

# TONGA

## COL activities in 2003-2006

### BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Tonga has been a steady contributor to COL since the organisation's inception in 1988. Ministry of Education officials have participated and benefited from regional consultations over the years including Pan-Commonwealth Forums and Pacific Association of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) meetings that COL has facilitated.

### SUMMARY

In the 2003-2006 planning period Tonga benefited from COL's support as an active member of PATVET. This included having senior officials from the education system attend various training events and piloting the new skills-training learning modules. Tonga also signed up to the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

### POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

#### **Working in Partnership to Strengthen National Systems**

The Minister of Education visited the offices of COL in 2004, just before taking office, for staff briefings concerning the region in general and post secondary education for Tongans in particular. He visited Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia to discuss with administrators possibilities of distance education courses and Tongans studying for advanced degrees in Canada.

#### **Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC)**

Tonga is one of the countries which signed the Singapore Statement to work together in the creation of the VUSSC (for more details of VUSSC see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives).

### **Preparation and use of learning materials**

COL worked with the chief executives of technical institutes and senior Ministry officials in vocational education in the Pacific island states to develop new skills-training learning modules. The modules were piloted in four Pacific countries and Tonga was one of them. More modules are in development.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Being an active PATVET member, representatives from Tonga participated in various meetings organised by COL in the Pacific region.

COL sponsored one delegate from Tonga to attend the biennial Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in New Zealand in 2004.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

The positive results yielded by COL's partnership with Tonga in 2003-2006 set the tone for further progress in the period 2006-2009. Membership of VUSSC is a cornerstone of this work and Tonga will begin to reap the rewards of being an active participant as the initiative is rolled out in 2006-2009.