



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **AFRICA**



Eswatini

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 African member countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of Africa 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 in Africa (Botswana, The Gambia, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles) 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 African member country. These are:

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

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Eswatini is a small state of the Commonwealth with a population of over 1.2 million ([World Bank](#), 2022).

COL's work in Eswatini is focused primarily in the areas of [higher education](#) and [open schooling](#). Eswatini is part of the [Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth \(VUSSC\)](#) network and benefits from programmes offered by COL's regional centre, the [Southern African Development Community's Centre for Distance Education \(SADC-CDE\)](#). Learners from Eswatini are also participating in COL's free, open online courses and other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Eswatini include:

- Ministry for Education and Training
- Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC)
- Eswatini Nursing Council
- University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

KEY CONTACTS

COL FOCAL POINT

Currently vacant

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- The University of Eswatini (UNESWA) is implementing COL's institutional employability framework.
- 1,105 nurses/midwives in Eswatini successfully completed one or more professional development courses.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

The Honourable Lady Howard Mabuza, Minister of Education and Training provided guidance and contributed to discussions in the high-level panels on Climate Change and Education organised by COL that would 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.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

Capacity-building workshops and courses held at UNESWA:

- Open and Distance Learning (October 2021) with 17 participants
- Online facilitation (October 2021) with 26 participants (6M20F)
- Online learning material development for ODL practitioners with 22 participants (9M13F)
- Team of 8 facilitators designed and developed a Certificate in Online Teaching (4-module course in Moodle) with COL consultant support. This 4-week course was piloted in November 2021 with 11 UNESWA staff with 100% completion (6F5M).

UNESWA is implementing COL's institutional employability framework.

COL agreed to support ten teachers from EDC: Centre for Open Schooling to undertake the Post Graduate Diploma in Open School Operations and Management offered by NAMCOL in Namibia. Studies commenced in January 2022 and will run over two years.

An additional 271 lesson-level OER were created, bringing the project total to 1,832 by January 2022. Subsequently, 83 images, 101 audio files and 30 video files were further created to support the teaching of siSwati.

In mid-2022, 16 EDC staff were trained in online facilitation skills.

Since 2019, COL has supported the gradual migration of the Emlalalini Development Centre (EDC) from a print-based and contact-supported model to a virtual open school with a digital administration system and learning management system (LMS) that offers a blended learning model. COL visited the EDC in November 2022 and has been supporting them with an information and communication technology (ICT) augmentation project to improve teaching and learning by making use of technology. This will see "the establishment of a multi-media development centre, the installation of solar power, the extension of Wi-Fi access to the whole campus, the boosting the signals at the regional centres and the installation of a server to connect all the systems and to link the centre and the regions."

A workshop was held on Open Course and Content Development, facilitated by COL in November 2022. A need was expressed to offer basic ICT training to both teachers and learners, along with having a strategy in place for slowly weaning students off teacher-centred approaches to more resource-based, collaborative, problem-solving and flipped classroom approaches.

Many educators from Eswatini are participating in COL's free, open online courses. Cybersecurity training for teachers (about 40 teachers, September 2022).

REGIONAL CENTRE: SADC-CDE

26 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.

In early 2022, an outreach programme was conducted to sensitise 63 communities to the advantages of open schooling using a blended model. 26 new learners registered and there has been a steady increase in enrolment since then. COL's Education Specialist for Open Schooling visited in November 2022 and gave a presentation promoting open schooling for girls. It was noted that Eswatini had recently changed its policy to allow pregnant teenagers to remain in school as long as possible. It was also noted that none of the strategies recommended to improve access to schooling for girls was detrimental to boys.

From January 2022 to January 2023, COL supported nurses and midwives in Eswatini to access online, context-specific, short, professional development modules. COL's partnership with the Eswatini Nursing Council and the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA) provides free access for nurses and midwives to modules available on the WCEA online training platform and mobile app. Through the programme, learners can also build their capacity via professional journal articles and webinars. 1,110 nurses and midwives successfully completed one or more courses. [May2023]

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.

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

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

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



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