COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

COL in the Commonwealth

2018–2020 HIGHLIGHTS

BOTSWANA

LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TARGETS 2021	ACHIEVED BY 2020
Improved sustainable livelihoods **300,000 PEOPLE**	**257,484** people
470 **ORGANISATIONS** Improved organisational capacity to leverage ODL	Target EXCEEDED **654** organisations
1.4 million **PEOPLE** Increased and equitable access to, and use of, quality learning opportunities	**880,039** people

Introduction

Since its creation some 30 years ago, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has become a true catalyst for positive change for a third of the world's population. Our vision of "learning for sustainable development" means that learning must lead to social inclusion, economic growth and environmental conservation. This aligns COL's work with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote learning opportunities for all."

COL harnesses the potential of open, distance and technology-enabled learning to help Member States accelerate progress towards achieving development outcomes.

To achieve outcomes and impact, COL has led six paradigm shifts:

- If the child cannot go to school, the school comes to the child.
- Technology-enabled learning can break open the ivory towers of tertiary education.
- Open educational resources (OER) are the answer to closed and costly textbooks.
- The digital divide can be transformed into a digital dividend.
- Literacy is not always a precondition for learning.
- The social capital of the mother is the most important determinant in bringing girls to school.

What are COL's key success factors? COL aligns its work with global priorities and ensures that it stays relevant to Member States' needs and priorities. COL is relevant, responsive and results oriented. The 2018–2020 Country Highlights summarise COL's progress towards achieving SDG4.

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

Working in two sectors, Education and Skills, with Gender as a crosscutting theme, COL uses pioneering models and approaches to achieve impact.

- COL has developed an innovative employability framework to strengthen and evaluate the impact of higher education institutions on graduates' employability, with a focus on industry and labour-market engagement.
- GIRLS Inspire has reached close to 81,000 girls and young women in remote and unreached communities, providing schooling and skilling them for livelihoods.
- The Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model is being upscaled in partnership with national banks, moving from the meso to the macro level.
- The Commonwealth Digital Education Leadership Training in Action (C-DELTA) programme is now being implemented across the Commonwealth.
- Ambitious projects to improve gender equality in two Commonwealth regions have been launched. These holistic models are based on community mobilisation and address areas such as capacity building in education, gender-based violence, health, empowerment, economic opportunities, and policy.
- Blockchain technology, built according to open standards, was used to issue certificates for massive open online courses (MOOCs) in different disciplines.
- COL has developed a comprehensive solution for data resilience in education for small states facing climate-related disasters.
- The ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9), held in Edinburgh, brought together close to 550 thought leaders, policy makers and practitioners to share best practices and harness innovation for change, with a view to providing employability skills to young people, offering a quality education to all regardless of circumstances, and identifying practical ways for technology to speed up our progress.

BOTSWANA

COL works with partners in Botswana to expand access to quality education and lifelong learning for all. Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Founder-President, Global Rainbow Foundation, Mauritius, represents Africa on COL's Board of Governors, and Mrs Fancy Amey, Director, Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), is COL's Focal Point for Botswana.

COL's current work in Botswana is primarily in the areas of gender and higher education, including through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Botswana Open University (BOU) hosts the SADC-CDE. Learners from Botswana have benefited from open online courses and other COL resources.

The following are the highlights from 2018 to 2020.

Programmes

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Higher Education initiative works with ministries and higher education institutions to increase equitable access to tertiary education and to address the needs of industry and national development through the use of policies, systems, models and gender-responsive learning resources.

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

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

April 2018. Training sessions were held with academic and administrative staff on the financial tool and the academic workload model.

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

BOU offers COL's Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes and is a member of the CEMBA/CEMPA consortium. The 29th Academic Board meeting and 13th Executive Governing Board meeting of the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes were held in Penang, Malaysia in May 2018. The meetings were hosted by Wawasan Open University and attended by board members from Botswana.

A high-level roundtable for vice chancellors (VCs) and heads of ODL was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 2018. Thirty-one VCs and representatives from 19 countries participated, including Dr Daniel Tau from Botswana (BOU).

Currently, COL is working with BOU to implement an integrated model to improve access to quality learning opportunities. In the framework of this initiative, a learner support strategy and implementation plan were developed. A needs assessment survey regarding learner support tools at BOU has been completed amongst its academic staff.

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

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

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

COL launched a new regional community of practice for quality assurance in ODL, involving higher education institutions and national QA agencies from seven Southern African countries, including Botswana. Following a launch meeting in South Africa

in April 2018, a task force was formed to draft QA guidelines. Pilot studies of quality guidelines at seven institutions, including BOU, were completed. The revised guidelines were subsequently shared in a paper at the Southern African Quality Assurance Network meeting in October 2018. In December 2019, members of the community of practice reconvened in Johannesburg, South Africa for a two-day workshop to finalise and validate the employability toolkit and the indicators to be used by national qualification agencies in the quality assessment of higher education institutions.

VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES OF THE COMMONWEALTH (VUSSC)

Botswana is an active member of VUSSC. Initiated by ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth, VUSSC supports the collaborative development and sharing of OER to promote learning for sustainable development. Dr Daniel Tau, Vice Chancellor at the BOU, is the Chairperson of the VUSSC Management Committee.

In the past few years, VUSSC has connected institutions through online technologies to promote eLearning and the collaborative sharing of educational resources using multi-institutional partnerships. The emphasis is now on supporting institutions to offer VUSSC courses and programmes while promoting the use of the Transnational Qualifications Framework.

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

In January 2019, COL entered into an agreement with BOU to support the development of three Special and Inclusive Education courses in Learning Difficulties, Autism Spectrum Disorders and Giftedness, and a Practicum Guide for the BEd in Special and Inclusive Education. COL will also support the integration of special and inclusive education issues into all courses through curriculum review and revision, as well as capacity building for tutors. In the framework of this agreement, BOU staff participated in a *Capacity-Building Workshop* in April 2019 and a *Special and Inclusive Education Enhancement Writers Workshop* in July 2019.

Course outlines for three new courses — *Education of the Gifted and Talented*; *Learning Disabilities*; and *Autistic Spectrum Disorders* — have been prepared and completed blueprints uploaded to the BOU portal.

TEACHER EDUCATION

The Teacher Education initiative works with partner institutions to improve teacher quality and achieve better learning outcomes for students. Through the Teacher Futures model, it works with governments, teacher education institutions, schools and other partners to deliver quality learning opportunities through in-service, technology-enabled teacher professional development.

In September 2018, COL's Adviser: Teacher Education gave a talk on teacher professional development for primary school teachers at the Tlokweng College of Education, in Botswana. The talk outlined COL's work in supporting Commonwealth governments and institutions with using technology-enabled approaches to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. It also highlighted the potential areas of partnership with the college and the Government of Botswana in the area of professional development for teachers in primary schools.

GENDER

COL's Gender initiative supports partners in mainstreaming gender and in implementing holistic projects to address specific gender issues. It aims to tackle the distinct challenges faced by girls/women and boys/men in regions where they are most disadvantaged, while also shifting the social norms that create and perpetuate gender inequalities.

With the support of Gender Links, an NGO based in Gaborone, BOU has completed a series of gender sensitisation workshops involving participants from all areas of the university, in preparation for conducting COL's Gender Scorecard audit.

A gender mainstreaming roadmap has been developed for BOU, and discussions are currently underway for its implementation. BOU has been identified as one of the institutions to participate in COL's gender evaluation process.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (TVSD)

TVSD supports partners in harnessing ODL to increase access to demand-driven, competency-based skills training. TVSD is increasingly focused on innovative models

that use ODL for theory, with practical skills development organised in workplaces and communities.

The HRDC has contracted COL to develop a policy framework and guidelines for student internships and apprenticeships. The project team has completed an inception report, a situational analysis, and a draft student internship and apprenticeship policy. The next steps will be finalising the policy, which incorporates feedback from a consultation process in February, 2020, and developing associated guidelines, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and an implementation plan.

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED LEARNING (TEL)

This initiative aims to encourage more institutions to integrate TEL and OER policies and practices to improve teaching and learning for skills development. TEL activities focus on the individual, institutional and country levels.

Under the aegis of TEL, COL has been offering a MOOC on *Introduction to Technology-Enabled Learning*, in partnership with Athabasca University, Canada. A total of 85 learners from Botswana benefited from the third and fourth course offerings, in 2018–2019.

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

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

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

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

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

In May 2019, SADC-CDE hosted a workshop in Kigali, Rwanda to sensitise participants to open schooling and introduce COL's Open and Innovative Schooling model. Participants hailed from Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

In July 2019, SADC-CDE sponsored 13 students (five from eSwatini, three from Malawi, three from Mozambique and two from Seychelles) to enrol in the Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners programme offered by BOU. In February 2020, an additional 20 students from Lesotho were sponsored to enrol in the programme.

OPEN AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING (OIS)

In December 2019, COL's OIS initiative entered into an agreement with BOU to develop and update some business studies content. This content will be developed by 45 staff and used on five campuses and in 233 schools by an estimated 5,000 learners.

Events and Special Activities

REGIONAL MEETING OF COL FOCAL POINTS

The Africa and Mediterranean regional meeting of COL's Focal Points took place on 24–25 September 2018 in Gaborone to strengthen the effectiveness of COL's work in addressing key priorities for education and training in the region and to share information about developments related to learning for sustainable development. Organised by COL in partnership with the Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoTERST) and Botswana Open University, it was inaugurated by the Minister, the Honourable Ngaka Ngaka. Ms Fancy Amey represented Botswana at the meeting.

MOOC ON INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS

The two offerings of COL's MOOC on *Introduction to Sustainable Development in Business*, which was organised in collaboration with the Open University of Mauritius in May–June 2019 and November–December 2019, attracted 136 participants from Botswana.

PCF9

Close to 550 policy makers, practitioners and thought leaders from across the Commonwealth and beyond gathered at the historic Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh, Scotland for the ninth Pan-Commonwealth Forum (PCF9), themed *Innovations for Quality Education and Lifelong Learning*. It was organised from 9 to 12 September 2019 in partnership with The Open University, UK.

The four days of insightful keynote addresses, engaging plenary panels, informative parallel sessions, and other programme highlights provided a unique opportunity to bridge traditional divides between borders and sectors. Discussions centred around four key sub-themes: *Opening Up Education*, *Equity and Inclusion*, *Technology* and *Employability*, and delegates appreciated the focus on new forum features — artificial intelligence, youth and girls' education and learners with special abilities. Under the auspices of PCF9, COL hosted a ministerial roundtable with participation from six education ministers.

COL sponsored nine delegates from Botswana to attend the forum. As well, there were two participants from Botswana at the Regional Centres' Directors meeting and two at the *Higher Education* workshop. One delegate from Botswana attended the VUSSC meeting, and another participated in the Open and Innovative Schooling meeting. All were hosted by COL in Edinburgh ahead of PCF9.

PCF9 Edinburgh Statement

Forum partners from over 60 countries believe that it is possible to significantly accelerate progress towards the aim and targets of SDG4 by prioritising the following collective actions now:

1. **Accomplishment at scale**
   Mobilise an emergency response to ensure that all children in the Commonwealth, including girls, learners with different abilities, and learners from vulnerable and marginalised communities, experience a quality education focused on accomplishment, knowledge exchange and the continued ability to learn.

2. **Skills for productive lives**
   Urgently create learning opportunities for marginalised, excluded, vulnerable and out-of-school young people to build skills for leading a productive life, embracing technology to enhance employability, entrepreneurship and confidence, and bridging accessible formal, non-formal and informal education.

3. **Creating new digital dividends**
   Develop new, innovative, flexible modes of education to foster creativity, imagination and peer knowledge exchange, increase reach and ensure no one is left behind, through the use of appropriate media and delivery, including blended approaches to digital learning.

4. Teachers as skilled agents of change

Teachers and teacher educators are the main agents of change for quality education and can be supported to catalyse action in their schools, communities and colleges as respected professionals who model lifelong learning. To do this we propose:

Creating **alternative, flexible and technology enabled pathways into teaching** to resolve the shortage of skilled and motivated teachers;

Expanding low-cost, highly effective ways to **support school-based teacher professional development** to build change capacity and capability within regional and national educational systems.

5. Positively disrupt higher education

Support innovation for quality higher education; **strengthen the technology-enabled learning ecosystem** throughout the Commonwealth, including the scope to develop professional skills, recognition, validation and verification of experiential and prior learning through micro-credentialing and blockchain technology; expand the reach of open education for dispersed audiences; and improve barrier-free access to tertiary education.

6. Challenging assessment

Radically relook at assessment models: build a culture of assessment to support employability and micro-entrepreneurship.

Our ambition is to achieve this through:

Bold inclusive collaboration;

Bringing together the diverse groups of critical thinkers, innovators and practitioners who can collaboratively make change happen by delivering quality education and lifelong learning for all;

Making greater use of data, evidence and storytelling to galvanise political will for enabling policies and well-resourced implementation plans;

Sustaining the momentum;

Building an active network of learning, support and action starting now.

Sustaining and building our momentum for change, we aim to bring our key commitments to the fore of the policy agenda through the Conference of Commonwealth

New Publications and Resources

In 2018–2020, COL produced a number of publications and resources, including:

Knowledge Series: Designing and Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners

As online learning and MOOCs become mainstream, it is important to explore new forms of credentialing. This publication offers a step-by-step guide to plan, design and implement micro-credentials and badges in diverse contexts and provides greater flexibility in the journey of the new learner-earner through a skills and capability framework.

A Blueprint and Toolkit for School-Based Teacher Development: SECONDARY

This toolkit is for implementing school-based teacher development as a way to improve the performance of schools and raise the achievement of children. This valuable resource includes a detailed framework, which can be adapted to the context of a particular country, region, district or school, and offers practical daily activities for teachers.

Guidelines on the Development of Open Educational Resources Policies

This new publication provides specific tools to analyse current contexts and policy environments, understand issues related to copyright and licensing, and align policy in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The guidelines present a systematic process for designing and implementing OER policies and measuring their impact.

A Guide to Integrating Employability in Higher Education Institutions: The Commonwealth of Learning's Employability Model

This publication provides clear guidelines on how to integrate employability pathways into instructional systems. From career counselling to career support, the guide demonstrates how institutions can prepare graduates for employment or entrepreneurship.

Gender Scorecard 2.0: Instructions and Templates

This is a tool to audit the capacity of institutions to mainstream gender. It helps with analysing existing policies and practices and developing clear steps for the effective promotion of gender equity.

All COL publications can be found on its open-access repository at **oasis.col.org**.

COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING (COL)

4710 Kingsway, Suite 2500
Burnaby, BC V5H 4M2 Canada
Phone + 1 604 775 8200 / Fax + 1 604 775 8210
info@col.org
www.col.org
@col4d
facebook.com/COL4D/
instagram.com/commonwealthoflearning/

February 2020