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1st – 2nd June, 2016

PSSC-12 Agenda 9.2

Meeting Paper Title: Report on Workshop on Agenda 2030 and SIDS: Strengthening Statistical Capacity and Readiness

1. Purpose of Paper

- Report on the Agenda 2030 Workshop

2. Background

Please refer to Annex I

3. Key Considerations

Please refer to Annex I

4. Key Recommendations

- 4.1. PSSC-12 and Partners to note the workshop report
- 4.2. PSSC agrees that progress in the TYPSS be compared each November against the objectives outlined in this report in section 3

5. Annex

Annex I: Agenda 2030 and the SIDS: Strengthening Statistical Capacity and Readiness

Annex I_PSSC-12 Agenda 9.2

Agenda 2030 and the SIDS: Strengthening Statistical Capacity and Readiness

Brief report on the discussions May 19-20 at PARIS21 Workshop

27 May, 2016

1. Background

Countries from Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS), Caribbean, and Pacific regions have identified in the SAMOA Pathway their priority areas for achieving sustainable development. These include, among others, economic and social development, energy, transport, consumption and production, food security, water, health and non-communicable diseases, climate change, disaster risk reduction, oceans and seas, forests, biodiversity, and management of chemicals and waste. SIDS countries are likewise committed to implement Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as articulated in its 17 goals (SDGs). The breadth of activity spanned by the SDGs necessitates statistical activity on a scale that would require a seriously disproportionate share of national resources of any of the small island developing states. For some SDGs, we can see well in advance that there are practical limitations to the range of technical solutions that could be adopted.

An important statistical concern of SIDS related to these Agenda is the capacity and readiness of their statistical systems to produce the data requirements for monitoring and evaluation while ensuring a harmonized and coordinated approach for implementation of both agenda. Although their general concerns have much in common, the statistical systems of SIDS vary considerably in terms of size, available resources and technical capacity. There are large differences in the domestic and international institutional environment and the local political context that supports statistical work, as well as data availability, among others. Their capacity and readiness to address the data needed to monitor global, regional and national goals would largely depend on these factors.

Realizing the constraints facing SIDS to fully comply with monitoring these new Agenda and ensuring it is aligned with their own country priorities, this report reviews the current state of SIDS statistical systems – their capacity and readiness – along with what lessons to be learned from previous experiences on MDGs and best practices in place that must be built on and continued. It presents a strategy for strengthening statistics in SIDS.

2. Commonalities and differences among the Small Island Developing States

There are significant differences in SIDS regions in the nature and extent of economic and political integration, which is more apparent in Caribbean than in Pacific and AIMS. This has resulted in the Caribbean states having a stronger user base in economic statistics, while the Pacific experience in regional harmonisation of population statistics appears more extensive than in the other regions. Economic and political integration sharpens the focus by the users of statistics not only on the scope but also the timeliness, harmonisation and reliability of statistical measures, and their accessibility. Where the expectations from users themselves are not strong and regularly asserted, neither the pressures of efficiency nor the meeting of

artificially imposed deadlines from international agencies can have the same impact on all these dimensions of statistical quality.

Information and communications technologies have become a powerful basis for leveraging off work of others. Technology has improved considerably the statistical collection and dissemination processes (e.g., use of PDA for surveys, admin-based data sharing, and data capture using innovative tools, GIS mapping). There is a need to share activities that keep SIDS abreast of opportunities from low cost tools and their evolving enhancements into estimation and derivation of recognised measures. This necessitates constant surveying of opportunities that could be shared between SIDS, and there is an urgent need for this to be done now. Collective approaches to technological innovation is vital for capacity building but it can be put at risk where the development of country-specific solutions in isolation becomes prevalent, and this investment in local solutions is at the cost of common solutions.

3. A common focus for the development of official statistics among the SIDS countries

The common focus for the development of official statistics in the SIDS countries is simple and stark. The regional leadership of SIDS countries need to develop official statistics by the following means;

Articulate a regional development pathway, and its fit with external agenda (e.g., SDG, IMF structural adjustment policy)

- *Make transparent the tensions between the global view of what statistics to collect and how it should be used for policy versus national view of what relevant statistics to collect to inform existing national concerns*
- *Reconcile the SAMOA Pathway and SDGs*
- *Determine the collective place and interests of SIDS for regional advocacy*
- *Institutionalise co-ordination among ministries in establishing statistical needs and priorities*
- *Lift the continuity/sustainability/predictability of funding for statistics*
- *Broker capacity supplementation in SIDS, for those countries and areas of statistics where capacity development is impractical because of size.*

Shift resources from sources to analysis

- *Transform operational processes*
- *Extend statistical sources particularly to administrative records*
- *Develop and share standards for MOUs, legislation, policy agreements*

- *Strengthen quality assurance practices*

Speed up the capacity to harmonise statistical sources

- *Adaption of international statistical standards facilitates integration and comparisons at detailed level*
- *International standards bring local legitimacy to statistics*

Lift share of data accessible by users

- *Deliver statistics in ways relevant to users, extend analysis*

Increase analyzability of statistical sources, especially by subnational area

- *Increase geospatial identification, in order to shift the boundary towards generating more subnational statistics, enabling local community information to be integrated with official statistics and frameworks*
- *Link national research institutions to NSOs*
- *Draw on partners' support within the country*

Make sure people know what exists

- *Deepen reach into decision-making contexts*
- *Co-ordination among ministries in establishing needs*
- *Develop case studies of significant applications of statistics to policy and community actions (Vanuatu cyclone)*

Extend the legal authority to embrace all dimensions of job

- *Advocacy for trust*

4. The experiences of the Small Island Developing States

There are four main themes to the evaluation that is being prepared after the Paris workshop. These are:

1. The general situation of SIDS statistical systems in responding to demands, evaluated by assessing experience in change over the most recent five years.
2. How much do the special characteristics of SIDS countries require solutions that are distinct from those relevant to most countries, and how distinct from each other are the SIDS Regions, and the countries within each SIDS region?
3. Regional level influences and responsiveness to the statistical agenda, and the form, strengths and weaknesses, and impact so far for SIDS of regional statistical leadership
4. Across the SIDS group, and within particular regions, what levers have proven to be effective drivers of change in SIDS? How far are these levers specific to SIDS countries?

5. Summary of the general situation of SIDS statistical systems in responding to demands

The current level of innovation and development is quite mixed and uneven. Recognition of the importance of using administrative records more effectively has been recognised as a significant goal for some time. Despite this, little progress has been made beyond well-established areas of taxation, external trade, immigration and civil registration, and even this is patchy. Having the legislative authority to hold such records is limited, although a few countries (Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, ?????) have updated their statistical legislation to enable this. Even where there is statutory support, the need for robust agreements needs to be supported by common practices. Administrative data quality is often poor, data management very weak and meta data is usually not up to the standards need for official statistics. These issues will limit the wider application of such sources despite their availability. The Pacific countries have completed a major initiative for Civil and Vitals Registration statistics with a consortium of development partners, demonstrating that the impediments noted can be overcome.

The key changes to SIDS statistical systems between 2010-2015 have involved the adoption of new technologies, geospatial initiatives across population, agriculture and environmental statistics, harmonisation of economic statistics and extension of macro-economic frameworks, long term planning and staging of survey and census programmes in regions.

The achievements across economic, social population, environmental statistics have differed among the SIDS countries. The Caribbean countries have had to face the demands for statistics that result from economic integration. In particular, harmonisation of economic statistics is critical to the advancement of macro-economic frameworks including the system of national accounts, and economic integration provides a focus for the instruments and practices that deliver this. Among the Pacific countries, the connection between macro-economic statistics and policy is quite varied and less structured, whereas a high level of harmonisation of methods, practices and staging of statistical sources has occurred with population statistics, so that resources have been applied with a high degree of effectiveness and consistency.

Of the successful initiatives in SIDS over the MDG period of the region which could be sustained in the SDG era, most importantly has been the adoption of new technologies. There is much further potential for broadening the take up of new technologies, and also to expedite ways in which SIDS countries become aware of what has become available from a rich mix of resources developed to support official statistics. Scanning for new opportunities could be shared across countries and managed much more collaboratively than at present, and the trialling and initial implementation of new systems done jointly. This information also needs to be made known to development partners and those providing technical assistance. In the Pacific and the Caribbean, there have been successful moves to integrate the content of social and labour force surveys, achieving a much improved balancing of cost, respondent load and the scope of subject areas surveyed. The geospatial

analysis has increased significantly, not only in population statistics but also agriculture. Address registers have been built up in several countries, leading the way to the potential development of population registers and the transformation of population estimates between censuses, which is currently quite fraught given the population dynamics of island populations and their multiple connections with other places for work, long term residence and education.

6. Background note: The SAMOA Pathway and SIDS collaboration in implementing the SDGs

Both the SAMOA Pathway and the SDGs recognize data and statistics as an important enabling factor to inform policies and programs and in monitoring the achievement of sustainable development. The SAMOA Pathway document includes data and statistics as one of the elements under the means of implementation. Meanwhile, Goal 17 of the SDGs includes data, monitoring and accountability under systemic issues as one of the targets.

The SAMOA Pathway was developed during the third international conference of SIDS. It recognises the need for SIDS to influence global agenda by defining what is relevant for them (e.g. informal economy, health, poverty, nutrition, employment). Sustaining statistical capacity building efforts has been difficult for most SIDS, and the conference report noted that progress across SIDS countries had been uneven. The report drew particular attention to climate change and the frequency of natural disaster:

“15. We recognize that the adverse impacts of climate change compound existing challenges in small island developing States and have placed additional burdens on their national budgets and their efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals. We note the views expressed by small island developing States that the financial resources available to date have not been adequate to facilitate the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation projects, ... “

“16. We note that small island developing States consider that the level of resources has been insufficient to ensure their capacity to respond effectively to multiple crises, and that without the necessary resources, they have not fully succeeded in building capacity, strengthening national institutions according to national priorities, gaining access and developing renewable energy and other environmentally sound technologies, creating an enabling environment for sustainable development or fully integrating the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy into national plans and strategies. “

Given the capacity and challenges of the mix of important indicators embraced by the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway, recommendations on what to prioritize as important indicators for SIDS given their specificities, capacity and challenges. The “Milan Declaration on Enhancing Food Security and Climate Adaptation in Small Island Developing States, in the framework of the SAMOA Pathway” released by the United Nations in October 2015 provided strong pointers to the collective priorities of small island states. The Milan declaration noted explicit concerns in the following areas:

- a. *progress in SIDS food security, health and nutrition will be essential to achieve the goal of overall wellness for SIDS people and communities;*
- b. *the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction was of particular importance;*
- c. *the need to realize sustainable growth based around an ocean economy. This would require actions to address ocean acidification through scientific cooperation; combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds; sustainably manage and protect coastal ecosystems and achieve healthy and productive oceans;*
- d. *for SIDS to maximize benefits from the oceans and seas, they need to sustainably use their fisheries and other marine living resources and develop fisheries and other marine-related industries, enabling them;*
- e. *the need to support SIDS in improving the management and use of natural resources, promote integrated rural development, adapt to climate change and build resilience to extreme weather and climatic events.*

There needs to be a comprehensive mapping of the priority areas of the SAMOA Pathway with the SDGs. Without this, the opportunity to highlight well in advance the likelihood of achievement of particular SDGs may be missed, and expectations between the SIDS and their development partners will not be well aligned. The Samoa pathway provides strong focus for interregional exchanges and leverage from diverse experiences. Initial indications are that SDG issues are likely to be common across SIDS, enabling the build-up of a community of interest and shared activity for resolution and setting expectations early. There is much to be gained from the shared experiences of the SIDS countries. At a country level within regions, South-South collaboration has expanded the resources available for development, and provides a model that can be extended to span the different SIDS regions