended and online learning.
- The University of Eswatini is implementing COL's institutional employability framework.
- Over 1100 nurses/midwives in Eswatini successfully completed one or more professional development courses.
- Eswatini Higher Education Council developed guidelines for institutional assessment and programme evaluation.

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

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is focused on adding value to member countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. We support the governments and institutions in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. During its current plan (2021-27), COL will:

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

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

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth and has four initiatives: Open Schooling; Teacher Education; Higher Education and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

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

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

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

KEY CONTACTS

FOCAL POINT

Ms Thembekile Y. Dlamini
Acting Chief Inspector of Tertiary Education
Ministry of Education and Training

REGIONAL CENTRE

The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) supports open and distance learning (ODL) capacity building in the sub-region. As a member of SADC, Eswatini continues to benefit from the activities of COL's regional centre.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Eswatini include:

- Ministry for Education and Training
- Emlaladini Development Centre
- Eswatini Nursing Council
- University of Eswatini

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

COL initiated several high-level panels on Climate Change and Education to support Member countries in advancing climate action (through policy, capacity, resources and research). This resulted in the *Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education*, published in August 2022. The Honourable Lady Howard Mabuza, Minister of Education and Training provided guidance and contributed to discussions in the high-level panel meetings.

The study on *Out-of-School Children and Youth: A Contemporary View from Selected Africa Commonwealth Countries* covers Eswatini.

The Eswatini Higher Education Council developed two guidelines on institutional assessment and programme evaluation with COL support.

COL's President met with Her Excellency Ms Thandazile Mbuyisa, High Commissioner at the Eswatini High Commission in London on 14 May 2024.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

Strengthening capacities at University of Eswatini

The University of Eswatini (UNESWA) has demonstrated improved capacities to leverage ODL with COL support in areas of design and delivery of ODL, authentic assessment and integrating employability attributes in courses. Since 2021, several workshops have been organised on open and distance learning online material development, and online facilitation. As a result of the support, UNESWA has developed a Certificate in Online Teaching (4-module course in Moodle). This 4-week course was piloted in November 2021 with 11 UNESWA staff with 100% completion (6F/5M).

COL's institutional employability framework is also under implementation in a systematic manner. A project dissemination meeting on the employability project was held at University of Eswatini in June 2023 with 48 participants (23F/25M). Four courses have been revised and improved with employability attributes and offered to students during Feb-June 2023. Seven hundred learners (359F/341M) have enrolled in these courses.

COL supported capacity of UNESWA staff on authentic assessment in a workshop held in November 2023 with 39 (12M/27F) participants. An Authentic Assessment Framework was developed at UNESWA with COL support in December 2023. Following this, a workshop on course revision to integrate authentic assessment was held in February 2024, with 46 (18M/28F) participants. University of Eswatini held a project dissemination meeting in June 2024, with 55 (27F/28M) in attendance.

Emlalatini Development Centre offering blended and online courses

Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC) has been operational primarily with a print-based, contact-supported model. Since 2021, COL has been working with EDC to increase its access and improve institutional effectiveness. A desktop research study was conducted

during the pandemic, leading to the initiation of OER development in 2021. Following the completion of development of OERs for nine Junior Secondary subjects in 2021, EDC was further supported to develop more OER in the siSwati language and to conduct a blended learning outreach in Eswatini on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Training.

In March 2022, an additional 214 learning resources were created to support the teaching of siSwati. An outreach programme supported 63 communities to take advantage of open schooling using a blended model, reaching nearly 16,000 community members. Between July 2022 and June 2023, 736 students, including 508 girls registered with EDC and accessed Junior Certificate courses and OER. Several staff members of EDC have also received support to register in the Post Graduate Diploma in Open School Operations and Management offered by NAMCOL in Namibia to develop professional competencies in open schooling.

In 2023, additional ICT support was provided to strengthen Open Schooling at EDC through an ICT Augmentation project. Furthermore, 112 teachers and staff received training in online course facilitation, online content development using Moodle, course development using OER, multimedia production for online course enhancement, and TEL/OER policy development. In October 2023, a draft Technology-Enabled Learning policy, including OER, was developed. As of now, 13 online courses on Moodle learning management system have been developed for Eswatini General Certificate Secondary Education (EGCSE). Five hundred and ninety-four new students (409F/185M with 15PWD) have enrolled in the ten pilot schools in Junior Certificate and EGCSE courses. EDC has demonstrated improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL and moving towards offering blended and online learning.

REGIONAL CENTRE ACTIVITIES: SADC-CDE

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

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

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

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

From January 2022 to January 2023, COL supported nurses and midwives in Eswatini to access online, context-specific, short, professional development modules using courses from the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA). 1,110 nurses and midwives successfully completed one or more courses.

Ministry and EDC staff contributed to the development of the course *Becoming a Climate Champion: A Climate Emergency Course for Young People*.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Nokuphila Saulus from UNESWA was invited to participate in the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022, in Penang, Malaysia, including an online workshop earlier in the year. The workshop theme was ‘Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world’ with three sub-themes—Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change.

COL’s Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Two delegates from Eswatini registered for the Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14–16 September 2022. Both Dr Patience Samkelisiwe Dlamini, University of Eswatini and Mr Bhekithemba Victor Gama, Ministry of Education, were sponsored by COL.

COL’s Regional Focal Points Meeting for Africa and Europe was held in Seychelles from 20–21 February 2023. Official representatives from 19 Commonwealth countries in the region participated in the two-day meeting, including Ms Thembekile Y Dlamini from Eswatini.

COL introduced the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Practitioner Research Training and Mentorship programme in 2023. This six-month programme focusses on stimulating and supporting practitioner research on ODL in higher education to facilitate quality educational research. This online programme also includes the establishment of a network of mentors to promote high-quality research in ODL and encourages sharing of research findings through online fora and publications. At the core of this programme are 14 experienced and well-published mentors who serve as guides and co-authors for the selected early-career researchers. Professor Karen Ferreira-Meyers, University of Eswatini is a mentor.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

Becoming a Climate Champion: A Climate Emergency Course for Young People

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5370>

Gender Profile 2023: Eswatini

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5522>

Out-of-School Children and Youth: A Contemporary View from Selected Africa Commonwealth Countries

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4057>

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

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4068>



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