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INFORMATION PAPER NO. 8: REGIONAL STATISTICS

Purpose and Summary of Issues

Purpose

This paper is presented in two parts. The main paper provides Forum Economic Ministers with an update on regional statistics governance and finance in response to the 2019 FEMM Action Plan. The second part - Annex 1 - provides a brief update on key statistical activities conducted in the region over the last 12 months, since the 2019 FEMM in Fiji.

Summary of Issues

- i. During 2019 the regional statistics governance framework continued to function effectively in providing leadership, coordination and guidance on methodological issues through the Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC), the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB), the Donor and Development Partner Group (DDPG) and the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS). Meetings and deliberations of these statistics system governance bodies all met on schedule during the year.
- ii. Countries in the region conducted 14 census and surveys during 2019, and a further 21 are scheduled for 2020. With the continuing pandemic-related restrictions on both international and domestic travel, some of those activities scheduled for 2020 may be postponed until next year.
- iii. Last year Ministers endorsed that additional funding be made available to enable countries to complete their core census and surveys as set out in the five-year collections programme (refer table 1). Following ministerial endorsement for additional funds to be committed to the collections programme a paper for a statistical collections funding facility was submitted to the Donor and Development Partner Group last year. This proposal is still with development partners for indications of specific funding commitments. The funding gap of US\$20-30 million required to complete all the census and surveys to 2023 remains largely unfilled.
- iv. Since the beginning of 2020 the regional collections programme has been disrupted by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the demand for data on the impacts of the pandemic on both the macro-economies and micro-economies of households has increased substantially. Development partners, including SPC, PFTAC, CROP agencies, bilateral donors, the UN system and international finance agencies including World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have been working hard to establish a strong, more timely and comprehensive data system to enable the pandemic's economic, poverty and livelihood impacts to be assessed.

- v. In 2019 Ministers endorsed a review of the Ten Year Pacific Strategy for Statistics (TYPSS) 2011-2020 to be undertaken at the end of 2019, in consultation with the funding partner (DFAT). This was initially rescheduled for 1Q2020, and then rescheduled again to the second half of 2020 due to the travel restrictions imposed following the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.
- vi. The pandemic has significantly increased demand for development microdata to establish socioeconomic baselines and to guide COVID-19 impact evaluation. However, these efforts are hindered due to microdata dissemination constraints. FEMM is encouraged to promote census and survey microdata dissemination through the Pacific Data Hub – Microdata Library of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the signing of Data Licence Agreements between the producer – often the national statistical agency – and SPC, which allow microdata dissemination. Currently 53 data Licence Agreements (DLAs) have been signed with national authorities across the region, this has allowed the following work to be undertaken;
 - Compilation of pre-Covid-19 benchmark indicators for assessing the impact of the pandemic related to demographic, health, economic activity, education and household consumption by urban-rural region and expenditure quintile indicators for nine countries (Cook Islands, FSM, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu)
 - Compilation of Labour Market indicators (following the latest ILO definitions) for 14 countries (Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Marshall, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu by urban-rural region, sex and broad age-groups; work almost complete;
 - Compilation of Expenditure aggregates underway for nine countries (Cooks Islands, FSM, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu) by urban/rural region and COICOP sub-class.
- vii. The second part of the paper, Annex 1, provides an update of key statistical development work that has taken place in the region over the 12 months to end April 2020. SPC and PFTAC among other development partners have delivered a large number of activities in both economic and social statistics development, as well as on the data and reporting requirements for the 131 indicators of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development (PRSD). Other partners that have been involved in regional statistics development include: the Australian Bureau of Statistics; Statistics NZ; UNESCAP, UNICEF; UNFPA; World Bank; FAO and ILO. MFAT and DFAT continue to be the two main donors for regional statistics development. All agencies have been adapting their ways-of-working to mitigate the effects of the international travel restriction and domestic lockdowns.

A. Overview/Summary

The Pacific Regional Statistics Governance Framework continued to play an important role in guiding the development of new and appropriate statistical methodologies for the region and in enhancing the coordination of statistical activities across PICTs and development partners.

2. Progress continues to be made in statistical methodologies, and the cost effectiveness of conducting statistical collections in the region, but many challenges continue to be faced by PICTs in the production, dissemination and use of Pacific statistics. The need to understand and monitor the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economies and people of the region has led to a significant increase in the demand for reliable and timely data. This has added to the burden of meeting the regular statistical needs of national governments for SDG reporting requirements and for the reporting on many regional and global commitments.

3. This paper continues to raise awareness of the financing gaps that exist for member countries to undertake their core statistical collections and for general statistical development in the region; the financing gaps are particularly acute for small island member countries. As system leader, SPC-SDD continues to negotiate for higher funding toward statistics development; it is also critical that this continues to be supported by leaders at national and regional fora level.

4. It is important to note, however, that two NSOs (Tonga and Vanuatu) did receive significant boosts to their manpower capacities through their respective national budgets during the year. This provides a great example to other NSOs to emulate.

5. During the year SPC-SDD and the World Bank finalised a project that will fund household income and expenditure surveys (HIES) for Kiribati and Tonga and will provide SPC-SDD with much needed technical assistance in survey design, data harmonisation and welfare economics, Other donors are once again encouraged to match this funding with similar investment in the collection of Pacific statistics for other countries.

6. Additional funding is sought from development partners to enable the HFPM surveys to be conducted. These are essential if comprehensive and harmonised data is to be collected, compiled and made available to national administrations and the development partner community, to enable appropriate social protection and economic and social recovery measures are to be developed and put in place.

7. Budget shortfalls continue to be experienced against the amounts that are available at national levels in the funding required for the core national statistical collections. There have been cases in the last year (including Solomon Islands) where the conduct of the census was jeopardised because of difficulties in covering funding gaps. Fortunately, these gaps were filled, at the last minute but this is clearly an unsatisfactory situation and can lead to disruptions in the collection programmes.

8. For the next four years to 2023, it is estimated that between USD20 – US\$30 million additional resources will be required by the smaller NSOs in the region to conduct their scheduled basic core statistical collections as set out in the collections programme. It is important that FEMM reinforce the need for governments, donors and development partners to recognise the importance of having up-to-date statistics to inform national policy decision-making, as well as SDG and other reporting requirements.

B. Discussion

Regional Statistics Governance Framework

9. In 2019 the Regional Statistics Governance Framework continued to function very effectively with meetings of five core components taking pace as scheduled; these included the Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC); Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB – two meetings); the Donor and Development Partners Group (DDPG) and the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) on civil registration and vital statistics. A meeting of the Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) was not scheduled for 2019, and the meeting scheduled for 2020 has been postponed until first quarter 2021. An additional interim and virtual meeting of PSSC will be held instead at the end 2020 to ensure continuity of the statistics governance system and to consider important statistical issues, including those arising from the impact of the pandemic.

10. Key issues in regional statistics governance in 2019 included:

- The continued implementation of SDD's business plan, including support for developing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and strengthening capacity in National Statistics Offices (NSOs); significant progress in improving data dissemination; innovative work on regional reporting of the Pacific SDG indicators and support to VNRs;
- In principle support for the proposed core statistical collections funding mechanism, which is intended to provide a coordinated approach to funding for Pacific statistics collections and to achieve efficiencies and improved cost effectiveness; it was agreed that further work is needed on the details of how the mechanism will be operationalised, noting current governance arrangements for regional statistics;
- Recognition and appreciation for PFTAC's support and technical assistance and the positive outlook for continued funding of the Government Finance Statistics programme, based on strong demand from PICTs; and
- The appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2020 and its immediate and damaging impact on economies and livelihoods of across the region emphasised the need for and importance of having timely and relevant data through which to monitor the impacts and formulate response measures.

11. Other important issues in statistical developments included:

- The production of Pacific-specific Sampling Guidelines for Pacific surveys;
- The development of a new regionally standardised HIES data collection methodology for the Pacific region;
- Progress on developing updated guidelines for both monetary and multidimensional poverty measurement with recommendations to be completed in 2020;
- The high and ever-increasing demands on NSOs, for SDG-related data, and latterly, the demands for data on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The continued support to national accounts, government finance statistics and external sector statistics through PFTAC has highlighted the need for Pacific countries to produce quarterly data; the lack of quarterly data has hindered the measurement and assessment of the economic impacts of the pandemic;
- The need to provide additional capacity development and adoption of new technology in order to meet the demands for data;
- The launch of the new SDD website, the creation of the Pacific Data Hub (PDH), which provides a central, sustainable and accessible platform for cataloguing and/or hosting Pacific data from the region, including the Pacific Microdata Library, the dotStat Pacific indicator database, the SDG dashboard and progress wheels, and the development of PopGIS 3 (for data visualisation and mapping), faster and more responsive than previous versions and can be used on laptops and smartphones;
- Progress in the compilation, analysis and dissemination of international merchandise trade statistics. Currently discussions are in progress with partners including the Oceania Customs Organisation for the development of a Pacific Commodity Trade Database;
- The development of the draft Pacific Roadmap for Gender Statistics in a collaboration between SPC and UN Women and the need for further work on the Roadmap, noting that the aims include building on already established platforms, developing capacity to use data, and exploring opportunities to re-analyse existing collections;

- A regional workshop on Legal Identity and Identify Security held by SPC with support from Australia and in collaboration with the Brisbane Accord Group on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and other regional partners. This workshop attracted global attention and has led to the development of a partnership with the UN Legal Identity Agenda Task Force; and
- A delay in the review of the TYPSS 2011-2020 that is now in its third phase and reaching the end of the current cycle. This was originally scheduled for early late 2019 through early 2020 but has now been delayed until the second half of 2020 owing to travel and finance restrictions consequent on the COVID-19 pandemic. The intention remains to take stock of the achievements and challenges of TYPSS and to develop a TYPSS II to take statistics development in the Pacific forward to 2030.

Regional Statistics Finance Gap and Resource Mobilisation

12. Lack of adequate financial resources for statistical collections, continues to be a key constraint faced in Pacific statistics development. The reporting requirements placed on small NSOs by the 2030 Agenda, regional and global reporting requirements and now the need for more detailed data for pandemic impact monitoring is significant. The urgency to produce up-to-date core statistics, sourced from national censuses and surveys, puts pressure on both Pacific NSOs and on SDD's limited technical support team. The need for additional resources to be provided to NSOs for the conduct of these surveys and censuses and for SDD to enable it to provide the necessary technical assistance and support is now acute.

13. A general pro-forma estimate indicates that a total of around US\$244 million will be required to cover the likely costs of the remaining four years (2020-2023) of the current 5-Year Data Collection Plan (2019-2023) for the Pacific. Approximately 71% of these costs relate to surveys and census in PNG and Fiji, therefore excluding these two countries, and assuming that national administrations will fund between half and two-thirds of all census and surveys from national budgets, there is a potential funding gap of between US\$20-US\$30 million for the smaller NSOs, see Tables 2a&2b. Costs may be significantly reduced if NSOs adopt the recommended computer assisted personal interview (CAPI) methodologies for surveys and census.

14. The core collections covered in the five-year programme are very important for the compilation of the 131 PRSD indicators. It is estimated that approximately 76 of the PRSD indicators – almost sixty percent - are derived either directly or indirectly from, or need the results of the core collections, to be calculated.

Regional Statistics Response to COVID-19

15. The Covid-19 pandemic has been an economic and social disaster for the region. But data on the impacts of the pandemic at both regional and in many cases, national levels has so far been very limited. Restrictions on travel and movement have limited the ability of governments, NSOs and other agencies to collect data.

16. In response to this, SDD in collaboration with World Bank, UN agencies and other development partners and agencies has commenced a set of initiatives on the data needed to monitor the economic and social impacts of the pandemic:

- **A Covid-19 socio-economic indicators page has been established on the SDD website at <https://sdd.spc.int/disasters-data/covid-19>**, this has brought together a selection of key regional data that highlights levels of “vulnerability” of PICTs to selected economic factors; the page also includes selected **population density maps** highlighting areas of high population density etc., as places of higher vulnerability to infection.
- **The page also includes a selection of macroeconomic “lead indicators”** through which the impact of the pandemic could be monitored, and which could be compiled from relatively readily available administrative and other data has been identified and is available on the website. These indicators could be a transitional stage towards the production of quarterly macroeconomic data as recommended by PFTAC.
- A regional initiative has been launched for **High Frequency Phone Monitoring (HFPM) surveys of households** across the region; these longitudinal surveys will aim to collect data from selected sample households over a 12-month period on **pandemic impacts on lives, livelihoods and coping strategies**; ; a copy of the concept note is available on the SDD website.
- SDD is working to **coordinate funding for this initiative from World Bank and other potential funding agencies** (including bilateral partners), and to establish an implementation schedule that avoids duplication of survey effort and minimises the burden on national statistics offices.

C. Next Steps: Way Forward for Covid-19 Impact Assessments

17. Recognising a) the importance and urgency of obtaining data on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the people and economies of the region, and b) the need to avoid as far as possible duplication of efforts and additional reporting burdens on national statistics offices, the following approaches can assist in meeting the needs of both national governments and development partners for such data in developing responsive policies and measures:

- The regular dissemination of administrative data to produce economic leading indicators, as recommended, as a transitional process towards the production of quarterly data for macroeconomic monitoring through national accounts, government finance and external sector statistics;
- Making microdata available to decision -makers and bona fide users under appropriate data licence agreements to enable more detailed analysis and consideration of critical development issues to be undertaken; and
- The establishment of a coordinated HFPM survey programme for the region as a means to obtain data on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives, livelihoods and coping strategies of the people.

**Table 2a: Five-Year Collection Plan & Costing as at May 2020:
Revised to take Account of Rescheduling as a Result of COVID-19**

Five-Year Statistical Collection Plan; PICT Summary 2019 - 2023					
PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
American Samoa	AGR	PHC			
Cook Islands	LFS		PHC		LFS
			AGR		
			MICS-DHS		
Fed. States of Micronesia		PHC	DHS-MICS		HIES
		HIES			LFS
Fiji	HIES		LFS		HHL
	AGR	MICS			
French Polynesia	LFS	LFS	LFS	PHC	LFS
				LFS	
Guam	HIES	PHC			
Kiribati	HIES	PHC	LFS	AGR	HHL
			DISABILITY		MICS-DHS
CNMI	AGR	PHC	HIES	HHL	
	LFS		LFS		
Marshall Islands	HIES	PHC	MICS-DHS		
Nauru	HHL		PHC	HIES	
		MICS-DHS	HIES		
New Caledonia	PHC	DHS	LFS	LFS	LFS
	HIES	LFS			
Niue	AGR		PHC		
Palau		PHC	HIES	MICS-DHS	
		AGR			
Papua New Guinea		PHC	HIES		
Samoa	MICS-DHS	PHC	SSDS	LFS	DISABILITY
	AGR			HIES	
Solomon Islands	PHC	HIES		AGR	LFS
				MICS-DHS	
Tokelau			PHC		
			MICS-DHS		
Tonga	MICS	HIES	PHC	AGR	
				DHS	
Vanuatu	HIES	PHC	MICS-DHS	LFS	AGR
Tuvalu	MICS-DHS	DISABILITY	HIES	PHC	DISABILITY
Wallis and Futuna	HIES	DHS			PHC
		21	23	15	13
		LFS - Labor Force Survey			
		DHS - Demographic Health Survey			
		HIES - Household Income and Expenditure Survey			
		PHC - Population and Household Census			
		AGR - Agriculture Census / Surveys			
		MICS - Multi Indicator Cluster Survey			
		Other (SSDS - Samoa Strategy for the Development of Statistics			
		HHL - Household Listing			
		Disability			

Table 2b: Five-Year Collection Plan & Costing as at May 2020:

Revised to take Account of Rescheduling as a Result of COVID-19

PICT Five-Year Statistical Collection Plan; Pro-forma Estimated Costing 2019 - 2023					
PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
American Samoa	681,600	681,600			
Cook Islands	45,900		183,600		45,900
			183,600		
			137,700		
Fed. States of Micronesia		1,266,000	1,266,000		633,000
		633,000			316,500
Fiji	5,370,000		2,685,000		2,685,000
	10,740,000	8,055,000			
French Polynesia	836,700	836,700	836,700	3,346,800	836,700
				836,700	
Guam	1,060,200	2,120,400			
Kiribati	712,200	1,424,400	356,100	1,424,400	356,100
			356,100		1,068,300
CNMI	679,200	679,200	339,600	169,800	
	169,800		169,800		
Marshall Islands	327,600	655,200	491,400		
Nauru	35,100		140,400	70,200	
		105,300	70,200		
New Caledonia	3,276,000	2,457,000	819,000	819,000	819,000
	1,638,000	819,000			
Niue	19,200		19,200		
Palau		214,800	107,400	161,100	
		214,800			
Papua New Guinea		107,220,000	53,610,000		
Samoa	1,788,300	2,384,400	596,100	596,100	596,100
	2,384,400			1,192,200	
Solomon Islands	8,545,200	4,272,600		8,545,200	2,136,300
				6,408,900	
Tokelau			18,000		
			13,500		
Tonga	898,200	598,800	1,197,600	1,197,600	
				898,200	
Vanuatu	1,768,200	3,536,400	2,652,300	884,100	3,536,400
Tuvalu	95,400	31,800	63,600	127,200	31,800
Wallis and Futuna	68,400	102,600			136,800
Total Estimated Cost	41,141,619	138,311,020	66,314,921	26,679,522	13,199,923

ANNEX 1
Summary of Key Statistical Activities Conducted in the Region by PFTAC and SPC-SDD since the 2019 FEMM

Part A: PFTAC support to Statistics Initiatives in the Pacific

Part A: PFTAC support to Statistics Initiatives in the Pacific

PFTAC highlights of 2019

In 2019, two resident advisors for Government Finance Statistics (GFS) and Real Sector Statistics (RSS) worked for PFTAC. Additionally, the External Sector Statistics (ESS) program has been supported by external short-term experts. In 2019, PFTAC provided 186 person days of national accounts and ESS missions to 13 countries. Two regional workshops have been provided. The PFTAC real sector resident advisor contributed 94 days with the remaining 92 days provided by short-term experts. On GFS, PFTAC conducted 7 in-country and 4 remote assistance GFS TA missions and one regional training workshop. The total mission days amounts to 134, of which 89-person days by the PFTAC GFS resident advisor and 45 by short-term experts.

1. In 2019, the topics for national accounts and ESS assistance varied in accordance with the different needs of member countries. PFTAC missions assisted:
 - a. to extend the coverage of national accounts by implementing expenditure side gross domestic product (GDP) compilation in Samoa.
 - b. to improve the use of tax and other administrative data to supplement or replace business surveys in the compilation of GDP in a regional workshop held in the Republic of the Marshall Islands in September 2019.
 - c. to finalize the rebasing exercise with the Cook Islands.
 - d. to train the high number of the region's new NSO staff by conducting a workshop held in Fiji in October 2019.
 - e. Vanuatu and Tonga in their plans to improve the timeliness of their GDP data by introducing quarterly GDP (QNA) programs. PFTAC evaluated their human, organizational and data capacities in feasibility studies which were already sent to the authorities for discussion.
 - f. Fiji by providing ongoing targeted training to compile experimental QNA data.
2. The GFS program continued to deliver on the same themes as set out in 2018. The main activities and achievements for GFS assistance in 2019 were:
 - a. Increase assistance in the coding and mapping of the new national chart of accounts aligned to the guidelines provided through the Government Finance Statistics Manual 2014 (GFSM 2014). A new information system went operational in the Cook Islands, while reforms progressed in Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. These reforms may see potential improvements in producing financial statistics and will ensure improved timeliness if the GFS is automated as part of the process;
 - b. compile and disseminate GFS for the budgetary central government for decision making and IMF surveillance as well as for reporting to IMF's Government Finance Statistics annual database. 12 reports were submitted with data to the annual database, one less than in FY2019. Hands on training in the GFS compilation process was provided in the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Remote assistance was provided to compilers in Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste, to report their GFS data;
 - c. expand coverage to the general government, with progress in data preparation in Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Papua New Guinea finished expanding the GFS coverage to its national budget volume II with further improvements to the overall budget compilation process aligned to the GFSM 2014;
 - d. increase coverage in the compilation of PSDS, with progress made in Cook Islands, Fiji, Palau,

Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu; and

- e. prepare detailed business process documentation to better understand compilation processes in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands.

PFTAC's future work and challenges

3. PFTAC's main objective in national accounts and GFS will continue to assist member countries with the production of more reliable and timely economic statistics. Due to travel restrictions in the course of the Covid-19 crises, its advisors are forced to increase temporarily the provision of remote TA on national accounts and GFS for capacity building, instead of doing in-country missions.
4. The coronavirus pandemic and the resulting global shutdown have resulted in a worldwide recession. Governments, donors, businesses, and citizens require timely, high frequency data in order to track the depth of the recession and the pace and shape of the recovery. Quarterly national accounts provide a consistent, timely overview about a country's most recent economic development. Currently, only two of PFTAC's 14 member countries (Samoa and the Cook Islands) compile quarterly national accounts.
5. There is significant scope to increase the number of countries publishing quarterly national accounts in the region. PFTAC will strive to realize initiatives with countries to develop fit for use QNA in which the PFTAC experts do a significant share of the compilation of the data in order to address this urgent need. Part of this initiative forms a regional workshop on quarterly national accounts and seasonal adjustment which is planned to take place around the mid of 2020.
6. As member countries hired new staff which have to be trained swiftly in order to maintain or increase their statistical capacities, a further workshop on a regional level is planned. This workshop will take place in the second half of 2020 and focuses on basic national accounts training with ample practical exercises.
7. PFTAC GFS program will enter a final year of funding under Phase V, and unless there is a change of plan and funding, the resident advisor position will end April 30, 2021
8. GFS PFTAC adviser will assist on how to record the most commonly observed interventions in fiscal accounts during the Covid-19 pandemic.
9. Technical assistance will have to be delivered through different modalities, including through remote channels which requires a high level of commitment both from the TA provider and the member country recipients.
10. Public Sector Debt Statistics set the basis to analyse debt sustainability to assess solvency, liquidity, and debt service capacity of the government. PFTAC will increase assistance in the compilation of PSDS.
11. Enhance collaboration between National Statistics Offices and Ministries of Finance to achieve automation of the GFS in the Financial Management Information Systems (FMIS) where possible. Automating the GFS in the FMIS ensures improved fiscal statistics for financial and economic reporting, fiscal forecasting, improved timeliness for decision making and regional and international dissemination and comparison.

Part B: SPC support to Statistics Initiatives in the Pacific

1. Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES)

a. 2019/20 survey status

- Vanuatu 2019/20 HIES field work finished in March 2020. Dataset and corresponding outputs (survey report, poverty analysis and SDG indicators) will be available in 2020.
- Kiribati 2019/20 HIES field work finished in April 2020. Dataset and corresponding outputs (survey report, poverty analysis and SDG indicators) will be available in 2020.
- Marshall Islands 2019/20 HIES field work is scheduled to finish in June 2020. Dataset and corresponding outputs (survey report, poverty analysis and SDG indicators) will be available in 2020/21.

b. 2020/21 survey status

- [Pacific Census and Survey Calendar](#) is used to coordinate PICTs, technical assistance providers and partners.
- COVID-19 is likely to delay a number of surveys, including those scheduled to occur in 2020; specifically, FSM, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tonga. At the time of writing, these surveys are still scheduled to occur in 2020, however given the uncertainty as a result of COVID-19, there is a possibility that the survey will be postponed until 2021.

c. HIES Methodological Experiment

- In 2018/19, SPC and other partners conducted a methodological experiment with the objective to optimise the collection of consumption data through Household Income and Expenditure Surveys. The experiment and the results are summarised below.
 - Household income and expenditure survey (HIES) is the primary data source to estimate poverty prevalence and to rebase the consumer price index and gross domestic product in the Pacific region. More recently, HIES is being used as a secondary source to estimate dietary energy consumption and to perform food security and nutrition analysis.
 - Since 2011, a regionally standardised HIES has been implemented in the Pacific region where consumption data are captured through a household-based two-week food acquisition diary. Empirical evidence suggests the diary does not perform well due to low monitoring and respondent fatigue resulting in a trend of declining access to food over the diary period. Additionally, the standardised HIES instrument does not collect opening and closing stocks of food before and after the implementation of the 14-day diary, which prohibits the estimation of apparent consumption. Furthermore, the standardised HIES instrument does not have specific modules on meal partakers and food away from home, which anecdotally appear to affect consumption estimates considering the Pacific culture of sharing food as well as apparent increasing access to pre-prepared food consumed away from home.
 - In response to these challenges, the Pacific Community (SPC), the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), and other partners, conducted an experiment in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), which was hosted by the Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office (EPPSO). The 'RMI HIES Experiment' is designed to guide future improvement to the regionally standardised HIES methodology, which aimed to test:
 - the use of technology, in the form of tablets and satellite phones, to capture and transfer data in remote Pacific islands;
 - the inclusion of complementary survey modules, including stocks, food away from home and meal partakers; and
 - different methodologies to collect consumption data through HIES.
 - The different methods for collecting consumption data include varying forms of high and low monitored diaries with data being collected using paper and tablets; and varying forms of seven-day consumption recall with data being collected using tablets.
 - The experiment identified that:

- the use of technology to collect and transfer data is appropriate in the Pacific despite not having widespread internet connectivity.
- the inclusion of complementary survey modules, including partakers and food away from home is important as it has an impact of poverty and dietary energy consumption estimates; and
- the collection of consumption data via 7-day recall does not have any adverse implication in comparison to the current method and is around six times less expensive to administer.

The results of the RMI HIES Experiment were presented to the Pacific Statistics Methods Board which endorsed the methodological recommendation.

2. Pacific Population and Housing Censuses

2019 census status

- a. Nauru conducted a mini census in 2019 with the primary objective of updating the sampling frame for surveys scheduled in 2019 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey) and in 2020 (Household Income and Expenditure Survey).
- b. Solomon Islands conducted a census in 2019. The data are currently being processed in preparation for analysis.
- c. Tokelau conducted a population count in 2019.

3. Disability

- a. The inclusion of a module to identify persons with disabilities is recommended in all censuses and surveys conducted in the Pacific region. This allows for disability-disaggregated analysis for targeted policy to improve the situation of persons with disabilities.
- b. Disability monographs for Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu were prepared and published in 2019/20 (accessible: <https://sdd.spc.int/topic/disability>).

4. Population estimates and projections

Revised PICT projections were released on the SDD website in 2020, taking into account the most recent national information from household collections and administrative data.

5. Agricultural and fisheries statistics

- a. SPC and FAO continue to collaborate on the collection and use of HIES data to report against SDG 2.1 (End Hunger).
- b. Agricultural census/surveys were conducted in Fiji and Samoa over the 2019/20 period.

Civil Registration and vital statistics¹

- a. Regional Capacity building workshop bringing together civil registration and health officials from 5 Pacific Island countries to deliberate, share knowledge and experiences on the topic “Legal Identity and Identity Security”.
- b. Support to the governments of Fiji and Papua New Guinea in undertaking a comprehensive assessment of their civil registration and vital statistics systems.

¹ All initiatives under the civil registration and vital statistics work programme are undertaken by the Brisbane Accord Group partnership.

- c. Support to the government of Fiji and Papua New Guinea in the development of a national multisectoral CRVS plans.
- d. Support to the government of Solomon Islands in undertaking preparatory arrangements for review of their national CRVS legislation and in establishment of a framework for data sharing between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- e. Review and updating of regional guidelines on legislation for civil registration and vital statistics.
- f. Support to the government of Nauru in the analysis and development of a vital statistics report based on civil registration records.
- g. Support to countries (Nauru, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Palau, New Caledonia) in setting national targets for development of their CRVS systems and completion of the regional CRVS Midterm Review questionnaire which is a framework for reporting status and the progress that countries are making in the advancement of their CRVS systems

6. International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS)

- a. An in-country training on IMTS was delivered in PNG with Fiji providing the South-South facilitation. The training also had three invited presentations, two from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and one from the University of Papua New Guinea.
- b. In-country technical assistance was provided to Palau, Guam and PNG. PNG also had the benefit of the South-South facilitation.
- c. Presented a paper titled Strengthening capacity for data management and trade statistics as well as participated in the panel discussion on Digital trade at the 21st Oceania Custom's Organisation Annual Conference.
- d. A staff from Nauru was attached to the SPC to work on the IMTS.

7. Business Statistics

In-country technical assistance was provided during 2019 on collection and compilation of business statistics to the Tonga Department of Statistics.

8. Tourism Statistics

Conducted a Tourism Satellite Account Development Feasibility Study for Vanuatu. This was requested and funded by UNITAR.

9. Revenue Statistics

Collaborated with OECD on Revenue Statistics in the Pacific.

10. Price Statistics

In-country technical assistance was provided to Fiji, Cook Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.

11. Sustainable Development Goal Pacific Indicators

SPC and PIFS have led the regional process. The set of 132 regional sustainable development indicators was endorsed by Leaders at the 48th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in Samoa, in 2017, as part of the *Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development*. SPC, UNESCAP, UNDP and PIFS are working with PICTs to populate these indicators, and data is being progressively loaded into the Pacific Data Hub for use by countries, as well as regional and global agencies and donors.

A regional update report, to supplement the 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development Report, is being prepared for the 2020 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting. This will include a section on Covid-19, and the measures taken by PICTs to address the health pandemic.

Five Pacific countries (Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu) presented their Voluntary National Reviews in 2019. These describe national progress against the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2020, FSM, PNG, Samoa and Solomon Islands are preparing to present at the High-Level Political Forum in July. (at this stage the UN is planning for HLPF to proceed, but the format may be virtual)

12. Microdata Curation

- a. Access to well documented and comparable development microdata is critical for forming and evaluating policy, and for reporting against indicator frameworks, such as those embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals. With financial assistance from the World Bank through the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building, SPC implemented a project to improve data dissemination and use in the Pacific region. The project has:
 - Established the Pacific Microdata Library;
 - Standardised census and survey microdata; and
 - Developed appropriate approaches towards sampling in small island states.
- b. National statistical agencies, line ministries, and other organizations in the Pacific region produce valuable datasets through their censuses, surveys, and administrative data collection activities. These data, however, remain largely under-exploited. Many data producers in the Pacific region do not have the resources, technical capacity, or mandate to conduct in-depth analysis of the data, and researchers outside these organisations do not have easy access to the microdata. In addition to not being sufficiently disseminated, many datasets are not properly documented and preserved. We have addressed these issues through the establishment of the Pacific Microdata Library (<https://microdata.pacificdata.org/>), which is responsible for acquiring and documenting data (survey and census microdata, geospatial data, and administrative datasets) to ensure their long term preservation and to maximise their dissemination and use.
- c. Establishing national data archives is not a realistic objective in much of the Pacific region. As such, the Pacific Microdata Library is being centralised and administered by SPC, which is the principal scientific and technical organisation in the Pacific region providing development assistance to its 22 developing member states in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, health and education and in areas such as statistics, climate change and social development.
- d. The Pacific Microdata Library: a) preserves microdata to prevent data loss; b) documents datasets in accordance to international standards to improve their usability; c) publishes metadata to increase data discoverability; and d) has developed data governance frameworks to facilitate microdata dissemination and use.
- e. The Pacific region has made significant progress in ex ante statistical data collection standardisation. Regionally standardized instruments, classifications and methodologies have been developed for population and housing census, household income and expenditure survey and labour force survey. These harmonization activities were implemented to ensure that Pacific statistical collections meet international standards and allow for the production of consistent and comparable data across the Pacific region. In consideration of the significant progress made in harmonizing ex ante statistical collections, to facilitate rapid and comparable data use, we have implemented ex post statistical collection microdata standardisation. We have also developed guidelines for sampling in the context of the small island states of the Pacific, including agricultural sampling.
- f. Pacific Island countries and territories are encouraged to disseminate development microdata through the Pacific Microdata Library to ensure their long-term preservation, accessibility and use.

13. Disseminating statistics/information:

- a. SDD website redevelopment
SDD's new website released mid-2019 <https://sdd.spc.int/>. Data and content driven; Content presented by topic and country.
- b. National Minimum Development Indicator Database (NMDI) redevelopment
Indicator list is being finalised in April 2020 and will then be added to <https://stats.pacificdata.org/> database followed by having a visualisation dashboard added to <https://pacificdata.org/>.
- c. Pacific Data Hub
PDH catalogue/website established and expanded in 2019. Will be one-stop-shop for datasets on the Pacific. SDD's Microdata Library (<https://microdata.pacificdata.org/>) and .Stat Suite Indicator Database (<https://stats.pacificdata.org/>) both now come under the umbrella of the Pacific Data Hub and all of their respective datasets are referenced within the Pacific Data Hub main catalogue.
- d. SDG Dashboard
The dashboard provides easy access to, and visualisation of the 132 Pacific Sustainable Development Indicators (<https://pacificdata.org/content/17-goals-transform-pacific>). It is hosted within the Pacific Data Hub and pull data from <https://stats.pacificdata.org/>.
- e. Improving microdata dissemination and use in Pacific Island Countries: Work was ongoing on a World Bank funded project with three overarching components: 1] Establishing the Pacific Data Library: preservation, documentation and anonymization of microdata, 2] Standardisation of census and survey datasets: development of guidelines to construct harmonised census and survey datasets and 3] A new sampling strategy for small-island Pacific states: development of guidelines to improve the efficiency of sampling. Archived datasets: <https://microdata.pacificdata.org/>.

14. Pacific Standards and Classifications

- a. Collaborated in the review of the Pacific Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System 2017 (PACHS17) workshop organized by the OCO. Passed on the leading role of PACHS22 to OCO in favour of now playing a supporting role.
- b. Commenced work on the revision of the Pacific Classification of Individual Consumption according to Purpose from 2012 to 2020 based on UNs latest revision to be released mid-2020.
- c. QGIS for Census and Survey Mapping; QGIS manual published in May 2020 by SDD helps NSOs and other line ministries undertake regular mapping activities. UNFPA/SDD have also adapted a version of SDD's manual for a global audience to assist with the 2020 round of Population and Housing Censuses.