

President's Message for Commonwealth Day 2020



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Professor Asha Kanwar
President & CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Greetings on a very special Commonwealth Day as we recently welcomed our fifty fourth Member State, Maldives. The theme for this year is, “Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming,” and as one of the three Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations, the Commonwealth of Learning or COL is making concrete contributions. Even today, millions in the Commonwealth do not have access to quality education or to technology. And we know that education breaks the vicious cycle of poverty and social injustice. COL’s role is to promote learning for sustainable development through the use of distance learning and technologies. Let me share some examples of how we connect, innovate and transform.

First, COL connects all 32 small states in a network which is the Virtual University of Small States of the Commonwealth. VUSSC brings together policy makers and practitioners to collaboratively develop quality courses that are then used by tertiary institutions to increase access and lower costs. Nineteen countries got together in Maldives to develop a course on sustainable agriculture. This was offered by the National University of Samoa and all graduates of the first cohort have got jobs in their own country. Second, COL’s innovations help convert the digital divide into a digital dividend.

COL’s APTUS device is a technology solution that can bring quality content to places which may not be connected by electricity or the internet. Students with mobile devices can access world class content in remote locations such as the mountain school in Pakistan or the atoll in the Pacific with significant improvement in teacher motivation and learner outcomes. COL’s audio MOOCs, an interface of computers and mobile devices, is providing lifelong learning opportunities to farmers in local languages.

Third, COL transforms the lives of the most marginalised communities through education and training. More than 80000 women and girls received training for livelihoods in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Mozambique and Tanzania. In addition to enhanced economic opportunities, hundreds of child early and forced marriages were averted. Such interventions are empowering girls and transforming their communities

Learning is our common wealth and learning is the key to our common future. Let us connect, innovate and transform together! Happy Commonwealth Day to all of you!