



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

COUNTRY REPORT
2021-2023 | **PACIFIC**



Tonga

Helping Commonwealth Member States and institutions use distance learning and technologies for expanding access to education and training.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is focused on adding value to member states' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG4. It's supporting the governments and institutions of the Pacific in the use of appropriate, affordable technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development.

During its current plan (2021-2027), COL will:

- i) build on its expertise in ODL, OER and TEL to play a more influential role in national policy development and implementation;
- ii) invest in innovations and research;
- iii) support the digital transformation of institutions and organisations;
- iv) promote gender equality; and
- v) implement a rigorous monitoring and evaluation plan.

COL's work is organised into two sectors — Education and Skills — with Gender Equality and Technology-Enabled Learning (TEL) as cross-cutting initiatives.

The Education sector supports formal education from secondary to tertiary levels across the Commonwealth, particularly in the small states in the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) and has four initiatives: Open Schooling; Teacher Education; Higher Education and the Virtual University for Small States of The Commonwealth (VUSSC).

The Skills sector supports formal, non-formal and informal education and training to equip learners for livelihoods and has three initiatives: Skills for Work; Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) and GIRLS Inspire.

The work in these sectors complement the three pathways of change COL is focusing on in achieving impact for each Pacific member state. These are:

1. Building National Resilience
2. Strengthening Institutions
3. Improving Lives and Livelihoods.

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Tonga, a small state of the Commonwealth consists of some 170 islands with a population of about 107,000 ([World Bank](#), 2022).

COL's current work in Tonga is primarily in the areas of skills for work and tertiary education through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth network. Learners from Tonga are also participating in COL's free, open online courses and benefitting from other available resources.

PARTNERS

COL's partners in Tonga include:

- Ministry of Education and Training (MET)
- Montfort Technical Institute
- Tonga National University (formerly Tonga Institute of Higher Education)
- USP Tonga Campus

COL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN JULY 2021 - JULY 2023

HIGHLIGHTS

- **109 teachers from Tonga trained to provide effective learner support in ODFL contexts.**
- **Professional development of TVET practitioners**
- **78 learners from Tonga have enrolled in 340 courses with 59 certificates being issued.**
- **Active TVET Project with Monfort Technical Institute to build the capacity of TVET practitioners.**
- **Development of online learning resources for teachers: [ODL Course Catalogue](#), [National OER Collection Site](#), and [Online TVET Toolkit](#)**

In addition to COL's core activities, the Partnership for Open Distance and Flexible Learning (ODFL) in the Pacific is a 5-year project (2020–2025) funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) to support enhancing capacity and efficiency of education sectors in the Pacific through greater use of innovative delivery mechanisms and technology. COL, together with the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD), is implementing the project in the nine Commonwealth countries in the Pacific (Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu). <https://pacificpartnership.col.org>

KEY CONTACTS

BOARD MEMBER

**The Honourable
Hu'akavameiliku of Ha'asini**
Prime Minister

FOCAL POINT

Dr Raelyn Esau
Dean, Faculty of Business &
Public Administration
Tonga National University
Ministry of Education and
Training

BUILDING NATIONAL RESILIENCE

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

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.

A survey on data resilience in education systems was conducted with the Ministry of Education and Training, Tonga in May 2022 to understand the data infrastructure and management system in response to a natural disaster.

A survey on ICT access and use in the Pacific was conducted in April 2022 with people in the Pacific, in which 133 participated from Tonga. The purpose of the study was to better understand the local needs to ensure an effective and appropriate delivery of a learning program in the Pacific. Nominated by COL's Focal Point, Dr Tangikina Moimoi Steen, CEO, Ministry of Education and Training participated in an in-depth interview.

Between July and October 2022, two nominated Ministry officials from Tonga participated in the workshops on policy and planning for ODFL, including COL's Focal Point, to improve their knowledge and capacity.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS

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

Six courses developed and offered with 109 teachers from Tonga trained to provide effective learner support in ODFL contexts.

- Open Educational Resources for Online Learning, November 2021 (7 teachers)
- Digital Skills for OER Sharing, September 2021 (21 teachers); November 2022 (6 teachers)
- Communication Skills for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, January 2022 (10 teachers); June 2022 (30 teachers)
- Assessment Skills for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, April 2022 (16 teachers)
- Learner Support for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, November 2022 (5 teachers)
- Quality Assurance for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, February 2023 (4 teachers)

The Tonga OER Collection Site provides resources for teachers that can be used or adapted for their teaching. This site was contextualised in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Training to reflect the national curriculum. <https://ton.oer4pacific.org/>

USP launched the Semester Zero programme in January 2022 to ensure a smooth transition of future students to university life. This programme was implemented on a COL-hosted Moodle platform.

Launched in September 2022, the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Course Catalogue offers training courses for teachers in the Pacific on various aspects of ODL. This catalogue was designed in a way that Ministries and educational institutions can have admin access and share any relevant courses for their own country. <https://www.odlcatalogue4pacific.org/>

COL is supporting the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) to build the capacity of inclusive and disability educators, teachers and practitioners and equip participants with the professional knowledge and skills so that they can train others. 40 have completed the two online courses that have been offered since late 2021:

- Introduction to Assistive Technologies, June 2021 (32)
- Introduction to Disability Needs Assessments, February 2022 (8)

COL provides tuition scholarships to learners in the Pacific for USP's Legislative Drafting Programme which was developed with COL support. A total of two learners from Tonga have been awarded the Postgraduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting. Graduates from this programme contribute to good governance in the region. Joycelyn Sikalu, Assistant Crown Counsel in the Attorney General's Office, Kingdom of Tonga, has said that the programme: "...assisted me in... legal drafting and legal analysis work, allowing me to interpret and analyse the laws differently and in a manner that I never did before."

IMPROVING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS

COL continues to provide learners, especially from disadvantaged groups, access to learning and resources for improved livelihoods.

COL's Commonwealth Wise Women is engaging eminent women as role models, who 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 in 2022 where female leaders from across the Commonwealth share their stories on the path they followed to leadership. Ms Elizabeth Kité, Founding CEO of Take the Lead Tonga and Serial Entrepreneur contributed to the podcast series. <https://www.commonwealthwisewomen.org>

COL has partnered with Montfort Technical Institute to enhance the capacity of Technical and vocational education training (TVET) practitioners using the online Pacific TVET Professional Development Toolkit, which was developed by COL. Staff are currently using toolkit resources to develop competence-based assessments. <https://pacifictoolkit.col.org>

COL's partnership with Coursera, Udemy and Grow with Google continues to offer nominated learners this vast range of courses - a pathway for lifelong learning and growth and enhancing skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Since July 2021, 78 learners from Tonga have enrolled in 340 courses with 59 certificates being issued.

The MOOC on 'Assessment Skills for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning' re-offered by the University of South Pacific (USP) in March 2023 had 352 enrolments, including 6 from Tonga. [Apr2023]

Gender Equality consultations with 5 key stakeholders were carried out in Tonga. The data from these consultations will be included in the recommendations for strategic and targeted interventions to address boys' underachievement in schools to the government of Tonga. [Apr2023]

COL undertook a Study on the *Underachievement of Boys in Tonga* to understand factors affecting boys' participation, performance, and learning outcomes in school. The research study engaged over 450 stakeholders through surveys and interviews with parents, teachers, boys, staff of the Ministry for Educational and Training and community members [July 2023].

SPECIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In March 2022, a **webinar on the TVET Toolkit** was held with 19 practitioners and institutional leaders from Tonga registered, with additional TVET institutions showing interest to become partners.

COL's Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning is held triennially and is co-hosted with different partners in different regions of the Commonwealth. Three delegates from Tonga registered for the **Tenth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF10)**, the first-ever hybrid Forum held in Calgary, Canada from 14-16 September 2022. All were sponsored by COL and included: Raelyn Esau, Tonga Institute of Higher Education; Malia Sio, Ministry of Education & Training and Tangikina Steen, Ministry of Education & Training. A **parallel session on ODFL in the Pacific** was also held during PCF10 with Raelyn Esau in attendance.

PUBLICATIONS OF RELEVANCE

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

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4534>

ICT use and access in the Pacific: Emerging Perspectives <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5252>

Improving the Efficacy of Mentorship with an Open Education Ecosystem

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4065>

Integrating OER in Teaching: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific

<http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4014>

Reversioning OER: A Guide for Teachers in the Pacific <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/4015>

Guide to QA of ODFL Provision in the Pacific <http://hdl.handle.net/11599/5443>



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