

Gender Green Teacher Programme Launch



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Video Presentation

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National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), India

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Distinguished colleagues, it is an honour to be present at the launch of the Gender Green Teacher programme. This is particularly significant as it brings together three core values of the Commonwealth of Learning - gender equity, environmental consciousness, and quality education.

The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), has been a long-standing partner that has collaborated with COL on several initiatives – which include capacity building in quality assurance, recognition of prior learning, and developing Open Educational Resources.

As countries build more schools to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG4 – ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030, we will see more construction. As Bill Gates (2021)¹ points out, cement, steel and plastic, which are essential for construction, are the biggest emitters of carbon. More brick and mortar institutions could add to the growing carbon footprint of the education sector. COL conducted a study in Botswana, which found that the average carbon footprint of the distance learning students is nearly three times lower than that of their campus counterparts. Emissions from travel were by far the greatest contributor to this disparity. This suggests that distance or blended modes can decrease emissions by reducing face-to-face contact hours. By offering distance learning, NIOS is contributing to India's aspiration of achieving Net Zero by 2070.

When Commonwealth Heads of Government met for CHOGM 2018, they identified 12 years of quality education for every girl in the Commonwealth as a key priority. Open schooling is a flexible and cost-effective means of ensuring access to secondary education. CHOGM 2022 identified climate change as a major threat and urged governments to take appropriate action. Since humans are the primary cause for the changes to the planet's ecosystem, each one of us is responsible and must take concrete action.

¹ Gates, B. (2021). *How to avoid a climate disaster: the solutions we have and the breakthroughs we need*. Knopf.

A UNCC report tells us, 'On any given day, more than a billion children are enrolled in primary or secondary schools. Imagine if these children could understand the main causes and consequences of climate change and what they ...can do to be better prepared for climate change...' (UN CC: Learn, 2013)².

If these children could be mobilised, think of the impact on families and communities. Few countries are preparing present and future generations with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Our teachers can be the most effective agents of change. However, over three fourths of the teachers surveyed by UNESCO and Education International expressed a strong desire to teach climate change and many believed they did not have the appropriate training to do so. COL supported the development of a Green Teacher programme in Nigeria which has helped thousands of teachers to inculcate environmental concerns among learners from a very early age.

The vulnerable are the hardest hit when disasters strike. For example, four out of every five people displaced by climate change are female. Girls with education can help families handle climate related risks and in Nepal and India, women's involvement in forest management yielded better results.

The Gender Green Teacher initiative aims to build the capacity of teachers to incorporate gender and environmental concerns into teaching and learning. It is about shaping a new generation of learners who understand the importance of gender equality and environmental sustainability. NIOS will take the lead in implementing this online programme at scale and provide a model that can be replicated in other institutions across the Commonwealth.

In these disruptive times, we must equip our educators with the tools and knowledge they need to navigate and mitigate the challenges that lie ahead. Through the Gender Green Teacher programme, we are taking steps to do just that. Let me conclude by saying 'Beti Padhao, Paryavaran bachao'.

²UN CC: Learn (2013). [*Integrating Climate Change in Education at Primary and Secondary Level*](#) - Interactive Version.