

# FIJI ISLANDS

## COL activities in 2003-2006

### BACKGROUND

A small state of the Commonwealth, Fiji Islands is part of the grouping of South Pacific Islands. Fiji is a member of the regional network: Pacific Association of Technical/Vocational Education and Training (PATVET). It is via this network that Fiji has benefited from many of COL's activities in the South Pacific. Fiji did not contribute to COL's budget in 2003-2006.

### SUMMARY

During the 2003-2006 period COL has worked with Fiji to promote Literacy and Livelihoods (L&L) and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. Key components of COL's activities include:

- participation in the analysis of the TVET sector focussing on needs and infrastructure;
- staff training in media development;
- supporting the PATVET regional network; and
- course development and delivery.

### POLICY AND SYSTEMS ENHANCEMENT

#### Working in Partnership to Strengthen National Systems

Staff at the Fiji Institute of Technology were trained on how to operate the COL installed media development units at the Centre, which also provided video support for the development of distance education programmers. COL established similar centres in several institutes in the Pacific Islands. COL is providing ongoing support as the Institute moves towards using dual-mode delivery.

Fiji has benefited from COL's Media Empowerment activities in the Pacific. These activities are part of a regional technical vocational initiative undertaken by COL and sanctioned by the Ministers of Education in the region in institutional capacity development with in-country Polytechnics and Technical Institutes. The activities in Fiji have added value to the course development work at the Polytechnics and have enabled the institutions to advocate technical vocational training as a career choice among young people or those wishing to upgrade skill sets.

### **Working with Regional Partners**

Forty-one participants from the Pacific attended the Regional Consultation on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Pacific – The Way Forward at the South Pacific Community Education Training Centre in Fiji. Three COL representatives attended the consultation. COL's presentation focused on the work of media support for the TVET institutions in the region (Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati and Vanuatu) and future directions. COL expanded on its work covering the Millennium Development Goals as well as COL's focus on health in the region. This consultation enabled COL to meet and update PATVET participants whom COL has been working with for the past ten years.

### **Strategic Planning**

A consultant was hired by COL to undertake an environmental scan with a special focus on the current Literacy and Livelihoods (L&L) infrastructure and its potential application to the education and training system in four Pacific Island countries including Fiji. The consultant's report was used as a resource input in the planning workshop held in Suva in May 2003.

The Fiji Islands attended the "International Literacy and Livelihoods Experts Meeting: Learning for Life in a Changing World" which was held in Vancouver in November 2004. As part of the consultative meeting in L&L for the Pacific, COL visited the campus of the Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT) in March 2006.

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

Fiji is an active participant in the VUSSC (for more details of VUSSC see section on Pan-Commonwealth initiatives).

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

A workshop to develop a model for delivering training in basic trade skills to local communities in the Pacific Islands was held in Suva from 28 April – 2 May 2003. Consultants from Australia and New Zealand provided additional insight. The area targeted was "working with timber" and "working with concrete" – for both volcanic islands and coral atolls. The materials were piloted in at least two countries. Fiji assisted this initiative by providing video support. Two basic trade courses have been completed: "Working with Timber" and "Working with Concrete". A third course "Small engines" is in development.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Under the COL's Young Professionals Attachment Programme 2003-04, Fiji hosted an intern at the Fiji Institute of Technology. In 2004-2005, another intern was placed at the Institute.

COL has supported three attachments of staff from FIT and one from Tarawa Technical Institute to The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) to gain knowledge and experience of open and distance learning (ODL). Over 30 staff members at FIT have completed distance learning courses about ODL through TOPNZ.

COL sponsored two delegates from Fiji to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning which was held in partnership with the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ) in Dunedin, New Zealand in July 2004.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

Fiji will continue to build on its excellent partnership with COL in the next planning period 2006-2009. Activities in this period will focus on education, learning for livelihoods and the human environment. Fiji's commitment to VUSSC will be an important element in the strengthening of its education sector.