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INFORMATION PAPER 7: REGIONAL STATISTICS INITIATIVE

Purpose and Summary

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 FEMM Action Plan. The second part - **Annex 1** - provides a brief update on key statistical activities conducted in the region over the 12 months since the 2020 FEMM.

Summary

- i. The past year 2020-2021 has been a challenging one for national statistics offices around the region, as well as the technical agencies and development partners that serve and support them. The demand for statistics to inform governments and partners of the social and economic impacts of the pandemic has risen significantly while in many countries the resources available to meet the statistical demands have come under pressure as budgets have been squeezed. Provide more frequent and better statistics with less resources seems to have been the almost universal cry.
- ii. Many of the core statistical collections in the regional programme of core census and surveys, including population and housing censuses (PHC), household income and expenditure surveys (HIES), labour force surveys (LFS), demographic and health surveys (DHS) and multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) had to be rescheduled in 2020. The current programme of core collections is illustrated in the 5-year programme 2020-2024 attached at **Table 1a**. Between 2021 and 2024 there are now nine census and a similar number of household surveys already scheduled, along with around two dozen other DHS, MICS and LFS and other core surveys. In addition, other short term “rapid assessment surveys” (RAS) and high-frequency phone monitoring (HFPM) surveys have been conducted instead or in addition to other core statistical collections.
- iii. The speed, breadth and the longevity with which the pandemic caused widespread social and economic disruption took everyone by surprise and there was an urgent need for “real-time” data and information on the breadth and depth of the impacts. Recent assessments of the impact of the pandemic have concluded that there are serious gaps in the availability of up-to-date information

and data on what is happening to families and economies when shocks, such as the pandemic, occur.

- iv. The unavailability of such up-to-date information on the national budget, the levels of employment and unemployment, economic and business activity and the needs of the most vulnerable for social protection measures, raised awareness of the importance of making available a wider range of administrative data that could be used to produce proxy or lead indicators in the absence of the regular official statistics.
- v. Some governments found that their legislation on statistics and sharing and dissemination of data across either other government agencies and/or with development partners and agencies was outdated and very restrictive. This highlighted the need for review and revision of statistics legislation to enable secure and managed data dissemination to assist urgent response measures to be developed and implemented in the face of such a widespread and serious shock at both the macro and microeconomic levels. Advocacy for dissemination of microdata that are produced through the conduct of national censuses and surveys is essential to ensure data are available for use for policy and planning purposes. This will greatly increase the return on investment from conducting such surveys.
- vi. Despite the challenges caused by the travel restrictions resulting from the pandemic 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.
- vii. 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 continued to impose a significant additional burden on national statistics offices (NSOs) in seeking to meet a significant increase in the demand for reliable and timely data.
- viii. This paper seeks to once again raise awareness of the financing and resource 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 the small island states. As system leader, SPC's Statistics for Development Division (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. It is recommended that development partners and other donors again consider supporting the proposed regional statistics financing facility that was endorsed by Ministers in 2019.
- ix. For the four years (2021 to 2024), the cost of conducting the forty-two already identified core census and surveys in the smaller Pacific countries (excluding Fiji and PNG) will amount to an estimated US\$57 million, see Table 1b for the pro-forma costing. Assuming national governments will be able to finance between two-thirds to three-quarters of these costs there will be an overall funding gap of between US\$15 - US\$20 - million to be filled in order to enable the smaller NSOs in the region to conduct their scheduled basic core statistical collections. The use of new technology (e.g., tablets) in conducting the censuses and surveys and the use of a newly introduced real-time and online data management and processing system has significantly reduced costs and shortened data processing time. For example, the Kiribati census was conducted in November 2020 and the preliminary results were released in February 2021, around nine-months earlier than traditional methods.

- x. The core collections covered in the five-year programme are very important for the compilation of the 131 indicators of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development (PRSD). It is estimated that approximately 76 of the PRSD indicators – almost sixty percent - are derived either directly or indirectly from core collections, or need the results of the core collections, to be calculated.
- xi. 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.
- xii. 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 2021. SPC and PFTAC among other development partners have delivered a large number of activities in the development of both economic and social statistics, 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 adapted their ways-of-working to mitigate the effects of the international travel restriction and domestic lockdowns.

A. Overview and Summary of Key Issues

Regional Statistics Governance Framework

1. In 2020 the Regional Statistics Governance Framework continued to function effectively through virtual meetings of the core governance components taking place during the year; these included the Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC); Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB – two meetings); and the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) on civil registration and vital statistics. The planned meeting of the Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) was rescheduled again for 2021. An additional interim and virtual meeting of PSSC was 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.
2. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, significant work has been carried out by the Pacific Statistics Governance Framework and its main components (FEMM; HOPS; PSSC; PSMB; DDPG, BAG) over the last twelve months in guiding regional statistics development, coordinating statistical and CRVS activities of member countries, donors and development partners and in supporting the continuation of this work in the current challenging statistical environment.
3. The Heads of Planning and Statistics Meeting originally planned for 4Q-2020 has been rescheduled to 3Q2021 and an additional interim meeting of the PSSC was held in November 2020 to ensure continuity of the statistics governance system.
4. A review of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) Phase 3 will now take place in 1st and 2nd Quarters of 2021, with the objective of developing a follow-on TYPSS II to guide and support statistical development through to 2030.

5. Emphasis has been given to the dissemination of census and survey microdata through the Pacific Data Hub - Microdata Library and under the governance of Data Licence Agreements (DLAs), to enable national decision-makers, researchers and other users to have access to data that can be used to develop policies for the benefit of all Pacific people in the difficult Covid-19 social and economic environment of 2020.

6. Emphasis has also been given to the regular dissemination of key economic and social statistics and statistical indicators that can be derived from administrative data that is collected and compiled by government ministries and agencies including finance, revenue, customs, immigration, social security agencies, provident funds and electricity generators in order to provide timely data for economic monitoring and social monitoring of the pandemics impacts.

B. Discussion

7. Key issues in regional statistics governance in 2020 included:

- The continued implementation of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) supported by SDD's business plan, ongoing support for the development of National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and strengthening capacity in National Statistics Offices (NSOs), especially of their websites and dissemination capacities; the launching of the Pacific Data Hub (PDH), innovative work on regional reporting of the Pacific SDG indicators and support to VNRs.
- The scheduled end-of-programme review of the TYPSS 2011-2020 that is now in its third and final phase, was rescheduled to early 2021 and is currently taking stock of the achievements and challenges of TYPSS and developing a TYPSS II to take statistics development in the Pacific forward to 2030.
- 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; further work on this proposal was constrained by the need to focus on the pandemic and further work is needed on the details of how the mechanism should be operationalised within the framework of current governance arrangements for regional statistics.
- The enhanced demand for national accounts, government finance statistics and external sector statistics, especially for pandemic impact monitoring, has emphasised the importance of the support provided through PFTAC and the need for Pacific countries to produce regular and timely quarterly data; as noted already, the lack of timely data has hindered the measurement and assessment of the economic and social impacts of the pandemic.
- Support continued from PFTAC for the Government Finance Statistics programme, based on strong demand from PICTs. Unfortunately, this programme remains under threat for 2021 and beyond.
- The appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2020 and its immediate and damaging impact on economies and livelihoods of families and economies across the region emphasised the need and importance of having timely and relevant data through which to monitor the impacts and formulate response measures.

8. 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 based on computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI);
- Continued progress on developing updated guidelines for both monetary and multidimensional poverty measurement, progress on this work was delayed and will now be completed in 2021;
- The high and ever-increasing demands on NSOs, for SDG-related data and data for national, regional and global monitoring and reporting commitments as well as the significant demand for data on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Funding for a new capacity development programme was secured during 2020 and recruitment of a Statistics Adviser (Data Analysis and Capacity Development) is about to commence. The need to provide capacity development in the use of data for evidence-based policy development and the adoption of new technology in order to improve the speed, accuracy and cost-effectiveness of census and surveys meet the demands for data are seen as high priority areas as NSOs and sector ministries seek to meet the demands for quality briefing papers to inform policy;
- The launch in 2020 of the new SDD website, and 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;
- In support of populating the draft Pacific Roadmap for Gender Statistics, SDD also secured funds to recruit a gender and human rights statistician, recruitment of this position will also be initiated shortly;
- During 2020 the CRVS Adviser in SDD was nominated as the Chairperson of the UN's Global CRVS Task Force; in this capacity a series of Pacific regional and global webinars were conducted specifically to support civil registration authorities to manage registration systems during the pandemic and to review the feasibility of establishing register-based census in small island countries; and
- During the year SPC-SDD experienced the resignations of two long-serving staff, who for financing reasons have not yet been replaced. However, on the positive side SDD secured additional financing for a gender statistician and a data analyst and training specialist to promote capacity development in the use of data for policy analysis and development. Arrangements for the World Bank IDA funded HIES project were finalised and the first appointments to this project are expected in the near future.

Regional Statistics Response to COVID-19

9. The Covid-19 pandemic has been an economic and social disaster for the region over the last year. But timely data on the impacts of the pandemic at both regional and in many cases national levels, has been limited. Restrictions on domestic movements have limited the ability of governments, NSOs and other agencies to collect data. Outdated and often overly restrictive statistics legislation has hindered the sharing of data that could be valuable in supporting policy responses.

10. 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).

11. 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.

12. In response to this, SDD in collaboration with World Bank, UN agencies and other development partners and agencies commenced a suite of initiatives to compile additional data needed to monitor the economic and social impacts of the pandemic:

- Regional Covid-19 infection and vaccination rates and other relevant data can now be found on the SPC website at <https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2021/05/covid-19-pacific-community-updates> this page is updated weekly.
- A Covid-19 socio-economic indicators page is being updated on a quarterly basis primarily from available administrative data and now covers the whole of 2020; this can be found at <https://sdd.spc.int/disasters-data/covid-19>, the page brings together a selection of key regional data that highlights the impacts of the pandemic on selected economic and social factors where data is available; the page also includes selected population density maps highlighting areas of high population density etc., as places of higher vulnerability to infection.
- Coverage has increased over the period as more countries have recognised the importance of making data available; it is hoped that these indicators could be a transitional stage towards the production of quarterly macroeconomic data as recommended by PFTAC.
- In mid-2020 a regional initiative was launched by World Bank for High Frequency Phone Monitoring (HFPM) surveys of households across the region, PNG and Solomon Islands were the first to be surveyed in this way; these longitudinal surveys are collecting data from selected sample households over a 12-month period on the pandemic's impacts on lives, livelihoods and coping strategies; Statistics New Zealand, WFP and a number of UN agencies have also conducted similar surveys in other countries.

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

13. Recognising a) the continued importance and urgency of maintaining the flow of 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 that can be used 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 census and survey 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; Currently 53 data Licence Agreements (DLAs) have been signed with national authorities across the region;
- Support the dissemination of census and survey microdata through the Pacific Data Hub - Microdata Library and under the governance of Data Licence Agreements (DLAs), to enable national decision-makers, researchers and other users to have access to data that can be used to develop policies for the benefit of all Pacific people;
- Support the regular dissemination of key economic statistics and statistical indicators that can be derived from administrative data that is collected and compiled by government ministries and agencies including finance, revenue, customs, immigration, social security and provident funds and electricity generators in order to provide timely data for economic monitoring;
- Countries can also improve their access to Climate Finance if they share their data with those who can undertake the more complex analysis required to produce information related to resilience and adaptation to climate change, in terms of risks, vulnerabilities, and impacts; to assess the impact of action and the baseline and on gender differentials; and
- The establishment of a coordinated HFPM and rapid assessment 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 on a continuing basis. These and other new survey methodologies, including using mobile phone positioning and satellite data to provide up to date Small Area population estimates is a development statistical being considered by SPC. Positioning data provided in this way can be used to provide supplementary demographic details to support census data.

Pacific Community (SPC)
4 June 2021

Table 1b: Five-Year Collection Plan Pro-Forma Costing as at May 2021:

Five-Year Statistical Collection Plan Pro Forma Costing; PICT Summary 2020 - 2024					
PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Samoa	681600			170400	681600
Cook Islands		183600		45900	
	45900	183600			
Fed. States of Micronesia		949500		633000	
	633000	1266000		316500	
Fiji	10740000	2685000		2685000	
		8055000			
French Polynesia	836700	836700	3346800	836700	
			836700		
Guam	2120400				
Kiribati	1424400	356100	1424400	356100	
	356100	356100		1068300	
CNMI	679200	339600	169800		
		169800			
Marshall Islands		491400			
		655200			
Nauru		140400	70200		
	105300	70200			
New Caledonia	2457000	819000	819000	819000	
	819000				
Niue		4800	19200		
		19200			
Palau	214800	107400	161100		
	214800				
Papua New Guinea		53610000			
		107220000			
Samoa	2384400	596100	596100	596100	1788300
	596100	2384400		1192200	
		596100			
Solomon Islands	4272600		8545200	2136300	
			6408900		
Tokelau		18000	13500		
	4500				
Tonga	598800	1197600	1197600		
			898200		
Tuvalu	31800	63600	127200	31800	
Vanuatu	3536400	2652300	3536400		1768200
		884100			
Wallis and Futuna	102600			136800	

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

Summary

1. Reliable macroeconomic statistics that are available in a timely manner are essential for evidence based economic policy making by government authorities. They also provide the private sector, foreign investors, rating agencies, and the public in general with important inputs in their decision-making, while informing national and regional economic analysis including for International Monetary Fund (IMF) surveillance.
2. In 2020, economic developments were overshadowed by the COVID19 pandemic and resulting economic crisis. This put strain on statistical offices which faced crisis specific accounting problems and strong demand for faster, more timely, and higher frequency data. Hence, the IMF Statistics Department decided together with PFTAC to put a special focus in 2020 on Quarterly National Accounts (QNA) programs in the region.

Discussion

3. Throughout 2020, PFTAC had two resident advisors for Government Finance Statistics (GFS) and Real Sector Statistics (RSS) respectively. Additionally, a small External Sector Statistics (ESS) program has been supported by external short-term experts (STX) and from the IMF regional office in Bangkok.
4. PFTAC uses a fiscal year from May 1 until April 30, so Fiscal Year 2021 that ended on April 30, 2021 entirely corresponded to the restrictions and challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of days of direct delivery of TA slightly declined in FY2021 versus the previous year (160 days in the RSS program (of which 40 were by STX) in FY2021 versus 176 in FY2020, and 79 days in the GFS program in FY2021 versus 106 in FY2020. Despite the decline in the number of TA days, more missions or training events were delivered in FY2021 (RSS was 16 up from 13 and GFS was 12 up from 7). This unusual development is a result of all TA and training having to be delivered remotely and virtually, that overall entails fewer days compared to when travel is involved.
5. On GFS, 11 remote missions to member countries were delivered plus one regional training event delivered virtually. The total TA days were 79, of which 66 days were by the PFTAC GFS resident advisor and 13 days by STX.
 - i) **Target:** In 2020, PFTAC's main objectives in national accounts were to assist member countries keep up with their regular publication schemes despite the period of crisis and to promote the introduction of Quarterly National Accounts programs. These programs produce GDP data at a higher frequency and with a shorter time lag for publication than annual figures. Such economic data is especially useful in times of crises to more promptly inform economic policy making and allow quicker implementation of fiscal and monetary policy measures in response to changing circumstances.

The GFS program continued to deliver on the same themes as in 2019 and previous years. The ESS program concentrated on continuing to improve capacities for Balance of Payment (BoP) compilation in the region.

- ii) **Progress:** Concerning the objective of supporting countries to maintain their regular publication schedule during times of crises, outcomes were mixed. Some countries actively requested PFTAC assistance concerning crises related accounting problems and support in preparing upcoming publications. Other countries, however, were probably preoccupied by the crisis and were difficult to engage and hence did not seek assistance. Conversely, the second objective to launch QNA programs was quite successful. At the end of 2020, Fiji published for the first time QNA data on an experimental basis. The Cook Islands and Samoa, both compiling QNA already for several years, were assisted with the compilation of seasonal adjusted data. Furthermore, work with Tonga and the Solomon Islands has started.

On GFS, the main activities and achievements in 2020 were:

- a. Assistance in how to record the most commonly observed interventions in fiscal accounts during the COVID-19 pandemic across the region.
- b. Expansion of coverage to the general government and public sector in Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, while progress was made in Fiji and Solomon Islands.
- c. Preparation of detailed business process documentation to better understand compilation processes in Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Tonga.
- d. Compilation and dissemination of 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. Twelve reports were submitted with data to the annual database. Hands on training in the GFS compilation process was provided in the Federated States of Micronesia, Cook Islands, Palau, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Nauru, and Vanuatu.
- e. Review of the coding and mapping of the national chart of accounts in Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji.
- f. Increase in the coverage in public sector debt statistics, with progress made in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.
- g. Increase in frequency of GFS reporting in Cook Islands.

The ESS program assisted Tuvalu with the implementation of a new data collection file sourced by the country's International Transactions Reporting System.

- iii) **Comments:** Concerning the introduction of QNA programs in PFTAC member countries, two problems became apparent. First, the number of staff in several smaller NSOs is very limited restricting their ability to maintain even regular annual national accounts work. Such limitations make the longer-term introduction of such programs risky. Secondly, the high-frequency source data (quarterly or monthly indicators) necessary for compiling quarterly

GDP are sometimes not accessible to the statistical offices. The cooperation concerning data sharing with other public administration agencies and provident funds needs improvement before such programs can be realised.

Next Steps

6. Provided that staff capacities in national accounts statistics are increased and data sharing of high-frequency public administrative data is improved, PFTAC aims to further roll-out QNA programs in the region. Although beyond PFTAC's mandate, the achievement of such ambitions may require capacity supplementation for some member countries where capacities are too low to autonomously compile and publish annual national accounts on a regular basis.

7. As the PFTAC GFS program will end August 31, 2021, future demand for GFS TA in the Pacific should be requested to the IMF via PFTAC or the Asia Pacific Department country mission chief or team. Having up to date business process documentation will greatly assist GFS compilers to maintain the GFS compilation in the future.

Part B: SPC support to Statistics Initiatives in the Pacific

i. Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy

8. The Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) 2010–2020 was adopted by leaders of Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs) in 2009. TYPSS was developed in recognition of the need for a comprehensive plan to drive the improvement and development of statistics in the Pacific region. The TYPSS end-of-programme review is currently underway with a view to a new programme, TYPSS 2, being developed to support statistics through to 2030, the end period of the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ii. Pacific Statistics Methods Board

9. Pacific Statistics Methods Board met in July and September 2020. Key topics addressed were: high frequency phone survey methods, poverty methodology, the capture of labour information in census and the utilisation of administrative databases in Pacific census programmes, and the use of technology and software by NSOs

iii. Project Management: Improving Pacific Statistics and Data (PSD)

10. The PSD project including the Pacific Data Hub component became fully staffed and operational in 2020; this project supports the following work streams: i) the establishment of the Pacific Data Hub, ii) the population of the PDH DotStat development indicator database, iii) the maintenance and update of the SDG database and progress wheels, iv) support for Pacific countries to compile their SDG Voluntary National Reports to the UNGA, v) support to national statistics offices to improve their national statistics websites and link these to the PDH to enhance dissemination and data sharing.

iv. Pacific Sustainable Development Indicators

11. Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Form Secretariat (PIFS) have led the regional process. The set of 131 (1 indicator has since been deleted from the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) framework) 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, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (UNESCAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and PIFS are working with Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) to populate these indicators, and data are being progressively loaded into the Pacific Data Hub for use by countries, as well as regional and global agencies and donors.

12. A regional Biennial update report, to supplement the 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development Report, was launched in 2020 after the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting. This included a section on COVID-19, and the measures taken by PICTs to address the health pandemic.

13. Four Pacific countries (Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands) presented a Voluntary National Review in 2020. These describe national progress against the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In 2021, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is preparing to present at the High-Level Political Forum in July, while French Polynesia has prepared its first national report on the SDGs.

v. Civil Registration and vital statistics¹

- a. Collaborated with the UN Statistics Division and PARIS21 to conduct webinars to provide guidance on the maintenance of operational continuity of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems during COVID-19 and implementation of the UN holistic approach to legal identity. These webinars were based on global guidance developed by UN partners and SPC on maintaining operational continuity of civil registration systems during the pandemic.
- b. Collaborated with the global CRVS group in compilation of a report on the impact of the COVID-19 on CRVS systems across various parts of the world.
- c. Collaborated with UN partners and countries in the European region to deliver a series of webinars on the use of registers and administrative data in census programmes of PICTs. The 10 webinars held on this topic were attended by officials from the National Statistics and Civil Registration offices.
- d. Collaborated with Plan international to deliver a webinar on the principles for design of IT systems for CRVS, the value of a common regional approach to the adoption of CRVS IT systems and orientation on [OpenCRVS](#). OpenCRVS is an open-source digital solution that is free to use, adaptable to the country context, interoperable with other government systems (e.g., health and ID systems).
- e. Piloted Open CRVS in Niue in collaboration with Plan international and WHO.
- f. Developed publication on the status of civil registration systems in the Pacific which consolidates information from 18 PICTs across various themes e.g., legislation,

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

organization, and management of CRVS systems the levels of completeness of birth and death registration.

- g. Developed training curricula on medical certification and coding of causes of death in collaboration with the partners of Brisbane Accord Group. These curricula will be made available to the Fiji National University and other universities in the region for incorporation into their academic training programmes for medical doctors and other health professionals.
- h. Supported Tonga in the analysis of register-based births and deaths (and causes of death) data and release of their vital statistics report for years 2013-2018.
- i. Supported Fiji, Tuvalu, Nauru and the Republic of Marshall Islands in auditing certificates of causes of death and in the review of the quality of cause of death coding.

vi. International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS)

- a. *Development of the Pacific Commodity Trade Database (PACComtrade) was investigated successfully, and work is in progress on this in collaboration with Oceania Customs Organisation- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Melanesian Spearhead Group and PIFS.*
- b. In-country technical assistance was provided to Palau and Vanuatu *in the compilation, analysis, drafting of the report and dissemination of IMTS using international best practices and standards.*
- c. Remote technical assistance was provided to *1] CNMI, 2] Guam, 3] Tonga, 4] Kiribati, 5] Samoa, 6] Cook Is, 7] Tuvalu and 8] Fiji in the review/compilation, analysis, and dissemination of IMTS using appropriate international best practices and standards.*
- d. *On-going collaboration with OCO on Regional HS22.*

vii. Business Statistics

- a. Virtual support provided to UNESCAPs Asia-Pacific Statistics Week: Reviewed papers and chaired the session on “Approaches to integrated analysis: use of sound methodologies”.
- b. Virtually support provided to UN ESCAPs Steering Group meeting: a presentation was made on the “Capacity for producing economic statistics in the Pacific”.
- c. As a member of UNESCAPs Data Integration-Community of Practice (DI-CoP) SDD supported webinars conducted on the use of modern technologies that can be used to integrate data from different sources.

viii. Price Statistics

Attended Australian Bureau of Statistic’s webinar on compilation issues in the Consumer Price Index.

i. Tourism Statistics

In country support was provided to the South Pacific Tourism Organisation in their Regional Tourism Workshop on Strengthening Tourism Statistics and Sustainable Tourism Development in the Pacific. Collaboration continues virtually.

j. Revenue Statistics

On-going virtual collaboration with OECD on Revenue Statistics in the Pacific.

k. Knowledge Products

- a. Blog on “New data shows significant declines in international trade in four Pacific Island Countries” released.
- b. Blog on “Visitor arrival numbers slump in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories” released.
- c. Information paper on ‘Capacity for producing economic statistics in the Pacific’ released.
- d. Work in progress on information paper titled “Trade to GDP ratios”.
- e. Near real time indicators on economic and social impacts of COVID-19 on PICTs were disseminated/redisseminated on the SDD website and the Pacific Data Hub (PDH.Stat).

l. Pacific Standards and Classifications

- a. Pacific Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (PACCOICOP) was released.
- b. Pacific compilation Guide on IMTS is in progress.
- c. Geographic information system (QGIS) for Census and Survey Mapping manual developed by Statistics for Development Division (SDD) to help National Statistics Organisations and other line ministries undertake regular mapping activities. Published in May 2020 (<http://purl.org/spc/digilib/doc/4fcax>). United Nations Population Fund /SDD also adapted a version of SDD’s manual for a global audience to assist with the 2020 round of Population and Housing Censuses. Published in July 2020 (<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/qgis-digital-cartography-censuses-and-surveys>).
- d. Pacific Sampling Guidelines for harmonising census and survey microdata and Pacific Nutrient Database published.

m. Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) status

14. Household income and expenditure survey is the primary source for data relating to poverty, malnourishment and food security. The HIES also importantly provides data to rebase the household

component of GDP and to update the CPI basket. The HIES produces data to report against around 20 percent of the SDG indicators.

- a. Vanuatu 2019/20 HIES dataset processed.
- b. Kiribati 2019/20 HIES dataset processed.
- c. Republic of the Marshall Islands 2019/20 HIES dataset processed.
- d. Wallis and Futuna 2019/20 HIES data collection compiled and ready for processing.
- e. Tonga 2020/21 HIES data collection in progress from January 2021. New methods developed for HIES endorsed by the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) in 2019 have been used in Tonga which is a mixed diary-recall method, and also the above-mentioned surveys of Vanuatu, Kiribati and RMI.

n. Pacific Population and Housing Censuses

15. Population and housing census is the primary source of population-based information on the Pacific people. Around 70 of the Pacific SDGs require population-based data, which are primarily sourced from census. Census also provides a range of information on all persons, which informs policy across sectors and demographics.

- a. Palau 2020 Population and Housing Census field work completed, and data entry is in progress.
- b. Nauru 2019 mini-Population and Housing Census dataset finalised, and thematic products drafted.
- c. Vanuatu census 2020 completed and data editing in progress.
- d. Kiribati census 2020 completed and data editing completed; preliminary population counts by island and demographic were published within 5-weeks of the census date. With funding support from UNFPA and MFAT, SPC provided the censuses of Vanuatu and Kiribati with a data management system and dashboard used for tracking the progress of fieldwork and to ensure full coverage for accurate population estimates. The dashboard also allowed for remote technical support from SPC to the Pacific Region in conducting census during COVID.
- e. Again, through support and collaboration between UNFPA and SPC, the 2021 censuses of RMI, FSM, NRU, TOK, TON, WSM will have access to similar dashboard and remote technical support from the Pacific Community.
- f. In 2020, a new labour module was tested and approved by the Pacific Statistics Methods Board. This module aligns with the survey module, which ensures that labour market statistics are consistent.

o. Poverty Indicators

16. Analysis and draft reports of poverty indicators for Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau were completed and were awaiting final endorsement by national authorities.

p. Food Security

17. Food security and food systems analysis were undertaken, including food security profiles for Solomon Islands and Vanuatu produced, opportunities to build a robust response to COVID-19 and Pacific food system resilience published, 9 microeconomic factsheets produced for COVID-19 baseline matrix, and collaborated with FAO in the implementation of the regional TCP on SDG 2.1. SDD is also a key stakeholder in SPC's proposed cross-sectoral programme for improving regional food security.

q. Targeted technical support

- a. Vanuatu 2020 Post Disaster Needs Assessment Survey (Cyclone Harold).
- b. Cook Islands 2019 Labour Force Survey.
- c. Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands 2020 High Frequency Phone Monitoring Survey (COVID-19).
- d. Marshall Islands 2020 Socioeconomic Impact Assessment Survey (COVID-19).
- e. Kiribati 2018 Social Development Indicator Survey (MICS).
- f. Tonga 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.
- g. Cook Island Rapid Assessment Survey 2021

r. Disseminating statistics/information

i. SDD website

SDD's divisional website continues to be improved and expanded with new data and content <https://sdd.spc.int/>; all interactive charts and maps link to dynamic data stored in <https://stats.pacificdata.org/>.

ii. National Minimum Development Indicator Database (NMDI) redevelopment

Indicator list reviewed and added to the Pacific Data Hub Indicator Database (<https://stats.pacificdata.org/>); [old NMDI website decommissioned](#).

iii. Pacific Data Hub

PDH catalogue/website scaled up significantly in 2020/2021. Now contains 5,038 datasets and 11,163 publications of which many come from SDD. SDD's Microdata Library (<https://microdata.pacificdata.org/>) and PDH.Stat Indicator Database (<https://stats.pacificdata.org/>) are directly integrated.

iv. SDG Dashboard

The dashboard provides easy access to, and visualisation of the 131 Pacific Sustainable Development Indicators (<https://pacificdata.org/content/17-goals-transform-pacific>). It is hosted within the Pacific Data Hub and pulls data from <https://stats.pacificdata.org/> which now “feeds” more than 100 visualisations.

v. Microdata Library

The Microdata library is focused on preservation, documentation and anonymization of microdata. 156 microdata sets have been documented, published and curated according to international standards, making data discoverable, useable and accessible for secondary analysis for evidence informed development. In 2020, more than 40 requests were received to access microdata for policy development and research through the library and 10 microdata files were disseminated to verified users and researchers.

vi. PDH. statistics

This flagship development indicator database now contains 908 Pacific Development Indicators belonging to a range of thematic areas including economy, social, population and health as well as multi-domain indicators related to SDGs and NMDIs. There are currently more than 570,000 data observations in the database. A range of plugins were developed to allow users to easily access the data (Excel, PowerBI, Stats, R, Python). COVID-19 cases, deaths and vaccination data have recently been added by SPC’s Public Health Division in collaboration with SDD as well as visualisations on the SPC COVID-19 update page (<https://www.spc.int/updates/blog/2021/04/covid-19-pacific-community-updates>). Currently one of the most popular pages on the SPC website.

vii. Regional Tables

IMTS and related regional economic statistics tables on GDP, Government Finance Statistics, Visitor arrivals, Inflation and Total reserves in months of imports of goods and services were reported on, analysed and disseminated in collaboration with Information and Publications Officer through SDD Website, dotStat platform and the Pacific Data Hub.

viii. 2020 Pocket Statistical Summary was released.