



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **AFRICA**



The Gambia

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 Gambia is the smallest nation in mainland Africa in size with a population of over 2.7 million people ([World Bank](#), 2022).

COL's work in The Gambia is in the areas of [open schooling](#), [teacher education](#), [lifelong learning for farmers](#) and [skills for work](#). It 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 [Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning \(RETRIDOL\)](#). Learners from The Gambia are also benefitting from COL's free, open online courses and other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in The Gambia include:

- Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE)
- Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MHERST)
- Gambia College
- Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI)
- National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA)
- University of The Gambia
- West Africa Livestock Innovation Centre (WALIC)

KEY CONTACTS

COL FOCAL POINT

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

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - MAY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- COL is supporting the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE) in establishing an open school. Mr Louis Moses Mendy, Permanent Secretary, MOBSE gave an introductory speech at the stakeholder consultation workshop in November 2022.
- COL met with the President of The Gambia, HE Adama Barrow to apprise him of the advantages of lifelong learning for farmers (L3F).
- Two national policies were developed related to sheep and poultry production.
- New courses on "Leading Change for Technology Enabled TVET" and "Assistive Technology in TVET" were developed and offered with 60 TVET practitioners from The Gambia participating.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MOBSE) in The Gambia is a new partner for open schooling. COL supported MOBSE in developing a detailed project plan to establish an open school. In November 2022, COL participated in a 5-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.

Two capacity-building workshops were held in January 2023 for government officials on the scaling up of lifelong learning for farmers and reducing the gender gap.

Two national policies were developed related to sheep and poultry production.

In January 2023, Professor Wale Adekunle, COL Adviser: L3F, made a call on the President of The Gambia, HE Adama Barrow to apprise him of the advantages of L3F. In addition, meetings were also held with the Honourable Minister of Youths and Sports, Mr Bakary Y. Badjie, along with representatives of the Ministers of Agriculture, Women Affairs, Environment, the Ministry of Higher Education and the Office of the President.

35 officers and policymakers participated in a stakeholder engagement workshop towards the development of a national ODL policy for higher education in The Gambia in February 2023.

Twenty (12M/8F) participants from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education were trained in March 2023 on using Moodle to create OER-based curriculum content.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

118 (100M/18F) TVET trainers participated in the Flexible Skills Development (FSD) course in late 2021.

COL and UNESCO-UNEVOC jointly partnered with NAQAA and MHERST to improve the effectiveness in leveraging Open Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) through policy development and capacity building with additional 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 60 TVET practitioners from The Gambia participating. 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 and Zambia.

A hybrid policy dialogue session was held pre-PCF10 in September 2022 to discuss country-level initiatives to build the resilience of TVET systems using ODL. Anthony Mendy from MHERST and Gibril Jaw and Sambujang Marreh from NAQAA participated.

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 (MOOCs), 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. Over 25 teachers signed up for the COL MOOC on cybersecurity training for teachers.

COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model is based on a holistic approach that builds the capacity of farming communities, especially women, through the use of ODL and appropriate technologies where communities learn in their own languages and where learning becomes collateral for credit. In 2023, COL will work with various stakeholders in The Gambia to scale up the L3F approach for the attainment of food security, one of the SDGs – a twin challenge that requires going fast and far at the same time. This follows COL's in-country visit in January 2023 where COL Adviser: L3F presented a broad-based "Collaborative Action for Food Security" through which the integrated L3F approach could be scaled up. This visit was preceded by a series of country-based consultations which arrived at the selection of the entry point for the scaling up of L3F. Through these consultations, stakeholders across various sectors agreed that poultry meat and small ruminants are commodities of priority in food security in The Gambia.

COL's L3F partner, West Africa Livestock Innovation Centre (WALIC):

- held a workshop in the Gambia from 5-7 September 2022 for 43 stakeholders from the government and non-government sector, focusing on: Gender gaps in relation to food self-sufficiency and the sustainable development goals; COL and L3F approaches in agriculture; attaining food security and sufficiency in the Gambia and Policy interventions toward self-food sufficiency in The Gambia.
- with the assistance of stakeholders developed 2 National policies, one on "Self-Sufficiency in Sheep Production in The Gambia" and the other on the "National Self-Sufficiency in Poultry Production Program for The Gambia".

28 (2F/26M) institutional staff participated in the stakeholder engagement workshop towards development of national ODL policy for higher education in The Gambia in February 2023.

COL is supporting The Gambia College in the development of an institutional Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Policy and a Strategic Implementation Plan.

- 5-day workshop for 28 educational stakeholders (19M/8F/1undisclosed) was held in March 2023, followed by a one-day workshop to validate the draft policy and plan in late April 2023 with 25 participating. Participants were from Gambia College, MoHERST and MOBSE.

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.

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

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

Learners from The Gambia are participating in COL's free, open online courses.

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; Isatou Ndow, Gambia College

COL Adviser: Skills participated in the **launch of the UNESCO Strategy for TVET 2022-2029** 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 20 Commonwealth countries in the region participated in the two-day meeting, including Mr Anthony G. Mendy.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

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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