

Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors

April 21, 2021

Report of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the global community to embrace distance and online delivery to keep the doors of learning open. The current crisis has highlighted yet again, the uneven development of technology across the Commonwealth. COL has been promoting the use of a range of technologies from print, radio, TV to the internet to reach learners in different contexts. As an intergovernmental organisation, established by Commonwealth Heads of Government to promote distance learning and technologies for human resource development, the role of COL has never been more important.

COL's Strategic Plan 2015–2021 is based on the conviction that learning leads to sustainable development. COL continued 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. This aligns COL's work with SDG 4 which aspires to provide equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning for all. In order to accelerate progress towards this goal, COL has been building capacity, supporting the development of policy, materials, replicable models and fostering collaboration and partnerships.

As it completes the final year of the current Strategic Plan 2015-2021, COL has exceeded all the targets identified. External evaluators, who conducted a meta-evaluation to assess the impact of the Strategic Plan 2015-2021, concluded that *'COL programming over the period assessed ...was relevant, effective, and efficient. COL is having an impact in many dimensions and across several initiatives; and in many cases, where government has taken interest and is assuming more leadership, there are good reasons to believe some of the changes at the institutional and government levels are sustainable.'* The Institutional Gender Audit, also conducted in this final year, found *'many improvements and increased focus on gender mainstreaming at COL over the last five years ... and there are a number of good practice and innovative examples in programming'*.

Pandemics, natural disasters and widening inequalities will continue to challenge our systems. The lessons learned in the past will help shape a better future. COL will support Member States in their efforts to rebuild robust and resilient systems of education and training by providing bold and imaginative solutions to address future risks and uncertainties.

Background

1. Created by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987, COL is the world's only intergovernmental organisation with a mandate to promote open, distance and technology-enabled learning in support of development.
2. COL's mission is to help governments expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open and distance learning (ODL) and appropriate technologies. It assists governmental, non-governmental and community partners in developing policy, building capacity, refining models, creating materials and nurturing collaborative networks.
3. "Learning for Sustainable Development" is the title of the Strategic Plan 2015-2021, which began in July 2015. COL believes that learning is the key to sustainable development. Learning must lead to opportunities for economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation.
4. COL's strategic goals are:
 - a. human resource development in the Commonwealth;
 - b. harnessing ODL/Open Educational Resources (OER) and technology to promote equitable access to learning for sustainable development; and
 - c. promoting Commonwealth cooperation.
5. COL's priorities are:
 - a. development and promotion of OER; and
 - b. education and training for women and girls.
6. Over the course of six years, COL aimed to improve the capacity of 470 organisations to leverage technology for education and training, increase quality learning opportunities for 1.4 million learners, mostly from marginalised communities, and strengthen the sustainable livelihoods of 300,000 people. COL believes that these activities will become reference points for governments and institutions to strengthen learning for sustainable development. As a small and specialised intergovernmental agency, partnerships underpin all of COL's work. COL promotes cooperation and collaboration among Member States, Commonwealth bodies, multilateral organisations, educational institutions, civil society, and the private sector.
7. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 lockdowns, COL has made significant progress towards achieving the corporate targets. As of April 15, 2021, COL has reached more than 2 million learners. It has helped to substantially build the capacity of 764 organisations. Evidence shows that COL's interventions have helped over 389000 Commonwealth citizens improve their livelihoods.

Reporting to Governments

8. In addition to annual reporting to the Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors and its own Board, COL presents its strategic plan, along with individual country reports, to Commonwealth education ministers when they meet triennially.
9. “COL in the Commonwealth,” a compendium of individual Country Reports, is published at the end of each triennium. It was presented to Education Ministers at the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (20CCEM) in **Fiji** and since 21CCEM has been postponed will be despatched to Ministers of Education in May.
10. COL has a network of Focal Points, nominated by Education Ministers, in each Member State and keeps them apprised of its work on an ongoing basis.
11. COL participates in Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and presents its progress report to Foreign Ministers. During the 25th CHOGM in London in April 2018, COL highlighted at various forums the paradigm shifts required to secure ‘our common future’. COL will also participate in the 26th CHOGM expected to take place in Kigali, Rwanda.

Six-Year Plan 2015-2021

12. The Strategic Plan 2015-2021 is titled “Learning for Sustainable Development.” COL is committed to realising its vision of achieving development goals through universal access to learning. COL has developed its next Strategic Plan 2021-2027, which has been approved by the COL Board and will be despatched to Ministers of Education for their endorsement in May.
13. COL’s mission is translated into a comprehensive Logic Model that specifies the outcomes COL aims to achieve through its activities. These activities are divided into two programme sectors – Education and Skills, with gender as a cross-cutting theme. The Education sector has five initiatives: Open/Innovative Schooling (OIS), Teacher Education, Higher Education, the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and GIRLS Inspire.

The Skills sector works in both formal and non-formal learning. The initiatives in this sector are: Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD), Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F), and Technology-enabled Learning (TeL). A new Skills Online initiative has been introduced under TVSD. Gender is a crosscutting initiative which supports all COL programmes, as well as implements standalone projects.

14. The **Education** sector initiatives are as follows:

Open/Innovative Schooling (OIS): Due to progress made in achieving universal primary education, secondary schools are now unable to absorb the surge of pupils completing primary schooling. Open/Innovative schooling is increasingly recognised as a viable solution to the growing demand for equitable access to secondary education, especially for girls and marginalised groups, particularly in remote locations. Governments are seeking to redefine the way secondary education addresses societal needs by diversifying the curriculum. This means making technical and vocational

programmes available alongside academic offerings – something that open schools are well positioned to do (www.col.org/OpenSchooling). OIS currently works in **Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Eswatini, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Trinidad & Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia.**

Teacher Education: One of the targets of SDG4 seeks to “substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.” Governments and the education sector seek to increase teacher supply and improve teacher quality. COL’s Teacher Education initiative is focused on school-based, in-service training models, which can cut costs and achieve scale. It has emphasised the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and OER in teacher training to improve the quality of teaching (www.col.org/TeacherEducation). COL is working with institutions in **The Gambia, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.**

Higher Education: COL continues to support policy makers, institutions and leaders in higher education to harness the potential of ODL and technology and enable them to cope with the increasing demand for quality higher education, rising costs and diminishing public funding. COL has developed action plans aligned to the priorities of specific countries to increase access to quality higher education and forges partnerships with international and regional organisations to leverage its impact (www.col.org/HigherEducation). Institutions in **Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zambia** partnered with COL in this initiative.

The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC): Strengthening and improving the quality and scope of existing tertiary institutions is a key priority for small states. The VUSSC partnership represents **30 small states of the Commonwealth** dedicated to expanding access to tertiary education. VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the sharing of educational resources using collaborative and multi-institutional partnerships. COL’s emphasis is now on the delivery of VUSSC courses and programmes and in promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) (www.col.org/VUSSC). VUSSC was active in small states in Africa (**Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles**); the Caribbean (**Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana**); and the Pacific (**Fiji, Tonga**).

GIRLS Inspire: GIRLS Inspire was introduced in **Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania** in 2016, supported by Global Affairs Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australia. The project, which aimed to provide education and skills to women and girls for employment and entrepreneurship, is being scaled up in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, and introduced in **Sri Lanka**. A project based on the model is also being implemented in **Malawi**.

15. The **Skills** sector initiatives are as follows:

Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD): COL has demonstrated that using ODL and learning technologies can increase access to quality technical and vocational skills development equitably. The role of TVSD in creating a skilled workforce of lifelong learners for the informal and formal economies is constantly challenged by urban-rural and gender divides that exclude large numbers of learners from skills training systems. COL is working with institutional partners, industry, and governments in **Botswana, Fiji, Jamaica, Kenya, Nauru, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Zambia** to create contextualised, high-quality flexible and blended learning approaches to scale up skills development (www.col.org/TVSD). Skills Online includes collaboration between COL, its partners in **across the Commonwealth** and online learning providers Udemy and Coursera to provide job-oriented skills to unemployed youth, combining the power of online learning with offline mentorship.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F): COL's L3F programme helps rural communities find appropriate technology-based solutions to improve their livelihoods. L3F empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning process, organise themselves to solve the challenges of food security and improve their living conditions. Under the L3F model, COL is a catalyst in bringing together institutions, civil society and the private sector to build the capacity of communities through gender-sensitive learning (www.col.org/L3F). Ten countries, **Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia** are implementing the L3F model.

Technology-enabled Learning (TeL): This initiative aims to encourage more governments and institutions to integrate technology-enabled learning and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. COL believes that for technology to have a transformative effect in teaching and learning, a focus on policy-technology-capacity is needed and practice must be based on research evidence (<http://www.col.org/programmes/technology-enabled-learning>). This initiative is being implemented in **Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Cameroon, Fiji, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, and Uganda**.

Gender: Gender is a cross-cutting theme that underpins and complements all initiatives. COL recognises that the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to its agenda of learning for sustainable development. As a cross-cutting theme, gender equality requires that both women's and men's views, interests and needs shape COL's programmes. Gender mainstreaming is an organisational strategy for COL. A gender equality perspective is taken at all stages of the programme cycle – planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – to ensure that the initiatives offer equal opportunities, benefits and participation to girls/women and boys/men. COL has a Gender Policy, a Gender Action Plan and its website provides links to resources and research on gender and ODL and ICT (www.col.org/Gender). Projects are being implemented in **Bangladesh, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania**.

16. Recognising that the Commonwealth has diverse and geographically dispersed populations, COL has established regional centers to support capacity building in the field. Through an agreement signed with the Government of **India**, COL established a regional office, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in New Delhi. CEMCA works in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. COL also supports the Research and Training Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) hosted by the National Open University of **Nigeria** (NOUN); the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) located in the **Botswana** Open University (BOU); the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) at the University of the South Pacific (USP), **Fiji**; and, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning (CCCL) in **Malta**.
17. To adapt its programme to the unique needs of each country, COL develops individual Country Action Plans after extensive consultations with Focal Points and partner institutions. These are monitored and updated regularly (www.col.org/FocalPoints).
18. COL adds strength to its professional network by working with a group of eminent education and development professionals from across the Commonwealth. COL Chairs have been appointed to work in specific research areas related to ODL and OER (<https://www.col.org/about/col-chairs>).
19. COL is results-oriented and strives to achieve ‘value for money’. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are key components of COL’s Results-Based Management practice. COL’s ‘Theory of Change’ helps to define the roadmap to achieve its goals. A Risk Management Matrix is reviewed regularly by COL’s senior management and Executive and Audit Committees, and annually by its Board of Governors.

Examples of COL’s work

Some examples of COL’s work at the Pan Commonwealth level and in the four regions over the past year are presented as follows:

Pan Commonwealth

20. Over 150000 Commonwealth citizens were trained in skills for employability under the COL-Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, and course enrolments surpassed one million. The COL-Udemy programme, aimed at building skills for employment and entrepreneurship, reached 8112 learners from **Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda**. From April 2021, Google joins these collective efforts, providing 10,000 licenses for in-demand skills courses, while the COL-Udemy programme will reach an additional 10000 learners.
21. COL initiated the CommonwealthWiseWomen (CWW) project to empower women and girls to achieve their leadership potential and to influence the next generation of leaders. Regular CWW webinars have been held, attracting close to 300 participants. Two cohorts of 48 mentors and 128 mentees from across the Commonwealth were supported and a CWW country chapter in India was launched with 8 mentors and 80 mentees.

22. A series of four MOOCs on the Blue Economy was offered in partnership with The University of **Seychelles**, reaching more than 6000 learners across the **Commonwealth**.
23. COL has partnered with the **UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE)**, the **International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)**, **National Research University-Higher School of Economics (HSE)** and **Beijing Normal University (BNU)** in a new project ‘Rethinking and Redesigning National Smart Education Strategy’. The project aims to identify key issues and trends of the futures of education and explore the solutions of infusing ICT into education.
24. COL completed a series of regional consultations to update Focal Points on its work, and to consult with them on their priorities for the Strategic Plan 2021-2027. Consultations were held with Pacific Focal Points, and representatives from **Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu** shared their national priorities. Online consultations were held with Focal Points from **Africa and Europe** and 16 countries were represented.
25. Ministries of Education in **Belize, Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Trinidad & Tobago, Vanuatu** and **Zambia** are continuing the integration of the open/innovative schooling (OIS) model. More than 7100 learners are enrolled in open schools under the model.
26. While the externally-funded GIRLS Inspire project has ended, the model is being scaled up in **Bangladesh, India and Pakistan**, and was introduced in **Sri Lanka**. A project based on the model is also being implemented in **Malawi**. To date 100726 women and girls have been trained through the model. This has resulted in 22172 girls accessing income generating opportunities and has contributed to the prevention of 1190 child marriages.
27. School-based teacher development is underway in **The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka**. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice, and more than 3000 teachers have been reached. Working with various partners, nine MOOCs for teachers were offered attracting over 7600 participants from **50 countries**.
28. Through the Technology-enabled Learning (TeL) initiative, the ‘Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA)’ online platform (<https://cdelta.col.org>) has 13585 registered users, and the ‘Understanding Open Educational Resources (OER)’ platform (<https://learnoer.col.org>) has 14687 registrations. C-DELTA was nominated as a finalist for the Falling Walls 2020 award and Understanding Open Educational Resources won a prestigious Brandon Hall Group Silver Award for excellence in the Learning Management Measurement/Business Impact Tools category.
29. COL, **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** and Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning (3CL), Malta have partnered to foster lifelong learning and promote skills development via digital technologies, with a focus on Africa and the

small states. This new partnership will focus on sharing knowledge and expertise in educational technology, online and distance learning, the digitalisation of skills development, and technical, vocational education and training.

Africa

30. COL partner Matumaini Mapya and the Ministry of Agriculture, **Tanzania** organised a workshop on 'Integration of Table Banking in National Policies' for representatives from the ministry and various cooperatives. One outcome of this event was the recommendation that the Tanzania Producers Financial Public Limited Company, developed with COL support, be licensed to manage micro-finance.
31. To empower women and girls and foster gender equality, Concerned Youth Organisation (CYO), **Malawi** has trained more than 2300 learners in agricultural skills, financial literacy, and human rights. CYO also supported 79 youth to return to school and trained school management committees to address violence against girls.
32. COL supported **Kenya's** Ministry of Education, to implement the national plan 'Establishment of Distance and Flexible Learning in TVET'. This includes the design of a resource repository, support for 28 institutions to implement online learning and training for more than 2000 TVET teachers. Close to 1000 additional teachers have enrolled in the next offering of training.
33. COL has supported policy development at universities in Africa, including employability policies and strategies for Copperbelt University, **Zambia**, and Moi University in **Kenya**, and a Quality Assurance policy for University of Buea, **Cameroon**. With the University of **Rwanda** (UR), a prototype online policy development tool, encompassing four policies at UR is being developed. The self-service tools and resources can be adapted and used by other institutions.
34. Through COL sponsorship, 500 nurses and midwives in **Seychelles** have accessed online continuing education courses on the World Continuing Educational Alliance (WCEA) platform. On average each learner has completed eight courses. COL signed an agreement with WCEA and the Nurses and Midwives Council, **Botswana** to support 12000 nurses and midwives to access the courses.
35. During the pandemic period, views of the **Namibian** College of Open Learning's (NAMCOL's) OER content, developed with COL support, increased from an average of 2000 a month to 18000 a month. More than 1500 new curriculum-based OER have been developed. The resources, which are estimated to reach 100000 learners, will be launched in a formal handover to the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture.
36. With support from COL, the Yaba College of Technology (Yabatech), **Nigeria** has launched a programme using informal apprenticeships to create new employment pathways for young Nigerians. The focus is on upskilling technicians for computer and mobile phone repair and maintenance. COL has helped Yabatech to develop open educational resources for the programme, and the college is building staff capacity to mentor other TVET institutes in blended learning.

Asia

37. During COVID-19 lockdowns, COL's Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for **Asia** (CEMCA) trained over 2000 faculty from partner institutions, offered MOOCs on life skills and academic counselling reaching over 6000 learners, and leveraged community radio to deliver health-related information to rural communities. CEMCA, in collaboration with the National Institute of Education **Maldives**, trained 754 teachers and teacher educators in developing online courses and virtual labs, and teachers of Universiti **Brunei Darussalam** were trained in OER.
38. COL supported Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), **India** to build the digital skills of 2000 artisans and weavers from marginalised communities. Participants reported a significant shift in the way they utilise their smartphones for livelihood opportunities. With dedicated online pages, they can reach wider audiences and increase their sales, especially during COVID-19 lockdowns.
39. At **Bangladesh** Open University (BOU), 150 staff were trained in developing outcome-based self-learning materials and OER. COL is also working with BOU to provide solutions to remote proctoring.
40. COL trained close to 1000 staff of Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank (APCOB), **India** in aspects of the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model. This partnership adds a new dimension to L3F by bringing in the co-operative sector as a stakeholder in informal learning, to raise awareness about the importance of building cognitive social capital for improved credit management. APCOB delivered mobiMOOC-based training to 877 learners to enhance credit performance.
41. COL's Agricultural MOOCs (AgMOOCs) reached around 33000 learners from **Asia** during the COVID-19 period.
42. The Universiti **Malaysia** Sabah (UMS), with the support of COL, organised a MOOC on 'Introduction to Bio Risk Management' with 950 learners. UMS also applied COL's new TEL Benchmarking Toolkit, which resulted in an 'action plan' to strengthen TEL at the institution.
43. In **Pakistan**, the Society for Protection and Rights of the Child (SPARC) concluded a project to build skills for livelihoods, exceeding its targets and training more than 14000 women and girls.
44. The Women's Development Centre (WDC) in **Sri Lanka** trained 447 women in skills for livelihoods and conducted awareness raising for local police on gender-based violence.
45. With COL support, the Virtual University of **Pakistan** developed and delivered a course on 'Introduction to Artificial Intelligence for IT and Non-IT Professionals'. It was offered during two successive semesters and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, over 20000 learners enrolled.

Caribbean

46. A MOOC ‘Using Open Educational Resources for Online Learning: An Introduction (OER4OL)’ reached close to 9,000 teachers in the **Caribbean** using the mooKIT platform. The Ministry of Education **Trinidad and Tobago** is using the course as the foundation for more in-depth teacher training.
47. COL is supporting **Dominica's** Climate Resilience Execution Agency to increase public knowledge about disaster preparedness and emergency readiness at the individual, household and community levels. Consultations have been completed with five of the ten most vulnerable communities in Dominica.
48. COL supported the **Bahamas** Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI) to develop and deliver quality online education. Twenty-three lecturers completed training in developing and teaching online courses and nine were trained as faculty leads. Five online courses were developed and are available on the BTVI Moodle platform, and an online self-instructional orientation course for learners is also available.
49. Three hundred and seventy-five learners from **The Bahamas** and beyond were able to boost their knowledge of good agricultural practices through a MOOC, delivered by The Bahamas Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources and The Bahamas Agricultural Health and Food Safety Authority in partnership with COL.
50. The Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, **Belize**, with the support of COL, implemented C-DELTA in 44 schools, with 1878 participants.
51. In partnership with **Jamaica** Teaching Council (JTC) COL has launched a project to mentor 10000 boys, addressing challenges as identified in the ‘Baseline Study on School Intervention Strategy Aimed at Addressing the Underachievement of Boys in Jamaica’.
52. **Antigua** State College developed a policy for implementing technology-enabled learning (TEL) and a baseline study on TEL at the College was completed.
53. The maximum uptake of the COL-Coursera Workforce Recovery Programme has been in the **Caribbean**. The Ministry of Education, **Guyana** signed an MOU with the Private Sector Commission and the Public Service Commission to ensure that the certificates earned are recognised for employment. The National Transformation Initiative, **Barbados** signed an agreement directly with Coursera to continue offering this programme as part of its national skills transformation agenda.

Pacific

54. Responding to a request from the Ministry of Education, **Fiji**, COL offered the OER4OL MOOC for the Pacific Region in collaboration with the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) at the University of the South Pacific. The course was designed to provide immediate support teachers in the region with guidelines and resources to cope with school campus closures during COVID-19.

55. Under the 'Partnership for ODFL in the Pacific' project, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, **New Zealand**, an OER repository was built and content related to teacher education and school subjects was added and shared with ministries of education. The revised OER4OL MOOC was offered, and more than 580 learners enrolled. Consultation meetings with TVET stakeholder groups from eight **Pacific** countries were held and research on the regional TVET ecosystem was completed.
56. A Video-on-Demand service was launched by COL to support education needs in the **Pacific** Island States. The platform has over 800 open educational resources supporting curriculum needs in **Fiji, Nauru, Samoa** and **Tonga** with the capacity to grow with more curated content to suit other countries as well. It has been designed to ensure that all the curated resources are downloadable even in low-bandwidth environments and can be hosted on local servers.
57. A project to strengthen food security and resilience, particularly for women and girls, was launched in the **Solomon Islands** and **Papua New Guinea**. Following various consultations and a baseline assessment, a handbook of learning guidelines was developed, along with four modules of the training programme. In **Papua New Guinea** 101 people were trained in domestic trades.
58. Two MOOCs 'Youth and Climate Crisis' and 'Youth Rights, Civil Engagement and Political Participation' were offered by COL regional centre PACFOLD with 627 and 423 enrolments, respectively.
59. COL is supporting **Kiribati** Teachers College (KTC) in developing teacher capacity in Open Educational Resources (OER) and digital learning. 'Mobile Learning with Multimedia', the first in a series of online courses to be contextualised for KTC learners, had 70 enrolments.
60. As part of its technology-enabled learning implementation, **Fiji** National University has developed 18 online/blended courses with 1554 students registered. The University of **Papua New Guinea** has also developed 18 online/blended courses where 1548 students have registered.
61. COL is working with **Nauru's** Ministries of Education, and Industry and Environment, Taiwan's Technical Mission, community leaders and farmers to use mobile learning to develop skills in growing their own gardens. The app was finalised and site/content administrators were trained to begin populating the app with local content.
62. **Tuvalu** launched the Building, Construction and Allied Trade Skills (BCATS) programme, the country's first TVET pathway from school to the Tuvalu Atoll Science, Technology and Training Institute (TASTTI). The Minister for Public Utilities and Environment was the guest of honour at the launch. Eight trainers from TASTTI were certified as workplace assessors by New Zealand's Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation and 40 learners enrolled in a higher-level programme.

63. Twenty-five COL-sponsored students from **Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu** enrolled in the Legislative Drafting Programme through the **Fiji** campus of the University of the South Pacific.

Technology and Innovations

64. COL is recognised as one of the foremost sources of knowledge on open, distance and technology-enabled learning. A wide range of start-up guides, toolkits, research reports and other resources are freely available on COL's website (<https://www.col.org/resources>).
65. The *Journal of Learning for Development* (JL4D) is an open online scholarly journal which provides a forum for practitioners and academics working in education and international development to share knowledge and experience (www.jl4d.org). The Journal is indexed in several online sources including ERIC, BASE Search Engine, WorldCat, and Directory of Open Access Journals.
66. As a key player in the fast-evolving field of knowledge management, COL continues to develop its internal systems to organise information of its own work and to support partners. COL has an advanced intranet service that supports eLogframes for Results Based Management (RBM) while enabling access to a large repository of professional reports and publications. COL's institutional repository (<http://oasis.col.org>) contains COL publications from the past 20 years.
67. COL is present in many forums that explore the leading edge of new media. COL's formal communications media such as its website and newsletter, *Connections*, are supported by other electronic communications such as broadcast messaging, Facebook, Twitter, videos and blogs.
68. Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, many face-to-face training events and meetings have had to be moved online. COL is using various technology tools, including webinar and videoconferencing platforms, to deliver training and consult with stakeholders.
69. Aptus is a low-cost device designed by COL to support educators and learners to connect to digital learning platforms and content without the need for grid electricity or Internet access. Aptus continues to be used to deliver curriculum-based OER for open schooling in **Africa**, and 30 devices along with 300 tablets were deployed to the Ministry of Education, **The Bahamas**, for use by local schools still grappling with the effects of hurricane Dorian.

Funding

70. COL's core budget comes from voluntary contributions of Commonwealth Member States.
71. COL's financial strategy is based primarily on two sources of revenue. Voluntary contributions from approximately 45 Commonwealth Member States provide the resources for about 80% of the annual budget. While the seven largest major donors are **Canada, India, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria and South Africa** COL

appreciates the financial support that it receives from all contributing Commonwealth countries. Additional contributions from grants and fee-for-service work accounts for over 15% of total revenue. On the expenditure side, a minimum of 87% of the budget is directed to the programme and the balance to organisational management and governance.

72. As of the middle of April, 40 countries have contributed this fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2021. In the previous fiscal year, COL received financial contributions from 46 countries.

Conclusion

73. Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit and the learning losses that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieving the targets of SDG 4 by 2030. COL's experience shows that ODL, OER and TEL can be leveraged to increase access to quality education, skills development and lifelong learning at lower costs. COL will provide support to ministries and institutions to develop enabling policies, build resilient systems and enhance human resource capacity for formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Going forward, 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) develop skills for employment and entrepreneurship; and
- v) promote gender equality.

Further Information

Web: www.col.org.

Twitter: [@COL4D](https://twitter.com/COL4D).

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/COL4D/>.

Blog: www.col.org/blog.

Videos: www.col.org/videos.

Six-Year Plan 2015-2021: <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/826>.

Board of Governors: www.col.org/board /Staff: www.col.org/staff.

Publications: <https://www.col.org/resources>.

Speeches and presentations: <https://www.col.org/news/speeches-and-presentations>.

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