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## Pacific Statistics Methods Board Meeting Summary Report and Recommendations

**23–24 May 2019**

**Statistics NZ – Auckland Office**

**New Zealand**

Prepared by the  
Statistics for Development Division (SDD) of the  
Pacific Community (SPC)

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### List of abbreviations

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<b>PFTAC</b>	Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre
<b>CAPI</b>	Computer-assisted personal interviewing	<b>PICTs</b>	Pacific Island countries and territories
<b>ESCAP</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN)	<b>PSMB</b>	Pacific Statistics Methods Board
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization	<b>RMI</b>	Republic of the Marshall Islands
<b>HIES</b>	Household Income and Expenditure Survey	<b>SDD</b>	Statistics for Development Division (SPC)
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	<b>SPC</b>	Pacific Community
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

The Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) met at the Auckland office of Statistics New Zealand from 23 to 24 May 2019. The meeting was chaired by Vince Galvin.

<b>Participants</b>	<p><b>The following Board members and observers attended:</b></p> <p>Melanesia – Kemueli Naiqama, Fiji</p> <p>Polynesia – Dr Viliami Konifelenisi Fifita, Tonga</p> <p>Australian Bureau of Statistics – Bruce Fraser</p> <p>Statistics New Zealand – Vince Galvin (Chair), Dr Ofa Ketu'u, Tracey Savage</p> <p>UN agencies – Stanley G. Gwavuya (UNICEF)</p> <p>Observers:</p> <p>Cook Islands – Taggy Tangimetua (Sampling Subcommittee member), Jim Nimerota</p> <p>FAO – Nathalie Troubat</p> <p>PFTAC – Marcus Scheiblecker</p> <p>World Bank – Kristen Himelein</p> <p>University of Waikato – Professor John Gibson</p> <p>Pacific Community (SPC) – Michael Sharp, Rens Hendriks</p>
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## Summary of proceedings

(All papers and presentations referred to in this report are available online:  
<https://sdd.spc.int/events/2019/05/pacific-statistics-methods-board>)

### Agenda item 1: Towards a service offering for the PSMB

1. Vince Galvin summarised methodological issues and service needs highlighted in the Board's previous meetings, and possible mechanisms to address them.
2. Issues/service needs include:
  - quality assurance of estimates released by NSOs to ensure national authorities have confidence in the information. Suggested mechanisms to provide assurance include an endorsed set of practices, and agreed adaptations of international guidelines to fit PICT conditions;
  - a helpdesk or 'rapid response' service to provide a sounding board for NSOs and feedback on technical issues;
  - support for more substantial statistical redevelopment work through a regional approach (e.g. the recent 'bootcamp' on HIES sampling).

### *Discussion*

3. Participants discussed the pressures to release survey results quickly and the potential for these early reports to contain poor data. They recognised, however, that timely release is important for policy relevance. Suggested approaches include:
  - phased release of high-level aggregate statistics while analysis continues;
  - for CAPI collections, starting data cleaning and quality checks as soon as the data is acquired, which should result in fewer data problems;
  - assigning version numbers to data sets to allow improvements. Updated versions can be made available with documentation of revisions for transparency – the PSMB could set guidelines for this documentation process;
  - better communication and coordination between NSOs and partners/data users.
4. PICT representatives also noted:
  - Government preference for a full report rather than phased release of data for various sectors;
  - need for recognition of Pacific cultural practices and lifestyles in survey questionnaires (e.g. reasons for bulk food purchase);
  - need for interpretation of international manuals to address specific PICT issues (Cook Islands gave the example of Customs including the cargoes of foreign ships registered to Cook Islands as exports in national accounts, though the ships operate elsewhere).
5. The Chair summarised by recognising the work already being done between partners and NSOs to address some of the issues raised. He said the PSMB's role could include identifying where existing international processes could be adapted for the Pacific and inviting relevant agencies to present potential solutions.

### ***Recommendation***

6. PSMB noted the many statistical services currently provided to PICT NSOs by partner agencies and agreed the Board's role includes:
  - i. identifying statistical services that work in meeting the needs of PICT NSOs, and potential gaps in the services currently offered;
  - ii. working with PICT NSOs, SPC-SDD, donors, and partner agencies to establish new services to fill the gaps identified, and – where needed – to improve the coordination, funding and delivery of statistical services offered across the Pacific;
  - iii. ensuring that all PICT NSOs are aware of the statistical services available, that they can easily access these services in a timely way, and that the resulting deliverables and knowledge are centrally accessible;
  - iv. advocating that methods and tools promoted and used across the Pacific as part of the statistical services offered are standardised and are relevant to, and applicable by, PICT NSOs.

### **Agenda items 2 and 3: Sampling Subcommittee terms of reference and Sampling Guidelines**

7. Subcommittee Chair, Bruce Fraser, presented draft TOR for the PSMB Sampling Subcommittee.

### *Discussion*

8. The meeting endorsed the TOR (Annex 1) after agreeing to the addition of a clause on regular review of the Subcommittee's operation and its continuation.
9. The representation of PICTs on the Sampling Subcommittee and PSMB was also raised. To facilitate the representation and engagement of all PICT NSOs, Viliami Fifita suggested (1) delegating a PSMB focal point in each NSO; and (2) establishing a formal protocol for communication with other PICT NSOs to support dissemination and adoption of PSMB decisions. Currently, Tonga represents Polynesia, Fiji – Melanesia; Guam – Micronesia; and Nauru – Small NSOs.
10. The Chair agreed the representation of all NSOs was a challenge and noted the suggestion.

### **Recommendation**

11. PSMB:
  - i. endorsed the TOR for the Sampling Subcommittee subject to inclusion of the following amendment at the end of paragraph 1 (Authority):  
*PSMB will regularly review the need for and operation of the Sampling Subcommittee.*

### **Sampling guidelines**

12. The Sampling Guidelines are designed to provide a usable resource for PICT NSOs. They draw on other resources, repackaging them for the Pacific, and feature plain language, examples and graphics to illustrate ideas, and a balance between the practical and theoretical. The Subcommittee Chair acknowledged the work of Kristen Kastelic (WB), Chris Ryan (UNESCAP) and Tracey Savage (Stats NZ) in producing the guidelines.

### *Discussion*

13. Participants discussed expanding the guidelines to cover all priority collections in the region, not just HIES. They suggested further chapters could be commissioned, using Chapter 3 as a template, with the Subcommittee to review the additional text.
14. To get feedback from PICT NSOs and support dissemination and use of the guidelines, Dr Ketu'u suggested workshopping the draft at a regional meeting. PICT feedback will then be incorporated before finalising the guidelines. The World Bank offered to provide facilitators for the workshop.
15. Members agreed to review the existing draft within the next two weeks and provide any comments to the Subcommittee.

### **Recommendation**

16. PSMB:
  - i. acknowledged the excellent work of the Sampling Subcommittee in producing the draft sampling guidelines;
  - ii. agreed PSMB members will review the draft guidelines and return feedback within a two-week period for the Subcommittee to consider and incorporate;
  - iii. agreed that the draft guidelines will be workshopped with NSO representatives at a regional workshop led by key development partners, and that feedback from the workshop will be incorporated in the guidelines before they are finalised for dissemination;

- iv. agreed on expanding the guidelines to cover other surveys in addition to HIES, with SPC–SDD to coordinate production of these additional chapters (noting the need for consistency with the notation and level of existing chapters);
- v. agreed the Sampling Subcommittee will provide peer review of the additional chapters and the final text of the guidelines; and that
- vi. Stats NZ will be approached to fund the regional workshop at a time agreed to by all parties (Stats NZ has proposed that the workshop be held in February 2020).

#### **Agenda item 4: Marshall Islands Household Income and Expenditure Survey Experiment ('RMI HIES experiment')**

17. Michael Sharp (SPC) briefed PSMB on the conduct and results of the RMI HIES experiment and presented the results of a post-experiment survey which included interviewing the implementing statistical agency<sup>1</sup> and field staff. The following data users then presented feedback on the complementary HIES modules:

- Economic activity: ILO (Michael Sharp);
- Food insecurity experience scale and food away from home: FAO (Nathalie Troubat);
- Partakers and stocks: SPC (Michael Sharp);
- Disability: UNICEF (Stanley Gwavuya);
- Fisheries: SPC (Michael Sharp);
- Consumer price index: SPC (Rens Hendriks);
- National accounts: PFTAC (Marcus Scheiblecker);
- Prevalence of undernourishment and diet composition: FAO (Nathalie Troubat);
- Poverty: University of Waikato (Prof. John Gibson) and World Bank (Kristen Kastelic).

18. Michael Sharp (SPC) briefed PSMB on the financial implications of adopting a recall methodology (in comparison to diary) for the collection of consumption data.

#### **Summary of PSMB recommendations relating to the RMI HIES Experiment**

19. Below is Michael Sharp's synthesis of the recommendations that were presented to PSMB in relation to the RMI HIES Experiment, specifically on whether:
- a. CAPI is an appropriate means for capturing data through HIES and in the context of the Pacific;
  - b. the new survey modules produce the data required by the user and are appropriate for inclusion in the core HIES module; and
  - c. the use of the recall method (versus diary) has any significant adverse implications for data quality and user requirements, including those for CPI, national accounts, poverty and nutrition analysis.

#### **Use of tablets to collect data**

20. Feedback from field staff indicated that CAPI was well assimilated.
21. The satellite phone was expensive and feedback from field staff indicated that it was ineffective.
22. The use of Survey Solutions CAPI software requires internet access to back up data. As such, there is risk of data loss in low-connectivity environments. It is, however, noted that the risk of data loss for paper-based or tablet-based storage is similar. It is also noted that internet connectivity is fairly widespread in the Pacific region, particularly in urban areas, and is increasing. Therefore, the risk of data loss through inability to back up data because of low connectivity will reduce in time.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

23. Despite the risk of data loss, the verification and validation checks, and the sequence patterns, that can be programmed into a CAPI system significantly improve data quality and interview flow.

### **Recommendation**

24. PSMB agreed that:

- i. CAPI is an appropriate means to capture data through HIES. The associated field work management, data validation and data transfer processes are likely to improve data quality in comparison to a HIES administered on paper.
- ii. switching from paper to tablet-based collections constitutes a methodological break and, therefore, a potential break in the data trend, as evidenced through the results of the RMI HIES experiment. The switch from collecting data using paper to using tablet-based forms therefore requires careful consideration. Should other methodological changes be made (e.g. changing from diary to recall to collect consumption data), they should be made once only and at the same time.

25. PSMB recommends that:

- iii. major methodological changes, such as switching from paper to tablet-based collection occur infrequently and that once the decision to make a major methodological change is made, the implementing PICT should maintain the new methodology for subsequent surveys so as not to break trends. Frequent methodological changes are discouraged.

### **Inclusion of complementary survey modules**

26. PSMB agreed that any decision to include additional modules in the HIES should be made by the country itself and be driven by data needs and funding availability. The country should also give due consideration to the 'appropriateness' of inclusion of additional modules and whether they are, in fact, fit for inclusion in the HIES or another survey.
27. The inclusion of the complementary survey modules described below is not considered to be a major methodological change. Should the country deem this data to be of priority, the below modules should be implemented as soon as possible, irrespective of whether CAPI/PAPI or diary/recall are adopted.

### **Stocks (only relevant when using a diary to collect food acquisition data through HIES)**

28. When capturing food consumption data using the diary, it is strongly advised to collect opening and closing food stocks before and after implementation of the two-week food acquisition diary.
29. The results of the RMI HIES experiment indicated that the Stocks Module was not implemented consistently or comprehensively. This is evidenced through the apparent net destocking over the two-week diary period. It is important that the implementation of the Stocks Module is well managed and that methodologies are developed to minimise the respondent burden (i.e. the 'invasiveness' of collecting food stocks) while collecting the main food items that households stock.

### **Recommendation**

30. PSMB recommended:

- i. that a Stocks Module is implemented when using a food acquisition diary in HIES. The Stocks Module should be developed sensibly so as to capture the most relevant food items and to minimise the invasiveness for respondents and time associated with collecting food stocks; and
- ii. improved training for, and monitoring of the implementation of, the Stocks Module.

## **Partakers**

31. The collection of meal partakers has implications for estimated dietary energy consumption and, therefore, data use in applications such as prevalence of undernourishment.
32. The results of the RMI HIES experiment indicated that the methodology of recalling the number of non-household member meal partakers, by age and sex, was problematic due to the mathematical complexity of calculating the number of meals for which partakers joined the household over the last 7 days. Additionally, the age range of partakers needs to be modified to allow for disaggregation of the population by <15 and 15+ years to enable partakers to be mapped to regional definitions of adult equivalences.

## ***Recommendation***

33. PSMB recommended
  - i. that a Partakers Module is developed and implemented as a core HIES module. The Partakers Module should be adopted when implementing any HIES methodology, including those using diary- or recall-based approaches to collecting food acquisition and consumption data.

## **Food away from home**

34. Food away from home contributes significantly to dietary energy consumption.
35. In the RMI HIES Experiment, the diary appeared to perform better than the recall Food away from Home Module.

## ***Recommendation***

36. PSMB recommended:
  - i. that an individual-level Food away from Home Module is developed and implemented as a core HIES module. The Food away from Home Module should be adopted when implementing any HIES methodology, including those using diary- or recall-based approaches to collecting food acquisition and consumption data.

## **Labour force**

37. The recently developed economic activity module performed well in producing data to report against a number of labour market indicators.

## ***Recommendation***

38. PSMB recommended:
  - i. all PICTs implement any data collection exercise on their labour market using the present Labour Force Module;
  - ii. all PICTs note and manage series breaks and ensure that national-level reporting requirements and data needs are met;
  - iii. ILO and SPC develop a minimal version of this Labour Force Module as soon as possible, to be reviewed by PSMB, for inclusion in the 2020 round of population censuses in the Pacific;
  - iv. ILO and SPC finalise the current Labour Force Module by considering the recommendations for improvement as described in the report (ref. Document 6).



### **Disability (Washington Group on Disability Statistics)**

39. The integration of the WG-6 set of questions in HIES presents a significant opportunity for disaggregated disability analysis. It also allows for reporting SDG indicators by disability status.
40. To use HIES data to report by disability status, specific sampling approaches are necessary to ensure a sufficient sample of the population with disabilities.

#### ***Recommendation***

41. PSMB recommended
  - i. that the WG-6 module be included as a core HIES and census module.

### **Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) Module**

42. The FIES Module is used for reporting against SDG Indicator 2.1.2.
43. Given that HIES is a consumption-oriented survey, it is a logical survey for inclusion of the FIES Module, which is an individual or household-level module consisting of eight questions.
44. The RMI HIES experiment indicated that further field worker training is required for administration of the FIES Module. The underperformance of the module can be attributed to limited training and possibly to the need to contextualise the module for the Pacific.

#### ***Recommendation***

45. PSMB recommended that:
  - i. the FIES Module should be incorporated as a core HIES module and should also be considered for inclusion in any nationally representative survey to allow for reporting against SDG Indicator 2.1.2;
  - ii. consideration of cultural adaptation of the module and development of Pacific-oriented resource materials, and improved training of field staff in implementing the module.

### **Use value of durables**

46. The collection of purchase price and year of acquisition (or life expectancy) of durable goods, and what you could sell the asset for today, was added to the HIES experiment. These data are used to estimate the depreciation of assets, which is included in the construction of consumption aggregates. They're also used for inequality and deprivation measurement.

#### ***Recommendation***

47. PSMB recommended:
  - i. including questions in HIES to collect estimations of the use value of durables, given the application of this information to poverty measurement and national accounts.

### **Anthropometrics (height and weight)**

48. Anthropometric data is used in calculating the prevalence of undernourishment (SDG Indicator 2.1.1). Collecting anthropometric data requires specialised training and the presence of all household members at the time of interview.

#### ***Recommendation***

49. PSMB recommended:

- i. identifying alternative sources of anthropometric data; the inclusion of a module that collects anthropometric information is the decision of the implementing PICT.

### **Use of diary or recall**

50. In situations where diaries are highly monitored, the RMI HIES experiment indicated that:

- a transition between diary and recall approaches need not have adverse implications for the use of HIES data for the following applications:
  - CPI,
  - national accounts,
  - poverty, and
  - food security and diet composition;
- low-monitored diaries yield inferior data quality;
- the cost of recall is markedly lower than the cost of diary.

### **Recommendation**

51. PSMB:

- i. agreed it is critical that NSOs are properly advised when deciding to move from a diary to a recall method, including how to accommodate the break in time series data;
- ii. in light of the cost savings, and the consistency and quality of data generated through use of recall in the RMI HIES experiment,<sup>2</sup> recommended that PICTs consider the option of shifting from diary to recall-based methodologies for the collection of consumption data;
- iii. recommended that PICTs not make the change until they are ready, and then embrace the change for all subsequent surveys (i.e. not switch back to diary for the next survey). Any transition must be suitably supported through training;
- iv. noted that there is still much to learn from the results of the RMI HIES experiment;
- v. recommended a HIES manual be developed following the RMI experiment;
- vi. noted the need to identify a venue for communication of the results of the RMI HIES experiment to PICTs.

### **Agenda item 5: Other matters**

#### **Issues for PSMB's next meeting**

52. Viliami Fifita mentioned he had presented a paper on poverty measurement to PSMB after the discussion at its May 2018 meeting.
53. Kristen Kastelic suggested (1) that analysis of monetary and non-monetary measures of poverty should be the focus of PSMB's next meeting.
54. The Chair said issues for the next meeting could include:
  - measurement analysis issues, including poverty analysis,
  - release of statistics, and

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<sup>2</sup> This is consistent with international best practice (e.g. food data collection in household consumption expenditure surveys).

- record access, which ILO has asked PSMB to consider.

55. It was agreed that Kristen Kastelic and John Gibson will put together some recommendations on monetary poverty measurement in advance of the next meeting.

56. Other issues for PSMB consideration include:

- reporting back on the formal analysis of the RMI HIES experiment (M. Sharp),
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) in 2020 (S. Gwavuya), and
- census, with several scheduled for 2020 in PICTs.

### **New Deputy Chair**

57. Noting that the Deputy Chair should be a Government Statistician, the Chair asked Viliami Fifita to consider taking up the position left vacant by the retirement of the Fiji Government Statistician.

### **Dates of next PSMB meeting**

58. The next meeting of PSMB will be on 28 and 29 October 2019 in Noumea, New Caledonia.

## **Annex 1: Terms of reference for the Sampling Subcommittee of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board**

### **AUTHORITY**

1. The PSMB Sampling Subcommittee has been established by the Pacific Statistics Methods Board to support the board to undertake its role. The PSMB has responsibility for terms of reference, membership and operation of the Subcommittee and has the ability to dissolve the Subcommittee. PSMB will regularly review the need for and operation of the Sampling Subcommittee.

### **ROLE**

2. The role of the PSMB Sampling Subcommittee is to provide expert advice to PSMB on survey sampling, and related issues, such as estimation. The Subcommittee will provide advice on both theoretical aspects of sampling as well as practical and operational considerations. In line with the purpose of the PSMB, the Subcommittee will aim to ensure best practice standards are developed that are fit for purpose for use in Pacific Island countries and territories.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

3. Membership will be determined by the PSMB. The PSMB will appoint a Chair for the Subcommittee from the membership of the PSMB. If the Subcommittee Chair ceases to be a member of PSMB then the position of Chair will be open until filled by the PSMB Chair. Other members are also appointed by the PSMB. It is not necessary that a member of the Subcommittee also be a member of PSMB.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **Meetings**

4. Meetings will be held as required, convened at the discretion of the Subcommittee Chair. The business of the Subcommittee may be progressed in meetings or may be progressed out of session through discussions among members. Meetings are generally expected to be no more than 60 minutes duration.

#### **Agenda and papers**

5. Agenda topics will be determined by the Subcommittee Chair, following suggestions from Subcommittee members, or by request from PSMB. As a small and 'fast moving' Subcommittee, it is not required that formal agenda be prepared ahead of meetings. Similarly, formal minutes are not required. It is the responsibility of the Subcommittee Chair to ensure that Subcommittee members are informed of relevant decisions or outcomes from Subcommittee meetings or other deliberations, which may be communicated through informal emails rather than through formal minutes of meetings. The Chair is similarly responsible for disseminating any relevant information to members before meetings (i.e. any discussion papers or similar material).

#### **Reporting**

6. The Subcommittee Chair will report on the progress and outcomes from the Subcommittee to the PSMB at regular PSMB meetings, or to the PSMB Chair on request.