



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING



COL in the Commonwealth

• **BOTSWANA** | 2015–2021

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2015–2021



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Foreword

COL in the Commonwealth: 2015–2021 Country Reports summarise COL's activities over the last six years, detailing what we have achieved in each Member State and across the Commonwealth. The reports describe not only how COL has addressed country needs in education and training but also how its work supports the priorities of its development partners: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

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 and 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, COL's role has never been more important.

COL's Strategic Plan 2015–2021 was based on the conviction that learning leads to sustainable development. COL has continued to use its expertise in distance education and technology-based approaches to promote lifelong learning that leads to sustainable development, which means economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation. This aligns COL's work with SDG4, which aspires to provide equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning for all.

To accelerate progress towards this goal and enhance impact, COL has been fostering partnerships, building capacity, supporting the development of materials and replicable models, and enabling policy. Focusing on these core strategies, this compendium begins with a Pan-Commonwealth section, which describes COL's initiatives under Education and Skills, with Gender as a cross-cutting theme. This is followed by a section containing brief regional overviews for Africa, Asia, the

Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The regional summaries are followed by individual country reports, which highlight some of the results achieved.

You will be pleased to note that COL has exceeded the targets identified for the six-year plan. 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."

This success has been possible through the support that COL has received from ministries of education as well as partner organisations and experts. *COL in the Commonwealth* is also the result of collective effort and collaboration. Partners on the ground have diligently provided COL with updates, while COL staff have tracked and assessed results obtained through meticulous monitoring and evaluation. I am very grateful to everyone involved for their valuable inputs.

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. Your continued support will be key to achieving these goals.



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

TARGETS 2021

ACHIEVED by April 2021



Improved sustainable livelihoods
300,000 PEOPLE



470 ORGANISATIONS
Improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL



1.4 million PEOPLE
Increased and equitable access to and use of quality learning opportunities



Pan-Commonwealth Activity

Located in British Columbia, Canada, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is an intergovernmental organisation that serves the education and training needs of the 54 independent states that comprise the Commonwealth and their combined population of 2.4 billion, of whom more than 60% are under the age of 30. COL was established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government specifically to help ministries, institutions and organisations expand the scale, efficiency and quality of learning by using open, distance and technology-based approaches.

COL participates in the 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.” As well, at the triennial Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) and the meetings of the Commonwealth Education Ministers’ Action Group, COL reports on its progress in promoting learning for sustainable development.

At the 20th CCEM, in Fiji in 2018, the Commonwealth Education Ministers commended COL “for its emphasis on Lifelong Learning for employment, entrepreneurship and empowerment which supported the ongoing efforts of Member States to achiev[e] SDG4... [and] its global leadership in Open Educational Resources (OER) and innovations in educational technologies.”

2nd World OER Congress

COL partnered with UNESCO, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the government of Slovenia to organise the 2nd World OER Congress, in Ljubljana, Slovenia from 18 to 20 September 2017. The ensuing 2017 Ljubljana OER Action Plan provided 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.



COL leverages its impact through a wide range of partnerships that include institutions, national organisations, international development agencies and non-governmental organisations. Inter-governmental partners include the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Women, UNESCO and UNESCO’s Institute for Information Technologies (IITE) and UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). COL also works with donor agencies such as the World Bank, regional organisations such as the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation, national and regional distance education associations, industry, and private-sector foundations such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

COL assists governmental, non-governmental and community partners in developing policy, building capacity, refining models, creating materials and nurturing collaborative networks.

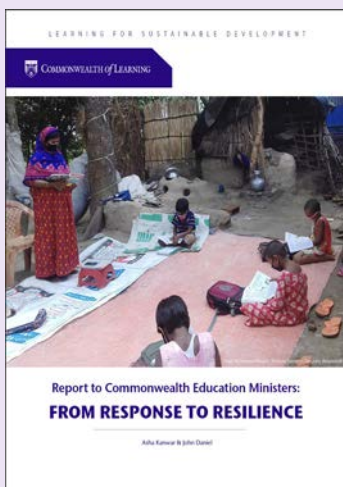
COL's response to COVID-19

COL has been quick to respond to the urgency of the situation and the evolving needs across the Commonwealth by initiating relevant projects and targeted country interventions and joining global coalitions.

COL has joined the UNESCO Global Education Coalition and “Combat COVID-19: Keep Learning”, spearheaded by IITE. COL also initiated the International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19, commonly known as [OpenDoor](#), bringing together over 60 organisations and institutions around the world. COL's online repository of curated content and tools became a

go-to resource for educators across the world. The COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative has provided access to free online courses to almost 150,000 Commonwealth citizens, many of whom have lost their livelihoods due to COVID-19.

In an effort to help young women and girls become successful in their fields of interest and build future generations of leaders, COL has launched [CommonwealthWiseWomen](#). This new mentoring programme offers unique networking opportunities to women and girls from underserved communities across the Commonwealth by pairing them with successful and influential women in leadership roles.



Report to Commonwealth Education Ministers: From Response to Resilience

“What lessons can be drawn from the COVID-19 experience to make education systems more resilient in future? This policy brief provides examples of how governments and institutions made it possible for people to continue their education during the pandemic and identifies factors that contributed to success. The responses required are reviewed from social, pedagogical, technological and psychological perspectives.”



COL's Programmes



Education and Skills are COL's two programme sectors, with gender as a cross-cutting theme.

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

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, and 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.

Activities

OIS currently works in Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Eswatini, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia. COL also supports the information-sharing activities of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association.

COL has supported the development of policies and strategies in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Tanzania; developed and enhanced open schooling models in Belize, Malawi, Mozambique, Trinidad and Tobago, Vanuatu and Zambia; and promoted quality OER, including for persons with disabilities, in Bangladesh, Botswana, Eswatini and Namibia. It also



COL's activities and projects are relevant to achieving SDG4, to the priorities of the Commonwealth countries COL works in, and both relevant and appropriate to achieving the aims of the current Six-Year Plan.

- COL is accepted and seen as a leader in ODL. It has the mandate, over 30 years of experience, a large repository of OER materials, tools and highly skilled international experts on staff and at the governance level.
- COL's innovative approaches to teacher development, blended learning, and institutional capacity building in ODL, OER and TEL are at the cutting edge.
- COL is committed to learning from doing and adapts its work based on the evidence coming from M&E and internal studies.

Key Evaluation Findings. *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*

has been building capacity in course development, delivery and assessment in Guyana and Papua New Guinea.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the current model for OIS is relatively new and involves developing, piloting, scaling and mainstreaming OER, ODL, eLearning methods and open educational practices in order to have a large-scale systemic impact. Since the implementation of this model started in 2017, educators in six countries have developed curriculum-based OER and have piloted or are close to piloting their use. The pilots in Mozambique and Zambia are currently reaching about 800 formerly out-of-school youths per year, and both countries are now looking towards scaling. In addition, as part of their response

to the pandemic lockdowns, participating countries shared some of the OER they had in development, and these were downloaded more than 26,000 times in 2020. In a similar vein, curriculum-based resources created for use by learners in Kenya were viewed on YouTube more than 20,000 times in the first eight weeks and, it is estimated, were viewed by more than 150,000 learners in Kenya and Tanzania when first broadcast.

TEACHER EDUCATION



Teaching quality is considered to be the most important factor affecting learning in schools in most Commonwealth countries. COL's focus is on improving teacher quality through school- and technology-based training models, which can cut costs and achieve scale. Working in partnership with government agencies and teacher education institutions, COL supports capacity development in the integration of technology and OER into pre- and in-service training.

Activities

COL is working with ministries of education as well as non-governmental organisations and teacher education institutions in The Gambia, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kiribati, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Uganda to develop capacity and resources for school-based teacher development.

In response to partner needs and emerging pedagogies, the initiative has also developed online courses, including MOOCs and webinars for educators and education leaders.

COL's Educational Podcasting for Innovative Classrooms is a response to the increased need for practices, processes and systems for effective last-mile teaching and teacher professional development in partner countries.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the model has been replicated in ten countries. The findings from the evaluations and interviews with key actors at institutional and government levels suggest that the model is succeeding in West Africa, particularly The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and it shows potential for scale, with the strategic selection of institutions by governments.

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 in the face of 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, while also forging partnerships with international and regional organisations to leverage its impact.

Activities

Institutions in Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka,



Uganda and Zambia have partnered with COL in various projects.

COL is collaborating with 12 higher education institutions across the Commonwealth to offer the Commonwealth Executive Master in Business Administration and Commonwealth Executive Master in Public Administration programmes.

Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning project, led by the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL is supporting the development of quality assurance mechanisms for blended learning courses at 23 higher education institutions located in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

Outcomes

The evaluation of Higher Education initiatives in the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021* found that student performance had improved and student satisfaction had increased. There is evidence that systemic investments in technology, staff training, materials development and quality assurance policies have all had a positive impact.

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 32 small states of the Commonwealth dedicated to sharing educational resources and expanding access to tertiary education. VUSSC works with ministries of education and their agencies, post-secondary institutions and non-governmental organisations to build capacity in online course development, pedagogy and assessment. It promotes technology-enabled learning through the provision of a learning platform and enables the transfer of credits across small states through the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework.

Activities

VUSSC has been active in small states across three regions – Africa (Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles), the Caribbean (The Bahamas, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana) and the Pacific (Fiji,



Solomon Islands) – promoting eLearning, supporting the development of OER and providing learning opportunities at certificate, diploma and degree levels.

VUSSC has supported the development of a series of blue economy MOOCs in which close to 6,000 learners from across the world have participated.

In response to the increasing need to transition to online delivery, VUSSC has supported institutions in Africa and the Caribbean to manage and use learning management systems to create and offer courses.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, VUSSC has repurposed and made available an online undergraduate degree programme in Youth Work Development to universities that are members of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, there is strong support from ministers of education in the small states of the Commonwealth, and COL offers a variety of courses responding to the unique needs of small states in areas such as the blue economy, sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism, disaster management and port management. VUSSC has played a major role in the development of OER that have led to educators' pedagogical development and students' improved educational performance. The Transnational Qualifications Framework, which allows for the recognition of qualifications earned in one nation by 31 other nations, is a major strength.



The Skills sector addresses the needs of both formal and non-formal learning. The initiatives in this sector are: Technology-Enabled Learning, Lifelong Learning for Farmers, GIRLS Inspire, and Technical and Vocational Skills Development, including Skills Online.



TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

This initiative aims to encourage more governments and institutions to integrate TEL 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.

Activities

This initiative is being implemented in Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Fiji, Grenada, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Saint Lucia, Samoa, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Since its launch in 2018, COL's Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training

in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users. Over 24,000 learners have benefited from MOOCs organised in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada. Since 2018, COL's online course *Understanding OER* has been used by over 13,000 people worldwide; in 2020, it won a prestigious Brandon Hall Group Silver Award.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, TEL demonstrates the systematic use of technology to offer quality education at scale. The C-DELTA (seven modules) and Online Course on Open Education Resources (LearnOER) platforms are examples. TEL provides peer-reviewed and quality-assured tools and resources to help any educational institution integrate technology in teaching and learning so as to improve the quality of



PCF8

PCF8 was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 27 to 30 November 2016. More than 500 participants from 59 countries joined COL and host partner Open University Malaysia for four days of speeches, presentations and discussions on the theme *Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development*. In the framework of the forum, education ministers from five countries held a Ministerial Roundtable, where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. Forum delegates adopted the Kuala Lumpur Declaration with a set of ten recommendations for governments, institutions, the private sector and civil society, on topics that included lifelong learning, ODL, access and equity, teacher education, OER, education of women and girls, research and innovation.

student learning and success. The Advanced ICT Skills Development Project has developed 26 OER courses to make the teaching and learning of advanced ICT skills affordable. These courses are developed as OER textbooks that can be adapted by institutions to offer courses. In addition, this initiative works to improve TEL policies.

LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS (L3F)

This programme empowers vulnerable rural women and their families to gain knowledge, create their own self-directed learning processes, and organise themselves to solve the challenges of lack of access



to credit and finance to improve their livelihoods. In this 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.

Activities

Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Tonga, Uganda and Zambia are currently implementing the L3F model. Nearly 800,000 farmers, more than half of them women, have participated in L3F learning activities. COL has also trained over 100,000 learners across several countries of the Commonwealth using MOOCs - to scale up L3F through building capacity in agricultural extension. During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, about 42,000 learners were trained using innovative mobiMOOCs. Banks in various countries collaborate with L3F, including NABARD, a large agricultural bank in India, and Andhra Pradesh State Cooperative Bank. COL has been building the capacity

of staff at the Bank of Tanzania through a visit to India and subsequent follow-up training workshops.

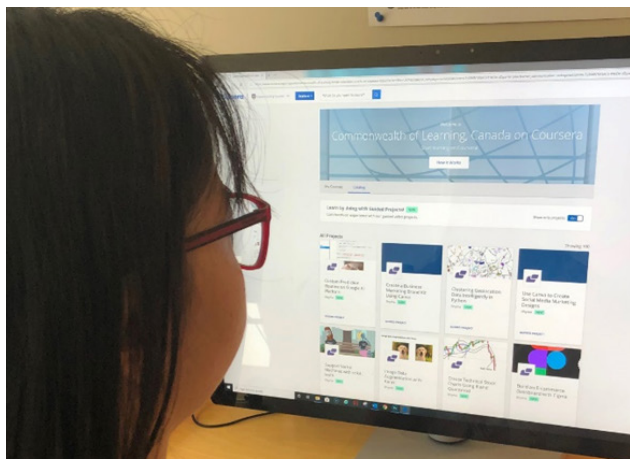
Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, since being piloted in 2006, the L3F programme has been demonstrated to enhance crop productivity, household incomes and empowerment, not simply through learning but also by linking small-holder farmers to sources of financing and to other actors in the supply chain. Participants invest their incomes in children’s education, better food and improved housing, as well as increasing their assets and diversifying their income-generating activities, which multiplies the development impact. COL’s ability to broker partnerships is a key strength: the L3F model links participants with microfinance, agricultural extension workers and agricultural supply chains using a social-capital approach.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

COL is building the capacity of TVET government agencies and institutions to increase access to quality TVSD through using ODL and learning technologies. COL is supporting selected partners to implement Skills in Demand projects, which blend online learning with learning in the workplace or community. Tapping into the physical and human resources in these contexts helps overcome TVET-specific challenges of how to develop practical skills while still reaching marginalised learners in informal sectors and remote locations.





Activities

Since 2015, COL has trained more than 3,000 TVET educators across the Commonwealth in flexible and blended learning. COL is supporting government agency partners in The Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and Zambia to implement national change strategies for flexible and blended TVET. COL has seven Skills in Demand projects underway in Kenya, Nauru, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Zambia, and across the Caribbean in partnership with the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies. Skills being developed are project management, gardening, construction, computer and mobile phone repair, furniture making, and teaching and assessment for TVET teachers and workplace trainers.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, more than 100 partners are implementing flexible and blended (FaB) learning approaches to varying degrees, and there is evidence that organisations are moving toward more flexible TVSD. COL has online OER to build capacity in flexible skills development, allowing countries to cost-effectively scale up institutional capability through training trainers to use COL’s OER. COL’s new Skills in Demand model was found to meet the needs of national TVET agencies and bring government support that allowed work to scale rapidly across institutions and workplaces. TVSD also promoted learning networks: the INVEST Africa Community Learning Network has more than 2,000 members, and the African Foundation for Quality e-Learning for TVET (AFQueT) was founded in 2019 by nine individuals

from five African countries who have had their capability in eLearning built through COL.

As well, Skills Online aims to support the efforts of Member States to disseminate skills required for employment and entrepreneurship. Through hybrid models that apply ODL techniques, it helps women, girls, youths, persons with disabilities, entrepreneurs and the unemployed to acquire relevant 21st-century skills and access in-country mentorship support. It enhances the ODL capabilities of both TVET institutions and other non-governmental organisations involved in skills development.

The COL–Coursera partnership has been offered in 50 Commonwealth countries, resulting in over one million course enrolments and over 182,000 certificates. In addition, COL has collaborated with UdeMy Inc., facilitating access for vulnerable youths in Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda to 4,000 highly curated online courses that have benefited over 8,100 learners. In India, COL has helped reskill 2,100 auto-technicians, tailors and beauticians to become sanitation hygiene entrepreneurs and train 5,000 women digital entrepreneurs to meet new demands created by COVID-19.

GENDER

Gender is a cross-cutting theme that underpins and complements all COL initiatives. COL recognises that the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment is central to its agenda of learning for sustainable development. COL supports partners in mainstreaming gender and in implementing holistic projects to address specific gender issues. Targeted programmes tackle the distinct challenges faced by



girls/women and boys/men in regions where they are most disadvantaged, while also shifting the social norms that create and perpetuate gender inequalities.

Activities

Projects are being implemented in Botswana, Ghana, Guyana, India, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago. Through a variety of skills-building activities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, COL has been empowering women to achieve sustainable livelihoods. In Sri Lanka and Tanzania, COL has trained girls and young women in ICT, and in the Caribbean, it has helped address issues of boys' underachievement. In 2020, COL launched a gender-equality capacity-building project with the participation of 11 partners in nine countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.



As well, a special project, GIRLS Inspire, has aimed to provide schooling and skills development to some of the hardest-to-reach girls in the Commonwealth. COL has worked in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania to provide education and training to almost 100,000 girls to equip them for employment and entrepreneurship. This project has been supported by Global Affairs Canada and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, COL has the ability to influence as well as support partners, and its long

history and relationships give it credibility. Three of the gender projects — the Social Safety Net project, Lifelong Learning for Mothers, and the Gender Mainstreaming project — have developed strategies and mechanisms for implementation that can be scaled up. The Gender Mainstreaming model has clear guidelines, and the three phases of the gender mainstreaming strategy are logically connected and relevant. In addition, COL has developed tools, including a Gender Audit Tool and a Gender Road Map template. A social protection mobile application has also been developed for Solomon Islands.

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE FOR ASIA (CEMCA)

COL's regional office in Asia is based in New Delhi, India. 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.

Activities

Through activities with partners in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka, CEMCA has helped institutions improve their capacity to leverage ODL for increased access to education. During the COVID-19 lockdown in the region in 2020, CEMCA offered training to faculty and leaders in ODL institutions to help with the transition to online learning. Recently, virtual labs have been introduced.



Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, CEMCA operates with a small academic staff and well-developed networks. Its advocacy efforts and technical support have led to the successful adoption of institutional OER policies. Similarly, capacity building with institutions has created improvements in knowledge, changes in attitude, and changes in systems and practices, leading to the increased use of OER to create learning materials. In a few cases, partner institutions have shared their experience with other universities, creating a multiplier effect. CEMCA has also been able to obtain additional contributions from other donors or development agencies.



PCF9

Close to 550 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from across the Commonwealth and beyond gathered at the historic Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Scotland for PCF9, themed Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning. It was organised from 9 to 12 September 2019 in partnership with The Open University, UK. The four days of insightful keynote addresses, engaging plenary panels, informative parallel sessions, and other programme highlights provided a unique opportunity to bridge traditional divides between borders and sectors. Discussions centred around four key sub-themes — Opening Up Education, Equity and Inclusion, Technology, and Employability — and delegates appreciated the focus on new forum features: artificial intelligence, youth and girls' education, and learners with special abilities. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers.

REGIONAL CENTRES



COL supports regional centres in Western and Southern Africa, Europe and the Pacific. These are hosted by ODL institutions (in Botswana, Fiji and Nigeria) or ministries (in Malta). They carry out activities that are aligned to COL's mandate and programmes.

Outcomes

According to the *Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021*, the regional centres are centres of excellence focused on advocacy and research in ODL. They have generated activities that can be replicated by new partners. In addition, they have well-developed networks of consultants to help them expand activities. The evaluation found that the regional centres are becoming increasingly relevant in their respective regions. The more established ones have developed networks and partnerships, significantly increasing ODL capacity in their regions.

SERVICES

COL's eLearning for International Organisations (eLIO) is a service initiative that works with international organisations on a fee-for-service basis to develop and deliver professional development courses and projects. Over the past 20 years, eLIO has progressively diversified its services to provide innovative solutions to meet the needs of globally dispersed staff and enable learning for sustainable development.



COL IN AFRICA

By 2030, young Africans aged 15–24 are expected to make up 42% of the world's youth and will account for 75% of those under age 35 in Africa, presenting a huge opportunity to change this demographic fact into a demographic dividend. Education has a key role to play in reducing inequality, improving health, boosting employability and spurring social empowerment, and it is pivotal for meeting the global sustainable development agenda. Distance and online learning provide additional opportunities, but many parts of the region still experience significant challenges with connectivity and electricity, access to platforms, content, and teacher capacity.

In Africa, mobile-cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants are at 76.57% (2018), and 17.37% of households have Internet (2018).

There are five public open universities in Commonwealth Africa, and the University of South Africa was the first distance teaching university in the world. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, governments provided remote learning to out-of-school students using a variety of approaches, such as radio, television programmes, eLearning platforms, and social media.



COL focuses on adding value to the countries' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It supports the Commonwealth governments and institutions of Africa in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. Its initiatives in formal education include emphasising quality and inclusive secondary and higher education and strengthening teacher development programmes. In the area of skills, COL supports the expansion of access to technical and vocational education, the linking of informal learning to credit in agriculture, and the use of technology-enabled learning (TEL). These initiatives have been designed to achieve



socially inclusive and gender-sensitive human resource development at low economic and environmental costs.

Two regional centres help promote the development of leadership and expertise in the fields of open distance learning (ODL) and TEL within Africa. The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) is supported by the Botswana Ministry of Education and hosted by Botswana Open University. SADC-CDE operates to increase the provision of quality distance education in the region, support research activities, and undertake and promote training and development in ODL. The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) is hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). This regional centre promotes capacity-building and research activities in ODL while also serving as a centre of expertise for Nigeria and West Africa.

The Meta-Evaluation Report Stage 2: Strategic Plan 2015–2021 concluded that COL's activities improve education access and quality and are focused on capacity building, policy development and institutional technology support for education, TVET, agriculture, and women's and girls' empowerment. The focus is relevant to both COL objectives and national priorities.

COL's major regional initiatives in the African Commonwealth countries between 2015 and 2021 are outlined below.

- COL assisted the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning with transitioning into Botswana Open University (BOU, effective 1 December 2017) by providing technical advice, reviewing the institution's systems and supporting capacity building.
- BOU, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana, the Open University of Mauritius, NOUN and the University of Seychelles have benefited from the high-quality learning and professional development opportunities offered by COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration programmes.
- BOU and the University of Mauritius offer the Virtual University for Small States of the

Commonwealth (VUSSC) Master of Educational Leadership programme. BOU also offers VUSSC degree and diploma programmes in Business and Entrepreneurship.

The collaboration between Botswana Open University and COL through the VUSSC was beneficial to the small states of the Commonwealth, and the introduction of open educational resources reduced the cost of study materials by more than 50%.

– An Evaluation of the Bachelor of Business Entrepreneurship Programme by Open and Distance Learning: The Case for Botswana Open University (2020)

- Through the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning (PEBL) project, COL works to enhance teaching quality, student outcomes, employability and research output by addressing the critical academic staff shortages faced in many East African universities. Nine PEBL institutions have utilised COL's quality assurance (QA) rubrics for the review of blended courses, and 15 institutions have drafted their institutional QA review reports. Between October 2019 and September 2020, 10,083 students took quality-assured, credit-bearing blended learning courses developed by PEBL.



- In partnership with RETRIDOL and hosted by NOUN, COL has supported the development of dual-mode universities in Nigeria. Two universities have acquired the permit to operate as dual-mode universities. The ODL policies for nine universities have been approved by their institutional senates, positioning them to acquire dual-mode

accreditation from Nigeria's National Universities Commission.

- In January 2021, a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between COL and NOUN to continue supporting RETRIDOL as a centre of expertise in ODL for West Africa.
- SADC-CDE has engaged in capacity building in open schooling, non-formal education, and gender. Through these efforts, it has supported all 11 Commonwealth Member States of the SADC region, as well as three additional countries in the East African Community: Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda.
- SADC-CDE also supports the capacity building of officers in ministries across the region in the area of distance education. It is currently sponsoring 33 learners from Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Seychelles.
- COL launched a new regional community of practice for QA in blended and online courses, involving higher education institutions and national QA agencies from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia and Zambia.
- An institutional trial audit of the University of South Africa (Unisa) conducted by COL marked a critical milestone in a year-long collaborative project. Initiated to prepare Unisa for its institutional review by South Africa's Council of Higher Education, the trial audit supported South Africa's largest university in reviewing its policies and practices, with a focus on teaching, learning and student success.
- The school-based teacher development model Teacher Futures is underway in The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda. The programme supports collaborative learning among teachers and teacher educators through communities of practice and school-based training. A total of 4,174 teachers and teacher educators have been reached.
- Working in collaboration with various institutions and experts from the region, COL has offered tailored training through a series of MOOCs to improve teacher capacity in responding to new demands for distance and online learning during COVID-19. The courses include



The students in the treatment schools — i.e., those who benefited from COL's intervention — have higher scores than their counterparts in the control schools. The combined mean score of the students from the treatment schools is higher than their counterparts' from the control schools.

– The Evaluation of the Integrated INSET School-Based Teacher Development Programme (INSET SBTD) Sierra Leone (2019)

Cybersecurity Training for Teachers, Mobile Learning with Multimedia (focusing on educational podcasting), OER for Online Learning and Teaching Mathematics with Technology, among others. These have attracted 2,974 participants from 19 Commonwealth countries in Africa.

- COL's OER for Online Learning MOOC, offered in 2020, attracted a total of 390 participants from 28 countries in Africa.
- With COL's support, the ministries of education in Eswatini, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia have been integrating open/innovative schooling (OIS) in their education systems. The OIS 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 QA. Another important activity is the strengthening of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association through increased member engagement and social media presence.
- COL helped to develop institutional ODL policies in Cameroon, Uganda and Zambia. Baseline studies on the status of ODL in Cameroon and



Advanced ICT Skills Development Project

The Advanced ICT Training Employability project of Kampabits, Uganda has been highly effective and created social value for each of its stakeholder groups. The estimated social return on investment is UGX 1:UGX 3.481. This social value is linked to the contribution toward employability, reduction in the risk of STD, provision of access to ICT equipment and training, and ensuring of matches between Kampabits participants and employers.

– *Evaluation of Technology-Enabled Learning Initiative (2019)*

Rwanda indicated that the current demand for higher education in Cameroon will double by 2030 and that there is an urgent need for stronger capacity building in Rwanda. Quality Assurance Certificates of Recognition for successfully implementing the COL Review and Improvement Model were issued to two institutions in Lesotho and Seychelles.

- In collaboration with the University of Cape Town, South Africa, COL has developed the conceptual framework and seven modules for the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme to build the capacities of teachers and learners to use digital skills for lifelong learning throughout the Commonwealth.
- COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative has contributed to the improved livelihoods of more than 500,000 people in Africa. In Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, partners are moving towards macro-level expansion through partnerships with governments and national banks. In Tanzania, COL has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture to



integrate L3F and table banking in co-operative law and legislation. The innovative mobiMOOC approach has increased access to learning using basic mobile phones. Subregional organisations, such as the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), have partnered with COL to use AgMOOCs for building agricultural capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa.



- Through the Government of Canada's funding for the GIRLS Inspire project, COL has provided relevant skills that lead to livelihoods for more than 7,500 unreached and marginalised girls in remote and rural areas in Mozambique and Tanzania and has prevented child marriages.
- The Skills in Demand model, which links educational institutions and industry partners, was introduced in Africa. COL supported three partners in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia to work with informal industry associations to increase

As a result of COL's interventions, the Kenya Technical Teachers Training College revised its strategy to include technology-enabled teaching and learning, leading to the establishment of the ICT and ODeL departments, and the allocation of budgets to support ICT integration in teaching and learning. The institution also established departmental performance contracts aligned to the college's strategic priorities and operational procedures to guide the FaB approach led by the ODeL Department.

– **Commonwealth of Learning: TVSD Initiative INVEST Africa Summative Evaluation (2019)**



access to formal TVET through blending online and workplace learning.

- COL has launched a project in Mauritius with the Global Rainbow Foundation (GRF) to build the capacity of service workers, teachers and volunteers who work with people with disabilities. With COL's support, GRF has developed short, interactive, online courses for these practitioners.
- In partnership with the University of Seychelles, COL organised a series of MOOCs on the blue



economy and blue growth, which attracted close to 6,000 participants worldwide.

- In partnership with the Open University of Mauritius, COL offered its *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC in June 2019, November 2019 and June 2020. The MOOC attracted close to 5,000 participants from the Commonwealth countries in Africa.
- The Africa OER Regional Consultation, which provided opportunities for African delegates to learn more about OER and contribute to the 2nd World OER Congress, was held in March 2017 in Port Louis, Mauritius. Representatives of 16 Commonwealth countries from Africa were in attendance.
- The Africa and Mediterranean regional meeting of COL's Focal Points took place on 24–25 September 2018 in Gaborone, Botswana to strengthen the effectiveness of COL's work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region and to share information related to learning for sustainable development. In April 2020, COL held online consultations with Focal Points from the region as part of

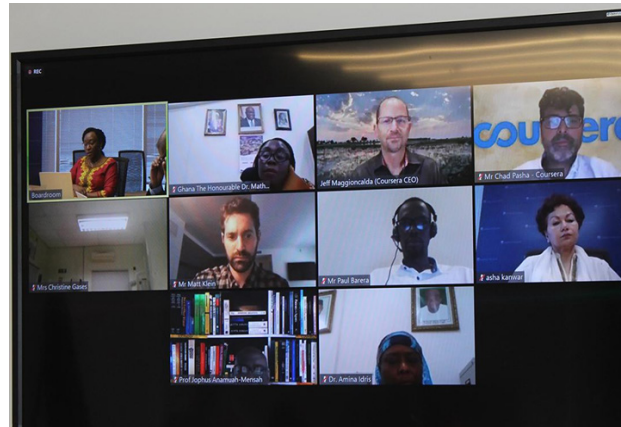


the development of its new strategic plan (2021–2027).

- African Virtual University, Botswana Open University, Busitema University (Uganda), Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (Kenya), Moi University (Kenya), Mzuzu University (Malawi), Namibian College of Open Learning, National Open University of Nigeria, National Teachers' Institute – Kaduna (Nigeria), Open University of Mauritius, Uganda Management Institute, Thika Technical Training Institute (Kenya), University of Namibia, University of Rwanda, University of Seychelles and University of South Africa are all members of the COL-led International Partnership of Distance and Online Learning for COVID-19.
- Ms Kgomotso Motlotle (Botswana), Ms Margaret Mensah-Williams (Namibia), Professor Romeela Mohee (Mauritius) and Professor Mpine Makoe (South Africa) are mentors in COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen programme, aimed at developing the leadership potential of women and girls in the Commonwealth.
- Through the Ghana Library Authority, Rwanda Telecentre Network and Kenya's Programme for

Capacity Development in Africa, there were over 15,700 enrolments in Udemy courses, aimed at upskilling young people for better livelihoods.

- More than 44,500 learners from Africa joined the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative,



gaining free and unlimited access to 4,000 online courses taught by highly reputed professors and mentors from top universities and companies around the world. Learners earned over 44,800 certificates of course completion, boosting their employability in the face of COVID-19.





Botswana



Introduction

Botswana (population: 2,303,697 in 2019) has a primary net enrolment rate of 87.7% (2014), a secondary net enrolment rate of 59.8% (2003) and a gross enrolment rate of 79.9% (2008). The [Botswana Qualifications Authority](#) is the country's co-ordinating body for the development of quality vocational skills. There are about 30 vocational and technical training centres, and the [Botswana International University of Science and Technology](#) is one of several tertiary institutions offering courses in technical and vocational education. Teacher education is offered through the [University of Botswana](#), along with four teacher-training colleges. Other tertiary institutions include the Botswana College of Agriculture, the Botswana Institute of Administration and Commerce, and the Botswana Accountancy College. Open and distance learning is offered by [Botswana Open University \(BOU\)](#), whose mandate is to make education accessible to all of Botswana. BOU hosts the Southern African Development Community's Centre for Distance Education, COL's regional centre for Southern Africa.

Internet connectivity is available to 41% (2017) of the population, and mobile-cellular subscriptions are at 174 (2019) per 100 people. Infrastructure is available for distance and technology-enabled learning and for expanding access to education and training in Botswana. One of the Ministry of Basic Education's [strategic priorities](#) is the utilisation and integration of ICT and e-education as a means to improve teaching and learning and as a tool to improve education management.

BUILDING EDUCATION RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on education. In response to the government temporarily suspending the national school calendar due to COVID-19, the Ministry of Education and Skills Development [broadcast classes through TV to assist with distance learning](#). The Botswana Telecommunications Corporation Limited (BTCL), in partnership with a local innovator, introduced free access to their [online platform](#), geared towards helping students with educational content.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL's Board of Governors.

FOCAL POINT

Mrs Fancy Amey, Director, Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), is COL's Focal Point for Botswana.

NOTABLE MENTIONS

The Honourable Dr Unity Dow is a former member of COL's Board of Governors.

Dr Daniel Tau is a COL Honorary Fellow.



COL's Work in Botswana: Six-Year Review 2015–2021

COL works with partners primarily in the areas of gender and higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the

Commonwealth. Learners from Botswana have also participated in COL's open online courses and have benefited from other resources.



Education Sector Overview

OPEN/INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

Dr Tommie Hamaluba of BOU participated in the pre-PCF9 Commonwealth Open Schooling Association meeting in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019 and is the co-author of a chapter in COL's most recent OIS publication.

In 2020, COL commissioned the South African Institute for Distance Education to support the open school at BOU with online training in Moodle to develop new OER content in junior business studies. It is anticipated that the completed content will be used by 10,000 learners.

TEACHER EDUCATION

In September 2018, COL's Adviser: Teacher Education gave a talk on teacher professional development for primary school teachers at the Tlokwen College of Education, in Botswana. The talk outlined COL's work

in supporting Commonwealth governments and institutions with using technology-enabled approaches to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. It also highlighted the potential areas of partnership with the college and the Government of Botswana in the area of professional development for teachers in primary schools.

A total of 21 learners from Botswana participated in the *OER for Online Learning (OER4OL)* MOOC launched in 2020.

A total of 33 learners from Botswana participated in the October–December 2020 offerings of the *Mobile Learning with Multimedia* MOOC, and 73 participated in the *Cybersecurity Training for Teachers* MOOC, also offered twice in October–December 2020. Thirty-three learners joined the *Teaching Mathematics with Technology* MOOC, organised in November–December 2020.



HIGHER EDUCATION

COL assisted the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) with transitioning into an open university (BOU) by providing technical advice, reviewing the institution's systems and supporting capacity building.

A unit cost analysis and activity-based costing model was developed and completed with data from the Serowe College of Education, Botswana. Based on this model, COL supported BOU to develop costing sheets, a financial model and an academic workload model for the tertiary arm of the university. The model and tools were presented to the Ministry of Education and the Human Resource Development Council in April 2018. Training sessions were held with academic and administrative staff on the financial tool and the academic workload model.

A set of financial planning tools for BOU, including a financial planning template, a programme costing template, an academic workload calculator, a time allocation report, and a report titled *A Comprehensive Financial Planning Model for the Tertiary Education Stream of the Botswana Open University* were developed with COL's support in June 2018.

In January 2019, COL entered into an agreement with BOU to support the institution in capacity building for online course development, facilitation and student support systems, and to strengthen the institutional quality assurance (QA) system, including the development of QA guidelines for open and distance learning (ODL).

In the framework of this initiative, a learner support strategy and implementation plan were developed. A needs assessment survey regarding learner support tools at BOU has been completed amongst its academic staff.

Representatives of BOU faculty attended in-person workshops to develop a quality-enhancement plan and develop/implement online learner support tools. A BOU cohort participated in an online course on facilitating online courses.

In addition, COL supported a meeting to develop national quality guidelines, which included representatives from BOU, the Ministry of Basic Education, the Ministry of Tertiary Education, the Botswana Qualifications Authority and Botho University.

BOU staff also participated in a workshop titled *Online Course Development through the Use of OER* in March 2019. Subsequently, three modules have been developed and reviewed for the Bachelor of Education (BE) in Special and Inclusive Education programme.

BOU offers COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium. A total of 509 students enrolled in the programmes between 2014 and 2019, with 64 graduating between 2017 and 2019.

CEMBA/CEMPA benefits from the oversight and direction of two governing bodies: an Executive Governing Board (EGB) and an Academic Board (AB). The EGB is the policy formulation body, which governs the programmes and has general control over their administration and performance, while the role of the AB is to plan, develop and review the courses and programmes and advise the EGB. Dr Daniel Tau, Vice Chancellor, is a member of the Executive Governing Board, and Professor Baakile Motshegwa, Dean for the School of Business and Management Studies, is a member of its Academic Board.

Between 2015 and 2021, the AB met in Gaborone, Botswana, in October 2015 and in Penang, Malaysia, in May 2018; six meetings were organised via teleconference (in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021). The EGB in-person meetings took place in Gaborone in October 2015 and in Penang in May 2018; the EGB hosted a virtual meeting in August 2016.

Two high-level roundtables for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL were held in Malaysia in March 2016 and May 2018. Representatives from 19 countries participated, including from Bangladesh. The meetings were co-hosted by Asia e University.

COL launched a new regional community of practice for QA in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national QA agencies from seven Southern African countries, including Botswana. Following a launch meeting in South Africa in April 2018, a task force was formed to draft QA guidelines. Pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions, including BOU, were completed. The revised guidelines were subsequently shared in a paper at the Southern African Quality Assurance Network meeting in October 2018. In December 2019, members of the community of

practice reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and the indicators to be used by national qualifications agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions. The final version of the toolkit is available on COL's online repository, [OAsis](#).

The three offerings of COL's *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business* MOOC, organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in 2019–2020, attracted 298 participants from Botswana.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions so they can offer VUSSC courses and programmes, and promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework. Currently, 41 courses are available to partners via www.colvee.org.

Dr Daniel Tau, Vice Chancellor at BOU, serves on the VUSSC Management Committee.

As part of a tripartite Commonwealth initiative with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the University of the West Indies Open Campus, VUSSC has repurposed and made available online certificate, diploma and undergraduate degree programmes in Youth Work Development to universities that are members of the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work, including BOU.

In January 2019, COL entered into an agreement with BOU to support the development of three special and inclusive education courses, and a Practicum Guide for



COL's 2019 *Delivery Mode and Learner Emissions: A Comparative Study from Botswana* compared ODL learners at BOCODOL (BOU) and learners from a similar but face-to-face programme at another institution. It found that most of the ODL students were first-generation graduate students. Other interesting findings of the study were:

- ODL students had significantly lower carbon-related emissions than their face-to-face counterparts, mainly due to reduced travel requirements.
- The ODL programme appeared to reduce the opportunity cost for ODL students, compared to the cost for face-to-face learners.



the BED in Special and Inclusive Education. COL will also support the integration of special and inclusive education issues into all courses through curriculum review and revision, as well as capacity building for tutors. In the framework of this agreement, BOU staff participated in a capacity-building workshop in April 2019 and a *Special and Inclusive Education Enhancement Writers Workshop* in July 2019. Revision of five courses is currently underway. In the framework of this partnership, course outlines for three new courses — *Education of the Gifted and Talented*; *Learning Disabilities*; and *Autistic Spectrum Disorders* — have been prepared, and the completed blueprints have been uploaded to the BOU portal.

As well, BOU offers COL's Master of Arts in Educational Leadership programme, from which 35 persons have graduated to date.

COL signed an agreement with the World Continuing Education Alliance (WCEA) and the Nurses and Midwives Council, Botswana to support access for 12,000 nurses and midwives to Continuing

Strengthening training for special education teachers in Botswana

“The workshop came at the right time. . . The first cohort of students feels that the current programme does not ground them well enough to handle learners with special needs in inclusive classes. The enhancement of the programme will strengthen teaching skills and strategies, as well as attract more trainees to enrol in the programme,” noted BOU Programme Co-ordinator Beauty Gaotlhobogwe.



Professional Education eLearning modules offered through the WCEA online platform. It is expected that course completion will result in strengthened nursing and midwifery competencies and, by extension, the delivery of better health care to patients in Botswana.

In 2020–2021, VUSSC offered four MOOCs on the blue economy in partnership with the University of

Seychelles. Learners from Botswana were among the nearly 6,000 participants in these courses.

In September 2020, COL launched the course *Designing and Developing Online Assessments*. The two course offerings brought together 75 participants from 14 Commonwealth countries, including Botswana.

Skills Sector Overview

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

Botswana’s Human Resource Development Council approached COL for assistance with improving their apprenticeships and student internships to better achieve Botswana’s national skills development goals. COL developed an inception report, a situational

analysis, a student internship and apprenticeship policy, associated guidelines, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and an employer database. The next steps will be to develop an implementation plan and transfer knowledge.

TVSD has been offering several online training courses across the Commonwealth, including *Flexible Skills*



Development, Facilitating Online Courses, Moodle Implementation, and Blended Learning in the Classroom. One staff member from BOU completed the 2020 iteration of the *Flexible Skills Development* course.

A total of 1,119 learners from Botswana have benefited from online courses in the framework of the COL–Coursera Workforce Recovery Initiative, boosting their employability skills in the face of economic disruptions caused by COVID-19. COL’s partners in Botswana are BOU and the African Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. The first cohort of programme graduates from Botswana were recognised at a virtual convocation for Africa held on 18 August 2020, where the Honourable Dr Douglas Letsholathebe delivered special remarks.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

COL supported the development of draft OER guidelines for the ten regional operations offices of Botswana’s Ministry of Education and Skills Development by organising advocacy and sensitisation sessions. The aim of these activities was to provide direction in the use of OER for quality teaching and learning in the general education system.

In partnership with Athabasca University, Canada, COL has been offering two MOOCs — *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL)* since 2017 and *Blended Learning Practice* since March 2020 — for teachers in secondary, post-secondary and vocational education across the Commonwealth and beyond. Learners from Botswana were among the 24,000 participants in these courses.

Since its launch in May 2018, COL’s Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) platform has had over 13,500 registered users, including in Botswana.

GENDER

The *Gender Profile 2017: Botswana* report is a compilation of current sex-disaggregated data for socioeconomic indicators, namely in the areas of health, education, economic participation, and decision making.

In 2016–2017, BOCODOL (now BOU) pilot-tested the Institutional Gender Scorecard for Gender Mainstreaming developed by COL. The resulting gender

mainstreaming efforts have led to gender-sensitive higher education programmes and policies.

Subsequently, and with the support of Gender Links, an NGO based in Gaborone, BOU completed a series of gender sensitisation workshops involving 64 staff from all areas of the university, in preparation for conducting COL’s Gender Scorecard audit.

In 2020, COL launched the CommonwealthWise-Women (CWW) Mentoring project to promote change by empowering girls and women to become leaders and influence the next generation of leaders. Ms Kgomotso Motlotle, former Secretary General of the Botswana National Commission for UNESCO, is a CWW mentor.

REGIONAL CENTRE

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION
(SADC-CDE)

SADC-CDE operates in partnership with the Botswana Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology. Following a Memorandum of Agreement, it has been hosted by BOU since September 2018, promoting training and development in ODL and increasing the provision of quality distance education in Southern Africa.

In August 2018, SADC-CDE and COL held a workshop on *Technology-Enabled Learning for Open Schooling* at BOU in Gaborone. The workshop presented opportunities to augment the volume, quality and delivery of content through the adoption of TEL and COL’s offline, off-grid Aptus device.





In January 2019, SADC-CDE held a workshop on non-formal education in Botswana with participants from eight countries in the region. The goal was to sensitise them to ODL as well as to information and communication technologies in non-formal education programmes. Participants developed draft institutional action plans for non-formal ODL programmes.

In February 2019, SADC-CDE and Gender Links organised a gender sensitisation workshop in Johannesburg. Participants included academics and administrators of ten institutions from eight countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa.

In May 2019, SADC-CDE hosted a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to open schooling

and introduce COL's Open and Innovative Schooling model. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In 2019–2020, 33 staff from various institutions in Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique and Seychelles were sponsored to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners (CDEP) programme offered by BOU. The online induction for this cohort was conducted on 29 August 2020.

SADC-CDE supported the publication of the *Policy Brief SADC-ODEL Response to COVID-19*, released in May 2020.

As well, SADC-CDE ran a series of webinars for 40 open schooling staff in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Tanzania to train them in technology-enabled learning. This ran from August to October 2020.

A total of ten BOU staff participated in a series of six webinars on Learning Design for Online Course Provision for Open Schooling and have been working on action plans for subsequent interventions.

In June 2020, COL trained two members of the SADC-CDE staff in monitoring and evaluation.

Special Events and Activities

PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF)

COL supported the participation of four delegates from Botswana at PCF8 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November 2016. Education ministers from five countries participated in PCF8, holding a Ministerial



Roundtable where they discussed learning and sustainable development, including issues of access and capacity. The Honourable Dr Unity Dow chaired this meeting. In addition, Mrs Ivy Rose Mathew, Botho University, Dr Bantu Lulu Morolong, BOCODOL, and Dr Daniel Tau, BOCODOL, attended the forum.

COL sponsored nine delegates from Botswana to attend PCF9, held in Edinburgh, UK in September 2019: Ms Fancy Amey, BOU/SADC-CDE, Mrs Mabel Bothasitse, BOU, Dr Tommie Hamaluba, BOU, Dr Bantu Lulu Morolong, BOU, Dr Mmabaledi Seeletso, BOU, Dr Tebogo Ethel Seretse, BOU, Dr Daniel Tau, BOU, Mr Chawapa Thabo, BOU, and Mr Bakani Thothe, Botswana Qualifications Authority. In addition, Ms Amey and Mr Thabo attended the Regional Centres meeting, Mrs Bothasitse and Mr Thothe



participated in the Higher Education workshop, Dr Hamaluba attended the Open Schooling meeting and Dr Morolong participated in a Gender meeting. Dr Tau, a member of the VUSSC Management Committee, participated in two of the three VUSSC PCF9 pre-conference activities. All were hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON OER

COL organised six Regional Consultations on OER leading up to the 2nd 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 Africa Regional Consultation was held in Port Louis, Mauritius in March 2017. Mrs Fancy Amey, the COL Focal Point for Botswana, Ms Grace Muzila, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic Education, and Mr Taolo Tsimanyane, Acting Deputy Director of the Department of Information Communication Technology and Media Services, Ministry of Basic Education, attended.

REGIONAL MEETINGS OF COL FOCAL POINTS

Between 2018 and 2020, COL's Focal Points from Africa and Europe met twice for regional consultations. The first meeting took place in September 2018

in Gaborone and was organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology and BOU. It was inaugurated by the Minister, the Honourable Ngaka Ngaka. The second meeting was held virtually in May 2020. Ms Fancy Amey represented Botswana at both meetings.

COL'S INTERNATIONAL MOOCS

The Blockchain in Education webinar series was offered in July 2020 by COL's regional centre in Europe, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning. It brought together 91 participants, including from partner institutions in Botswana.

Recognising the need to improve numeracy skills among youths, COL's Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development created a MOOC entitled *Functional Numeracy*. The two course offerings (February and June 2020) saw enrolments from around the Commonwealth, including from Botswana.

The *Digital Literacy Lab for Educators* MOOC, offered by COL in September 2020, attracted participants from Botswana.

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 partnerships assist

in improving and extending teaching and learning services to people in the developing Commonwealth.

COL's partners in Botswana include:

- Ministry of Basic Education
- Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology
- Botswana Open University (formerly Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning)
- Human Resource Development Council

Looking Ahead: 2027

Most Member States will accelerate efforts to address the learning deficit that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. They will also need innovative solutions to achieve the targets of SDG4 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.

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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