



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Regional Compendium

2021-24

2021–24

Regional Compendium

This Commonwealth of Learning's Regional Compendium 2021–24 presents a summary of the strategic impact of work to drive open learning in the Commonwealth member states, by region. We provide summary reports to all the governments of the Commonwealth, gathered together here.

COL achieves impact for each member state at three levels:

1. Building National Resilience: working with government and regulators on policy and capacity building;
2. Strengthening Institutions: working with national institutions on policy, capacity building and co-creating open courses;
3. Improving Lives and Livelihoods: working directly with learners and non-governmental organisations.

COL's strategy has led to significant outcomes at these three levels of impact.

1	60	national policies and strategies with 22 countries
	6,600	government officials and staff trained in 33 countries
2	166	institutional policies and strategies created in 135 educational institutions
	36,000	institutional staff trained
	890	new and improved courses co-created
	9,600	learning resources co-created
3	1,100	communities sensitised
	48,000	women and girls supported
	6,200	under-achieving boys back in learning
	96,000	farmers trained
	715,000	learners in COL direct-to-learner courses



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ACRONYM GLOSSARY

BOU – Botswana Open University

CANTA - Caribbean Association for National Training Authorities

CCEM – Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers

C-DELTA - Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action

CEMBA/CEMPA - Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration

CEMCA - Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia

CHOGM – Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

COL – Commonwealth of Learning

FODE - Flexible Open and Distance Education, Department of Education, Papua New Guinea

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

L3F – Lifelong Learning for Farmers

MFAT - Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand

MOOC - Massive Open Online Course

NOUN – National Open University of Nigeria

ODL – Open and Distance Learning

OECS – Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

OER – Open Educational Resources

PACFOLD - Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development

PCF – Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

RETRIDOL - Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning

SADC-CDE - Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

TEL – Technology Enabled Learning

TVET - Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNESCO-UNEVOC – International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training

USP - University of the South Pacific

VUSSC – Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth



FOCUS ON THE PAN-COMMONWEALTH

While most of the work of the Commonwealth of Learning is located directly in a single country or a single region, some is designed to cover the globe and impact on all 56 Commonwealth countries.

A selection of that work from 2021-24 is reported here.

ABOUT COL

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) was established in 1987 by Commonwealth Heads of Government “... to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education.” (Memorandum of Understanding on the Commonwealth of Learning)

Hosted by the Government of Canada with headquarters in Burnaby, British Columbia, COL is the world’s only intergovernmental organisation solely concerned with the promotion and development of distance education and open learning.

COL’s greatest impact is in supporting efforts to provide Commonwealth citizens greater access to quality education and training through open, distance and technology-enabled learning, thereby allowing them to benefit from improved livelihoods, greater gender equity and overall economic, social and cultural development leading to sustainable development.

COL is committed to promoting equitable access to quality lifelong learning for all – believing, in effect, that access to learning opportunities will lead to progress in achieving sustainable development.

COL’s Strategic Plan 2021-2027 focuses on promoting ‘Learning for Sustainable Development’. This means learning must lead to opportunities for economic growth, social inclusion and environmental conservation. This ambitious mandate brings together the fields of education and development in complex ways, making COL a unique organisation.

Progress towards achieving the three pathways of change, that is, national resilience, strengthening institutions, and improving lives and livelihoods, continues to be made through COL’s various activities throughout the 56 member states of the Commonwealth.

NETWORK

COL is governed by a distinguished Board of Governors with up to 17 members from around the Commonwealth who bring leadership and expertise in a wide range of areas.

As an intergovernmental organisation of the Commonwealth, COL is required to report to the Heads of Government and must also report progress

to Education Ministers. Typically, this reporting is via the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), but also involves engagement with meetings of the Commonwealth Education Ministers’ Action Group.

COL Focal Points in each Commonwealth Member State represent a valuable policy network of senior officials nominated by ministries of education. They keep ministers briefed about COL's work, provide guidance on country priorities and serve as a valuable strategic resource. Regular local meetings are held to update Focal Points on current work in their region and the wider Commonwealth, and to consult with them on regional and national priorities. The latest meetings were held between December 2022 and March 2023.

COL Chairs are a scholarly network of distinguished experts from all over the Commonwealth, who advance research, innovation and thought leadership in open learning. The programme was started in 2010 to (i) facilitate the development of effective open and distance learning (ODL) and technology-enhanced education and training through advocacy, research and capacity-building across the Commonwealth; (ii) strengthen regional cooperation; and (iii) provide visibility for COL in the field. The COL Chairs are honorary positions hosted by universities within the Commonwealth.

Regional Centres for COL promote the development of leadership and expertise in open learning. The activities of these centres contribute to the achievement of COL's programme outcomes and foster regional cooperation. In partnership with the regional centres, COL; develops regional and national gender-responsive policies in ODL and flexible and blended learning; and supports research and innovations to advance access to quality education and skills training.

1. 3CL - Established by the Government of Malta, the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning has been advancing innovations through open access, AI, blockchain and technology-mediated solutions.
2. PACFOLD - Hosted and managed by the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development aims to empower communities in the region through flexible learning approaches.
3. RETRIDOL - The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning is hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria to promote the use of ODL and technologies for increasing access to equitable quality education and training in West Africa.
4. SADC-CDE Hosted by Botswana Open University, the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education supports ODL capacity building in the sub-region.

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 works closely in parallel with the two other intergovernmental bodies of the Commonwealth — the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation — to amplify efforts in increasing access to learning. We also maintain close relationships and do joint work with other Commonwealth organisations such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Further extending its reach and impact, COL engages with key members of the United Nations, such as UNESCO through its various bodies like the International Institute for Educational Planning, Institute for Information Technologies in Education, Institute for Lifelong Learning, International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training and the Global Education Monitoring Report.

COL works with non-governmental organisations on many initiatives. For example, COL has maintained a strong relationship with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for about 15 years. Thanks to the Foundation's annual grants, COL has been able to engage in greater advocacy for Open Educational Resources (OER). The success of this partnership is highlighted by the two OER Congresses that COL organised with UNESCO, significantly promoting the global conversation on open education. The Hewlett Foundation's support not only strengthens COL's OER initiatives but also connects us to a valuable network of other Hewlett grantees working in this area.

COL is a member of the following **regional and global associations**:

1. AAOU - Asian Association of Open Universities
2. ACDE - African Council for Distance Education
3. Consular Corps of British Columbia
4. DEASA - Distance Education Association of Southern Africa
5. FLANZ - Flexible Learning Association of New Zealand
6. Global Alliance for Literacy (GAL)
7. ICDE - International Council for Distance Education
8. INQAAHE - International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
9. NADEOSA - National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa
10. ODLAA - Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia
11. OER Foundation

All these networks enhance our resources and extend our influence with lasting effects across the Commonwealth and beyond.

COL wields significant influence in these networks. For instance, COL played a crucial role in leading discussions on Covid-19 mitigation and recovery strategies at the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) hosted by Kenya in April 2022. The President of COL moderated a ministerial roundtable that highlighted key issues such as equity, prevention of learning loss, and the role of parents in education. The session, attended by ministers from various member countries and experts, underscored ongoing challenges like the digital and gender divide, the need for recognition of self-directed learning and the impact of climate change on education. The President of Kenya referred to COL as an “engine of innovation” in his inaugural address. COL’s work during the pandemic was highlighted in the Ministerial Statement.

At the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Rwanda, June 2022, leaders recognised the urgent need to address global insecurities while emphasising the importance of collaboration for a full recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Heads endorsed public-private partnerships to create high-quality digital jobs for young people, commending COL’s pivotal role in equipping thousands of youths with new skills through online platforms and enhancing teachers’ capacities.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

From 2021-24, COL has helped create 60 policies (and strategies) within the National Strategies of 22 Commonwealth countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Cameroon, Eswatini, The Gambia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, Tonga and Zambia) **and directly supported 6,660 government officials and staff in 33 countries through training and sensitisation measures** (Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Fiji, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Uganda, Vanuatu and Zambia).

COL initiated several high-level panels on Climate Change and Education to support Member countries in advancing climate action (through policy, capacity, resources and research). This resulted in the Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education, published in August 2022. High-level panel members that provided guidance and contributed to discussions include: Dr Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary,

Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, United Nations Environment Programme, Geneva (Chair); The Hon Lady Howard Mabuza, Minister of Education and Training, Eswatini; The Hon Ms Premila Kumar, Minister of Education, National Heritage and Arts, Fiji; The Hon Ms Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education, Guyana; The Hon Dr Aishath Ali, Minister of Education, Maldives; The Hon Mr Evarist Bartolo, Minister

for Foreign and European Affairs, Malta; The Hon Dr Justin D. Valentin, Minister of Education, Seychelles; The Hon Dr Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, Minister of Education, Trinidad and Tobago; Dr Arjoon Suddhoo, Deputy Secretary General, Commonwealth Secretariat, United Kingdom; Ms Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director General for Education Sector, UNESCO, France; Dr David Atchoarena, Director, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Germany; and Mr Tao Zhan, Director, UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education, Russia. The following individuals also contributed to the discussion at the high-level panel meetings: The Hon Ms Fathmath Naseer, Minister of

State, Maldives; The Hon Mr Flavien P. Joubert, Minister of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, Seychelles; Mr Alexander Leicht, Chief, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, Education Sector, UNESCO, France; Ms Vibeke Jensen, Director, Division for Peace and Sustainable Development, Education Sector, UNESCO, France; Ms Won Jung Byun, Programme Specialist, UNESCO, France; Mr John Lesperance, Principal Secretary for Education Development, Ministry of Education, Seychelles; and Ms Lenor Baptiste-Simmons, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

From 2021–24, COL has helped 135 educational institutions to develop 166 policies and strategies, to regulate and support high quality digital, online and open learning. We have trained 36,580 institutional staff, to execute those strategies and improve teaching and learning in a digital age. With these institutions **COL has co-created around 890 new and improved courses and 9,680 learning resources**, all designed to be open and shared beyond one use in one place.

COL has enabled partner institutions to offer a range of open online courses through provision of course design and delivery platforms online. They are used for accredited courses of an institution using Moodle, an open-source learning management system. COL also makes available its COLcommons platform for micro-courses and MookIT for scalable open courses. About 40 institutions across the Commonwealth have made use of these facilities. COL has also helped institutions to establish their own delivery platforms using commercial Cloud services such as AWS (Amazon) or Azure. Some of the successful examples of such ownership transitions are in Fiji, Guyana and Ghana. In recent times, COL has helped partner institutions to pilot learner support services built on Generative AI technologies covering about 4,000 learners.

COL's Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme has emerged as a front-runner in creating digital education leaders at scale in schools, colleges and communities. COL continues to work with ministries of education, educational institutions and civil society organisations to spread the reach of this free programme to support lifelong learning. To promote digital education skills amongst students and teachers, the C-DELTA programme is implemented in five countries (Belize, Malaysia, Mauritius, South Africa and Sri Lanka) with registrations of over 13,000 and a completion rate of 33%.

Fourteen institutions are currently implementing COL's employability framework which can enhance a graduate's productivity in the workplace.

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

COL provides learners, targeting especially those from disadvantaged groups, direct access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods, through special-purpose programmes.

From 2021–24, reaching beyond institutional classes and spaces, we we have helped **over 1,100 communities** to lift about **48,000 women and girls and nearly 46,200 under-achieving boys back into learning**. In addition, in the critical economic activity of agriculture, close to 96,000 farmers have been supported with training opportunities in various topics in sustainable livelihood/agriculture, through audio/text/video messages delivered through mobile phones and by the establishment of linkages with value chain service providers.

Nearly 715,000 learners enrolled in COL run courses during this period. This includes enrollments in massive open online courses (MOOCs) and Moodle courses offered direct to learners by COL, COLCommons, and Skills Online (Coursera, Udemy, Grow with Google) courses. The completion number is nearly 196,000.

The value of COL's courses and platforms has appreciated since the Covid-19 lockdown. Starting with supporting partner institutions to develop their own MOOCs, COL has offered over 60 since 2021, broadly in strengthening capacity of teachers in the Commonwealth countries. These courses are largely related to technology-enabled learning, blended learning, teacher training, OER, cyber security, quality assurance, authentic assessment. They are available as OER and authentic assessment can be easily repurposed by partner institutions. COL's platform for MOOCs was used to train almost 50 per cent of teachers in Trinidad and Tobago during the lockdown, and about 30 per cent of teachers in Fiji. In the underserved sphere of food and agriculture, it has been useful in delivering about 35 courses by partners to over 200,000 students in undergraduate programmes. A unique feature is the number of veterinary courses offered. A series of Blue Economy courses are also available.

<https://commonwealthoflearning.info/mooc4dev>

COLCommons, a micro-course platform, offers 12 short courses where about 57,000 learners have enrolled. The platform offers a constantly growing selection of self-paced micro-courses developed with support

from leading experts. The platform has distributed over 30,000 certificates on a range of courses related to learning design, open educational resources, online assessment, micro-learning, learning analytics, computational thinking, etc.

COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen mentorship project (2021-2023) built a foundation for female leadership. Through this project, COL engaged eminent women as role models to mentor women at the early stages of their career and girls at the grassroots level in underserved communities, to become successful in their field of interest as well as to excel in leadership. Mentors and Mentees are from Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria and Tanzania. In 2021, COL introduced a ten-episode podcast series where female leaders from across the Commonwealth share their stories on the path they followed to leadership. <https://commonwealthoflearning.info/female-leadership-pod>

COL contributed to two policy simulation labs organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the Centre of Resilience and Sustainable Development at the University of Cambridge in April 2022. The labs were designed to assist Commonwealth small states to improve financial protocols to empower the youth and the leadership of the countries to make better decisions related to climate change and sustainable investment.

SELECTED OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

COL led a discussion on Covid-19 mitigation and recovery strategies at the 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Kenya in April 2022. In the opening remarks, as the moderator of the ministerial roundtable on lessons learned from Covid-19, COL President & CEO set forth the objective of the session to be an understanding of the adverse effects of the pandemic on education across the commonwealth countries and sharing of insights on how to mitigate and recover from such effects. Three core insights that emerged from the related discussions – the importance of equity, prevention of learning loss and role of parents in the learning ecosystem. Participants expressed agreement that discriminations such as digital and gender divides were still impacting recovery from the effects of the pandemic, while loss of learning affected a significant number of students across the Commonwealth countries. There was greater recognition of the role of parents and siblings in advancing learning during lockdowns. The Minister of Education from South Africa chaired the session. Other speakers included Ministers of Education from Malaysia, Maldives, Nauru, Rwanda and an Official Representative from the United Kingdom, who all shared experiences from their countries and offered insights for future best practices. Two activists highlighted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on learning by persons with disabilities while noting some gaps that need to be addressed. Experts from across the Commonwealth also shared their insights. A total of 43 participants were able to join in person as well as virtually.

Commonwealth leaders met for the first time after four years at the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Rwanda in June 2022 with the theme “Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.” The Heads recognised global insecurities in food, energy and climate, and “underscored the importance of connecting, innovating and transforming in order to facilitate a full recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.” They “agreed to encourage public-private partnerships, to create high-quality digital jobs for young people across the Commonwealth ... with the full participation of the Commonwealth

of Learning.” COL’s work over the last few years received recognition at CHOGM, with the Heads noting in particular its support to thousands of youths in acquiring news skills for livelihoods using the Web. The Communiqué commended COL’s role in building teachers’ capacity and recommending technology solutions to reach the unreached. COL was also encouraged to scale up its activities to help Member States accelerate their progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 by promoting equitable and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, especially women and girls. In his speech at the leaders’ summit, the Rt Hon Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, announced the renewal of support to COL for another three years.

At the Commonwealth Women’s Forum, COL President moderated a session addressing women’s participation in the digital world. Eminent panellists, including Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim and Ms. Bernadette Lewis, discussed the skills women need to thrive in a dynamic work environment. Key insights included the critical role of education, the necessity of early digital literacy, and the importance of role models. The discussion emphasised collective responsibility for providing access to technology and the need for inclusive policies.

Additionally, at the Commonwealth Youth Forum, President of COL highlighted the urgency of transitioning from commitment to action in skill development, advocating for lifelong learning and the potential of open and distance learning to scale literacy and technical skills affordably.

The 3rd High Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors & Heads of ODL Institutions jointly organised by COL and Asia eUniversity (AeU) was held in July 2022 in Malaysia. This two-day meeting was attended by 33 participants from 17 countries.

26 mid-career academics from 16 Commonwealth countries were invited to the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022. The workshop theme was “Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world’ with three sub-themes- Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change.”



COL and Athabasca University hosted the **Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10)** in Calgary, Canada, 14–16 September 2022, with the conference theme “Innovations for Educational Resilience.” Over 500 delegates from 42 Commonwealth and 11 non-Commonwealth countries registered for this first-ever hybrid Forum. The Prime Minister of Samoa and

Minister’s/Deputy Ministers of Education from 11 Commonwealth countries were present in Calgary. The Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt Hon Justin Trudeau welcomed delegates in a memorable video message.

1. **Samoa** - The Hon Fiame Naomi Mata’afa, Prime Minister
2. **Guyana** – The Hon Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education
3. **Maldives** – The Hon Aishath Ali, Minister, Ministry of Education
4. **Maldives** – The Hon Ahmed Mujahid, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
5. **Mauritius** – The Hon Leela Devi Dookun Luchoomun, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
6. **Namibia** - The Hon Faustina Namutenya Caley, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture
7. **Nigeria** - The Hon Mariam Yalwaji Katagum, Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment.
8. **Samoa** - The Hon Seuula Ioane Tuaau, Minister of Education, Sports and Culture
9. **Zambia** – The Hon Dr Syakalima Douglas Munsaka, Minister of Education
10. **Botswana** – The Hon Aubrey Lesaso, Assistant Minister, Education and Skills Development
11. **Cameroon** - Dr Kilo Vivian Asheri, Secretary of State, Ministry of Basic Education
12. **South Africa** - The Hon Kgwaridi Buti Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training

PCF11 (upcoming)

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Botswana to be represented by Botswana Open University will co-host with COL in Gaborone.

10-12 September 2025

COL organised the 4th Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Senior Officials to chart the future of higher education in a rapidly changing world. Co-hosted with the Open University of Mauritius (OUM), the event held in October 2023 attracted 24 distinguished participants from 15 countries. The discussions centred around four key themes, each facilitated by a panel of experts, which emphasised the need for educational institutions to adapt to the changing demographics and evolving student population needs. The expected outcomes were specifically designed to aid in refining overall approaches to technology, quality assurance, micro-credentials, climate change and leadership. The first theme, “Relevance”, focused on the critical need for educational programs to align with societal requirements. The second theme, “Technology”, explored the revolutionary impact of recent technological advancements such as generative artificial intelligence. The third theme,

“Climate Change”, discussed the pivotal role that universities can play in promoting sustainable development. The fourth theme, “Leadership”, revolved around sharing effective practices to improve institutional efficiency. The roundtable aimed to catalyse discussions on enhancing the relevance of universities in a rapidly evolving global landscape, thereby contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The event concluded with several recommendations, including the need for universities to adopt forward-thinking and adaptable strategies to navigate global disruptions and changing student demographics. The recommendations also urged embracing technological innovations like generative artificial intelligence and effective data utilisation, supporting the Green Learning Agenda, and building upon effective leadership practices for increased institutional efficiency and effectiveness.

In November 2023, COL's *Journal of Learning for Development (JL4D)* — a forum for the publication of research with a focus on innovation in learning and its contribution to development, celebrated its 10th anniversary. Since its inception, JL4D has an h-index of 32 and an i-10 index of 86, with 3,881 citations of which 3,530 citations have been received since 2019. To date, there have been 1,331 submissions in all with 192 of these in the first six months of 2024.

OAsis, COL's open access repository presently contains over 5,200 resources including research publications and course materials. Over the last three years, nearly three million users have accessed these resources which are frequently cited in scholarly publications in the ODL domain.

COL introduced the **Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Practitioner Research Training and Mentorship programme** in 2023. This programme focusses on stimulating and supporting practitioner research on ODL in higher education to facilitate quality educational research. This online programme also includes the establishment of a network of mentors to promote high-quality research in ODL and encourages sharing of research findings through online fora and publications. At the core of this programme are experienced and well-published mentors who will act as guides and co-authors for the selected early-career researchers.

SELECTED PAN-COMMONWEALTH READINGS

Blockchain in Education (with UNESCO)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4131>

Delivering a Common Future: COL's Report to the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4058>

Digital and Professional Teacher Competency Standards for Blended TVET

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5408>

Guidelines on Open and Distance Learning for Youth and Adult Literacy

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/3965>

Learning for Sustainable Development: COL'S Impact Report 2015–2021

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4045>

Making Digital Assessment Count: Designing for Engagement, Integrity and Authenticity

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4017>

National ODL Policy and Practice in the Commonwealth

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/3887>

Open Educational Resources in the Commonwealth 2021

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4009>

Open Universities in the Commonwealth: At a Glance

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5216>

Out-of-School Children and Youth: A Contemporary View from Selected African Commonwealth Countries

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4057>

Policy Brief: Leveraging MOOCs for Teacher Development in Low-Income Countries and Disadvantaged Regions

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/3980>

Practical Guide for WITED Chapters and Individual Champions for Increasing Girls' and Women's Participation in STEM-TVET

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4001>

Reaching the Unreached: Scale-Up Empowerment Study

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4006>

Research Study: Training for Blended TVET in Pan Commonwealth Countries

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5432>

Smart education strategies for teaching and learning: Critical analytical framework and case studies

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4464>

Social Return on Investment in Open Schooling

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/3934>

Teacher Skills Required for Blended TVET: Analysis and Guidelines

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5378>

Technology Application in Teaching and Learning

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4069>

Towards a New Model of Schooling in Seychelles

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/3981>

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4068>



FOCUS ON AFRICA

BOTSWANA | CAMEROON | ESWATINI | GABON | THE GAMBIA | GHANA | KENYA | LESOTHO | MALAWI | MAURITIUS | MOZAMBIQUE | NAMIBIA | NIGERIA | RWANDA | SEYCHELLES | SIERRA LEONE | SOUTH AFRICA | TANZANIA | TOGO | UGANDA | ZAMBIA

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is midway through a six-year strategy, which requires creating national resilience by working with governments on policy and regulation; building the capacities of institutions to implement open education; and supporting learners directly with open access and skills.

This summary presents highlights from three streams of work in the Africa region from 2021–24.

HOW WE WORK

Four members of our Board of Governors hail from this region offering leadership and expertise. Seychelles: Board Chair, His Excellency Danny Faure, Former President of the Republic of Seychelles; Nigeria: Her Excellency Dr Hajo Sani, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Nigeria to UNESCO; Sierra Leone: The Honourable Dr Haja Ramatulai Wurie, Minister of Technical and Higher Education; Kenya: Ambassador Dr Amina Mohamed, Founder, Alive Foundation. To augment the Board connections, COL leverages an extensive network of “Focal Points” to make its relationship with each member state in Africa more systematic and interactive — these are senior officials nominated by Ministries. They keep Ministers briefed about COL’s work, provide guidance on country priorities and serve as a valuable strategic resource. COL hosts regular meetings to update the Focal Points and consult on regional and national priorities. The last COL Focal Points meeting for Africa took place in the Seychelles in February 2023. The meetings are held to gather information on the country priorities and to provide information to the member states on what COL has done within the context of its Strategic Plan. Delegates from 16 of the 21 African member countries attended (Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo).

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. COL supports Africa Governments’ capacity to implement strategy.** In the three years from 2021-24, COL has helped create 41 policies and strategies with 16 of the 21 Commonwealth Africa governments.
- 2. Building institutional resilience in Africa.** COL has created 105 policies and strategies, helping 54 educational institutions to regulate and support high quality digital, online and open learning.
- 3. COL works directly with African Communities to ensure wide support for Women and Girls access to learning.** For example, over 62,000 community members were sensitised on gender equality in six countries over the last three years.

COL supports two regional centres in Africa which coordinate a range of our work and connect us to the work of others:

1. The Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) is supported by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Botswana and hosted by Botswana Open University (BOU).
2. The Regional Training and Research Institute for Distance and Open Learning (RETRIDOL) is hosted by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN).

SADC-CDE Regional Activities

A three-day workshop was held in December 2023 for government officials in the SADC region on open and distance learning (ODL) and open educational resources (OER) policy development and implementation. The workshop sought to empower officials towards championing ODL/OER implementation in their countries. Participants were from the following Commonwealth SADC member states: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia. Follow-up priorities include strategic engagement with the SADC Secretariat, establishment of a database of ODL and OER Policies and engagement with ministers of education from member states for propagation of these policies.

A Quality Assurance for dual-mode workshop was held in March 2024 for quality assurance officers from 18 higher education institutions, drawn from nine SADC member countries. Guided by the workshop proceedings, the following recommendations were proposed as possible future steps in dual-mode delivery and quality assurance: promotion of personalised learning and tailoring learning experiences to meet the individual needs and preferences of learners; fostering of data-driven instructions to improve learning outcomes; possible incorporation of augmented/virtual reality to create immersive learning experiences; and promotion of microlearning.

RETRIDOL Regional Activities

The monthly ODL discourse series continues to gain momentum attracting participants within the region and beyond. Some 1,500 participants were involved in nine webinars held since July 2023.

In April 2024, the workshop on ODL policy development for senior government officials in West Africa was held. The 29 participants were from the Commonwealth West African countries of Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Participants shared country status reports, which showed various levels of ODL policy development and implementation. A template outlining sections for ODL policy was developed at the end of the workshop to guide policy development/enhancement.

Directors of Academic Planning from 20 institutions in West Africa converged in Nigeria for a workshop on graduate employability frameworks in May 2024. The workshop sought to equip participants with expertise to develop and implement graduate employability frameworks in their dual-mode higher education institutions and explore best practices to integrate industry-relevant skills, design impactful programmes, and leverage data for continuous improvement. At the end of the workshop, 17 institutions expressed readiness to develop and implement graduate employability frameworks at their institutions.

RETRIDOL also enhanced courses for the Postgraduate Diploma in Distance Education Programme at NOUN.

The West African Journal of Open and Flexible Learning was indexed by the Directory of Open Access Journals database with Volume 12: issues No 1 and 2 published. COL supported the annual hosting of this journal until 2024.

African POLICY meets PRACTICE

PCF10 Conference, 2022

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. The Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), the first-ever hybrid Forum, was held in Calgary, Canada, from 14–16 September 2022.

The Honourable Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa, delivered the inaugural address in person.

The conference saw 16 African countries send 193 key stakeholder delegates. Of these delegates, 77 were sponsored through COL programmes and additional funds provided by Botswana Open University, Namibian College of Open Learning and the National Open University of Nigeria.

In fact, PCF10 boasted a gathering of more ministers from more Commonwealth nations than ever before — twelve in total with seven joining from Africa who were engaged as keynotes, chairs and panellists. They included: the Hon Dr Kilo Vivian Asheri, Secretary of State, Ministry of Basic Education, Cameroon; the Hon Faustina Namutenya Caley, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture Namibia; the Hon Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, Mauritius; the Hon Ambassador Mariam Yalwaji Katagum, Minister for State for Industry, Trade and Investment, Nigeria; the Hon Aubrey Lesaso, Assistant Minister of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology, Botswana; the Hon Buti Kgwaridi Manamela, Deputy Minister of Higher Education & Science and Innovation, Republic of South Africa; and the Hon

Dr Syakalima Douglas Munsaka, Minister of Education, Zambia.

COL conferred the title of Honorary Fellow of COL on two eminent individuals from Africa during the Excellence in Distance Education Awards held at PCF10 — the Hon Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun in recognition of her contributions to the advancement of quality education and the Hon Ambassador Mariam Yalwaji Katagum in recognition of her contributions to advancing education and advocating for lifelong learning.

A ministerial roundtable session, also held during PCF10 and co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and COL's President, generated a lively discussion on how governments addressed educational disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nine education ministers from all over the Commonwealth joined in the discussion.

The roundtable session revolved around ODL and building resilience and technological innovation while being inclusive. Other themes included improved access to education through ODL, service schools and how every community is vital to educational growth. Ministers examined the many inherent benefits of ODL in a world where Covid-19 was still a major global health emergency.

Work has started for PCF11 which COL will co-host with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Botswana, to be represented by Botswana Open University. This event is planned from 10–12 September 2025.

Africa TVET Regulators Conference, 2023

In partnership with the African Union Commission and its development partner, AUDA-NEPAD, COL hosted the Africa Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Regulators Conference at the Kenya School of TVET in Kenya under the theme ‘Strengthening Digital Transformation and Governance of TVET Systems in Africa.’

Heads of TVET regulatory bodies and commissions from across Africa, representatives from the International Labour Organisation, UNESCO and the German Development Cooperation, along with representatives from 15 African countries attended the conference from 30 November to 1 December 2023.

The objective of the conference was to take stock of the current state of TVET in Africa, review a strategy for blended TVET as part of the initiatives to implement the African Union’s Digital Education Strategy, advocate for the implementation of various approaches, models and tools in strengthening skills development systems in Africa, promote collaboration and partnerships among regulatory bodies and develop a roadmap for harmonising regulations, qualification standards and micro-credentials across the continent.

Ms Esther Mworira, Principal Secretary of Kenya’s State Department of Vocational and Technical Training, stated, “TVET needs a paradigm shift to reduce high unemployment rates occasioned by lack of focus in skills development.”

Mr Nicholas Ouma, Senior Youth Adviser, African Union Commission, emphasised that a continental digital transformation strategy is crucial. He added that such a strategy will position TVET for inclusive lifelong learning.

During the closing session, the Honourable Ezekiel Machogu, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kenya, stated that helping solve Africa’s education challenges lies with TVET institutions. He urged collaboration between regulators and institutions to address “the significant gaps in education.”

A first draft of the Blended TVET Strategy for Africa was developed and presented at this conference.

Enhancing skills training is closely tied to the resilience of systems. COL is actively assisting ministries and regulators across Commonwealth countries to formulate policies, strategies, and standards for ODL in TVET to promote more accessible, affordable and quality learning opportunities.

Regional Open Schooling workshop and Botswana Open University’s Inaugural ODL Conference, 2024

In May 2024, COL co-hosted a pre-conference regional workshop on open schooling which was attended by open schooling partners from 11 sub-Saharan African countries. The workshop enabled partners newer to open schooling to learn from partners involved in open schooling provision over many years and provided an opportunity to plan partnership activities over the next three years. The two-day pre-conference workshop preceded the inaugural ODL conference of

Botswana Open University at which COL’s President gave a keynote address before heading to South Africa for meetings with the Ministry of Education and the University of South Africa. The workshop and conference in Botswana also overlapped with the University of South Africa’s 2024 International Conference on Teaching and Learning for which COL’s Director: Education offered a virtual keynote address.

AFRICA IMPACT (2021–24)

Flagship Project

COL flagship projects are agreed with Commonwealth governments to add significant extra resources to core programme impacts in specific areas, to bring forward critical outcomes.



In June 2023, Global Affairs Canada announced a new grant arrangement with COL to implement a project titled **Empowering Women and Girls in the Commonwealth**.

This three-year (2023-2026) project will go towards supporting women and girls from disadvantaged communities in Bangladesh, **Malawi, Mozambique**, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Since 2015, Global Affairs Canada has invested in COL's work to provide women and girls with education and skills development, first through the GIRLS Inspire project and subsequently in the Empowering Women and Girls project. This latest project will directly reach 75,000 women and girls while building the capacity of 20,000 men and boys. Using a context-specific and holistic approach, with coordinated interventions operating at the individual, household, community and societal levels, the project will also engage government officials, community leaders, women's rights and civil society organisations, financial institutions and employers to create a safe and enabling environment for the successful implementation and sustainability of the project. In total, 400,000 community members will be reached through public campaigns.

Post-pandemic work has seen a return to in-person project implementation at partner institutions coupled with an ever-increasing interest in online learning. In addition to the expanded use of open systems for learning all over the world, this post-pandemic phase has also marked the entry of many new players using open systems. COL has risen to this challenge by providing targeted assistance in policy formulation, capacity building, awareness raising and OER development.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL works with African governments to drive the quality open learning agenda through Policy and Strategy development.

In 2021-24, COL has helped create 41 policies and strategies with 16 African governments of the Commonwealth and have directly supported 3,500 officials and staff in the governments of 19 Commonwealth Africa countries through training measures connected to the open learning agenda.

COL delivers national resilience enabling governments to support change at a national level to increase resilience in challenging times. At the highest level of impact, working directly with a government to their national priorities offers an opportunity for the most significant and most sustained change. Government policy and regulation can create, nurture and assure quality in national institutions, driving valuable 'open' behaviour. Governments who work with COL on training and upskilling themselves in new methods can respond

more effectively to the changing world. COL supports government and national regulatory staff in updating good governance, aligning with their national priorities.

One strategy has been to **engage with stakeholders during conferences and other regional and global gatherings**. For example:

- Several high-level panels were constituted on Climate Change and Education to support Member countries in advancing climate action (through policy,

capacity, resources and research). This resulted in the Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education, published in August 2022. Several Ministers and experts from the African region were part of this high-level panel.

- COL participated in the 2021 Global Education Summit through an online panel on 'Getting Girls into and Back to School'. COL's President moderated the discussion which included ministers from Botswana and Guyana. Open schools were proposed as a cost-effective and flexible option to ensure girls return to school, mitigate the impact of learning loss and provide safe spaces.
- Following concerns expressed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2022 on the declining situation of food security and inefficient food systems and their concomitant effect on the attainment of SDGs, COL has stepped up the process of scaling up its Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative in various African countries. In January 2023, COL

Adviser for L3F met with the President of The Gambia, HE Adama Barrow, to apprise him of the advantages of L3F and Mr Kwabena E Quaison, Director in the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation along with Mr Yaw Osafo-Maafa, Senior Presidential Advisor on the 'Future of Ghana without Aid.' These discussions helped set guidelines and opened the way for greater collaboration towards the attainment of food security through the scaling up of the L3F approach. The Gambia was also supported in developing two national policies on sheep and poultry farming.

COL also works with individual countries to address national priorities particularly related to creating or improving and implementing policy frameworks for enhanced leverage of ODL, improved teaching and learning, extending the use of ODL in TVET contexts and/or improved gender equity.

COL helps African governments create policy to open access to education

In response to a request from the Ministry of Basic Education, Cameroon, an ICT in Education Policy and Strategic Framework for Basic Education was developed in July 2021 and approved by the Ministry in January 2022.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, The Gambia, developed an ODL policy for higher education institutions in 2023. The draft document is being finalised after several stakeholders' validation meetings and will be endorsed for implementation by the government within the last quarter of 2024. In recognition of the need for second chance opportunities for out-of-school youths, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education developed a national ODL policy and detailed project plan in 2022 to enable the establishment of a virtual open school in The Gambia. In 2023 and 2024, ministry staff were trained in both digital curriculum content development and ODL systems towards this purpose.

Also in The Gambia, the Ministry of Agriculture developed an oil crop strategy to improve the livelihoods and resilience of the smallholders engaged in oil crop production and marketing.

In Malawi, a national policy on ICT in Education that also includes OER, was developed with the Ministry of Education and the National Council for Higher Education

developed national guidelines on the delivery of ODL programmes.

The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, Mauritius developed a national OER policy in consultation with key stakeholders in November 2021. This policy was adopted by Cabinet in December 2022, and implementation began in 2023. In order to create an enabling environment to support higher education institutions to use technology enabled learning (TEL) to increase access and improve the quality of teaching and learning, the Higher Education Commission developed and approved a national policy guideline on TEL. Institutional TEL policies were also developed in four participating universities: University of Mauritius, University of Technology Mauritius, Université des Mascareignes, and Open University of Mauritius.

The National Institute for Distance Education, Mozambique, updated their national ODL policy framework based on lessons from implementing an open schooling project in 2021-22 and the revision was endorsed by Cabinet in 2023. Ministry staff were subsequently supported to offer training workshops to orient practitioners to the revised framework.

Following the development of Nigeria's policy and strategy on ODL in 2018, in early 2024 the National Board

for Technical Education conducted a review of the policy and developed ODL Standards and a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of ODL initiatives. Presently, accreditation has been granted to 40 institutions to provide ODL programmes, and the development of more than 300 courseware for the Higher National Diploma programme began in 2023. Following up on the national OER policy approved in 2018, COL, in partnership with the National Universities Commission facilitated a meeting for over 140 stakeholders on mainstreaming OER in higher education in Nigeria, giving rise to a clear recommendation for OER implementation at the institutional levels. In response, COL continued to support eight higher education institutions in Nigeria towards OER awareness, policy development and course enhancement with OER. This process is ongoing.

COL supports African governments to assure and drive quality in teaching and learning

The Eswatini Higher Education Commission developed and validated two quality assurance guidelines for assessment of ODL programmes and institutions in March 2024. Stakeholders held validation meetings in May 2024, while the final version will be submitted to the government for approval and implementation in the coming years.

In 2021–22, the National Teaching Council, Ghana trained over 15,000 teachers using COL resources. Through this support, the institution established a national virtual learning platform to promote teacher self-learning and professional development. A national policy for ODL in teacher training has also been drafted.

Three policies in recognition of prior learning, recognition of current competencies and credit accumulation and transfer were developed for the Council on Higher Education, Lesotho. In addition, the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre developed a Strategic Plan 2024–2028, which includes the transformation of the Lesotho Distance Teaching Centre into the College of Open and Distance Learning of Lesotho in line with the national ODL policy developed in 2021–22 and endorsed by Cabinet in 2023.

A revised Education and Training Policy 2022–2027 for the Ministry of Education, Seychelles was developed and the policy was approved by the Government of Seychelles in October 2022.

The Rwanda Basic Education Board conducted a baseline study on policies and practices related to ODL and TEL in teacher education in 2022. This study led to the development of a national ODL strategy for in-service teacher training in 2023.

In Togo, the Ministry of Primary, Secondary, and Technical Education drafted an ODL policy and a strategic implementation plan in 2024, addressing both open schooling and teacher education. The combined policy has undergone stakeholder review and verification and is now awaiting cabinet approval. The Ministry of Higher Education and Research also developed an ODL policy for higher education institutions, which has undergone further stakeholders' review and is ready for government approval and subsequent policy implementation.

In Sierra Leone, the Teaching Service Commission drafted a Strategy Plan for training 16,000 teachers in Code of Conduct for Teachers and Positive Discipline in Schools and the subsequent Guidelines for applying ODL policy to Teacher Education and Training Programmes.

The Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa, has developed a Social Inclusion Review and Improvement Model to support the implementation of the Policy Framework for the Realisation of Social Inclusion in the Post-School Education and Training System (2016).

Matumaini Mapya, a COL partner in Tanzania, worked with five local government authorities to facilitate the establishment of a Learning Innovation Development Platform.

The Teaching Council of Zambia developed a TEL Competency Framework and an ODL Strategy for In-Service Teacher Training in 2022. This framework and the policy paved the way for the creation of an ODL strategy and the development of four mandatory ODL courses for continuous professional development of teachers in 2023. COL also supported the Zambia Qualifications Authority with the redevelopment of a Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and the development of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System Policy. Support has also been provided on integrating employability guidelines in the Zambia Qualifications framework. A set of employability attributes have been drafted and framework-level descriptors revised accordingly. Through mentoring support, the

Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority developed a National Strategy for the Implementation of ODL.

Examples related to nationally extending use of ODL for TVET:

- In 2023, Kenya’s national ODL committee, hosted by the Kenya School of TVET developed a framework for quality assurance and for monitoring and evaluation of ODL in TVET to facilitate the implementation of the national ODL Standards and Accreditation Tool developed by the Technical Vocational Training Authority.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Kenya developed a strategy for the attainment of self-sufficiency in sunflower and soya bean production.

Examples related to improving gender equity:

- Since 2021, COL’s Gender Equality initiative has been advancing gender mainstreaming across West Africa. Partnering with the Ministry of Higher Education, The Gambia, the Centre for National Distance Learning, Ghana, and the Centre for Girls Education, Nigeria, the gender mainstreaming scorecard has been successfully implemented. These efforts have strengthened the capacity of over 360 staff members, including high-level government officials, affiliate institutions, and diverse stakeholders through training on gender competencies and comprehensive institutional assessments. As a result, three robust gender strategies with actionable plans have been developed in The Gambia, Ghana, and Nigeria to

integrate gender perspectives into institutional processes and programmes. By incorporating varied perspectives, these strategies will enhance inclusivity and drive equitable outcomes for gender equality in ODL and beyond.

- Over 1,100 policymakers and government officials were trained in gender equality, gender-based violence and grass-root advocacy in The Gambia, Kenya, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda through local partner organisations. In Malawi and Tanzania, workshops were organised to build the capacity of policymakers, parliamentarians and law enforcement officials to change discriminatory social norms.
- The Khomas Directorate of Education, Arts, and Culture, Namibia conducted gender audits utilising COL’s gender scorecard to assess institutional policies, processes and programmes.
- In response to the rising cases of femicide and violence against women in Kenya, COL initiated a compelling campaign that resonated throughout the entire county. This campaign is complemented by collaborative efforts with government officials to review the Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, which aims to enhance the existing systems for victim protection. The project also involves training women and girls, empowering them with knowledge about their rights and guidance on appropriate actions in the event of violation.
- The County Government, Kisumu, Kenya developed a roadmap and strategy for mainstreaming gender.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL collaborates with partner institutions in Africa to build capacity to support quality open education and training.

COL strengthens institutions by building capacity in national institutions at the Tertiary, TVET and School levels. This means working with administrators, teachers and students to co-create resources that can be reused and shared beyond one use and training staff to use recent technologies and systems in innovative ways and to help set up new systems, processes and policies to help drive high-quality learning.

In the last three years, COL has supported the development of 105 institutional policies and strategies, helping 54 educational institutions in Africa to regulate and support high-quality digital, online and open learning. In addition, COL has trained over 12,000 institutional staff across the Commonwealth to implement those strategies and improve teaching and learning in a digital age. In the process, and true to our model of change, COL has co-created over 500 new and improved courses and close to 4,000 learning resources that can be re-used in other courses, all designed to be open and shared beyond one-use in one place.

COL supports institutions in several ways, through policy/strategy development and staff capacity-building at the institutional level as well as through capacity-building activities at a regional level.

Examples of policy/strategy support at institutional level:

- To address the changing needs of out of school youths in Eswatini, Emlalalini Development Centre Open School has been supported since 2019 to transition from a print-based to a blended learning model. Recently open schooling students outperformed students in 22 traditional schools in national examinations as a proof of concept for its new blended learning provision of open schooling, ahead of a national pilot later in 2024.
- Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology in Kenya adopted COL's benchmarking toolkit to develop a three-year action plan to mainstream TEL.
- The Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority in Kenya is implementing a pilot of the TVET Open and Distance eLearning Standard and Accreditation Tool at two institutions (Sigalagala National Polytechnic and the Eldoret National Polytechnic) that was reviewed in 2022.
- In implementing the national OER policy project in Nigeria, eight Higher Education Institutions developed institutional OER policies.

- "Researchers on ICTs in Education in Africa" at the University of Nigeria developed audio and text-based resources as OER in business, science, health and social studies for primary and junior secondary learners to support a community outreach initiative in 2021–22. This was one of several initiatives in the sub-Saharan African region which sought to identify pathways back into formal learning for out of school youths. Similar investigations also took place in Botswana, Eswatini, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Examples of staff capacity-building:

- Over 30,000 participants enrolled in COL's massive open online courses (MOOCs) targeting teachers.
- Akenten Appiah Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development, Ghana, has developed 24 courseware for Competency-Based Education on Technical Skills and Assessment, using ODL approaches.
- The Kenya Institute of Special Education trained teachers in online course facilitation for students with special needs. In early 2024, the MOOC on "Creating an Inclusive School" resulted in 3,628 learners registering and 710 completing the course.
- The Namibian College of Open Learning revised 14 courses and developed six vocational courses aligned with the revised national curriculum.
- To enhance graduate employability in higher education institutions, 14 partner institutions in 10 countries

developed institutional employability frameworks and received support in staff capacity building, among them six partner institutions in Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Lesotho, Nigeria and Tanzania developed 25 courses which integrate employability attributes. Namibia University of Science and Technology developed a course on “Employability Skills”.

- In Nigeria, staff were trained in digital learning in 16 universities across the country. In addition, to tackle the challenges of assessment in ODL, support was provided to higher education institutions in implementing authentic assessment methods. For instance, five dual-mode institutions (Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ahmadu Bello University, University of Ilorin, Babcock University and Modibo Adama University) revised 28 courses to integrate authentic assessments. In addition, 11 institutional TVET ODL strategies were validated during a Leadership for ODL in TVET workshop.
- Faculty members from the Academy for Design and Innovation, Mauritius received training in developing and teaching online courses and designing online assessments. Consequently, they developed 14 blended courses, enrolling nearly 300 students in 2023.
- Teachers at Seychelles Institute of Distance and Open Learning received training on developing blended courses.
- In Sierra Leone, five universities (Milton Margai Technical University, University of Sierra Leone, Njala University, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology and Eastern Technical University) developed ODL policies, including OER and enhanced up to 20 blended learning courses with OER. The courses are being offered to learners and progress is monitored. In 2022, Freetown Polytechnic trained over 100 staff members to develop ODL courses and establish learner support services. As a result, the staff created 25 ODL courses and uploaded them to an online Learning Management System. These courses were reviewed using the quality assurance guidelines developed by the institution in 2023. The institution is currently piloting these courses in an ODL model. The Gambia College has followed the same model and is at the stage of finalising the course development.

Examples of regional capacity-building

- Three institutional OER repositories were developed with COL support at the National University of Lesotho, Njala University (Sierra Leone) and Moi University (Kenya).
- Over 30 trainers from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, were trained in the use of virtual labs in collaboration with the Kenya Technical Trainers College. COL organised a regional workshop on the use of virtual labs in TVET for practitioners from Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.
- COL has been working with the Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius to develop and deliver disability training and sensitisation courses to disability practitioners, educators and communication professionals across the Commonwealth. Learners across the five small states in Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Seychelles) have benefitted.
- With the Association of Commonwealth Universities, COL has worked to support the Partnership for Enhanced and Blended Learning project to develop and strengthen quality assurance systems for six universities in Nigeria and six in Ghana.
- COL introduced the Gender Equality and Women empowerment course to effect individual and collective transformation for advancing gender equality at the workplace and in the communities that COL’s partner organisations serve. Policymakers and staff members from the following countries have completed the course: Botswana, Eswatini, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.
- 112 participants from 17 countries in Africa participated in a workshop to enhance the capacity of staff in developing e-content organised by the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture in March 2023.
- In Botswana, Eswatini and Seychelles, over 12,000 nurses and midwives completed online professional learning modules.
- Among other cross-cutting activities, three institutional OER repositories were developed at the National University of Lesotho, Njala University (Sierra Leone) and Moi University (Kenya).

- COL in collaboration with the Namibian College of Open Learning, conducted a workshop to validate the competency framework and standard for a blended TVET trainer; developing learning outcomes for COL's exemplar course for a blended TVET trainer, and benchmarking for the establishment and operationalisation of ODL centres. The workshop was attended by 11 key TVET trainers from the Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development in Ghana, Botswana Open University, Kenya School of TVET, Kaduna Polytechnic in Nigeria, Namibian College of Open Learning and the Technical and Vocational Teachers' College in Zambia.
- The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture organised a workshop on e-content for participants from 17 countries in Africa. The College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Makerere University, Uganda designed content on post-harvest technologies, water management and agronomic practices for potato cultivation for delivery using mobile phones. Partners in Uganda provided training in honey production and skills for livelihoods.
- To strengthen skill training in TVET, a manual on zero waste in TVET was developed collaboratively by trainers in Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia for use in institutional and enterprise-based TVET.
- Monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance frameworks were developed in Kenya, Zambia and Nigeria. Teachers and trainers from Kenya, Mauritius, and Zambia took part in a "Preparing for Blended Delivery in TVET" course, leading towards cascade training on competency-based blended delivery in their respective institutions. Eleven institutional ODL in TVET strategies were validated during an open learning leadership session for nine institutions in Nigeria and two institutions in Kenya. Learners from Kenya and Zambia have completed the third cohort of the Assistive Technologies for ODL in TVET course. Youth employability, advocacy sessions, e-mentoring and on-the-job training were conducted for master trainers, master crafts persons and apprentices in Nigeria and Zambia. Learners from Nigeria and Zambia took part in a Vocational Pedagogy for Master Craftspersons course. An Industry Advisory Committee was established for Fashion Design and Garment Making in Nigeria, using COL's e-apprenticeship model.
- COL's worldwide Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration programme delivers high-quality learning and professional development opportunities – with 11 partner institutions, including the Botswana Open University, National Open University of Nigeria, Open University of Mauritius, and the University of Seychelles – that complement their existing MBA/MPA programmes. In this period, our African partners redeveloped 18 courses and 103 African students have graduated.
- COL L3F partner in Uganda, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture developed 12 courses for farmers.
- 112 participants from 17 countries in Africa participated in a workshop to enhance the capacity of staff in developing e-content organised by the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture in March 2023.
- COL also drives research in open learning in Africa. For example, our partnership with UNESCO-UNEVOC to build the capacity of TVET practitioners to utilise appropriate ODL approaches and technology for an inclusive TVET delivery in The Gambia and Zambia resulted in a research report on the status of implementation of TVET during the Covid-19 pandemic and the development and offering of two courses, "Leading Change for Technology Enabled TVET" and "Assistive Technology in TVET". 120 TVET practitioners from both countries participated.

LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

COL provides learners, targeting especially those from disadvantaged groups, direct access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods, through special-purpose programmes.

Government and institutions can sometimes react slowly, so catalytic actions outside of institutions can create the opportunity for later systemic change. At a much lower cost than conventional education, Open Learning can act beyond the reach of institutions, directly to disadvantaged learners, to help them move towards success. This is particularly valuable for reaching into communities directly with non-governmental and non-institutional partners.

Over the last three years, more than 1,100,000 learners, most of them in the critical economic activity of agriculture, participated in training opportunities in diverse topics in sustainable livelihood and agriculture, through audio/text/video messages delivered to farmers 'in the field' through mobile phones and the establishment of linkages with value chain service providers. Equity is a significant feature of disadvantage, with women, girls and at-risk boys being a very high proportion of our learners, but in addition to the results noted above, in work specifically targeting gender, COL has helped to bring over 34,000 women and girls and over 8,500 under-achieving boys back into learning, sensitising more than 62,000 community members to these and other equity matters.

COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen initiative engaged eminent women as role models to mentor women at the initial stages of their careers and girls at the grassroots level in under-served communities, to become successful in their field of interest as well as to excel in leadership. Mentors and Mentees were from Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria and Tanzania. In 2021, COL introduced a ten-episode podcast series where female leaders from across the Commonwealth shared their stories on the path they followed to leadership. Mrs Motun Ige, Principal of Ibadan International School, Nigeria; Ambassador Margaret Mensah-Williams, Namibia's Ambassador to the USA; and Professor Rajani Naido, Professor of Higher Education Management and Director, International Centre for HE Management, University of Bath, UK have contributed to the podcast series.

<https://commonwealthoflearning.info/female-leadership-pod>

In India, Kenya and Tanzania, CAD2.9 million were secured as loans by over 12,700 farmers to enhance their livelihoods.

Over 1.1 million farmers in The Gambia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were reached using basic mobile phones. A range of learning resources were developed for this purpose, including video clips, voice and text messages and audio scripts to train farmers in agricultural practices, including harvest and post-harvest management practices of sorghum.

Around 13,500 farmers received training in both Ghana and Kenya with an emphasis on food security and gender equality. In Ghana, 15,440 farmers were linked to financial institutions to access savings and credit services and just over 32,000 Ghanaian farmers were registered to receive training in harvest and post-harvest management practices of sorghum. With COL support, Siaya Seed Sacco, Kenya established a partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation and Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust to support farmers. 7,130 farmers in Kenya are linked into the Learning Innovation and Development Platform, where they are connected to financial services as well as domestic and international markets.

The Centre for Research and Development Initiative, Malawi developed and disseminated 30 radio programmes and 60 short messages for mobile devices to develop vocational skills among girls. 500 girls from across 10 communities in Malawi were enrolled with the Malawi College of Distance Education through community-outreach programmes conducted by community-based mentors, with ongoing support to help turn access into success. If successful, the strategy could be scaled subsequently in Malawi and elsewhere.

Through COL's GIRLS Inspire initiative, over 2,200 women and girls accessed apprenticeship opportunities. In addition, more than 1,600 women, girls and boys were

re-integrated back into school in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda. Partners in Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda facilitated access to financial resources for almost 5,000 women and girls. COL conducted awareness-raising events and sensitised almost 38,000 community members on gender equality in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania and Uganda.

SchoolNet, a partner in South Africa, provided mentorship and support to over 900 learners to encourage them to complete training in TEL, ensure active engagement in the course and find further studying opportunities as part of COL's Gender initiative.

In Tanzania, 2,712 girls, from 26 regions have been registered through a bridging programme offered by the Institute of Adult Education to link non-formal and formal learning pathways. The Institute also launched Inclusive Outreach Initiatives in five communities, creating mentorship groups and enrolling 40 new female participants per community to boost enrollment and inclusivity.

In addition, more than 1,000 teachers in South Africa completed other technology-enabled learning courses offered by COL's Teacher Education initiative.

In Uganda, 73 youth received employment opportunities, linked to internships and started their own enterprises in graphics and web design through COL support.

The Skills for Work Scholarship programme was offered from April 2021 to April 2024 in partnership with Coursera, UdeMy and Grow with Google. There were more than 93,000 learners from 25 Commonwealth nations who benefited from the programme, with over 483,000 course enrolments and 130,000 course completions. Over 25,000 learners from Africa benefited from the programme. Scholarships were offered through the Ghana Library Authority, the Open University of Kenya, the Higher Education Commission in Mauritius, the National Board for Technical Education in Nigeria, the Ministry of Education in Rwanda, the Ministry of Higher Education and Training in South Africa and the Ministry of Education in Togo. The scholarship programme benefitted around 13,000 lifelong learners in Ghana, 3,000 in Kenya, 4,000 in Mauritius, 1,000 in Nigeria, 4,000 in Rwanda, 100 in South Africa, 10 in Tanzania, 200 in Togo and 50 in Zambia.

PCF11 Conference, 2025

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Botswana, to be represented by Botswana Open University, will co-host the Eleventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning with COL in Gaborone.

10–12 September 2025

SELECTED OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

The 21st Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) was organised in Nairobi, Kenya in hybrid mode in April 2022. The COL delegation comprised the late Chair, COL Board of Governors Prof Narend Bajjnath, Professor Kanwar, COL President and Dr Venkataraman Balaji, COL Vice President. It was a proud moment for COL, when in his inaugural keynote, HE President Uhuru Kenyatta referred to COL as ‘an engine of innovation’! The theme of the Conference was “Rethinking Education for Innovation, Growth and Sustainability post Covid–19”. COL President was invited to conceptualise and facilitate a ministerial roundtable on “Lessons Learned from Covid–19 mitigation and recovery strategies” chaired by the Minister of Basic Education, South Africa, the Honourable Angie Motshekga.

The 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was held in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2022 with the theme — Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming. COL President delivered presentations about COL’s work during the lockdown to foreign ministers and senior officials and spoke at the Youth and Women’s Forums. An impact report and a compendium of country reports were circulated. The Heads recognised global insecurities in food, energy and climate, and “underscored the importance of connecting, innovating and transforming in order to facilitate a full recovery from the Covid–19 pandemic.” They “agreed to encourage public–private partnerships, to create high-quality digital jobs for young people across the Commonwealth ... with the full participation of the Commonwealth of Learning.” COL’s work over the last few years received recognition at CHOGM, with the Heads noting its support to thousands of youths in acquiring new skills for livelihoods using the Web. The Communiqué commended COL’s role in building teachers’ capacity and recommended technology solutions to reach the unreached. COL was also encouraged to scale up its activities to help Member States accelerate their progress towards achieving SDG4 by promoting equitable and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, especially women and girls. In his speech at the leaders’ summit, the Rt Hon Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, announced the renewal of support for COL for another three years. In addition, Gabon and Togo became the 55th and 56th members of the Commonwealth, respectively.

Vice Chancellors invited from Africa to participate in

the 3rd High Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Heads of ODL Institutions, held in July 2022 in Malaysia, came from Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Lesotho, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

Women invited from Africa who participated in the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022, in Malaysia, were from Botswana, Eswatini, Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. The workshop theme was ‘Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world’ with three sub-themes — Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change. The two-and-a-half-day meeting was attended by 26 participants from 16 countries.

COL participated at the launch of the UNESCO Strategy for TVET 2022–29 that was held at the United Nations Campus, Bonn, Germany in October 2022. COL Adviser: Skills shared lessons and experiences from a joint COL and UNESCO-UNEVOC project that supported the capacity building of TVET practitioners in The Gambia and Zambia to utilise appropriate ODL approaches and technology for an inclusive TVET delivery.

The 4th High-Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Senior Officials was held in October 2023 at the Open University Mauritius. Participants included Vice Chancellors from Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Seychelles and South Africa. Key recommendations included:

1. Have forward-thinking and flexible strategies to proactively position universities in the face of global disruptions and changing student demographics.
2. Embrace the transformative potential of technological breakthroughs like generative artificial intelligence and effective exploitation of data.
3. Develop strategies in support of the Green Learning agenda within university context.
4. Building on good leadership practices for increased efficiency and effectiveness of institutions.

Professor Geesje van den Berg from University of South Africa was appointed COL Chair (2023–26) with a specific focus on open and distance learning for teacher education. Professor van den Berg also served as a mentor for the ODL Practitioner Research Mentorship initiative which aims to stimulate and facilitate high quality research in the ODL sphere.

RECENT AFRICAN READINGS

Baseline Study on Technology-Enabled Learning at the University of Kabianga

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5442>

Benchmarking of Technology-Enabled Learning at Kibabii University <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5349>

Blended Learning Course Experience at Kaimosi Friends University <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5475>

Blended Learning Experiences at Nakuru Training Institute <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5361>

Blockchain in Education (with UNESCO)
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4131>

Digital and Professional Teacher Competency Standards for Blended TVET
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5408>

Gender Profile 2023: Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/1717>

How Para-Legal Awareness Can Lead to Women and Girls Dealing Successfully with Rights Violations. The study was conducted in Malawi
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5607>

Increasing Access to Open Schooling through an e-Learning Intervention: A Case Study from Zambia
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5223>

Making Digital Assessment Count: Designing for Engagement, Integrity and Authenticity
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4017>

Open Universities in the Commonwealth: At a Glance
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5216>

Out-of-School Children and Youth: A Contemporary View from Selected African Commonwealth Countries
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4057>

Out-of-School Parenting Girls' Learning Pathways in Rwanda: Building Resilience through Identity Formation and Mentorship <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5217>

Report of the Benchmarking of Technology-Enabled Learning at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5225>

Report on Technology-Enabled Learning Competency Framework for Teachers in Zambia
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5458>

Report on the Baseline Study of Technology-Enabled Learning at the Mauritius Institute of Education
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5256>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Africa
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5316>

Research Study: Training for Blended TVET in Pan Commonwealth Countries
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5432>

Sharing Open Resources: The Footprints of COL in Sub-Saharan Africa (COL BLOG)
<https://commonwealthoflearning.info/sharing-open-resources>

Social Return on Investment Analysis of Support from the Commonwealth of Learning for the Open and Innovative Schooling Model
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/3934>

Teacher Skills Required for Blended TVET: Analysis and Guidelines <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5378>

Teacher Training through Open, Distance and Technology-Enabled Learning in Rwanda
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5506>

Technology Application in Teaching and Learning
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4069>

Technology-Enabled Learning at the Four Public Higher Education Institutions of Mauritius
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5359>

The complexity of graduate employability for ODL (COL BLOG)
<https://commonwealthoflearning.info/complexity-of-graduate-employability-for-odl>

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4068>

Viable Learning Pathways Back into Schooling for Out-of-School Youths in Cameroon
<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5230>

Women's Economic Security: A Study on Sustained Income for Farmers and Entrepreneurs. The study was conducted in Malawi and Sri Lanka
<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5606>



FOCUS ON ASIA

BANGLADESH | BRUNEI DARUSSALAM | INDIA | MALAYSIA | MALDIVES
PAKISTAN | SINGAPORE | SRI LANKA

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is midway through a six-year strategy, which requires creating national resilience by working with governments on policy and regulation; building the capacities of institutions to implement open education; and supporting learners directly with open access and skills.

This summary presents highlights from three streams of work in the Asia region from 2021-24.

HOW WE WORK

Two members of our Board of Governors hail from this region and bring leadership and expertise in a wide range of areas. India: Professor Sudhir K. Jain, Vice Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University; Sri Lanka: The Honourable Dr Susil Premajayantha, MP, Minister of Education. To augment the board connections, COL leverages an extensive network of “Focal Points” to make its relationship with each Asian member country more systematic and interactive — these are senior officials nominated by Ministries. They keep Ministers briefed about COL’s work, provide guidance on country priorities and serve as a valuable strategic resource. COL hosts regular meetings to update the Focal Points and consult on regional and national priorities. The last COL Focal Points meeting for Asia took place in India in December 2022. The meetings are held to gather information on country priorities and to provide information to the member states on what COL has done within the context of its Strategic Plan. Delegates from six member countries attended (Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka).

COL’s regional centre, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), is located in India and was established in 1994 to promote the meaningful, relevant and appropriate use of media to serve the education and training needs of Commonwealth member states of Asia. Over the years, CEMCA widened its scope to embrace emerging educational technologies, and through activities with partners in eight countries, has

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **COL supports Asia Governments’ Strategy**, for instance, the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia developed and implemented a national Inclusive *Open Educational Resources policy*.
2. **We have built open learning capacity with Ministry and Institution Faculty teams**, through bringing together 18 Open Universities in India as a consortium to develop a roadmap for implementing the National Education Policy 2020. This work is captured in ‘The Ahmedabad Declaration’ now being implemented.
3. **Significant delivery of skills to disadvantaged groups**. For instance, more than 14,000 women and girls from three countries in Asia were trained through our integrated programme that links them to employment.

helped institutions leverage ODL for increased access to education and building capacity for accreditation.

CEMCA has been closely associated with all aspects of developing community radio in the region and responded to Covid-19 challenges by offering training on creating online courses and using virtual labs.

CEMCA's Advisory Council is responsible for broad policy formulation in the programme areas. It also provides informed guidance, monitors and evaluates CEMCA's progress, and suggests ways and means for improving its performance. Representatives from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka currently serve on the Council.

There are 23 Open Universities in Asia out of 34 in the Commonwealth. Notably, Pakistan's Allama Iqbal Open University, founded in 1974, was the first of its kind in Asia. The latest addition to this group is Mata Tripura Sundari Open University in India, established in early 2024.

COL published a 2nd edition of Open Universities in the Commonwealth: At a Glance in 2023 which provides a snapshot of the nature of Open Universities and evidence of the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on open universities moving all their learning and activities online.

COL is a member of the Asian Association of Open Universities.

Asia POLICY meets PRACTICE

PCF10 Conference, 2022

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. The Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), the first-ever hybrid Forum was held in Calgary, Canada from 14–16 September 2022.

The Hon Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa delivered the inaugural address in person.

The Hon Dr Aishath Ali, Minister of Education and the Hon Ahmed Mujahid, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Maldives were both active participants at PCF10. The keynote address for the sub-theme "Inspiring Innovations" was delivered by Mohammed Rezwan, Founder and Executive Director of Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, Bangladesh.

The conference saw seven Asian countries send 85 key stakeholder delegates. 44 of these delegates were sponsored through COL programmes and additional funds provided by India's National Institute of Open Schooling, Open University Malaysia and Wawasan Open University.

A ministerial roundtable session, also held during PCF10 and co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and COL's President, generated a lively discussion on how governments have addressed educational disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nine education ministers from all over the Commonwealth joined in the discussion.

The roundtable session revolved around ODFL and building resilience and technological innovation while being inclusive. Other themes included improved access to education through ODL, service schools and how every community is vital to educational growth. Ministers from across the Commonwealth examined the many inherent benefits of ODL in a world where Covid-19 is still a major global health emergency.

ASIA IMPACT (2021–24)

Flagship Project

COL flagship projects are agreed with Commonwealth governments to add significant extra resources to core programme impacts in specific areas, to bring forward critical outcomes.



In June 2023, Global Affairs Canada announced a new grant arrangement with COL to implement a project titled **Empowering Women and Girls in the Commonwealth**.

This three-year (2023–26) project will go towards supporting women and girls from disadvantaged communities in **Bangladesh**, Malawi, Mozambique, **Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka**.

Since 2015, Global Affairs Canada has invested in COL's work to provide women and girls with education and skills development, first through the GIRLS Inspire project and subsequently in the Empowering Women and Girls project. This latest project will directly reach 75,000 women and girls while building the capacity of 20,000 men and boys. Using a context-specific and holistic approach, with coordinated interventions operating at the individual, household, community and societal levels, the project will also engage government officials, community leaders, women's rights and civil society organisations, financial institutions and employers to create a safe and enabling environment for the successful implementation and sustainability of the project. In total, 400,000 community members will be reached through public campaigns.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL works with Asia governments to drive the quality open learning agenda through Policy and Strategy development.

The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, India organised a discussion with policymakers and academics for developing blended learning policy.

A consultation with parliamentarians in Pakistan led to policy recommendations for addressing women entrepreneurs' financial challenges.

A 'Skill Profiling' model was developed by the Central Board of Secondary Education based on multiple intelligence, interest inventory, and career lists for students.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia developed and implemented a national inclusive Open Educational Resources (OER) policy.

CEMCA, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology-Responsible AI for Social Empowerment and Education and Indian Institutes of Technology, has developed an AI India curriculum tailored for schools. The launch occurred during the Global Partnership Artificial Intelligence 2023 Summit, New Delhi. The course was introduced for AI literacy at an early stage within the Indian school education system.

With the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, COL trained 112 master trainers in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for teachers. These master trainers subsequently provided ICT training to 7,452 teachers in all nine provinces of Sri Lanka in 2023.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL collaborates with partner institutions to build capacity to support quality open education and training.

The National Institute of Education, Maldives developed an institutional policy for technology-enabled learning. The Islamic University of Maldives received OER training support from COL.

The University of North Bengal in India developed an OER policy; Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Jharkhand State Open University and Madhya Pradesh (Bhoj) Open University reviewed their Open Education practices while 40 faculty members of K K Handiqui State Open University were trained in the creation of learning material using OER.

All 18 Open Universities in India were brought together as a consortium to develop a roadmap for implementing the National Education Policy 2020. This work is captured in 'The Ahmedabad Declaration' now being implemented by the consortium with our technical support.

The National Institute of Open Schooling, India organised an international workshop with COL in June 2023 to focus on the adoption of the 'Gender-Green Teacher' programme. The workshop attracted 49 principals and senior professors from Africa (The Gambia, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda) and Asia (Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka). As part of the workshop, each participating institution developed an action plan to implement the Gender-Green Teacher programme in their respective countries, ensuring that the acquired knowledge and skills translate into practical teaching strategies.

Vidyasagar University, India, developed an institutional OER policy. CEMCA, in association with the Andhra Pradesh Information Technology Academy, supported the training of 437 faculty members from various engineering colleges in the use of advanced technologies and teaching methodologies in India.

Capacity building for the Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) was held in nine provinces of Sri Lanka. Launched in 2017, the C-DELTA programme has emerged as a front-runner

in creating digital education leaders at scale in schools, colleges and communities and has been adopted in educational institutions, ministries of education and civil society organisations as a non-credit course. Countries include Bangladesh, Belize, Mauritius, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, St Lucia and South Africa.

COL's benchmarking toolkit for TEL has been implemented in eight universities in Malaysia, including action plans.

Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education and Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation in India organised faculty development programmes on integrating 21st-century skills in teaching and learning and digital marketing.

A month-long online workshop on "Design Thinking and Innovation in Teaching and Training" was organised to assist higher education and vocational training institutions in the capacity building of their faculty members/trainers. This workshop was conducted in November 2021 and was attended by 114 participants from five countries (Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives, and Sri Lanka) who were educators from technical and engineering streams, business schools, and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) network.

The Model Institute of Education and Research, India developed 20 courses for teacher training.

Daffodil International University, Bangladesh developed and offered four skills courses on agriculture, health, social media and cybersecurity.

Teachers at the Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh received training on developing blended courses.

Teachers and teacher educators in India were trained on a Virtual Reality platform developed by CEMCA. Workshops on Virtual Labs, OER, teacher training and skills development in India and Sri Lanka were also organised.

32 teachers and academic counsellors of Bangladesh Open School were trained in blended learning techniques.

Training on open textbooks was conducted for teachers from 11 institutions in Malaysia.

11 organisations in Pakistan were trained on the prevention of workplace harassment.

Civil society partners in Pakistan: SPARC, developed learning resources on e-commerce, life skills and kitchen gardening. Bedari formed partnerships with local employers to create business opportunities for learners who completed the skills training.

In Sri Lanka, the Tertiary Vocational Education Commission developed a course on Caregiving to the Elderly. The study material was subsequently contextualised for India and developed as a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on COL's platform.

Joygopalpur Grameen Vikas Kendra, India, undertook the second phase of a pilot project to create a sustainable model village by promoting organic farming and aquaculture.

An exploratory study helped to analyse ways to incorporate blended learning/teaching techniques to enhance the efficacy of a Cosmetology and Electrician trade course offered in Indian Industrial Training Institutes.

Under the theme, "Listeners to Learners", CEMCA collaborated with local Non-Governmental Organisations: Voice of Azamgarh and START to develop a systematic learning programme for Auxiliary Social Health Activists on reproductive health issues in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India.

Dr B. R. Ambedkar Open University, India developed and released seven OER-based undergraduate level courses and eight microcredential courses.

The Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals and S M Sehgal Foundation offered radio programmes on soil testing.

The Commonwealth of Learning Open and Distance Learning Practitioner Research Training and Mentorship programme, introduced in 2023, focuses on stimulating and supporting practitioner research on ODL in higher education to facilitate quality educational research. This online programme also includes the establishment of a network of mentors with two from the Asian region: Professor Santosh Panda, India and Professor Shironica P. Karunanayaka, Sri Lanka.

The Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programme was originally the outcome of collaboration between COL and four open universities in South Asia: Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan), Bangladesh Open University, Indira Gandhi National Open University (India) and the Open University of Sri Lanka. Established in 2002, the CEMBA/CEMPA programme has expanded through partnerships with institutions in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and in response to the growing demands for post-graduate level education in business and public administration, it is designed for part-time study for busy working professionals. Our four partner institutions: Allama Iqbal Open University, Bangladesh Open University, Open University of Sri Lanka and Wawasan Open University, Malaysia renewed their five-year licenses in 2021. Over 620 students have graduated from the programme offered during their 2021–24 academic years.

LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

COL provides learners, targeting especially those from disadvantaged groups, direct access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods through special-purpose programmes.

COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen engaged eminent women as role models, to mentor women at the early stages of their career and girls at the grassroots level in under-served communities to become successful in their field of interest as well as to excel in leadership. These role models include Dr Lily Chan, Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, Professor Vasudha Kamat, Professor Asha Kanwar, Dr Gurdip Kaur, Professor Madhulika Kaushik, Ms Abtar Darshan Singh, and Professor Dr Zoraini Wati Abas.

<https://commonwealthoflearning.info/female-leadership-pod>

The Skills for Work Scholarship programme was offered between April 2021 to April 2024 in partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google. There were more than 93,000 learners from 25 Commonwealth nations who benefited from the programme, with over 483,000 course enrolments and 130,000 course completions. Between April 2021 and April 2024, nearly 55,000 learners from Asia benefited from the programme. Scholarships were offered through the National Library and Documentation Services Board in Sri Lanka, Better Future for Women in Bangladesh, Fatima Jinnah Women University in Pakistan, Virtual University of Pakistan, the State Board of Technical Education, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education in India. Approximately 15,000 learners benefitted from the scholarship programme in Bangladesh, with over 26,000 benefitting in India, more than 5,000 in Pakistan and approximately 9,000 in Sri Lanka.

COL's Lifelong Learning for Farmers model is being implemented in India, which follows a holistic approach to capacity building which emphasises continuous learning for farmers using ICTs and linking human capital with social and financial capital. The model also 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. Over 12,000 farmers have been trained through audio messages and 1,569 learners completed the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University agriculture massive online open course that was offered.

Promoting educational attainment and the economic participation of women and girls, COL continues through its flagship project Empowering Women and Girls and its GIRLS Inspire initiative to follow both a context-specific and holistic approach, with coordinated interventions operating at the individual, household, community and societal levels. It aligns its work with local and national development needs for scale and sustainability and uses community mobilisation to influence change in national policy while providing linkages with employers for internships and employment opportunities that facilitate access to credit for self-employment. This is being implemented with governments and civil society organisations in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. More than 14,000 women and girls have been trained. Select activities include:

- To increase women and girls' access to credit and financial resources partners in Bangladesh and Pakistan collaborated with nine financial institutions.
- In Bangladesh, Better Future for Women established partnerships with Kopotaksha Munda Dalit Women's Cooperative Society Ltd., Sundarban Adibasi Munda Sangstha and Rural Reconstruction Foundation to digitise TVET courses.
- A curriculum for the course manual on Women's Human Rights, Gender-Based Violence, protection, justice-seeking mechanisms, and service mapping was developed.
- Six interactive micro-courses were developed:
 - Climate Change and Climate Action
 - Small Scale Traditional Food Production and Food Processing Techniques for Sustenance and Survival
 - Gender Equality in the Context of Climate Change and Food Security
 - Designing Innovative, Climate Responsive and Sustainable Livelihood
 - Role of Innovations and Climate Responsive Actions to Attain Community Resilience
 - Indigenous Rights and Practices, The Way to a Better Planet.

SELECTED OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

The 21st CEMCA Advisory Council meeting was held online in December 2021, with members from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka present. It was recommended by members that CEMCA should build networks to perform a catalytic role and build new partnerships in the region.

The 3rd High Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Heads of ODL Institutions jointly organised by COL and Asia eUniversity was held in July 2022 in Malaysia. The two-day meeting was attended by 33 participants from 17 countries.

COL partnered with Wawasan Open University, Malaysia in organising the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022. The workshop theme was ‘Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world’ with three sub-themes — Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change. Twenty-six mid-career academics were invited from 16 Commonwealth countries, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka included.

CEMCA held their 22nd Advisory Council Meeting in New Delhi in December 2022 with members from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka in attendance. A major concern expressed was that despite the fact that distance learning had been embraced globally during the pandemic, the negative perceptions relating to the quality of this mode of delivery continue to persist. Members spoke on several topics including: the importance of blended learning and the need for advocating for the uptake of ODL; develop awareness programmes to conserve the environment and to promote climate

literacy in Commonwealth countries; Malaysia’s Higher Education Digitalisation Plan and COL’s support in promoting digital competencies; spreading community education and parental awareness around vocational and skills-based courses; the need for establishing virtual labs for vocational skill development; and the need for a consortium of universities to build virtual labs.

The Regional Focal Point meeting for Asia was held in New Delhi, India, December 2022. Representatives from six out of eight Asian Commonwealth countries (Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, and Sri Lanka) participated in the two-day meeting.

The 4th Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Senior Officials to chart the future of higher education in a rapidly changing world was co-hosted with the Open University of Mauritius in October 2023. This event attracted 24 distinguished participants from 15 countries, Bangladesh, India and Malaysia included. The session on technology and higher education, with a focus on generative AI and its implications for ODL was moderated by Professor Dato’ Dr Ansary Ahmed of Asia eUniversity, Malaysia. These sessions provided an opportunity for engaging in discussions on pertinent issues related to micro-credentials, generative AI and the future of ODL.

Professor Shironica P. Karunanayaka from The Open University of Sri Lanka was appointed COL Chair (2023–26) to work in specific research areas related to ODL and OER.

RECENT ASIA READINGS

Best Practices of Community Radio and Sustainable Development Goals: A Handbook (CEMCA)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5260>

Blockchain in Education (with UNESCO)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4131>

CEMCA Annual Report: 2021-2022

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5301>

CEMCA Annual Report: 2022-2023

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5614>

Gender Profile 2023: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/1717>

Handbook on Online Education in Commonwealth Asia (CEMCA) <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5259>

Making Digital Assessment Count: Designing for Engagement, Integrity and Authenticity

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4017>

Open Universities in the Commonwealth: At a Glance

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5216>

Reaching the Unreached: Scale-Up Empowerment Study <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4006>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Asia

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5228>

Smart Education Strategies for Teaching and Learning: Critical Analytical Framework and Case Studies

(includes India and Singapore)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4464>

Technology Application in Teaching and Learning

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4069>

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4068>



FOCUS ON THE CARIBBEAN

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA | THE BAHAMAS | BARBADOS | BELIZE
DOMINICA | GRENADA | GUYANA | JAMAICA | SAINT LUCIA | ST KITTS AND NEVIS
ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES | TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is midway through a six-year strategy, which requires creating national resilience by working with governments on policy and regulation; building the capacities of institutions to implement open education; and supporting learners directly with open access and skills.

This summary presents highlights from three streams of work in the Caribbean region from 2021-24.

HOW WE WORK

One member of our Board of Governors, the Honourable Curtis M. King, Minister of Education and National Reconciliation, St Vincent and The Grenadines hails from this region and brings leadership and expertise in a wide range of areas. To augment the board connections, COL leverages an extensive network of “Focal Points” to make its relationship with each Caribbean member country more systematic and interactive — these are senior officials nominated by Ministries. They keep Ministers briefed about COL’s work, provide guidance on country priorities, and serve as a valuable strategic resource. COL hosts regular meetings to update the Focal Points and consult on regional and national priorities. The last COL Focal Points meeting for the Caribbean took place in Jamaica in January 2023. The meetings are held to gather information on the country priorities and to provide information to the member states on what COL has done within the context of its Strategic Plan. Delegates from 10 member countries attended (Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago). Many of the regional and national priorities identified are reflected in COL’s areas of focus which include: inclusivity, boys’ education, TVET education, professional training for teachers and food security.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. **COL supports Caribbean Governments’ Strategy**, for instance, building on the success of the COL-Coursera Workforce Recovery programme introduced during the pandemic, the governments in Barbados and Guyana took ownership of this project and launched national programmes to scale up the approach.
2. **We have built open learning capacity with Ministry and Institution Faculty teams**, which led to the development of institutional ODL policies in Guyana, St Vincent and The Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago and institutional strategies for technical and vocational education in six countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica and St Kitts and Nevis).
3. **Delivery of training to farmers**. For example, in Jamaica, over 16,600 farmers received blended training with a tailored ‘farming as a business’ curriculum to equip them with essential agri-business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and technology adoption to enhance their farm management practices.

Caribbean POLICY meets PRACTICE

PCF10 Conference, 2022

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. The Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), the first-ever hybrid Forum was held in Calgary, Canada from 14–16 September 2022. The Hon Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa delivered the inaugural address in person.

The Honourable Priya Manickchand, Minister of Education, Guyana attended and was conferred a COL Honorary Fellow title.

The conference welcomed 17 key stakeholder delegates from eight Caribbean countries. 14 of these delegates were sponsored through additional funds provided by various institutions from around the Commonwealth.

At the ministerial roundtable session, co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and COL's President, a lively discussion ensued about strategies utilised by governments to address educational disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic. They examined the multifaceted and inherent benefits of ODL in a world where Covid-19 is still a major global health emergency. Nine education ministers spanning the Commonwealth contributed to the conversation.

This roundtable session centred on inclusivity in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to build resilience and technological innovation. Other themes included improved access to education through ODL, service schools, and community engagement for educational growth.

CANQATE Annual Meeting, 2023

The Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education – a member of a global network, along with the University of Trinidad and Tobago – organised its 19th annual meeting which was attended by about 200 quality assurance professionals in academia, training agencies, as well as officials from relevant ministries.

The Honourable Lisa Morris-Julian, Minister of Education for Trinidad and Tobago, delivered the inaugural address and the Vice President of COL gave a plenary address on the significance of current artificial intelligence developments.

The event was anchored by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the National Training Agency — an umbrella agency for Technical

and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the country.

In a special address, the Honourable Nigel de Freitas, Acting President of Trinidad and Tobago, emphasised the importance of rapid workforce development to improve and sustain the economic development of societies in the region and highlighted the role that innovative approaches could play.

Senior academics and leaders from COL's partner universities in the VUSSC network made presentations on quality assurance in the post-pandemic recovery phase.

CARIBBEAN IMPACT (2021–24)

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL works with Caribbean governments to drive the quality open learning agenda through Policy and Strategy development.

COL contributes towards strengthening of blended learning approach in skills education in a variety of ways in this region. During 2022-23, the Caribbean Association for National Training Authorities (CANTA) reviewed the Guidelines and Criteria for awarding the Caribbean Vocational Qualification, initially developed in 2015, to integrate components focused on blended learning. State officers at National Training Authorities use the Guidelines and Criteria to oversee the quality and standards of training in the region.

CANTA also held an occupational standards workshop for government staff and officials to develop occupational standards in the green, digital, blue and orange economies.

COL initiated several high-level panels on Climate Change and Education to support Member countries in advancing climate action (through policy, capacity, resources and research). This resulted in the Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education, published in August 2022. Ministers of Education from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago were members of this panel.

The University Council of Jamaica, tasked with regulating ODL standards and policies for Higher Education within Jamaica, hosted a training seminar with COL's support to achieve two objectives: to disseminate the revised ODL standards and to further train 484 faculty and staff to apply the standards in online course design and delivery. They have also now operationalised the standards into attractively packaged and accessible e-resources to guide workshop facilitators and participants new to the revised ODL standards.

The Jamaica Teaching Council distributed 26,147 Boys' Journals in 76 schools in seven regions—this life-planning guide helps to set life goals and follow them through. This government body was then able to support the mentoring of boys from different schools as part of the 'Boys'

Education Empowerment' project. An e-book 'Teaching boys effectively' was developed for mentors.

The Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme is the foundation of agricultural transformation which COL is setting with partners in Antigua and Barbuda and Jamaica. The Rural Agricultural Development Authority, Jamaica is bridging the learning gaps that exist in the life of resource-limited farmers through training in business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and technology adoption to enhance their farm management practices. To ensure long-term agricultural sustainability, the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and Barbuda Affairs developed a strategy for the attainment of food security in poultry productions and trained extension field officers in climate-smart agriculture.

The Gender Equality initiative supported Belize's Ministry of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs in completing COL's gender mainstreaming scorecard. This achievement led to the development of a comprehensive gender strategy with an action plan for integrating a gender perspective into the Ministry's processes and programmes. The process involved the active participation of 56 staff members, affiliate institutions and diverse stakeholders, ensuring varied perspectives were included to help achieve inclusive and equitable outcomes for the Ministry.

COL provided technology support to various ministries and national institutions:

- hosted Moodle platform for the Caribbean Tourism Organization to develop and offer two online training courses to the Caribbean Tourism Sector and to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to offer a course in Assistive Technologies to special education teachers.
- migrated learning management systems to the Cloud (Ministry of Education, Guyana)

The Skills for Work Scholarship programme offered between April 2021 to April 2024 in partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google saw more than 90,000 learners from 25 Commonwealth nations complete more than 130,000 courses. During these three years, nearly 13,000 learners from the Caribbean benefitted from the programme. Elsewhere in the Commonwealth, COL frames this work as reaching direct to learners, outside of government and regulatory support. However, in the Caribbean, our partners in offering these scholarships included The Bahamas: Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training; Belize: Mabel Walker Professional Development Institute at the Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training; Grenada: Ministry of Education;

Guyana: Ministry of Education; Saint Lucia: Ministry of Education, Sustainable Development, Innovation, Science, Technology and Vocational Training; St Vincent and The Grenadines: Ministry of Education; and Trinidad and Tobago: Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme. Over 90 learners benefitted from the scholarship programme in the Bahamas, while nearly 320 learners benefitted in Barbados, 100 in Belize, 1,800 in Grenada, 3,200 in Guyana, 30 in Jamaica, 1,100 in Saint Lucia, 875 in St Vincent and the Grenadines and 5,300 in Trinidad and Tobago. Building on the success of this programme that was introduced during the pandemic, Barbados and Guyana took ownership of this project and launched national programmes to scale up the approach.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL collaborates with partner institutions to build capacity to support quality and inclusive open education and training.

In 2022, in partnership with UNESCO-UNEVOC and CANTA, support was provided for the development of ODL strategies and action plans for eight TVET institutions in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, St Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname (a non-Commonwealth country, included with funding support from UNESCO-UNEVOC). Six of these plans were validated at a regional workshop in Barbados later the same year. Additionally, 10 TVET secondary schools in Jamaica were also supported, and four of these strategies have been validated. COL would provide technical assistance for the implementation of approved institutional strategies.

The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, developed an institutional Open Educational Resources (OER) policy and offered a massive open online course (MOOC) on dispute resolution and conflict management where 1,164 learners from 15 countries enrolled.

In 2023, CANTA conducted a review of the regional occupational standards to integrate elements for blended delivery, with reference to the guidelines and criteria in the regional qualifications framework. Consequently, in 2024, over 20 practitioners from Barbados, Grenada,

Guyana, Jamaica, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and The Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, designed four coursewares for competency-based training using blended delivery approaches using reviewed Robotics Operating System in the Orange (Dance Instruction), Blue (Fishing Vessel Operations), Green (Photovoltaic) and Digital (Animation) Economy. Plans are underway to pilot these coursewares and to develop others using the skills acquired.

A Monitoring and Evaluation strategy and baseline report were completed, and 65 Belize Ministry staff in open school management and 19 Ministry staff were trained in monitoring and evaluation techniques ahead of an ongoing pilot using 15 AptusPi devices in 15 schools.

In Guyana, the National Centre for Education Resource Development developed 15 teacher training courses while Cyril Potter College of Education is offering 225 courses currently available on their Moodle platform which has facilitated 10,256 learners accessing and completing its courses in online or blended modes. The college also developed an institutional Distance Education Policy.

St Vincent and The Grenadines Community College converted 21 courses for online delivery, nine of which are being offered to 950 students. 42 Faculty members have strengthened their capacity to design, develop and facilitate courses for online delivery. This has led to an increase in the pool of online course developers and facilitators at the college. Furthermore, an Online Teaching and Learning Policy was developed and the IT team is currently developing a Technology Strategy Plan with guidance from a COL consultant.

Antigua State College is strengthening its capacity in ODL as part of COL's ICT augmentation process to build institutional resilience. To date, 16 blended courses have been offered to learners, and a computer lab/studio has been established where high-quality multimedia lessons and other promotional material are being recorded.

In 2023–24, COL co-offered a MOOC on “Teaching Mathematics with Technology” with the University of West Indies, Five Islands Campus in Antigua and Barbuda, attracting over 1,000 participants. This partnership is expected to build evidence on the impact of contextualised OER on teacher professional development, especially in Mathematics and the Sciences.

In Barbados, a visioning workshop on open education was held at the Erdiston Teachers' Training College in 2024, which attracted 20 staff. The plan is to partner with the Ministry of Education on a nationwide capacity-building programme for teachers using ODL.

To support long-term, sustainable impacts, including livelihood strategies, violence prevention, and building the resilience of young men and boys in the Caribbean, for the past three years, COL collaborated with Youth Challenge Guyana, the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Transport, Belize and the Jamaica Teaching Council, to enhance blended learning, align training with employment needs, and sensitise communities. Partnerships in Belize, Guyana and Jamaica have mentored over 5,400 learners and sensitised more than 28,500 community members, addressing critical issues affecting young men and boys. Additionally, research by the Institute of Gender and Development Studies in Jamaica engaged 300 boys and young men and 150 mothers, highlighting the role of mothers in re-engaging boys in education and training. The findings are being used to drive meaningful change through an awareness campaign in Jamaica.

COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration Programme delivers high-quality learning and professional development opportunities – working with 12 partner institutions, including the University College of the Caribbean, Jamaica, the University of Guyana and the University College of the Cayman Islands – that complement their existing MBA/MPA programmes. Eighteen courses were redeveloped, and around 100 students have enrolled since 2021 to the programme offered by our Caribbean partners.

LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

COL provides learners, targeting especially those from disadvantaged groups, direct access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods, through special-purpose programmes.

In Jamaica, over 16,600 farmers received blended training using a tailored business curriculum to equip them with essential business skills, financial literacy, marketing strategies and technology adoption to enhance their farm management practices.

Youth Challenge Guyana promoted capacity-building for men and boys on the prevention of gender-based violence with the creation of the Community Dialogue Manual and engaged 25 companies to provide internships and jobs to these men and boys in hospitality services. Moreover, a mentoring network for parents was

established to support young men and boys to return to school and seek employment.

The MOOC, “Climate Literacy for All” was offered in partnership with The University of the West Indies, Jamaica. Almost 800 people from 47 countries enrolled in this course that was offered on COL's platform in late 2023. Facilitated by UWI, the course provided fundamental knowledge on the science of climate change and how to identify climate change solutions and take action at an individual level, especially in the context of small island developing states.

SELECTED OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

Pleshette McPhee, Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute, Sherry Maynard from the University of the West Indies (Barbados) and Debra Lowe, University of Guyana were invited to participate in the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL in August 2022, in Malaysia. The workshop theme was “Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world” with three sub-themes — Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change.

The project launch of COL and St Vincent and the Grenadines Community College’s launched a collaboration project in ODL in February 2023. Prime Minister, the Honourable Dr Ralph Gonsalves, described COL as “an institution of solidarity” and underscored the importance of e-learning for St Vincent and The Grenadines, especially in light of his government’s plan to have at least one graduate per household by 2030. Mr Nigel Scott, Director for the college also spoke.

A partnership between COL and OECS led to improved capacity among 50 educators to evaluate, select and use assistive technologies

as instructional support for students with special needs. To mark the successful completion of the training, a graduation ceremony for these educators was held in June 2023 where participants from seven Caribbean nations and territories gathered with leaders and senior members of their Ministries for the virtual ceremony.

Prof Paloma Mohamed-Martin, University, Guyana and Prof Haldane Davies, University of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Jamaica participated at COL’s Fourth Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Senior Officials hosted at the Open University of Mauritius in October 2023. Key recommendations included: a) Have forward-thinking and flexible strategies to proactively position universities in the face of global disruptions and changing student demographics; b) Embrace the transformative potential of technological breakthroughs like generative artificial intelligence and effective exploitation of data; c) Develop strategies in support of the Green Learning Agenda within university contexts; and d) Build on good leadership practices for increased efficient and effectiveness of institutions.

RECENT CARIBBEAN READINGS

Blockchain in Education (with UNESCO)

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4131>

Digital and Professional Teacher Competency Standards for Blended TVET

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5408>

Gender Profile 2023: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/1717>

Making Digital Assessment Count: Designing for Engagement, Integrity and Authenticity

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4017>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Caribbean <https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5288>

Research Study: Training for Blended TVET in Pan Commonwealth Countries

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5432>

Teacher Skills Required for Blended TVET: Analysis and Guidelines

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5378>

Technology Application in Teaching and Learning

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4069>

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4068>



FOCUS ON THE PACIFIC

AUSTRALIA | FIJI | KIRIBATI | NAURU | NEW ZEALAND | PAPUA NEW GUINEA
SAMOA | SOLOMON ISLANDS | TONGA | TUVALU | VANUATU

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is mid-way through a six-year strategy, which requires creating national resilience by working with governments on policy and regulation; building the capacities of institutions to implement open education; and supporting learners directly with open access and skills.

This summary presents highlights from three streams of work in the Pacific region for 2021–24.

HOW WE WORK

Three members of our Board of Governors hail from this region and bring leadership and expertise in a wide range of areas. Australia: Professor Belinda Tynan; New Zealand: Dr Caroline Seelig (ONZM); Kingdom of Tonga: The Honourable Hu’akavameiliku of Ha’asini, Prime Minister, Minister for Education and Training and Interim Pro Chancellor, Tonga National University. To augment the board connections, COL leverages an extensive network of “Focal Points” to make its relationship with each Pacific member country more systematic and interactive; these are senior officials nominated by Ministries. They keep Ministers briefed about COL’s work, provide guidance on country priorities and serve as a valuable strategic resource. COL hosts regular meetings to update the Focal Points and consult on regional and national priorities. The last COL Focal Points meeting for the Pacific took place in Fiji in March 2023. The meetings are held to gather information on each country’s priorities and to provide information to the member states on what COL has done within the context of its Strategic Plan. Delegates from eight member countries attended (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu).

COL supports a regional centre that coordinates a range of our work and connects us to the work of others - the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), hosted and managed by the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **1 - COL supports Pacific Governments’ Strategy**, for instance, via our contribution to the First Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (Auckland, New Zealand, March 2023) on the *Pacific Regional Education Framework and 2030 Agenda*. We have built capacities of over 140 ministry officials in the region on planning and policies for ODL.
- **2 - We have built open learning capacity with Ministry and Institution Faculty teams**, through multiple parallel actions via our *Pacific Partnership for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning* upskilling project. We have trained about 7000 teachers to help them make effective use of ODL and digital learning resources to support learners.
- **3 - Significant delivery of skills to teachers and resources to learners**. For example, 2021-24 saw nearly 7,000 course enrolments by learners from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The topics varied widely, including training in soft skills and communication, office management, food processing, and organic farm management. A survey conducted among learners in Fiji and Vanuatu indicated that approximately 40 per cent of them either secured new jobs or advanced in their current positions as a result of the training.

PACIFIC POLICY meets PRACTICE

PCF10 Conference, 2022

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. The Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10), the first-ever hybrid Forum, was held in Calgary, Canada, from 14–16 September 2022.

The Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa, delivered the inaugural address in person.

The conference saw nine Pacific countries send 44 key stakeholder delegates. 29 of these delegates were sponsored through additional funds provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand and the Open Polytechnic New Zealand.

A special Pacific session in PCF10 convened those key policymakers, educators and practitioners to review the progress of open and distance learning (ODL) in the Pacific, share lessons learned and discuss a way forward. This event was co-chaired by Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa and Professor Asha Kanwar, COL President and CEO.

“ODL is an important channel for increasing educational opportunities and outcomes, and relevant especially for the Pacific region, given the small and dispersed remote population and limited access to secondary and post-secondary opportunities. Despite the importance of ODL in the region, there's been a limited investment; more investment is needed for education in multiple ways.”
- Prime Minister of Samoa

The CEO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Samoa, Ms Peseta Noumea Simi, recommended strategies going forward to ensure uninterrupted access to high-quality education for all, which included: 1) adopting a multi-modal delivery of

education across the region; (2) planning for access to devices and the Internet for students and teachers; (3) providing technical support and training; (4) monitoring staff and student engagement and developing a community of practice. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, Fiji, Dr Anjeela Jokhan, explained the importance of teacher training in using Open Educational Resources and building resilience in the educational sector. The Deputy High Commissioner of New Zealand in Canada, Ms Kirsty Pelenur, spoke about the value that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand places in working with national and regional priorities within the context of ODL. She said achieving educational outcomes is not just about supporting ODL. It requires consideration of context and the ability of a programme to adapt and be responsive to progress and outcomes.

A ministerial roundtable session, also held during PCF10 and co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Samoa and COL's President, generated a lively discussion on how governments have addressed educational disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nine education ministers from across the Commonwealth joined in the discussion.

The roundtable session revolved around ODL and building resilience and technological innovation while being inclusive. Other themes included improved access to education through ODL, service schools and how every community is vital to educational growth. Ministers from across the Commonwealth examined the many inherent benefits of ODL in a world where Covid-19 is still a major global health emergency.

PACIFIC IMPACT (2021–24)

Flagship Project

COL flagship projects are agreed with Commonwealth governments to add significant extra resources to core programme impacts in specific areas, to bring forward critical outcomes.



The **Partnership for Open and Distance Learning in the Pacific** is a large five-year project (2020–25) directly funded by the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand to support enhancing capacity and efficiency of education sectors in the Pacific through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology.

In its fourth year now, the Pacific Partnership project has made significant progress in several key areas: developing

teachers, providing skills training for youth, building the capacities of ministry officials in Open and Distance Learning (ODL), and improving data resilience in ministries of education. Additionally, the project has involved reviewing policy documents and enhancing disaster recovery plans. This broad scope aligns with the project's holistic approach to meet the diverse educational and training needs of the region, emphasising resilience. A mid-term evaluation carried out by an independent expert group (January–April 2023) found that the project was effective, efficient and was fulfilling its objectives.

<https://pacificpartnership.col.org>

Much of the work that has taken place in the Pacific over the last three years is connected to the Pacific Partnership project, as noted below.

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

COL works with Pacific governments to drive the quality open learning agenda through Policy and Strategy development.

COL initiated several high-level panels on Climate Change and Education to support member countries in advancing climate action (through policy, capacity, resources and research). This resulted in the Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education, published in August 2022. The Fijian Minister of Education, National Heritage and Arts was a member of this high-level panel.

Since 2020, COL has supported the Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) unit in the Department of Education, Papua New Guinea, with a gradual migration from a print-based model to blended and online forms of provision. Online content has been developed for school subjects at Grades 11 and 12 levels, and FODE staff have been trained on how to facilitate the courses. Currently, FODE supports over 80,000 students through its print-based model, but it plans a pilot of its Grade 12 online content in the latter half of 2024 and a soft launch of its online provision for both Grades 11 and 12 from 2025.

COL's President, Vice President and Director of PACFOLD were delegates at the First Conference of Pacific Education Ministers (Auckland, March 2023) and presented on education infrastructure and teacher development, thus contributing to the development of the outcome statement.

In 2023–24, the Ministry of Education, Tonga developed a national ODL policy that will enable the provision of open learning at any level of the education system. COL also supported the development of a National ODL Policy Framework for In-Service Teacher Training in Fiji, in partnership with the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority.

Pacific Partnership project

Over 140 nominated Ministry officials from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu participated in a series of workshops on policy and planning for ODL. In March 2024, a workshop hosted by USP in Fiji, aimed to enable 29 participants from nine countries (Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) to understand microcredentials, good practice in implementing microcredentials and the relevance of qualifications frameworks to these new format microcredential courses.

As part of the Pacific Partnership project workstream on Harnessing Technological Advancements for Data Resilience — COL has assisted three countries — Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu — in improving their disaster recovery backup systems/policies in Ministries of Education, with due attention to each country's data sovereignty. For Kiribati and Tuvalu, backup solutions have been suggested as requested. For Vanuatu, COL reviewed the draft ICT Unit Disaster Recovery Plan

and offered recommendations for improvement.

An innovative solution using Cloudlets has been developed and tested in these countries for offsite data storage within national boundaries, with incremental storage to the data cloud. COL has also provided advice to the Ministry of Education, Vanuatu, for the establishment of a Directorate of Distance Education. In April 2024, an in-person regional workshop was organised in partnership with PACFOLD/USP in Fiji. It was meant to build the capacity of senior ICT officials in Ministries of Education to manage data resilience in the event of a natural disaster. A total of six IT officers (two each from Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) participated in the workshop.

From 2020–23, COL provided technical support and capacity building to state officers at the Vocational Education and Training division within the Department of Education, Papua New Guinea. This initiative culminated in the development of a Flexible Open Learning policy aimed at promoting wider access to skill development and training. COL is committed to assisting with the implementation of this policy.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

COL collaborates with partner institutions to build capacity to support quality open education and training.

In Fiji, since August 2021, there has been an ongoing Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) Implementation project with Fiji National University (FNU) where they have developed and offered 22 blended courses to students with over 1,600 currently enrolled. In June 2022 they also drafted a policy for OER. Two reports on this work with FNU were published and are listed in the recent Pacific readings below.

In April 2022, a regional meeting on “TEL in the Pacific and Its Increasing Importance: towards a regional community of practice to promote and sustain TEL” was organised by COL in partnership with PACFOLD/USP.

Over 600 participants provided input to a survey of ICT access and use intended to better understand local needs. The study found that this was necessary to ensure the effective and appropriate delivery of a learning programme in the Pacific.

A Gender Equality and Women empowerment course was introduced to effect individual and collective transformation for advancing gender equality at the workplace and in the communities that COL's partner organisations serve. Policymakers and staff from various institutions in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands have completed the course. COL has also contributed to building the capacity for monitoring and evaluation, project management and sustainable agriculture.

Pacific Partnership project

COL is building institutional capacity in the Pacific with online courses, webinars, toolkits, curated resources and collections such as an extensive course catalogue. There are targeted events for officials in ministries of education on open, distance and flexible education policies. Teachers have been offered a wide range of online courses to build capacities for delivering online and flexible education to learners in colleges and schools.

Focused activities to build the capacities of TVET educators to offer ODL are taking place, as well.

Since 2022, the ODL Course Catalogue offers training courses for teachers in the Pacific on various aspects of ODL. This catalogue was designed so Ministries and educational institutions can have admin access and share any relevant courses for their own country.

<https://www.odlcatalogue4pacific.org/>

National OER Collection Sites for all nine Commonwealth countries to be used by institutions have been developed with resources for teachers that can be used or adapted for their teaching. These sites were contextualised in collaboration with each country's Ministry of Education to reflect their national curriculum.

Almost 7,000 teachers from the Pacific have been trained to provide effective learner support in ODL contexts. New online resources and courses developed have been used to support and train teachers in providing effective learner support in open distance and flexible learning contexts. Courses for up-skilling teachers include:

- OER for Online Learning: An Introduction
- Digital Skills for OER Sharing
- Communication Skills
- Assessment Skills
- Learner Support
- Quality Assurance for Pacific Countries 1 & 2
- Empowered Digital Teacher for Online Learning

The Pacific TVET Professional Development Toolkit was developed and launched in late 2021 to build the capacity of the TVET sector and deliver improved skills training for youth. The resources can be accessed by anyone but are particularly focused on the needs of TVET teachers, leaders and those supporting TVET education in the industry. COL partner institutions are implementing continuous professional development projects using this Toolkit which include competency-based assessment, designing and developing Open Educational Resources (OER), providing skills training using blended learning approaches, building and strengthening relationships with industries and promoting TVET as a pathway for all learners. <https://pacifictoolkit.col.org/>

A webinar on the TVET Toolkit was held in March 2022 with over 200 practitioners and institutional leaders from the Pacific countries registered, with additional TVET institutions showing interest to become partners.

Next, a community of practice was established in events to deploy our TVET Online Toolkit (October 2023) that brought together 25 key stakeholders from the Pacific region, where TVET practitioners affirmed their commitment to serve as coordinators and champions of the Toolkit in their respective countries. From November 2021, seven TVET education providers in the Pacific have benefited from the resources in the TVET Toolkit and delivered quality training. They include Pacific Polytech (Fiji); Kiribati Teachers College; Department of Education, Papua New Guinea; National University of Samoa (NUS); Montfort Technical Institute (Tonga), Don Bosco Rural Training Centre (Solomon Islands), and Ituani Vocational Centre (Vanuatu). Almost 2,000 users have accessed the Toolkit. One regional coordinator at the USP and seven in-country Toolkit coordinators from Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati have initiated a Toolkit promotion programme. A new edition of the Toolkit based on user feedback is under design and development with facility to issue country-specific versions.

A one-of-a-kind Semester Zero programme was launched by USP in January 2022 to ensure a smooth transition of learners into university life. Future students can experience what tertiary education is like from the safety and comfort of their homes. This programme was implemented using a COL-hosted Moodle platform. In early 2024, COL also provided the technology to incorporate Generative AI for learner support in the same course that had about 2,600 learners, 70 per cent of whom expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the query-response service. Pilots were implemented at NUS as well as in a regional MOOC on quality assurance in ODL.

Building the capacity of STEM teachers in the use and adaptation of OER is essential to improve the quality of education. In a collaborative effort, COL and PACFOLD have trained over 300 STEM teachers in Fiji and Solomon Islands in using OER. A study report reveals teacher satisfaction with the blended training model adopted, a positive response to the incorporation of subject mentors, and the potential for learning and resource sharing in an OER-focused Community of Practice. It emerged that continued mentorship is necessary for trained teachers in adapting OER to their contexts.

LEARNER EMPOWERMENT

COL provides learners, targeting especially those from disadvantaged groups, direct access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods, through special-purpose programmes.

COL's CommonwealthWiseWomen engaged eminent women as role models to mentor women at the early stages of their career and girls at the grassroots level in under-served communities to become successful in their field of interest as well as to excel in leadership. COL introduced a ten-episode podcast series where female leaders from across the Commonwealth share their stories on the path they followed to leadership. Both Professor Diane Gibson, Professor of Health and Ageing, University of Canberra, Australia and Ms Elizabeth Kité, Founding CEO of Take The Lead, Tonga and Serial Entrepreneur contributed to this podcast series.
<https://commonwealthoflearning.info/female-leadership-pod>

COL is supporting its partners in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment through skills development for livelihoods and community sensitisation. More than 450 women, girls and young men have built skills to sustain themselves and their families. Solomon Islands National Council for Women trained women and girls on fabric dyeing and floral arrangements while Sisters of St. Joseph, PNG conducted training in tailoring and baking.

The Legislative Drafting Programme, developed with COL support has continued to provide tuition scholarship to learners in the Pacific. Since July 2021, 40 students from Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu have been awarded the Postgraduate Diploma

in Legislative Drafting, offered by partner institution, the University of the South Pacific who is licensed to offer the programme by distance education. Graduates from this programme contribute to good governance in the region.

The Skills for Work Scholarship programme was offered between April 2021 to March 2024 in partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google. There were more than 93,000 learners from 25 Commonwealth nations who benefited from the programme, with over 483,000 course enrolments and 130,000 course completions. Between April 2021 and March 2024, over 1,700 learners from the Pacific benefited from the programme. Scholarships were offered through NUS, FODE, the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources Development in Kiribati, and the Ministry of Education and Training, Tonga. In Samoa, approximately 170 benefitted from the scholarship programme, as well as 580 learners in Papua New Guinea, 670 in Samoa and 360 in Tonga.

MFAT, New Zealand is supporting youth employment through training in partnership with NGOs. One of the challenges in the Pacific region is that of high youth unemployment, with many school dropouts. About 3,500 youth, particularly in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu have been trained in leadership and practical skills leading to employability. An independent evaluation of youth training activities in Fiji and Vanuatu revealed very high levels of satisfaction (May 2024). By mid-2025, the goal is to train at least 5,000 youths in the region.

SELECTED OTHER SPECIAL EVENTS

Vice Chancellors invited from the Pacific to participate in the High-Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors and Heads of ODL Institutions in July 2022 in Malaysia came from Fiji and Samoa. The two-day meeting was attended by 33 participants from 17 countries.

In August 2022, a regional workshop with NGOs was organised in partnership with PACFOLD in Fiji where 14 representatives from the Pacific joined. NGO representatives learned about the project on Skills and Leadership training for youth, women and persons with disabilities and were invited to submit an action

plan and proposal to COL.

Dr Rajni Chand, Director of the Centre for Flexible Learning, USP, was invited to participate in the 4th Pan-Commonwealth Training Programme on Women and Leadership in ODL, held August 2022 in Malaysia. The workshop theme was ‘Women Leaders: Shaping the future for a sustainable world’ with three sub-themes — Leadership, ICTs and Climate Change. The two-and-a-half-day meetings were attended by 26 participants from 16 countries.

RECENT PACIFIC READINGS

Gender Profile 2023: Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/1717>

Guide to QA of ODFL Provision in the Pacific

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5443>

ICT use and access in the Pacific: Emerging Perspectives

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5252>

Improving the Efficacy of Mentorship with an Open Education Ecosystem

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4065>

Integrating OER in Teaching: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific (supported by New Zealand MFAT).

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4014>

Mid-term Evaluation: Partnership for ODFL in the Pacific

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5410>

Report of the Special Parallel Session: Strategies and Solutions for ODFL in the Pacific Region

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4534>

Report on Institutional Surveys on Open Educational Resources at Fiji National University

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4934>

Report on the Impact of Blended Learning at the Fiji National University

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4749>

Report on the Regional Focal Points Meeting – Pacific

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5289>

Reversioning OER: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific (supported by New Zealand MFAT).

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4015>

Supporting Learners Studying through ODFL: A Guide for Parents in the Pacific

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/5507>

Transforming Education for Climate Action: Report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education

<https://doi.org/10.56059/11599/4068>



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