

VTC expansion in American Samoa

By Hotavia Gingerlei Porter, UHM student July 3, 2003

Video Teleconferencing (VTC) is one of the many services, yet unfamiliar to the public, that is currently expanding throughout the world. VTCs are designed to transfer information from one professional/educational/governmental/regional facility to another on a face to face basis. VTCs allow two ends of a phone call to interact not only verbally but visually through a monitor or television (TV) screen. It is then safe to say that because of VTC, you can talk to your TV and your TV will talk back to you. VTC usage focuses on different aspects of the scientific advancing era. With the assistance of Pan-Pacific Education And Communication Experiment by Satellite (PEACESAT) throughout the Pacific region, the availability of such technology continues to grow. Sites that are affiliated with PEACESAT consume more capability of receiving and transmitting information at a much faster and wider range. Efforts by PEACESAT and the Pacific Island communities including, but not limited to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Guam, Palau, and Samoa have made research in the area of emergency management, education, health and medicine, environment and economics a much more viable option due to increased accessibility presented by the open network infrastructure formed through partnerships with various government, education, health, and private entities."

In relation to the territory of American Samoa, VTCs are used for distant meetings, conferences and other services. Distant learning and cultural exchange programs are also available within the local community through VTC. Distant learning

is a prime example of the advantages of such technology. For example, a class conducted in Tutuila can be heard and seen from Manu'a through a VTC connection. Another crucial illustration of the powerful ability of VTC occurred on July 1, 2003, where American Samoa Community College (ASCC) instructors Okenaisa Fauolo and Elisapeta Fa'alafi taught their classes at ASCC from the PEACESAT office in Honolulu through VTC. The encounter was a success and education once again is continually being promoted. PEACESAT also played a major role in a cultural exchange program between American Samoa and the Honolulu Home school children program through servicing a VTC between the two islands. Reigning Miss South Pacific Lupe Kenape Aumavae assisted by American Samoa Power Authority's (ASPA) Administrative and Technical Coordinator Tiresa Lutu shared the Samoan culture with children in Hawaii through VTC. Christina Higa of PEACESAT and Lisa Polous contributed their time to a productive demonstration of the convenience of VTC communications. Director of Education Dr. Sili Sataua, while delayed in Honolulu (July 2nd, 2003) was able to communicate and conduct meetings with his Tutuila office through VTC to meet a nearing deadline. VTC has fully served its purpose as an alternative when manual proficiency is not at its best (Hawaiian Airlines flight cancellation).

Another project associated with VTC is an upcoming workshop for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) called "Exploratory Workshop on Pacific Collection and Dissemination of Environmental and Related Information for Development of Remote Communities." The workshop (July 8th –10th) will focus on the possibilities of technological advancement (how to get information out to the public faster) in the Pacific Region. As organizer of the event, Edward Young, Jr., Chief,

Technical Services Division, encourages the participation of scientific minds throughout the world. Invitations were extended to representatives of the Pacific Regions including American Samoa's Warning Preparedness Meteorologist, Akapo Akapo, Kim Nitschke Atmospheric Radiation Measurement (ARMS) Coordinator, South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme (SPREP) Apia, Samoa, and others from Fiji, New Zealand as well as the mainland US. PEACESAT will demonstrate satellite ability to connect live to various countries/islands during the workshop. In such case, physical attendees will be in contact with absent members through VTC and information will effectively be exchanged.

As technological development increases, so should American Samoa's capabilities to advance with the world. The installation of VTCs can mean a cheaper way of communicating with the outside world. VTCs will be less expensive than sending representatives to off island conferences and meetings. VTC has proven to be an effective way of communicating in times of adversity. We have seen its success/capabilities with other programs let's make it work for many others.