

**TEN YEAR PACIFIC STATISTICS STRATEGY (TYPSS) Phase II**  
**11<sup>TH</sup> PACIFIC STATISTICS STEERING COMMITTEE (PSSC) MEETING**

Tanoa Plaza Hotel, Suva, Fiji Islands  
24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2015

**PSSC-11 Agenda Item 11.2**

**Meeting Paper Title: Official Statistics Programme at the University of the South Pacific**

**1. Purpose of Paper**

- To **share information** on Official Statistics Programme at the University of the South Pacific to improve regional statistical capacity;
- to **obtain a PSSC view** on activities pertaining to educational innovation and expansion of the existing programme to achieve Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS)
- to **propose areas** where USP can contribute to achieve outcomes of the PSSC Technical Working Groups; and
- to obtain **PSSC Decision on Recommendations**

**2. Background**

2.1. The Official Statistics Programme (OS) is one of the three programmes run by School of Economics at the University of the South Pacific (USP). Started in 2007 with the help of European Union funding, USP's OS programme is the only programme in the Pacific region that provide formal education on the principles, systems and methods involved in the compilation and analysis of the official statistics. Currently, USP OS programme offer certificate, diploma and undergraduate degree in OS.

2.2. USP OS programme contribute to the Pacific Islands countries (PICs) mainly through providing teaching and training to strengthen statistical capacity in the region. In the pacific context, it is very important because there is a need for timely, reliable and good quality statistics for efficient administration, good management and evidence-based decision making; improvements in the utilisation of national accounts, sampling survey methodologies, information for demographic and social policies and program purposes; and without adequate statistical evidence the impact of initiatives and projects cannot be monitored.

2.3. Our Official Statistics programs have recently been redesigned. The revised curriculum is in line with the growing demand for official statistics, statistical users, statisticians and data analysis experts in the region. It is an ideal program of study for those thinking of a career in official statistics and those working in National Statistical Offices. A wide range of courses are being offered in different teaching modes such as

face-to-face, distance and flexible learning, and on-line to make them more accessible to working officials and students.

### **3. Recent Developments**

#### **3.1. Course revisions**

**Initiative:** Early this year USP added two new courses in the Official Statistics and started revision of 6 existing courses based on expert recommendations from former chief executive of Australian Bureau of Statistics, Mr. Dennis Trewin. One course is fully developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and remaining 7 course revisions were initiated. Revision activities were generously funded by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). USP acknowledge contribution of ABS and UNFPA in initiating this activity.

**Outcome:** First draft of the revised course materials are prepared, and reviewed by Mr. Trewin. By end of this year, final versions will be ready to teach next year. A majority of revised courses are likely to be converted into face to face, print and online modes by the end of year 2015. All other remaining courses are expected to be converted in all modes by mid of the next year.

#### **3.2. Training Workshops for USP Staff, Students and NSO officials**

**Activities:** Two training workshops were conducted through OS programme, USP.

1. An UNFPA funded 6 days long intensive regional workshop on 'data analysis and report writing' was organized by the School of Economics Official Statistics Programme during July 6-July 11, 2015. A whole range of training on Software (STATA and Excel) was conducted along with emphasis on data analysis tools and report writing techniques. Participants included were 14 officials from Fiji Bureau of Statistics, one from each of the NSOs from Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and Cook Islands (total 5) and 15-20 OS students and School of Economics Staffs.
2. A workshop on 'data visualization and communication in the Pacific' was funded by Paris21 and jointly conducted by USP-SPC-Paris21 during November 2-4, 2015. Participants included were 6 officials from Fiji Bureau of Statistics, two from each of the NSOs from Samoa, PNG, Vanuatu and Cook Islands, one from Solomon Islands and 30 staff and students from USP. USP take this opportunity to thank both the partners Paris21 and SPC for conducting this workshop successfully.

**Outcomes:** Both of these workshops were highly successful in achieving goals and highly appreciated by participants.

#### **3.3. Promotion of OS programme in the region**

**Activities:** Programme Coordinator discussed way forward for OS programme with various stakeholders and promotional materials were disseminated. School of Economics OS promotional team visited around 55-60 schools covering more than 2000 students in various parts of Fiji.

**Outcomes:** Awareness was created about importance of official statistics programme and it was promoted that why this programme is important for evidence based decision making in the region.

### 3.4. Consultations regarding Postgraduate Studies in OS Programme

**Activity:** Programme Coordinator and Head of School visited Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and discussed graduate and postgraduate courses with various teams/departments. ABS funded this visit.

**Outcome:** Based on consultations, we now have some clarity over the types of courses and course contents that are required to offer in PG studies.

### 3.5 Teaching resources

**Activity:** School of Economics has 50 licenses for STATA under OS programme for teaching statistical data analysis purposes. USP also has sufficient licenses for SPSS, Eviews and other software for statistical data analysis purposes. USP also purchased books for OS students to use in the library.

**Outcomes:** Students will have preferential access to learning resources that were not previously available at USP. We can also help NSOs to analyse their data at the USP upon request. Better resources also strengthen our position in conducting training workshops individually as well as jointly with PSSC members.

## 4. Key Considerations

### 4.1 USP'S TWG Contributions:

- Being learning and teaching institution, USP has comparative advantages in the areas of statistical methodology, data based research, and networking among researchers. Thus, USP can contribute proposes to achieve outcomes of the relevant PSSC Technical Working Groups
- If required, USP can also provide venue for TWG meetings for PSSC partners at the minimal cost

## 5. Key Issues and Challenges

- i. **Launching Postgraduate Studies in OS:** Postgraduate studies in OS are approved by USP but are not offered due to lack of staff and other resources. USP understands that PG in OS is very important in building statistical capacity in the region

- ii. **Teaching Staff Shortage:** There is clearly a shortage of specialist teaching staff dedicated to OS programme due principally to shortage of funds and is an area where OS Programme Coordinator would like to explore further with PSSC and TYPSS Partners
- iii. **Expansion of the Programme to increase enrolments:** Enrolment in OS programme has increased by 30% in last 2-3 years. But that increase is not enough to make this programme achieve its goal and sustain. USP is looking other ways to expand this programme in other countries in the region including in PNG.

## **6. Key Recommendations**

**6.1 PSSC and TYPSS Partners to consider a request from OS Programme Coordinator for funding to fund one teaching position in the Official Statistics Programme at the USP:** Sufficient number of teaching staffs at the USP within OS programme will help to design and teach complete set of courses at the Undergraduate and Postgraduate level. With this help, Postgraduate Studies can be started quickly. This will ensure sustainability of the programme needed to meet growing demand for trained official statisticians in the region. If PSSC agrees to consider and TYPSS Partners indicates openness, OS Programme Coordinator can start the process of sourcing funds by circulating a Concept Paper including Costs

**6.2 PSSC and TYPSS Partners to agree to more direct involvement with OS Programme Coordinator on statistical training workshops, data analysis and other technical assistance:** This will not only help members to reduce their cost of training but training can also include OS students and USP staff

**6.3 PSSC to consider USP participation as a member in Technical Working Groups (TWGs):** considering proposed areas of contribution, USP is interested in participating as a member in the TWG Pacific Surveys Future and TWG IT, and any other TWG that by be formed in the future relating to areas of Methodology, Data Collection/Survey, Dissemination etc.