



Unitec in partnership with the Pacific Islands Association of Non Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) will see its first ever regional graduation ceremony take place in Tonga next week.

Sixteen graduates from Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands will receive their Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management (GDP) awards in Nuku'alofa on October 15.

Delegates from the Pacific, including New Zealand, will be on hand to witness the graduation, which coincides with a regional Civil Society Forum and the Pacific Leaders Forum in Nuku'alofa at the same time.

The programme has been under way since 1999 through financial support from NZAID.

It is designed for managers and coordinators of non-government organisations (NGOs) and community based organisations (CBOs) to support their leaders in achieving effective management and leadership.

Unitec's deputy president Dr Andrew Codling says the graduation ceremony is the culmination of the hard work from the students during many intensive block courses.

"This graduation celebrates more than just the successes of these individual students," says Dr Codling. "The learning from this programme is strengthening key organisations in the civil society sector, whose leadership is crucial to the achievement of strategic goals for the future of the Pacific region."

PIANGO's executive director Cema Bolabola agrees and says the graduation will create significant benefits to Pacific NGOs.

"The programme upskills graduates to guide credible and accountable organisations in contributing to the development of their respective countries.

"It also provides more effective and efficient NGO leaders both at national and regional level."

NZAID has been a big supporter of the venture and is a key player in investing in the long term sustainability of Pacific civil society organisations and their indigenous leadership.

Executive director Dr Peter Adams says this year will see the largest number of students graduate from the programme.

“The programme is one of the most successful capacity-building strategies for NGO managers and leaders in the Pacific.”

Dr Adams says the skills and knowledge gained can be applied to strengthen NGO's and the wider civil society in their respective countries.

As part of the programme, students build practical knowledge and skills in areas such as governance, managing and raising funds, team facilitation and working with volunteers.

Students are encouraged to draw on indigenous knowledge, management theory and their own experience to develop effective, values-based approaches to managing a community organisation.

More than 150 students are currently involved in the programme, which is now available in Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

For further information see <http://www.unitec.ac.nz/?BAAC5FF7-9014-4C5E-9FA2-F1F2A1F9600B> or www.piango.org

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