



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **ASIA**



Bangladesh

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 states' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of the Commonwealth in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development.

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

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

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

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth, particularly in the small states (Brunei Darussalam and Maldives) 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 state in the Commonwealth. These are:

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

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has a largely rural population of over 171 million ([World Bank](#), 2022).

COL's work in Bangladesh is in the areas of higher education, gender equality, skills for work and technology-enabled learning and benefits from programmes under the aegis of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA). Learners from Bangladesh are also benefitting from COL's free, open online courses and other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Bangladesh include:

- Ministry of Education
- Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology
- Aster Innovation Company Ltd
- Bangladesh Open University (BOU)
- Better Future for Women
- Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES)
- CITY University
- Daffodil International University
- Dhaka Ahsania Mission
- Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha
- University of Chittagong
- University Grants Commission (UGC)

KEY CONTACTS

FOCAL POINT

Mst. Rokhsana Begum
Deputy Secretary
Secondary and Higher
Education Division
Ministry of Education

REGIONAL CENTRE

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) is located in New Delhi, India and was established to promote cooperation and collaboration in the creation and use of multiple media resources for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and skills development in the Commonwealth countries of Asia. Its activities revolve around COL's Strategic Plan 2021-27, but at the same time, CEMCA retains its regional focus, keeping in view the challenges and requirements of Asian Commonwealth countries.

CEMCA's Advisory Council meets once a year and functions as an advisory body on CEMCA's affairs and is responsible for broad policy formulation in the programme areas. The Council meets once a year and membership is rotated among the members in Commonwealth Asia.

During the 2021-2027 plan, CEMCA will

1. Build the capacity of institutions to transition to online and blended learning;
2. Support gender-responsive skills development for livelihoods; and

3. Develop innovations in a range of technologies from Community Radio to AI-based solutions for reaching the last mile.

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- Bangladesh Open University renewed its five-year license in COL's CEMBA/CEMPA Programme.
- 20 universities developed institutional OER policy.
- Workshop on 'Sustainable Farming Techniques' was conducted for farmers in Bangladesh.
- TEL policy implemented at Ahsanullah Institute of Science and Technology.
- A strategy for the digitization of learning resources, focusing on climate-responsive sustainable livelihoods and food security has been developed
- 9,246 certificates have been issued to learners from Bangladesh under the Skills Online programme.
- 5,000 women and girls in Bangladesh have been trained.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

Sensitisation and training have been provided to over 541 policymakers and senior officials in Gender Equality (GE) and prevention of Gender Based Violence (GBV) to increase awareness and promote effective policies and strategies to address these issues. COL's partner, the Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES), held a policy review workshop to analyse and improve the existing CMES gender policy and made revisions to the policy to maintain minimum standards.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) Programme's goal is to deliver high-quality learning and professional development opportunities – with Commonwealth Partner Institutions – that complement existing MBA/MPA programmes. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is a participating partner institution with Professor Dr Syed Humayun Akhter, Vice-Chancellor, a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA Executive Governing Board and Professor Mostafa Azad Kamal, a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA Academic Board.

- Bangladesh Open University (BOU) renewed its five-year license in 2021.

- In 2022, nine course materials were redeveloped. They include Enterprise Information Systems and Digital Strategy, Management in Organization, People and Talent Management, Operations Management, New Public Management and Governance, Data Analysis for Decision making, Marketing Management, Accounting Issues and Financial Management for Business Decisions, and Disaster Management.

CEMCA and the University Grants Commission (UGC) initiated a capacity-building programme on open educational resources (OER) and online education for the faculty of higher education institutions. 1,100 faculty members from 20 universities participated in two online workshops held in mid-2021 and were trained on OER and the drafting of institutional OER policy. Subsequently, 100 educational leaders from participating universities have drafted institutional OER policies. All of the 20 institutional OER policy drafts were made available for adoption in respective institutions.

In September 2021, 98 faculty members from science disciplines at the University of Chittagong in Bangladesh were trained on how to access and use virtual labs for teaching and learning.

CEMCA organised a month-long online workshop on 'Design Thinking and Innovation in Teaching and Training' to assist higher education and vocational training institutions in the capacity building of their faculty members/trainers. This workshop was conducted in November 2021. The workshop was attended by 114 participants from five countries (Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives, and Sri Lanka) who were educators from technical and engineering streams, business schools, and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) network.

CEMCA facilitated a 'Training on Learning Management System (Moodle)' in May 2022 for 50 faculty members of the City University in Bangladesh, who are responsible for developing courses of study, and ensuring their delivery in a digital format through the University's Learning Management System (LMS) in the post-COVID period.

COL supported Bangladesh Open University (BOU) to develop an institutional policy on Inclusive Education. A workshop was held for 35 institutional stakeholders to meet and review the Bangladesh Open University Inclusive Education Policy for Open Schooling 2022. [May 2022]

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) has leveraged Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) to reach many students based on the systematic implementation of TEL. In the process, COL supported the capacity-building of staff, development of blended courses (5,415 students enrolled in 93 courses) and assisted in the benchmarking of TEL and development of their 3-year strategic plan for mainstreaming TEL. Reports on the Impact and Benchmarking of TEL at AUST have been published.

COL supported Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) to train female ready-made garment workers in managerial skills. Agreements were finalised with three factories for this training.

COL's GIRLS Inspire partner from Bangladesh participated in a pre-conference workshop that took place at PCF10 in September 2022 to develop a Strategy for the Digitisation of Learning Resources focusing on Climate and Environmentally Responsive Sustainable Livelihoods and Food Security.

As part of its digital augmentation project, COL is supporting Better Future for Women (BFW) in Bangladesh to build institutional capacity to adopt open, distance and eLearning (ODEL) systematically through augmenting available technologies and capacities.

- E-learning platform developed to deliver online skill courses for Gender equality. [Apr 2023]
- Six courses developed and shared via the e-learning portal. [Apr 2023]
- Three partnerships established with: Kopotaksha Munda Dalit Women's Cooperative Society Ltd., Sundarban Adibasi Munda Sangstha (SAMS) and Rural Reconstruction Foundation (RRF) to digitize their TVET Courses which will be also uploaded on the e-learning platform. [Apr2023]

CEMCA supported CITY University to adopt Open Educational Resources (OER) through implementing institutional policy.

- online capacity-building programme for 98 (69M/29F) teachers and leaders organised in December 2021 both in synchronous and asynchronous mode.
- 21 (17M/4F) Policy level members participated in a 2-day workshop to discuss the various sections of the COL-CEMCA OER policy template and develop the OER policy.
- 50 (37M/13F) educators trained in various ICT skills, e-content development, use of Moodle for learning the use of OER and Blended Learning models in May 2022.

CEMCA supported the International Bamboo and Rattan Organisation (INBAR) in the development of an Audio-Visual Module for Virtual Training on Furniture making for Artisans and Potential Entrepreneurs of Bangladesh; 2 video tutorials were developed in Bengali. [Jul 2022]

To improve COL's GIRLS Inspire partners' effectiveness in implementing the initiative, the team held the April Gender Liaisons Session #9 on the theme: Marginalization and inclusion. 12 partners participated. [May2023]

CMES trained 160 (96M/64F) staff from WROs and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) on: Strategies for effective public advocacy and community mobilization, Techniques for engaging and motivating community members to participate in advocacy efforts, developing effective communication skills and messaging for advocacy, Monitoring and evaluating the impact of advocacy efforts public advocacy and community mobilisation to help them become more effective agents of change in their communities. To-date, a total of 5,000 women and girls have been trained; 1,273 have accessed financial resources such as loans; 73 have opened bank accounts; 4,148 have accessed internship opportunities; and 32,87 Community members reached through advocacy events conducted. [May 2023]

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

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

13 Industry Skills Council representatives and subject matter experts developed competency standards for the occupation of Sewing Supervisor. [Jan 2022]

CEMCA conducted a six-day workshop in Bangladesh on sustainable farming techniques and the use of IPM technologies for year-round vegetable production. This workshop was conducted in batches for 309 marginalized community farmers (226M/83F) from November 2021 to January 2022. The sessions included an agriculture lab visit (Sher-e-Bengal Agricultural University), government schemes orientation by officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension Bangladesh, and inclusive programmes by agricultural scientists and experts/professors at agricultural universities.

Four courses were developed by Daffodil International University: A-IoT for Agricultural Automation; Exploratory Data Analytics in Health; Content Development for Digital and Social Media; Tech Penetration Testing in Cybersecurity. 441 students have enrolled in these courses. [Jun 2022]

COL's GIRLS Inspire initiative is operational in Bangladesh and is supporting the Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES) in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through skills development for livelihoods and community sensitisation. To date, a total of 5,000 women and girls have been trained; 1,273 have accessed financial resources such as loans; 73 have opened bank accounts; 4,148 have accessed internship opportunities; and 32,870 Community members reached through advocacy events conducted.

COL's ICT Augmentation project in Bangladesh reported that classroom-based training on ICT Skills is ongoing at the Women's TVET Corners. The access for now is limited to its members and when the online courses are available it will be made public so that more learners can benefit from these micro e-learning courses. To date, 1,311 (9M, 1,302F) learners have enrolled. [Apr 2023]

COL's partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google continues to offer nominated learners this vast range of courses - a pathway for lifelong learning and growth and enhancing skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Since July 2021, 9,246 certificates have been issued to learners from Bangladesh under the Skills Online programme.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Thirteen delegates from Bangladesh 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. Four were sponsored by COL. The keynote address for the sub-theme "Inspiring Innovations" was delivered by Mohammed Rezwana, Founder and Executive Director of Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha. Other participants included: Syed Humayun Akhter, Bangladesh Open University; Mst. Shopna Akte, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University; Setara Begum, Bangladesh Open University; Shahpar Sharmeen, Chhanda; Anir Chowdhury, Aspire to Innovate (a2i) Programme; Md Moinul Hoque, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST); Khondoker Mokaddem Hossain, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP); Mohammad Afzal Hossain, Centre for Mass Education in Science (CMES); Mahbuba Nasreen, Bangladesh Open University; Md Mizanoor Rahman, BOU; Sabina Yeasmin, BOU.

CEMCA held their **22nd Advisory Council Meeting** in New Delhi on 26 December 2022 with members from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka in attendance. A major concern

expressed was that despite the fact that distance learning had been embraced globally during the pandemic, the negative perceptions relating to the quality of this mode of delivery continue to persist. CEMCA Director mentioned that despite the challenges confronted during the pandemic, CEMCA was able to reach out to a significant number of learners. Ongoing activities included supporting higher education institutions to implement Open Educational Resources (OER) policies and help enhance pedagogical skills among teachers/trainers of Technical and Vocational Education institutions in Commonwealth Asia. Council members noted CEMCA's contribution to ODL in the region and outlined the priorities for the future. Professor Syed Humayun Akhter, Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Open University, spoke to the importance of blended learning and the need for advocating for the uptake of ODL.

The **Regional Focal Point meeting for Asia** was held in New Delhi, India, on 27-28 December 2022. COL Focal Point Mst. Rokhsana Begum from the Ministry of Education participated in the two-day meeting.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

The Impact of Technology-Enabled Learning Implementation at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/3925>

Reaching the Unreached: Scale-Up Empowerment Study <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4006>

Commonwealth Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) Annual Report: 2021-2022
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5301>

Report of the Benchmarking of Technology-Enabled Learning at Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4471>

Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) Achievement Report: July - November 2022 <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5345>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Asia <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5228>



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