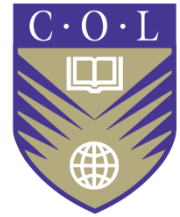


Promoting Learning for Sustainable Development



Presentation Transcript

*Foreign Ministers Meeting
CHOGM Malta 2015*

26 November 2015

*Presented by
Professor Asha Kanwar, President & CEO*

Chair, Honourable Ministers, Delegates.

As you know, the Commonwealth of Learning or COL is an intergovernmental organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government at the CHOGM held in Vancouver in 1987. Our headquarters are in Metro Vancouver and we have a regional office for Asia in New Delhi.

Our mission is to help Commonwealth member states and institutions to use existing and new technologies for expanding access to education and training.

COL believes that learning is the key to sustainable development and this aligns us to the global Sustainable Development Goals. Learning must lead to three things: one, economic growth, two, social inclusion and three, environmental conservation.

Let me give you two examples each of how COL achieves these three dimensions through the use of technology.

First, how has COL supported economic growth?

Millions of farm families do not have access to learning in developing countries. COL offers a new approach called the Lifelong Learning for Farmers. This unique programme has lifted thousands of farmers out of poverty. For every dollar invested, income and assets worth \$9 have been generated among the farmers, who became lifelong learners using basic mobile phones.

Skills development is a major priority for most governments. Using video and television, COL has trained thousands of young people in various trades. As a consequence of this training, Eunice Maganga from Kenya is now a trained construction worker and her income has increased by 150%.

Two, how does COL's work support social inclusion?

How do we reach children in remote areas who are far from the electric grid and internet connections? Aptus or the Classroom Without Walls is a COL innovation that costs about \$ 100. Aptus does not require power from the mains. We can use solar chargers instead. It does not require any connectivity. We use a wireless router. All this enables teachers and students to access good quality digital materials, through this device. In the aftermath of a cyclone in Vanuatu, the Hon Minister of Education presented Aptus to his officials for deployment in remote island schools.

As countries achieve success in providing universal primary education, there are still significant barriers preventing many young people from entering secondary education, particularly girls. Open schools provide flexible learning opportunities by using a range of technologies from print to the internet. As a young woman from Bangladesh says ‘I left school at the age of 12. I am 22 now and have 3 children. I went back to the open school so that I could help my children with their schoolwork’.

Third, what is COL’s contribution to environmental conservation?

Ministers of Education directed COL to establish a Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Over 53,000 persons have been trained under this initiative in all 31 small states. Environmental sustainability is a central concern for all the states. VUSSC is offering online courses in eco-tourism, sustainable fisheries and students have already graduated in Sustainable Agriculture from the National University of Samoa.

Working with the University of the South Pacific and IIT, Kanpur, COL facilitated a Massive Open Online Course or MOOC recently to generate awareness about Climate Change in the Pacific.

These, in short, are a few examples of how learning leads to sustainable development. COL is widely acknowledged as a leader in technology innovations and has developed transferable models to scale up its impact.

We have given you a document entitled ‘COL in the Commonwealth’ which details what we have done in each of your countries over the past three years.

COL will continue to respond to your needs and priorities. We are very grateful to the voluntary financial contributions received from 45 countries in the previous financial year and hope that you will continue to find COL worthy of your support.

Thank you for your kind attention.