THE MARINE TRAINING ANNEX
AT TOUHO VOCATIONAL
SECONDARY SCHOOL,
NORTHERN PROVINCE, NEW
CALEDONIA

During 1991, in my capacity as SPC Fisheries Information Officer, I came into contact with a teacher from the Poindimie Vocational Secondary School (LEP), Patrick Rolland. He enquired whether the South Pacific Commission could provide the school with technical documentation and curriculum materials for teaching purposes. The Fisheries Development Associate, Masanami Izumi, contacted some Japanese firms and from this source we were able to begin supplying the LEP with materials in the form of posters, videos and newsletters.

Until last year, the classes for the Certificate of Professional Aptitude (CAP) in Development (marine management and maintenance option) were all taught at the Poindimie LEP in rooms particularly ill-suited for courses on equipment used in a marine environment, especially maintenance of marine engines and hulls.

In the spirit of the Matignon Accords, the French Government wished to contribute to the construction of a completely new LEP at Touho for 400 pupils (including boarding facilities). The State also made the major financial contribution to the marine annex to this school, which, for practical reasons, was built alongside Touho port.

Touho, which means 'the insurgent' in the local Melanesian language, was founded in 1884. Situated between the Tiwaka river to the south and the Tipindje to the north, Touho lies 350 km from Noumea (see map below). Its main resources are coffee, agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

Izumi and I were invited to attend the opening ceremony for the Marine Annex and took advantage of this opportunity to appraise the students' new learning environment and familiarise ourselves with the curriculum, to get a better idea of the educational materials needed by schools of this kind.

The Marine Annex, located beside Touho port, required a capital investment of approximately 100 million CFP francs and comprises two large workshops, one for engine maintenance, the other for marine hull upkeep (see photos on next pages).

The school has two classrooms (one equipped with audio-visual equipment), two spare parts stores and some storage space.

The two-year course leads up to the CAP in Development (marine management and maintenance option). The various goals sought are the possible creation of small maintenance businesses, an input of qualified staff for existing companies in New Caledonia, continuing training for the local industry (engine maintenance, safety, conservation of the environment) and possible further study within the French merchant navy.

Map showing the location of Touho, Northern Province, New Caledonia
THE MARINE TRAINING ANNEX AT TOUHO VOCATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Marine Annex at Touho vocational secondary school, showing the engine maintenance shop (left) and the hull maintenance shop (right).

The purpose of this option is to prepare students for equipment maintenance in the marine environment, in particular marine engine and hull maintenance. Their professional tasks come under four main headings:

1. Propulsion: especially the maintenance, diagnosis, repair, testing, adjusting and fitting of petrol and diesel engines;

2. Extra training in general mechanical engineering, heat treatment and some notions of welding and design;

3. Maintenance of wooden or fibreglass hulls;

4. Introduction to the marine environment: safety, environment, rudiments of navigation and practical applications.

The teaching week consists of 36 hours of classroom work divided into 20 hours of general teaching and 16 hours of vocational training. The pupils are divided into two classes (Year 1 and Year 2), each accommodating 12 pupils.

One of the interesting special features of this kind of training is the vocational aspect. When a lesson concerns a particular subject (maintenance of the ignition system, for example), the pupils can apply their knowledge by repairing private fishermen's boats with ignition trouble. The school receives no financial reward from this service (it being up to the fisherman to purchase any spare parts required), but this is an excellent method because the students experience a real work situation.

Our discussions with the teaching staff revealed a real need for curriculum materials and showed what a positive contribution these make to the course. The South Pacific Commission has an important part to play in collecting and distributing documentation within and beyond the region (a list of the educational material available at SPC was published in the SPC Fisheries Newsletter #60).

The value of institutions of this kind is now widely recognized in New Caledonia and even beyond the Territory; some Tuvaluan education officials may soon be coming to the Territory to visit these LEPs and see how they operate.

Despite the recent opening of this major educational facility on the East Coast of New Caledonia, much remains to be done to coax this area out of its isolation and enable future successful students to find lasting employment in the region.
The engine maintenance shop has a full range of tools and a variety of functional work stations.

An example of useful educational material: poster showing a cross-section of an outboard motor.

This outboard motor test tank is the only one of its kind in the Territory.