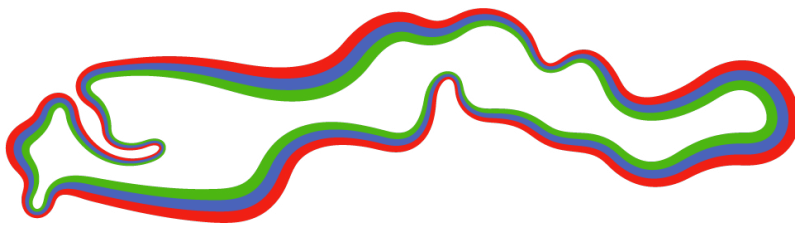




FOCUS ON THE GAMBIA



2021-24



COL's work in The Gambia is in the areas of higher education, open schooling, teacher education, lifelong learning for farmers and skills for work. It is part of the VUSSC network and benefits from programmes offered by COL's regional centre, the Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning. Learners from The Gambia are also benefitting from COL's free online courses and other openly available resources.

HIGHLIGHTS

- COL is supporting the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in establishing an open school.
- A national ODL policy for Higher Education in The Gambia was developed in June 2023.
- The Ministry developed an ODL policy for Basic and Secondary Education in November 2023.
- COL met with the President of The Gambia, HE Adama Barrow, to apprise him of the advantages of lifelong learning for farmers.
- Two national food security strategies were developed related to sheep and poultry production.

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 complement 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

Mr Anthony G. Mendy
Director of Tertiary and Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology

REGIONAL CENTRE

The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) is hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria to promote the use of open and distance learning (ODL) and technologies for increasing access to equitable quality education and training in West Africa. <https://retridol.nou.edu.ng/>

PARTNERS

COL's partners in The Gambia include:

- Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
- Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
- Gambia College
- Gambia Technical Training Institute
- Global Youth Innovation Network, Gambia Chapter
- National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority
- University of The Gambia
- West Africa Livestock Innovation Centre
- National Enterprise Development Initiative

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

Open Schooling

COL provided technical support to the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) towards the development of a national open distance learning (ODL) policy for schooling as a precursor to establishing The Gambia School of Open Learning (GAMSOL).

- COL supported MoBSE in developing a detailed project plan to establish an open school. In November 2022, COL participated in a five-day stakeholder consultation workshop to discuss the draft project plan. This workshop was opened by Mr Louis Moses Mendy, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education.
- A workshop was later held in Banjul in late 2023 at the Curriculum, Research, Evaluation and Development Directorate. Sixteen officials from different directorates engaged with stakeholders in developing the national ODL policy. The workshop resulted not only in the draft of a new national ODL policy for basic and secondary education but also a formal draft charter to establish GAMSOL.

- MoBSE's content development team working with an open schooling expert supported by COL, completed the development of Grade 10 materials in mathematics, English, general science, auto mechanics, metalwork, woodwork, history, electrical installation, fisheries and home science. The materials development process involved a one-week, in-country workshop followed by online support to develop a text and graphics version of the course materials.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers

COL Adviser: L3F, facilitated two capacity-building workshops for government officials on the scaling up of lifelong learning for farmers and reducing the gender gap in December 2022. Two national policies were developed: "Self-Sufficiency in Sheep Production" and the "National Self-Sufficiency in Poultry Production Programme".

COL briefed the President of The Gambia, His Excellency Adama Barrow, on the advantages of L3F for The Gambia.

Higher Education

Following the stakeholder engagement workshop, which 35 officers of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology participated in February 2023, a draft national ODL policy for higher education in The Gambia was developed in June 2023.

Teacher Education

60 participants attended the regional workshops on ODL for in-service teacher training organised by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in May 2023 in the Mansakonko and Birga regions.

36 government officials and policymakers engaged in the National Policy Dialogue on Open and Distance Learning and Technology-Enabled Learning for In-service Teacher Training in The Gambia in June 2023.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)

COL and UNESCO-UNEVOC jointly partnered with NAQAA and MHERST to leverage ODL through policy development and capacity building with a focus on increased, equitable and inclusive access to quality skills development, especially for women, girls and people with disabilities. Two courses were developed and offered: “Leading Change for Technology Enabled TVET” and “Assistive Technology in TVET” with 44 practitioners successfully completing them. In addition, a research report was completed that focused on the status of the implementation of TVET during the Covid-19 pandemic in The Gambia. Prior to this, 118 (100M/18F) TVET trainers participated in the *Flexible Skills Development* course in late 2021.

A hybrid policy dialogue session was held in September 2022 to discuss country-level initiatives to build the resilience of TVET systems using ODL. Anthony Mendy from MHERST along with Gibril Jaw and Sambujang Marreh from NAQAA participated.

Teacher Education

In March 2023, the Gambia College hosted a five-day workshop for 28 educational stakeholders (8F, 19M, 1 undisclosed) to develop an institutional ODL policy and a strategic implementation plan. Following this, the policy and plan were drafted in April. On April 25, 2023, the college organised a 1-day workshop to validate the draft policy and implementation plan with 25 educational stakeholders in participation.

Over 25 teachers signed up for the COL MOOC on cybersecurity training for teachers.

Higher Education

COL has supported the University of the Gambia for ODL implementation in the following ways

- ODL sensitisation and policy development workshop held in October 2023 with 40 stakeholders (28M/12F) and eight students (1M/7F).
- An institutional ODL policy was developed, and in January 2024, the Senate of the University of the Gambia approved it for implementation.
- Capacity-building workshop for instructional design and course material development was held in February 2024 for 30 (19M/11F) stakeholders.

REGIONAL CENTRE: RETRIDOL

Monthly ODL discourse held on 10 August 2021 on the topic “African regional approach to ODL and Quality Assurance: The ACDE-QAAA”. Number of participants: 107. Presenters included Professor Asha Kanwar and Professor Nebath Tanglang.

Six monthly webinars from January - June 2022 on various education topics were conducted with the participation of 663 institutional and government staff.

Four monthly discourse webinars were held from December 2022 to March 2023.

In April 2024, RETRIDOL hosted an ODL policy workshop, in which government officials from The Gambia also participated.

In May 2024, RETRIDOL hosted a regional workshop for employability framework in which there were institutional participants.

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

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

Lifelong Learning for Farmers

COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model is based on a holistic approach that builds the capacity of farming communities, especially women, using ODL and appropriate technologies where communities learn in their own languages and where learning becomes collateral for credit. COL is supporting the West Africa Livestock Innovation Centre.

A workshop was held in the Gambia from 5-7 September 2022 for 43 stakeholders from the government and non-government sector. The workshop focused on gender gaps in relation to food self-sufficiency and the sustainable development goals; COL's L3F approach in agriculture; attaining food security and sufficiency, and policy interventions toward self-food sufficiency in The Gambia.

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. Four delegates from The Gambia registered for the Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), for the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14-16 September 2022. These delegates included: Gibril Jaw, NAQAA; Sambujang Marreh, NAQAA; Anthony G Mendy, MHERST; and Isatou Ndown, Gambia College.

COL's Teacher Education initiative organised a hybrid pre-PCF10 workshop in September 2022 that introduced participants to concepts and models for teacher training at scale, including COL strategies and models using open, distance and technology-enabled learning. The event was attended by 19 participants representing 12 different institutions in The Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Trinidad & Tobago. Discussions focussed on a range of innovations for teacher development in low-income and other disadvantaged communities. These included the use of massive open online courses (MOOC), radio and podcasts to reach more teachers, and having the assistance of language translators and assistive technologies and other offline resources to improve the quality of learning resources.

COL Adviser: Skills participated in the launch of the UNESCO Strategy for TVET 2022–29 that was held at the United Nations Campus, Bonn, Germany in late October 2022. He shared lessons and experiences from the joint COL and UNESCO-UNEVOC project that supported the capacity building of TVET practitioners in The Gambia and Zambia to utilise appropriate ODL approaches and technology for an inclusive TVET delivery.

The 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 Mr Anthony G. Mendy from The Gambia.

COL, in partnership with the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), India organised an international workshop in June 2023 with a focus on the adoption of the gender-green teacher (GGT) programme. The workshop attracted 49 principals and senior professors from Africa (The Gambia, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda) and Asia (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka). As part of the workshop, each participating institution developed an action plan to implement the GGT programme in their respective countries, ensuring that the acquired knowledge and skills translate into practical teaching strategies.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

Gender Profile 2023: The Gambia <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5523>

Out-of-School Children and Youth: A Contemporary View from Selected Africa Commonwealth Countries
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4057>

Practical Guide for WITED Chapters and Individual Champions for Increasing Girls' and Women's Participation in STEM-TVET (Ghana, Malawi, Kenya, The Gambia)
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4001>

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



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