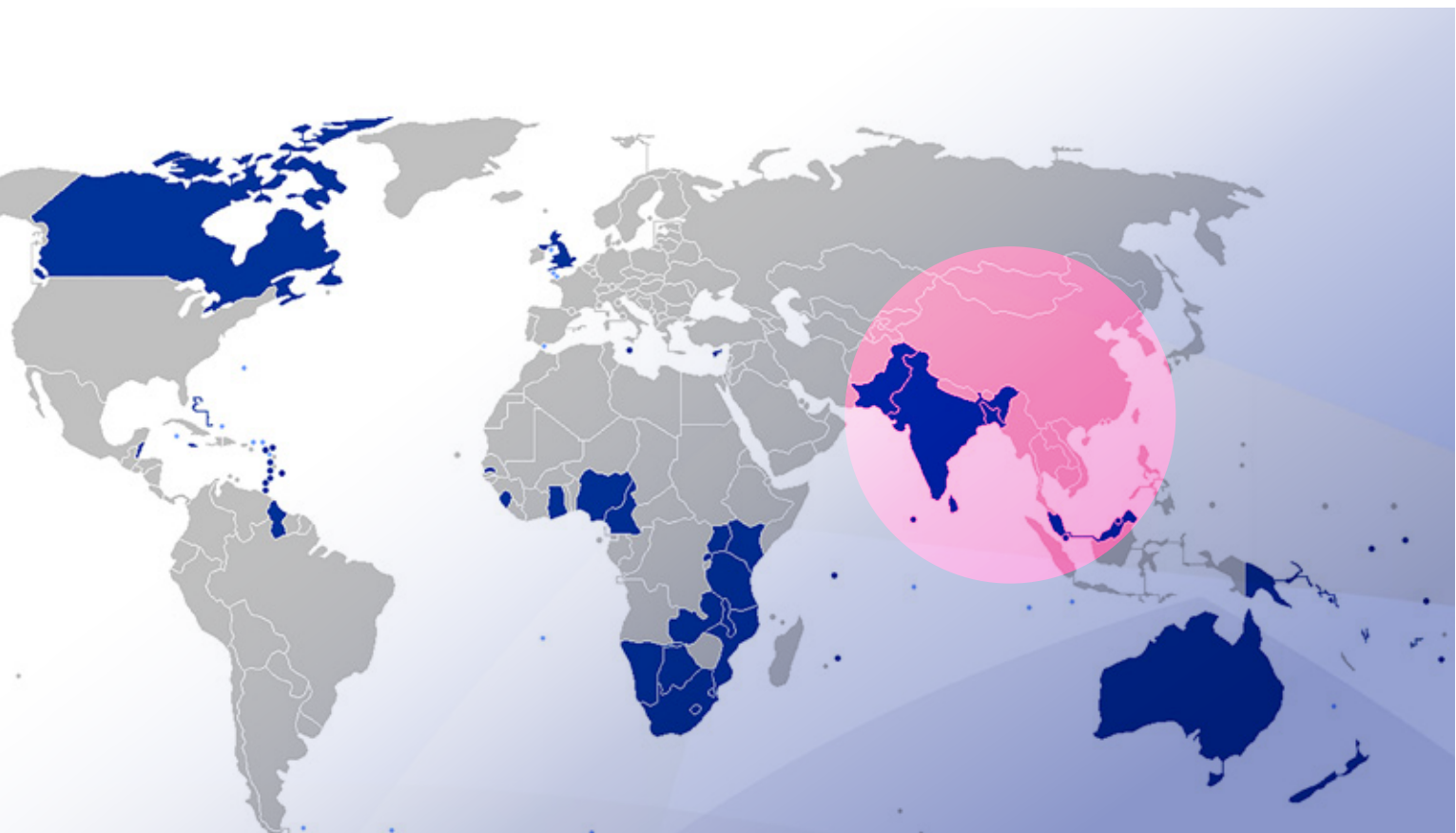




COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



ASIA

# **COL in the Commonwealth**

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**SRI LANKA 2015–2018**



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**SRI LANKA 2015–2018**



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

# Acknowledgements

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## **Direction**

Professor Asha S. Kanwar, President and Chief Executive Officer

# Foreword

*COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2018 Country Reports* summarises COL’s activities over the last three years (2015–2018), succinctly detailing what we have achieved in each Member State and across the Commonwealth. The reports describe not only COL’s recent activities in developing countries but also how its work supports the international development priorities of partner countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Bearing in mind the launch of a new set of post-2015 development goals, COL transitioned from “Learning for Development” to “Learning for Sustainable Development” to align itself with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” Therefore, COL continues to use its expertise in distance education and technology-based approaches to promote lifelong learning that leads to economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.

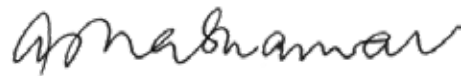
*COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2018 Country Reports* begins with a Pan-Commonwealth section, which describes COL’s initiatives under “Education” and “Skills.” This is followed by a section containing a brief report for each region: Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The third section details COL’s activities for each country within these regions.

COL’s five core strategies to achieve outcomes and impact are: partnerships, capacity, materials, models and policy. Focusing on these core strategies, the

reports for this triennium categorise COL’s activities in education, skills, gender, partnerships and special events, to better present how our work contributes to outcomes.

Most of COL’s recent initiatives and projects are already showing demonstrable results in expanding and improving opportunities for education and training, helping rural communities achieve greater prosperity and contributing to skills development.

The production of *COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2018 Country Reports* was made possible through collective effort and collaboration. Partners on the ground have diligently provided COL with updates. COL staff have tracked and assessed results obtained from partners through a thorough monitoring and evaluation process. COL’s advanced knowledge management systems have enabled us to capture information from numerous sources and synthesise this into the reports that make up this volume. I am very grateful to everyone involved for their valuable input.



Professor Asha S. Kanwar  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Commonwealth of Learning



**370,000+**  
**LEARNERS** Reached  
(Over **50%** Women)



**110+**  
**INSTITUTIONS**  
Adopted COL Models  
and Materials



**280+**  
**PARTNERS**  
in **42** Countries



**A++**  
**RATING**  
by DFID



**2,200+**  
**Learning Resources,**  
Materials and Curricula  
Collaboratively Developed

# PAN-COMMONWEALTH ACTIVITY

## Overview of COL and its activities across the Commonwealth 2015–2018

Located in British Columbia, Canada, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation that serves the education and training needs of the 52 independent states that comprise the Commonwealth and their combined population of 2.4 billion, of whom more than 60 per cent are under the age of 30.

Working collaboratively with governments in all Commonwealth Member States, COL has the mandate to promote the use of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies. COL leverages its impact through a wide range of partnerships that include institutions, national organisations, international development agencies and non-governmental organisations. Partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and UN Women. COL also works with donor agencies such as the World Bank, regional organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), national and regional distance education associations, industry, and private sector foundations such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

COL's overarching approach — especially its focus, scope and types of specific programmes and projects — is directed by its Strategic Plan, which is reviewed at the mid-term and evaluated at the end of the plan period. COL practises results-based management (RBM) and believes in meticulous planning and continuous monitoring and evaluation. COL's "Theory of Change" model identifies the areas to be addressed and defines its roadmap to achieve selected goals.

## COL and the Sustainable Development Goals

In its outcomes-based Strategic Plan 2015–2021, COL articulates its commitment to promoting equitable access to quality lifelong learning for all, believing that access to learning opportunities will lead to progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). COL's theme of promoting "Learning for Sustainable Development" aligns itself with SDG4, a stand-alone goal that aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

The three underlying principles of SDG4 are:

- i. Education is a fundamental human right and an enabling right.
- ii. Education is a public good.
- iii. Gender equality is inextricably linked to the right to education for all.

As a Commonwealth intergovernmental organisation, COL also operates within the framework of the Commonwealth Charter, which lays special emphasis on education, the importance of young people, the needs of small states, and gender equality. All these concerns are integrated in COL's initiatives, projects and services.

COL believes that if the global community is to achieve quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030, it will need to adopt innovative approaches and harness the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT). COL uses this approach in its programmes, which are divided into two sectors, Education and Skills, with Gender as a cross-cutting theme.



## Education

The Education sector is working in all regions of the Commonwealth. The stakeholders in this sector range from girls and women in challenging environments to open universities, teacher education institutions and ministries of education. The Education sector is strengthening its comprehensive, project-based approach to achieve systemic impact. There is a strong focus on open educational resources (OER) and the



promotion of gender mainstreaming in all activities. Discussions were initiated with partners to integrate sustainable development approaches into policies and programmes. The GIRLS Inspire project, aimed at preventing child, early and forced marriage and reaching unreached girls and women, is now well established and is having a positive impact on sustainable development.

### OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING

#### Overview

While many Commonwealth countries have made tremendous progress in achieving universal primary education, 100% transition from primary to secondary level has not been possible in several others. Lack of teachers, infrastructure and resources contributes to this challenge. Open schooling has emerged as a viable alternative to supplement and complement secondary education. Not only is this more flexible and cost-effective, but open schooling offers both academic and skills-based curricula. COL has been promoting this approach across the Commonwealth.

The new approach to open schooling at COL is more holistic and focuses on the training of teachers in eLearning, using OER, improving the management of open schools and supporting the use of appropriate technologies in teaching and learning. This involves integrating the open schooling approach into mainstream schools to enable many out-of-school youths to access formal education.

#### Activities

In 2017, the ministries of education in Belize, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia signed agreements to integrate open schooling in their education systems. The Open Schooling initiative has also been working with partners to follow up on the outcomes of COL-supported programmes through research studies, and to promote peer auditing for quality assurance. Another important activity is the strengthening of the the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association, through increased member engagement and social media presence.

### TEACHER EDUCATION

#### Overview

The Teacher Education initiative works with governments, teacher education institutions, teachers and other stakeholders to improve the preparation and development of both teachers and teacher educators. The ultimate beneficiary of teacher education efforts is the learner, through better learning outcomes. The initiative is evolving into a comprehensive package, the “Teacher Futures” model, to stimulate holistic development in school-based, in-service teacher training.



## Activities

Open Educational Resources for English Language Teaching, the Commonwealth Certificate for Teacher ICT Integration, diagnostic tools for special needs education in the Caribbean, and capacity building for teacher educators were some of the major activities implemented. As a result, more than 500 teachers were trained in East Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Under the new “Teacher Futures” model, major projects have been launched in Kiribati, Nigeria, Seychelles and Sierra Leone.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

### Overview

The Higher Education initiative works with ministries of education and higher education institutions (HEIs) to increase equitable participation through the adoption of open and distance learning (ODL) policies, systems, models, quality assurance mechanisms and gender-responsive learning resources to address industry and national development needs.

### Activities

The Higher Education initiative provides a holistic model to help HEIs to increase access, enhance quality, integrate sustainability and improve the employability of graduates. The model was launched in Namibia and Zambia in 2017. The initiative continues to support the development of quality assurance policies, frameworks and systems at the institutional and national levels, as well as provide capacity building in ODL and materials development. Through this initiative, COL sponsors learners in legislative drafting and online course design programmes.

Additionally, in collaboration with Asia e University, COL organised a high-level round table of vice chancellors of universities in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific to share insights and experiences in leadership, quality, technology and best practices in higher education.

COL is collaborating with ten HEIs across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master’s in Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. At

the end of 2017, the cumulative student enrolment reached 30,000, of which more than 13,000 learners had already graduated.

## VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH

### Overview

Ministers of education directed COL to develop the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) to promote human resource development and strengthen tertiary institutions.



VUSSC is a consortium of 30 Member States that are collaborating to develop and deliver eLearning materials through their tertiary institutions in order to improve access to quality higher education.

### Activities

The number of learners enrolled in VUSSC-developed full-time courses and programmes continues to grow, with more than 1,800 learners in 23 institutions in 14 countries. A total of 64 new modules were either developed or adapted from existing OER to increase the number of available courses that participating institutions can use. The Transnational Qualifications Framework supports the mobility of students and qualifications across institutions and discipline areas.



## GIRLS INSPIRE

### Overview

GIRLS Inspire is a special project supported by the Governments of Australia and Canada. It aims to break the cycle of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) by increasing access to education and training for girls and women through open, distance and technology-based learning in select Commonwealth countries with a high prevalence of child marriage. It also aims to reach the unreached women and girls in remote rural locations.

### Activities

The GIRLS Inspire project has strengthened the organisational capacity of nine partners in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania. The project developed community awareness about the benefits of girls' education and the harmful impact of CEFM and reached about 72,000 community members in over 180 communities and villages. As a result, GIRLS Inspire has delivered 104 life skills and vocational skills training courses and created 237 safe learning environments for over 32,530 female participants, with over 6,029 successfully transitioning to employment and income opportunities. The project contributed to the prevention of child marriages for 447 girls in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Pakistan.

## Skills

The Skills sector works to improve learning for livelihoods across all Commonwealth regions. Taking both top-down and bottom-up approaches, initiatives within the Skills sector engage with governments,

educational institutions, civil society and community-based organisations to develop policies, capacities and courses that support employability, entrepreneurship and empowerment. COL's interventions are implemented in both formal and non-formal learning settings by mainstreaming holistic models that demonstrate the pathway along the social value chain from learning to development. Its activities are further strengthened through the "OER for Skills Development" project supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

## LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

### Overview

The L3F initiative aims to establish an ICT/ODL-based system for continuous learning among marginalised farming communities, particularly women, leading to improved knowledge, empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. The model embodies a multidimensional approach to human resource development that holistically integrates social capital, financial capital and human capital to spiral a self-sustaining and self-replicating development process.

### Activities

The focus during this triennium has been upscaling L3F to macro institutions and strengthening existing partner initiatives to evolve into self-sustaining



business enterprises, with special attention given to the Pacific and Caribbean regions. L3F created quality learning opportunities for over 370,000 individuals throughout the Commonwealth, leading to higher levels of socio-economic empowerment as well as the ability to run successful business enterprises and practice sustainable farming.

## TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

### Overview

The TEL initiative aims to encourage more institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for innovation and skills development. This will enable more governments and organisations to adopt policies and strategies for achieving speed and scale in learning opportunities.

### Activities

In co-operation with governments and partner institutions, TEL activities included: the development of national and institutional ICT in education and OER policies/strategies; the development of advanced ICT skills courses for employability; capacity building for course writers and curriculum designers; and implementing TEL in three institutions through a systematic approach of baseline study, policy development, technical advice and capacity building.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

### Overview

The TVSD initiative supports partners in all five Commonwealth regions to harness technology so as to increase access to improved quality skills training. COL builds capacity in both formal and non-formal skills training through flexible and blended approaches to achieve quality and scale.

### Activities

TVSD has been supporting partners to develop national and institutional open, distance and flexible learning policies, build capacity and support

eLearning course development. The results of these interventions are tracked through tracer studies carried out by partners. New skills training courses have been developed in the African, Caribbean and



Pacific regions, and more learners are gaining access to non-formal courses. To date, 557 teachers are integrating technology in their practice, and more than 41,000 learners across the Commonwealth have been reached. Training resources for the integration of sustainable development in technical/vocational education and training have been developed.

## OER FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

OER constitute a key priority in COL's Strategic Plan. COL has been actively working with UNESCO and like-minded organisations to implement the ten recommendations from the 2012 Paris OER Declaration. The long-term vision is that more institutions/organisations within the Commonwealth will develop and use OER-based courses and materials to give their citizens access to quality education and training for sustainable livelihoods. With additional funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, COL has strengthened its leadership in OER in this triennium through this project.

## Activities

The activities this year focused on OER policy development/implementation, capacity building and OER course development. Nine provincial OER policies were developed during a national workshop in Sri Lanka, and 20 provincial OER guidelines were developed for provinces in Botswana and Cameroon.



Activities have resulted in 649 policy makers being sensitised to OER, and 17 OER-based skills courses that were developed by partners. Moreover, the initiative has been supporting the development of OER courses in life skills and non-formal/informal OER learning materials for farming communities.

## Gender

### Overview

Gender as a cross-cutting theme aims to harness the potential of ODL to expand access to education and improve learning outcomes for girls/women and boys/men by integrating a gender perspective into ODL practice and delivery. The cross-cutting activities of the initiative focus on building capacity for gender mainstreaming among partners in both formal and non-formal education. COL has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UN Women and is working with international partners to develop and implement holistic programmes aimed at addressing issues such as women's empowerment and boys' underperformance.

## Activities

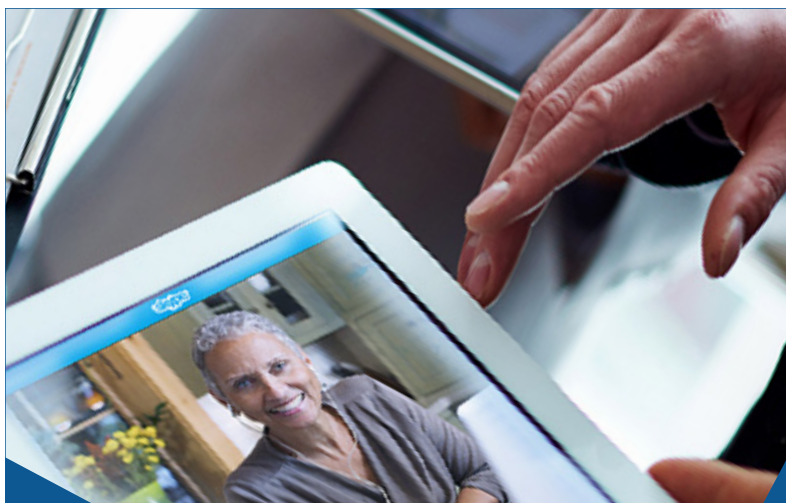
Emphasis was placed on assisting partner institutions with identifying gender gaps and finding ways to address these gaps, using COL's Institutional Gender Scorecard as the key tool for driving this process. Partners were also supported to develop gender-responsive policies and strategies for mainstreaming gender. A Commonwealth-wide study on the current situation of boys' underperformance was completed, and a new model to address the specific challenges and learning needs of at-risk boys was developed. A study was completed on the role of gender in co-operatives.

## Services

### ELEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS (ELIO)

#### Overview

eLIO provides online professional development courses to international organisations on a fee-for-service basis. eLIO has been customising and providing award-winning eLearning since 2006 to organisations such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, among others. This triennium, eLIO expanded its role by developing and offering its own courses and by pursuing externally funded projects.



## Activities

eLIO implemented its new Essential Skills for International Organisations programme. The first six courses were adapted from COL OER and were successfully marketed to the World Bank. Course delivery for international organisations resulted in a record number of 1,707 learners in 31 cohorts with a completion rate of more than 80%. COL entered into an agreement with



Women Deliver, an international NGO, to create an online version of its Young Leaders programme and to develop a massive open online course (MOOC) for its Deliver for Good campaign.

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY (KM&T)

### Overview

The KM&T team supports COL programmes with innovations in mobile and learning technologies. Aptus is a multipurpose micro-server designed to enable access to digital learning materials of all kinds, even when connectivity to power or data networks is minimal or non-existent. It was developed at COL as a prototype of open-source hardware. Its current configuration supports the delivery of digital video streams to about 20 users simultaneously and can host a Moodle service as well. KM&T also supports a MOOC management system for institutions in developing countries, as well as MOOCs for the food and agriculture sector.

## Activities

Aptus was deployed by a team of researchers at the National University of Samoa to test for ease of use and overall learning experience. Results showed that it was rated very highly for both aspects. A more powerful version of Aptus was developed and has been deployed in Open Schooling and GIRLS Inspire activities in Mozambique as well as Trinidad and Tobago. Through the portal MOOC4DEV, institutions in Malta and Nigeria were supported to offer courses. MOOCs in agriculture, offered in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK), attracted over 13,000 learners from 62 countries, and a trial MOOC for senior secondary students had an enrolment of 54,150 learners. COL also facilitated a partnership between India and Seychelles for training in MOOCs and ICT.

## Regional Centres

### COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA

### Overview

In response to needs expressed by the Commonwealth countries of the Asian region for more effective utilisation of educational media resources, COL established the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in New Delhi. CEMCA works to devise



appropriate learning solutions that maintain a balance between the aspirations of its diverse stakeholders and available resources. It works in education and skills development, with a special focus on community media, particularly community radio.

## Activities

CEMCA worked with 46 institutions in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to improve the capacity to leverage ODL for increased access to learning. It helped HEIs in two countries to adopt OER and ODL policies. Similarly, technical and vocational institutions were supported to enhance their capacity to reach large numbers of learners through ICT and ODL. Stakeholders in community radio stations were trained in developing audio content related to women's health and nutrition. CEMCA supported India's Ministry of Human Resource Development to generate a discussion paper on OER policy.

## REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR DISTANCE AND OPEN LEARNING

### Overview

In partnership with the National Open University of Nigeria, COL promotes ODL capacity building by supporting the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL), in West Africa. The RETRIDOL mandate includes engaging in and supporting ODL research activities, as well as ODL capacity building, while serving as a centre of expertise for Nigeria and West Africa.

### Activities

RETRIDOL has conducted training in online facilitation and tutoring, as well as policy formulation for dual-mode universities. Its work plan was revised to strengthen ODL in dual-mode universities in West Africa, in alignment with COL's higher education model. Several workshops aimed at supporting dual-mode institutions were held.



## SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY – CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

### Overview

The Southern African Development Community – Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) is supported by the Botswana Ministry of Education and hosted by the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (now Botswana Open University). The centre was established to increase the provision of quality distance education in Southern Africa, support research and undertake and promote training and development in ODL.

### Activities

SADC-CDE has been engaged in various capacity-building activities, including an online project management course and a Master of Education course through the Open University of Tanzania. SADC-CDE presented its draft strategic plan to COL and has launched courses on monitoring and evaluation and on eLearning. An online course on project management was completed by ODL practitioners from Botswana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. A new multilingual website with the three SADC languages (English, French and Portuguese) was launched. Through COL's technical assistance, the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning made a smooth transition to becoming the Botswana Open University, effective 1 December 2017.

## PACIFIC CENTRE FOR OPEN AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

### Overview

The Pacific Centre for Open and Flexible Learning for Development (PACFOLD) is hosted by the University of the South Pacific (USP) and is a “network of networks” to empower Pacific communities through lifelong learning. The centre’s priorities include advocacy and capacity building for flexible and open learning for sustainable development, as well as the development of national and regional ODL policies.

### Activities

During the 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum, stakeholders from the Pacific region discussed strategies to strengthen the role of PACFOLD in achieving learning for sustainable development. PACFOLD Learn, an online community for strengthening flexible and open learning, was launched. PACFOLD participated in several forums organised by the National University of Samoa, USP and the Matuaileoo Environment Trust Inc., a non-profit organisation in Samoa. An action plan for 2017 was also developed. PACFOLD launched an online course on flexible skills development, with 266 teachers from seven Pacific Commonwealth countries.

## COMMONWEALTH CENTRE OF CONNECTED LEARNING

### Overview

COL serves in an advisory capacity on the International Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Centre of Connected Learning (CCCL), a Maltese foundation created in 2017, which facilitates connected learning in Commonwealth and European member states. This purpose resonates with COL’s interest in technology-enabled and connected learning.

### Activities

CCCL facilitated the development of an open access policy for the University of Malta that was formally approved in September 2017. The International Advisory Board (IAB) of CCCL, which is chaired by COL’s President and CEO, held its first meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Malta’s Minister for Education and Employment participated in the meeting as a special invitee. The IAB gave specific advice to CCCL in programme matters, the mobilisation of financial resources and the development of strategic partnerships.





# The Commonwealth of Learning



## ASIA REGION

The Asia region of the Commonwealth is the most populous, with approximately 1.72 billion people. Among the seven Member States across South and East Asia, India has the largest population, with about 1.3 billion in 2017, while Brunei Darussalam has the smallest, with about 430,000. The populations in the other five countries are in the millions.

The region has shown promising economic growth with increases in GDP ranging from five to seven per cent. The Asian Development Bank argues that innovation, human capital and infrastructure are the three pillars that will sustain growth and help translate it into development (<https://www.adb.org/publications/asian-development-outlook-2017-middle-income-challenge>). These three pillars require strong education, learning and training systems.

Asia has made rapid progress in primary, secondary and tertiary education during the last three decades. However, globalisation, increasing population and dynamic changes in markets and technology have necessitated a much stronger emphasis on quality primary, secondary and higher education as well as skills development at both speed and scale. Non-formal education is also crucial since large numbers of people are in agriculture and the rural economy.

COL focuses on adding value to countries' efforts towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions in Asia in the use of appropriate, affordable and accessible technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education includes an emphasis on inclusive quality secondary and higher education and the strengthening of teacher development programmes. In the area of skills, COL supports the expansion of access to technical and vocational education, the reinforcement of non-formal

education in agriculture, and technology-enabled learning. These initiatives have been designed to achieve socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at lower economic and environmental costs.

COL's major regional initiatives in the Asian Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2018 are outlined below.

- Based in New Delhi, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) promotes the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of media and technology to serve the education and training needs of the Commonwealth Member States of Asia. CEMCA works in education and skills development, with a focus on community media, particularly community radio. Through activities with partners in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, CEMCA has helped institutions improve their capacity to leverage open and distance learning (ODL) for increased access to education.
- COL's Technology-Enabled Learning initiative encourages institutions to integrate technology-enabled learning and open educational resources (OER) practices to improve teaching and learning for innovation and skills development. As part of the Advanced ICT Skills Development project, Indira Gandhi National Open University is working with five other open universities in Africa and Asia to develop courses in web application development and mobile application development.
- Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) supports the economic improvement of small-scale farmers, who are primarily women. L3F focuses on the economic and social inclusion of farmers, training them in the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and assisting them in

gaining entrepreneurial skills. The L3F initiative links the capacity building of farming communities, particularly women, to social and financial capital through the use of ODL and flexible and blended learning. L3F has a network of partners across India and Sri Lanka.

- GIRLS Inspire is a project that provides vulnerable and hard-to-reach women and girls with opportunities to complete their schooling and receive skills training that will enable them to have sustainable livelihoods. The initiative, which in the Asia region works in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, aims to end child, early and forced marriage in rural communities and addresses other barriers that prevent girls' full participation in society.
- The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes are the outcome of collaboration between COL and four open universities in South Asia: Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan), Bangladesh Open University, Indira Gandhi National Open University (India) and the Open University of Sri Lanka. The flexible and modular CEMBA/CEMPA programmes are geared towards delivering high-quality learning and professional development opportunities in participating countries.
- Supported by COL, the Open University of Malaysia (OUM) has been working with five other open universities in Africa and Asia to develop courses related to web applications and mobile application development.
- COL's Open/Innovative Schooling initiative has been supporting the National Institute of Open Schooling (India) and the Open School of

Bangladesh Open University to develop an institutional peer-to-peer-review initiative between the two institutions.

- COL's Gender initiative has been supporting partner institutions in the Asian region to implement the Institutional Scorecard for Gender Mainstreaming.
- COL and Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a workshop to build the capacity of teacher educators and education practitioners in the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning. This annual initiative, under the Singapore Cooperation Programme, was held in Singapore in August 2017 and hosted 18 participants from ten Commonwealth countries.
- The Asia Regional OER Consultation, which provided opportunities for Asian delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World OER Congress, was held in December 2016.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF8) on Open Learning was organised with the OUM in Kuala Lumpur in November 2016. Under the theme "Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development," PCF8 brought together the best minds in ODL to discuss issues of common interest, exchange ideas and explore best practices. One outcome of the conference was the 2016 Kuala Lumpur Declaration, a set of recommendations for policy makers and practitioners.





# Sri Lanka

## Key Facts

- ➔ Joined Commonwealth: **1948**
- 👥 Population: **21,273,000** (2013)
- 🏫 Primary enrolment: **94%**
- GDP: **4.6%** p.a. 1990–2013
- UN HDI world ranking: **73**
- 🌐 Official languages: **Sinhala, Tamil**
- Currency: **Sri Lanka rupee**

## Geography

- 📍 Area: **65,610 sq km**
- 🌊 Coastline: **1,340 km**
- ★ Capital city: **Colombo**
- Population density (per sq km): **324**

Public spending on education was 1.7 per cent of GDP in 2012. There are nine years of compulsory education, starting at age five. Primary school comprises five years and secondary eight, the latter having two cycles of four years. Some 97 per cent of pupils complete primary school (2010). The school year starts in January.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) recognises 15 public universities and 17 higher education institutes, and there are four other public universities that come under other departments of government (2013). Leading universities include: the University of Colombo, which was established — as the University of Ceylon — in 1942, when Ceylon Medical College (founded in 1870) and Ceylon University College (1921) were merged; the University of Kelaniya; the University of Peradeniya; and the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), which provides courses through distance learning. Technical colleges offer courses up to the diploma level in engineering and business.

The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 1.80:1 (2011). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 98 per cent (2010).

In 1980, Sri Lanka hosted the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, in Colombo. Commonwealth education ministers meet every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

SOURCE: <http://thecommonwealth.org/member-countries>

## COL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Honourable Nurul Islam Nahid, Minister of Education, People’s Republic of Bangladesh, is a member of the COL Board of Governors as the regional representative for Asia.

## COL FOCAL POINT

Mr S. U. Wijerathne, Additional Secretary, Planning and Performance Review, Ministry of Education, is the COL Focal Point.

## NOTABLE MENTION

Professor Uma Coomaraswamy is a COL Honorary Fellow.

Dr Tara de Mel is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Mr H. M. Sirisena is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

Professor D. S. Wijeyesekera is a former member of COL’s Board of Governors.

## **Strategic Plan 2015–2021**

As outlined in COL's Strategic Plan 2015–2021, COL works in two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. COL has identified five core strategies to achieve outcomes and impact: partnerships, capacity, materials, models and policy. In practice, most COL activities incorporate more than one of these strategies — in some cases, all five.

COL's work in Sri Lanka revolves around the areas of gender, higher education, Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and open educational resources (OER).

### **Education**

#### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

COL's Higher Education initiative works to foster human resources for social and economic development across the Commonwealth. It supports higher education institutions and ministries in capacity building, policy development and curriculum reform. COL is working with OUSL to offer the Commonwealth Executive Masters in Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme. OUSL also holds a seat on the programme's Executive Governing Board and Academic Board.

In 2015–2016, COL supported a Quality Enhancement Tools Workshop for the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka, where 13 tools were developed. COL's Education Specialist for Higher Education visited the University of Jaffna in November 2016 to facilitate a workshop on the development of quality enhancement tools, as part of addressing the COL Review and Improvement Model's external verification recommendations, adopted by the university's senate. The process enhanced the institution's pursuit of a continuous quality improvement approach.

#### **TEACHER EDUCATION**

COL's Teacher Education initiative aims to improve the capacity of partner countries to deliver quality learning opportunities for sustainable development through innovative school-based, technology-supported teacher professional development programmes. Under its flagship programme, Teacher Futures, COL

works with teacher education institutions, teachers and teacher communities towards scalable national and cross-national teacher development models for improved learning outcomes.

COL's Vice President visited Sri Lanka in December 2015, meeting with the Additional Secretary and Focal Point in the Ministry of Education and briefing him about COL activities. He also met with the Vice Chancellor and professors of OUSL and identified strategies for strengthening teacher education. He reviewed the L3F activities of OUSL, the University of Ruhuna and MOBITEL. These meetings helped strengthen the link between COL and the Sri Lankan government.

COL supported two workshops for advanced information and communication technologies (ICT) course development at OUSL in August 2015 and July 2016. In 2016, COL commissioned a consultant to work with the Ministry of Education to develop OER in English Language Teaching.

### **Skills**

#### **LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS**

COL's L3F initiative empowers farming communities through the use of open and distance learning (ODL) and flexible and blended approaches. It was officially launched in Sri Lanka in 2007 and is well established now. COL contributes to the implementation of L3F in Sri Lanka through its support to OUSL and the University of Ruhuna. The focus of the University of Ruhuna in 2016 was, among other things, to increase the number of farmers involved in mushroom production, expand the use of ODL for farmer extension, and strengthen the human resource capacity of agriculture divisions in ICT-based extension.

The project supported: the development of gender-sensitive ODL materials; facilitator training in ODL materials development and participatory learning skills; blended learning on mushroom production; strengthening of the voicemail system for mobile-based learning; workshops in entrepreneurship and business-plan development; the creation of links between L3F participants and financial institutions, including state banks; capacity building for Agricultural Extension Field Workers and for Extension Officers in ICT-based extension and L3F; and the offering of a

computer-literacy training course for female students at the University of Ruhuna.

More than 5,500 participants accessed learning resources, which led to both increased production and improved mushroom yields. Telecommunication companies such as MOBTEL and Ericsson Telecommunication partnered with OUSL and the University of Ruhuna to provide technical and infrastructural facilities. The Department of Export Agriculture, the Department of Agriculture and financial institutions were also actively involved in L3F in Sri Lanka.

In 2017, the Ministry of Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure spearheaded a country-wide scale-up of L3F, with technical support from OUSL and the University of Ruhuna. The ministry and MOBTEL employed a full-time staff member responsible for the expansion of L3F. The University of Colombo has joined OUSL and the University of Ruhuna in the L3F consortium and is helping to expand L3F to the Batticaloa district. Ericsson Telecommunication donated 20 computers for an ICT centre in Batticaloa, to support the digital literacy of girls from L3F households.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Technical and Vocational Skills Development initiative supports partners in harnessing technology to increase access to improved quality skills training. A key aspect of the programme is the capacity building of partner organisations in course design and materials development. In this triennium, COL partnered with the University of Vocational Technology to develop a National Diploma in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Teacher Education by distance learning. The University of Vocational Technology continues to offer this programme.

## TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING

With COL's support, OUSL completed the development of two courses: i) Introduction to Android and ii) Programming with Python. As part of the advanced ICT course development project started with six open universities, these courses form a collection to be launched by educational institutions in the Commonwealth.

Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL), a massive open online course (MOOC) for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education developed in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, was offered in January–February and November–December 2017; 64 teachers from Sri Lanka participated in both cohorts of the TEL MOOC.

In 2015, a National Workshop on the Participatory Video Storytelling Programme was implemented by the Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum in partnership with the Postgraduate Institute of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya. The objective of this programme was to build the capacity of youths to produce community videos on issues affecting underprivileged communities in Sri Lanka and disseminate them through social media. This programme aimed to provide knowledge and skills on community learning and its relevance for producing community videos. The programme engaged 20 youths from Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil backgrounds, who were given eight days of training on producing community videos highlighting various social, cultural, economic and political issues affecting communities in different regions across Sri Lanka.

OER play an important role in ensuring equitable access to quality learning materials across the Commonwealth and beyond. COL is committed to developing and promoting the use of OER among institutions, organisations and governments through capacity-building and advocacy programmes and the development of OER policies.

A paper stemming from COL's OER-based eLearning professional development online course at the Open University of Sri Lanka received an ICDE Prize for Innovation and Best Practice – 2015 at the 26<sup>th</sup> ICDE World Conference, held at Sun City, South Africa in October 2015. In January 2016, a capacity-building workshop on the use/reuse of OER took place in Sri Lanka in collaboration with OUSL; 24 academics participated.

In 2016, with COL support and the guidance of the Ministry of Education, OUSL undertook an advocacy programme to promote the development of draft OER policies for Sri Lanka's nine provincial ministries of education (PMoE). The policies aimed to provide direction in the use of OER and increase access to, as

well as support quality teaching and learning in, the country's education system.

Within a six-month period, the project built awareness among key stakeholders of the concept and impact of OER, advocated for the necessity and benefits of provincial OER policies for education, initiated the process of drafting OER policies for each province, identified champions in each province to draft the policies, and provided ongoing online support to those champions, leading to final draft policies. During this intervention, approximately 60 policy makers country-wide were involved in the development of the final drafts for the nine provinces.

As a follow-up, COL provided support to a three-day National Workshop on Provincial OER Policy Implementation, which brought together 42 key stakeholders to finalise the provincial policies for potential adoption and implementation. Key results of the workshop included: detailed procedures for policy implementation in each provincial council, including key resource persons within the PMoE and Provincial Directorates of Education; and timelines for implementing the plan in the nine provinces.

In early 2017, OUSL completed a 12-part video-based course on Instructional Video Production for Teaching and Learning. This is a hands-on course on how to use technologies such as smart phones to capture, edit and publish high-quality instructional videos for teaching and learning.

## Gender

Gender is a cross-cutting theme in all of COL's work. COL aims to harness the potential of ODL to expand access to education and improve learning outcomes for girls and women, as well as boys and men, by integrating a gender perspective into ODL practice and delivery. The focus is on building capacity for gender mainstreaming among partners in both formal and non-formal education.

Three universities in Sri Lanka conducted gender audits and developed gender roadmaps using COL's Institutional Gender Scorecard. COL is now working with 12 additional universities in Sri Lanka to support this process in their institutions. In 2015–2016, the University of Peradeniya pilot-tested COL's Institutional

Gender Scorecard and the University of Ruhuna developed a gender roadmap to address its gender audit findings.

## Partnerships

Partnerships are fundamental to COL's work. Strategic partnerships allow COL to broaden its reach and engage at global, regional and national levels, while implementation partners support COL's work in communities and institutions across Commonwealth Member States. Partners include multilateral organisations, regional bodies, national governments, government agencies, foundations, civil society organisations, public and private (not-for-profit) institutions and the private sector.

COL's partners in Sri Lanka include:

- Ministry of Telecommunication and Digital Infrastructure
- Open University of Sri Lanka
- Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum
- University Grants Commission
- University of Peradeniya
- University of Ruhuna

## Special Events

### **2<sup>ND</sup> WORLD OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES CONGRESS**

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Open Educational Resources Congress, hosted by the Government of Slovenia in Ljubljana in partnership with UNESCO and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The 2017 Ljubljana OER Action Plan provides recommendations to stakeholders in five strategic areas: building the capacity of users to find, reuse, create and share OER; language and cultural issues; ensuring inclusive and equitable access to quality OER; developing sustainability models; and developing supportive policy environments.

The Asia Regional Consultation was held in December 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

## **8<sup>TH</sup> PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF8)**

Under the theme “Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development,” PCF8 brought together the best minds in ODL to discuss issues of common interest, exchange ideas and explore best practices, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Waradana De Silva, K. G. H. Uditha Ratnayake, Nalin Danushka Suraweera Arachchige and Nanda Wanniarachchi were Sri Lanka’s COL-supported participants at PCF8.

A key outcome of PCF8 was the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which presents a set of ten recommendations for governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society related to lifelong learning, access and equity, teacher education, OER and quality. It will be brought to the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers and the Commonwealth Heads

of Government Meeting for further consideration and implementation.

## **COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA ADVISORY COUNCIL ANNUAL MEETING**

Sri Lanka hosted the 17<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia Advisory Council annual meeting at OUSL, Colombo on 11 December 2017. Members representing Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka were in attendance.

## **Looking Ahead: 2021**

COL is committed to promoting equitable access to quality lifelong learning for all – believing, in effect, that access to learning opportunities will lead to progress in achieving:

- improved sustainable livelihoods;
- increased and equitable access to and use of quality learning opportunities; and
- improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL.

COL looks forward to working with Sri Lanka to address its specific challenges while also supporting broader efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and provide Commonwealth citizens with greater access to quality education and training through open, distance and technology-enabled learning.

## Publications and Resources

COL has issued a number of publications and resources over the past three years, including the following:

*Gender Profile: Sri Lanka* is part of a series that provides country-specific compilations of gender-related data for a number of indicators, including health, education, economic participation and more.

*The Impact of the Commonwealth of Learning, 2006–2015* documents and analyses the impact of COL's initiatives and makes recommendations on future directions for the institution.

*Institutional Scorecard for Gender Mainstreaming* is a self-assessment tool that can help with ongoing audits of an organisation's policies and strategies to promote a gender-balanced workplace culture. This comprehensive and systematic tool can be used by all institutions to develop or improve their gender-responsive policies and mechanisms.

*Making Sense of MOOCs: A Guide for Policy-Makers in Developing Countries* is a COL–UNESCO publication designed to raise the general awareness of policy makers in developing countries of how MOOCs might address their concerns and priorities, particularly in terms of access to affordable quality higher education and the preparation of secondary school leavers for academic as well as vocational education and training.

*Measuring Empowerment Toolkit: Using the Commonwealth of Learning's Three-Dimensional Empowerment Framework* is a practical toolkit intended for development practitioners, government officials, academics, monitoring and evaluation specialists, and researchers who are interested in measuring empowerment. It enables practitioners to develop context-appropriate survey instruments to measure empowerment based on COL's Three-Dimensional Empowerment Framework.

*Open Educational Resources: Global Report 2017*, published by COL in 2017 in preparation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World OER Congress, provides state-of-the-art information in the field of OER globally by analysing the responses of representatives of 102 governments and over 600 stakeholders. This authoritative source on the status of OER in the world was produced with the support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The report focuses on mainstreaming OER to achieve SDG4.

*Open Educational Resources (OER) Guide for Students in Post-Secondary and Higher Education* was published in 2016 as a guide, particularly for students in small states of the Commonwealth, to evaluating and using OER.

*Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2016* is the result of a study conducted as part of COL's OER for Skills Development project, supported by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The objective of the study was to collect baseline data from Commonwealth institutions with respect to the development, use and reuse of OER.

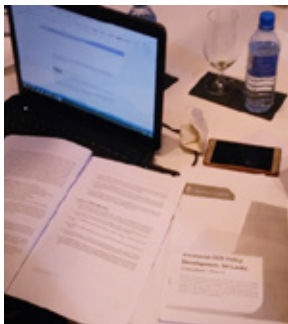
*Open Educational Resources: Policy, Costs and Transformation*, published with UNESCO in 2016, presents 15 case studies contributed by 29 OER researchers and policy makers from 15 countries across six continents and examines the implementation of the 2012 OER Paris Declaration through the thematic lenses of policy, costs and transformation.

*The State of Open Universities in the Commonwealth: A Perspective on Performance, Competition and Innovation* critically examines specialist ODL universities in the Commonwealth.

*Understanding Open Educational Resources*, by Neil Butcher and Andrew Moore, is a series of lessons designed for teachers in low-resource classrooms, explaining how they can use OER to support classroom learning.

*Using ICTs and Blended Learning in Transforming TVET* (in the Perspectives on Open and Distance Learning series) is a COL–UNESCO 2017 publication presenting a series of case studies from around the world that highlight the use and role of ICT in the transformation of technical and vocational education and training.

For all COL publications, go to: <http://oasis.col.org>.





8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 27-30 November 2016

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## The 2016 Kuala Lumpur Declaration

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### Preamble

The 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8), co-organised by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Open University Malaysia (OUM) in Kuala Lumpur from 27-30 November 2016,

*Mindful of relevant international statements including:*

The Charter of the Commonwealth 2013, which recognises the necessity of affordable education for sustainable development;

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 4 of ensuring *“inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”*;

UNESCO’s Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, Education 2030, which sets as target 4.3 that *“by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”* and elaborates that *‘a well-established, properly regulated tertiary education system supported by technology, open educational resources and distance education can increase access, equity, quality and relevance’* (item 43); and

The 2012 UNESCO-COL Paris Declaration on Open Educational Resources (OER) which advocates that States *“facilitate enabling environments for use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)”*.

- A. Recommends that governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society:
1. **Promote lifelong learning** through the widespread availability of appropriate technologies and multilingual opportunities in formal, non-formal and informal learning which are open to people, places, methods and ideas;
  2. **Reinforce market-driven skills development using open and distance learning (ODL) and blended and flexible learning** in collaboration with education, industry, agriculture and service sectors to empower and ensure sustainable livelihoods for all;
  3. **Encourage demand driven and context-specific research and innovation in technology** to promote access, equity and lifelong learning;
  4. **Institutionalise a quality culture** in ODL systems focusing on learners' learning outcomes;
  5. **Support teacher education and in-service teacher training** with ODL and blended and flexible learning, and increase the supply of qualified teachers;
  6. **Mainstream the use of OER** by developing strategies and policies at governmental and institutional levels to enhance quality while potentially reducing the cost of education;
  7. **Emphasise the key role of leadership** in strengthening learner-centred ODL which can widen access, enhance equity and gain respectability;
  8. **Ensure that the education of women and girls** through ODL is given utmost importance with a targeted approach, in support of SDG 5;
  9. **Strengthen ODL** that is inclusive and accessible to all persons with disabilities; and
  10. **Reinforce commitment to small island developing states and small states** in their efforts to advance education and learning with ODL, in tackling their particular economic, energy and climate change challenges, and in building their resilience for the future.
- B. Brings the above recommendations to the next Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) for further consideration and implementation.

## LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

**VISION:** To be the foremost global agency that promotes learning for sustainable development

**MISSION:** To help governments and institutions to expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches



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