

**SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY****THIRTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE  
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**  
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 16-19 November 2004)**THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGIONAL MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT**

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

**PURPOSE**

To inform CRGA about SPC's involvement in helping PICTs operationalise the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Pacific and in the production of the MDG regional report.

**BACKGROUND**

In the second strategic priority mentioned in SPC's 2003-2005 Corporate Plan, SPC emphasised its intention to strive towards "*Achieving the international community's development goals in the Pacific*". In doing so SPC proposed making available a wide range of expertise (particularly from the Social Resources Division) to member countries and territories, with particular emphasis on assisting countries that endorsed the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000, and had thus committed to implementing the Millennium Development Goals process. In conjunction with Programme Heads, the Director of SPC's Social resources Division explored various strategies and options for providing assistance to facilitate MDG integration into national plans and policies.

At the regional level, SPC took part in most of the regional initiatives aimed at advocating the MDG approach, and these benefited from SPC's long association with PIC statistical systems. At the Pacific Regional Workshop on MDGs held in Nadi, Fiji 17-21 March 2003 and jointly organised by the Forum Secretariat, UNDP, ADB and SPC, the MDGs were promoted, the capacities of national statistical information systems to respond to the challenges of the MDG approach was assessed, the consultation process with countries launched and a work frame and timeframe identified for the production of national reports.

At that early stage, SPC was eager to involve territories in the process, and a number of them were represented at the meeting. Delegates identified several indicators that, once customised, could be integrated into the territories' planning processes.

Following this meeting, SPC decided to conduct a case study in one PIC to promote the MDGs and assess assumptions about the capacity of NSOs and other national agencies to produce relevant MDG-related data. Findings were tabled during the 13<sup>th</sup> Regional Meeting of Heads of Statistics in September 2003, so that NSOs could comment on and suggest ways to improve this approach.

The case study was conducted in Vanuatu in August 2003 in close cooperation with Vanuatu authorities. The SPC Statistics and Demography/Population Programmes led the sessions with a UNFPA representative actively participating. An initial meeting brought together all the agencies producing socioeconomic and environmental data and follow-up visits were made to key departments such as Education, Health, Women, and Environment where more thorough assessments were conducted and where broad technical assistance on capacity to produce the required statistics were identified.

Drawing from the Vanuatu experience, SPC decided to establish a multi-disciplinary team of experts which, with the assistance of other agencies such as UNDP or UNFPA, could intervene at countries' request to assist in development of the MDG approach, and as a first step in the production of the first national report. This team, known as the SPC MDG Task Force, has been meeting regularly and has work visits scheduled for Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

At the same time, following the Nadi Meeting, CROP and international agencies decided to establish a UN/CROP MDG working group aimed at coordinating assistance to countries, focussing first on development of the reporting process.

All countries were supposed to have forwarded their MDG national reports to the UN Secretary-General by the end of this year. In May 2004 the UN/CROP MDG working group assessing MDG report progress in the region realised that out of the 14 Pacific Island states, only four would be in a position to report by the set date. It was then decided (and this was endorsed by the Finance Economic Minister's meeting), that in order for all countries to be ready to report by the deadline, a regional report would be produced (with input from national statistics and planning offices). SPC was entrusted by the UN/CROP MDG working group with the production of this report and UNDP agreed to fund it.

In contrast to the national reports that were supposed to customise targets and indicators, the regional report looks at the internationally agreed set of goals, targets and indicators on which the countries had been asked to report. SPC conducted this work over a three-month period with constant UNDP support and the collaboration of NSOs, other national statistic agencies, UN and CROP agencies. A final draft of the report was reviewed by delegates of the countries concerned by the report at a meeting that was held in Nadi, Fiji, in September 2004.

Despite pending issues regarding data accuracy, this report provides a comprehensive picture of where the region stands in key areas of its development. It is a document that should prove to be very valuable for anyone involved in development in the region. It was produced with a view to encouraging countries to begin the process of producing their national reports without any further delay. The report demonstrates that SPC has a clear lead in the provision of technical assistance to countries for development of the MDG approach, in particular through the PRISM data bank and other expertise available at SPC.

The process of compiling the reports involved the 15 countries, all CROP and UN agencies. Internally, many programmes made major contributions to the report, and the quality of the cooperation between SPC and UNDP staff involved in the project needs to be highlighted. Extracts from the regional report are given below to provide background information and a summary of some key findings..

## INTRODUCTION

### THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The United Nations Millennium Declaration, made in September 2000, was a powerful call to action by the international community that built on the foundation laid by a series of global conferences held in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

The Declaration (UN 2000) states that

*We recognize that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.*

The Declaration further recognises that the central challenge facing the world today is

*to ensure that globalisation becomes a positive force for all the world's people ... only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based on our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalisation be made fully inclusive and equitable.*

The Millennium Declaration marked a strong commitment to the right to development, peace and security, gender equality, the eradication of the many dimensions of poverty, and sustainable human development.

Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with associated targets and quantifiable indicators, were developed from the Declaration as a means of realising the objectives it sets forth. The indicators built upon other global indicators developed in response to previous global conferences. The goals, targets and indicators were presented by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the UN General Assembly in September 2001 in the "Road Map Towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration" (UN 2001).

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

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<sup>1</sup> These include the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 1992; International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo 1994; Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995; and the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), New York 1999. For a full listing see UN 2004b Annex 4.

The MDGs and their associated targets and indicators are more than simply a concise restatement of laudable international goals; they constitute a test of political will, a challenge to the world to build stronger partnerships. Meeting the MDGs requires commitment on the part of the developing countries – which will have to undertake policy reforms and strengthen governance – while at the same time necessitating action from the developed world in the form of new aid commitments, equitable trading rules and debt relief. By setting specific, measurable targets the MDGs offer the world both a reason and a means to accelerate the pace of development.

As stated in the Declaration, the MDGs represent an effort “to create an environment — at national and global levels alike — which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty”. It is hoped that commitment to the achievement of these goals will help to mobilise partners and resources; initiate pro-poor policy reforms, institutional change and budget reallocation; and improve monitoring of social indicators. Much of the work required to achieve the MDGs is already underway but demands greater focus and a renewed sense of urgency.

## THE PACIFIC REGION

The Pacific Islands region is distinguished by its geography and environment as well as its unique cultures and social traditions. The 14 Pacific Island countries (PICs) and one territory covered by this report — comprising Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu — are widely dispersed over a large geographical area. They differ significantly in size, population, and resource endowments and development constraints, but nevertheless share a number of development challenges.

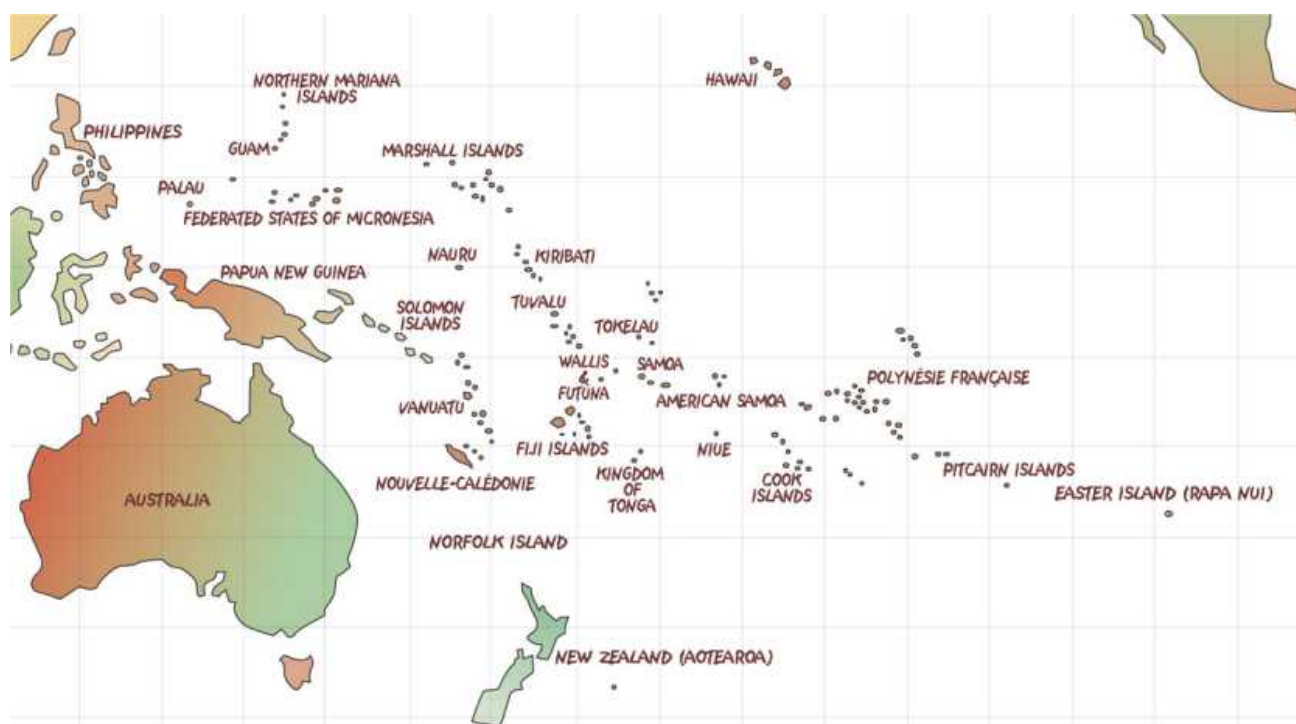
**Table I.1 Pacific Islands Population**

| Country or territory | Last census | Population as counted at last census | Mid-year population estimate 2004 (a) | Mid-year population estimate 2015 (a) | Land area (km <sup>2</sup> ) | Population density (people/km <sup>2</sup> ) circa 2004 (b) | Estimated annual pop. growth rate 2004-2015 (%) (c) |
|----------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|---|
| Cook Islands         | 2001        | 18,027                               | 14,000                                | 12,100                                | 237                          | 59  | -1.3  |
| FSM                  | 2000        | 107,008                              | 112,700                               | 129,000                               | 701                          | 161   | 1.2   |
| Fiji Islands         | 1996        | 775,077                              | 836,000                               | 891,100                               | 18,272                       | 46  | 0.7   |
| Kiribati             | 2000        | 84,494                               | 93,100                                | 119,700                               | 811                          | 115   | 2.3   |
| Marshall Islands     | 1999        | 50,840                               | 55,400                                | 66,100                                | 181                          | 306   | 1.6   |
| Nauru                | 2002        | 10,065                               | 10,100                                | 11,300                                | 21                           | 481   | 1.0   |
| Niue                 | 2001        | 1,788                                | 1,600                                 | 1,200                                 | 259                          | 6   | -3.8  |
| Palau                | 2000        | 19,129                               | 20,700                                | 25,900                                | 488                          | 42  | 2.0   |
| PNG                  | 2000        | 5,190,786                            | 5,695,300                             | 7,236,200                             | 462,840                      | 12  | 2.2   |
| Samoa                | 2001        | 176,710                              | 182,700                               | 201,900                               | 2,935                        | 62  | 0.9   |
| Solomon Islands      | 1999        | 409,042                              | 460,100                               | 589,700                               | 28,370                       | 16  | 2.3   |
| Tokelau              | 2001        | 1,537                                | 1,500                                 | 1,500                                 | 12                           | 125   | 0.0   |
| Tonga                | 1996        | 97,784                               | 98,300                                | 95,400                                | 650                          | 151   | -0.3  |
| Tuvalu               | 2002        | 9,561                                | 9,600                                 | 10,000                                | 26                           | 369   | 0.4   |
| Vanuatu              | 1999        | 186,678                              | 215,800                               | 289,400                               | 12,190                       | 18  | 2.7   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         |             |                                      | <b>7,806,900</b>                      | <b>9,680,500</b>                      | <b>527,993</b>               | <b>15</b>   |   |

Source: SPC 2004.

- Notes: a) Population projections for 2004 and 2015 and projected age-sex pyramids are based on the latest available census results. In some cases the latest census was collected too recently for fertility, mortality and migration estimates to be available. In such instances the total count from the latest census is shown, but the previous census has been used as the basis for projections. This may result in apparent discrepancies between census population totals and estimated population totals in some cases. All projections and estimates, except for Fiji Islands, are SPC estimates. The estimated smaller population sizes in 2015 than in 2004 for the Cook Islands, Niue and Tonga are based on recent SPC projections, drawing on extrapolations (medium-growth assumption) of recent international migration trends from these island countries.
- b) All population density estimates are based on 2004 population estimates.
- c) Average annual growth rates are derived from the most recent SPC population estimates and projections – see note a).

The Pacific setting is significantly different from most of the rest of the world. No two PICs have a common land boundary, and many are separated by thousands of kilometres of ocean. Some countries span a distance of several thousand kilometres. Although the land area of most PICs is very small all have vast marine areas, and most rely heavily on marine resources for both subsistence uses and economic development. Some PICs have extensive forest resources but most of the commercially exploitable timber has already been harvested in the region. The terrestrial flora and fauna of PICs is highly susceptible to disturbance, and the region has a high number of threatened and endangered species.



**Figure I.1 The Pacific Islands**

The overall population remains predominantly rural, but urbanisation is rapid across the region, and seven of the 15 PICs have over 40% of their population living in urban areas. Despite very low cash incomes in some countries, poverty has historically not been a significant issue in the Pacific due to the availability of subsistence resources and the strength of social networks. Poverty and income disparity are emerging concerns, however, and Pacific Island economies face many constraints to achieving sustainable growth, including their small size, remote locations and geographic dispersal.

Pacific Island cultures are highly diverse, with over 800 languages currently in use in the countries covered by this report. The significant cultural and political diversity of the Pacific Islands is an important aspect of the region's unique identity, but can function as a barrier to realisation of human rights. There is a need to understand and work through this issue, so that human rights become fully accepted and integral to Pacific Island societies. Rights-based violations are common, but there are very few organisations in place to monitor these violations. Most Pacific constitutions provide for a Bill of Rights chapter, and all PICs have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and most the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Many have not ratified a number of first generation human rights instruments,<sup>2</sup> but there is now a concerted effort by Pacific Island countries to comply with the human rights agreements that they have ratified and to meet their reporting obligations. Although the full realization of economic, social and cultural rights requires far more than achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Pacific Island countries have accepted that achieving the MDGs is an important step towards that end. The right to health care, education and a decent standard of living are closely linked to long-term economic growth and institutional reform; most importantly, these rights depend on the resolve and commitment of individual countries to setting and working towards their own benchmarks for achievement.

The prevalence of infectious diseases varies across the Pacific region, but HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria all impose significant health burdens in some countries at present. The high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections increases the risk of a significant HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region. In addition to infectious diseases, most PICs also face an increasing disease burden from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, ischaemic heart disease and cardiovascular disease. The incidence of certain NCD risk factors (such as obesity and tobacco use) are among the highest in the world. This "double burden" of infectious and noncommunicable disease impacts on the health of individuals and populations and has the potential to significantly affect broader social and economic development as well.

A number of security-related issues serve to threaten achievement of the region's development priorities, including achievement of the MDGs. These threats include ethnic and social tensions, land disputes, socio-economic disparities, the quality of governance and the erosion of cultural values. In addressing these issues an important priority for most countries is ensuring effective governance. There is a general acceptance in the region that in order to ensure good government there must be strong political will, more effective independent offices, transparent and accountable financial management arrangements, a stronger and socially responsible private sector, a more robust media, adequate civic education for the public and increased participation of civil society in national development processes. There has been increased national and international support for strengthening governance systems, and in many countries a strengthening of local government mechanisms, as well as community empowerment.

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<sup>2</sup> These instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UHDR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

## **ENHANCED REGIONAL COOPERATION**

Despite their differences, PICs share many common interests, and there has historically been a high degree of regional cooperation. Formal regional cooperation is coordinated through the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), which is a high-level advisory body made up of the heads of the region's 10 primary intergovernmental organisations.<sup>3</sup> A number of regular (in some cases annual, others biannual or triennial) regional meetings<sup>4</sup> are held at which the work of PICs and CROP organisations is reviewed and coordinated; in some cases these meetings provide direct input to annual meetings of Pacific heads of state (the Forum Leaders). There is also recognition by Pacific Island governments of the important role of civil society organisations as partners in the implementation of MDG commitments.

Important initiatives that have been developed at the regional level through existing cooperative mechanisms have focussed on a number of important sectors. Trade and economic cooperation-related agreements include the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement and the South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement; education initiatives include the Forum Basic Education Action Plan 2001. Gender disparity and empowerment of women has been addressed through the Pacific Platform for Action, while examples in the health sector include the regional strategy on HIV/AIDS and the Tonga Commitment to Promote Healthy Lifestyles and Supportive Environments. Environmental issues have been addressed through numerous initiatives, such as the 2003-2007 Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the Pacific Region.

The commitment of Pacific Island leaders to cooperation and their continuing agreement regarding the path of development for their countries was recently reaffirmed through the Auckland Declaration,<sup>5</sup> in which leaders adopted the following vision:

Leaders believe the Pacific region can, should and will be a region of peace, harmony, security and economic prosperity, so that all its people can lead free and worthwhile lives. We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed. We seek a Pacific region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values, and for its defence and promotion of human rights. We seek partnerships with our neighbours and beyond to develop our knowledge, to improve our communications and to ensure a sustainable economic existence for all.

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<sup>3</sup> CROP is chaired by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). Other members comprise: Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), University of the South Pacific (USP), South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), and Fiji School of Medicine.

<sup>4</sup> Regular meetings are held addressing a number of sectors including: economics, health, fisheries, agriculture and forestry, environment, education and tourism.

<sup>5</sup> PIFS 2004e.



To achieve this vision and overcome the challenges facing the region, leaders have concluded that significant changes and improvements are needed in how development is pursued. The proposed Pacific Plan, which is under development by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in cooperation with other CROP organisations, at the request of Pacific Island leaders, is intended to create stronger links between the countries of the region, and will propose concrete plans for the enhancement of economic growth and sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> The proposed plan will consider options for improving regional cooperation, and will closely examine:

- means by which to secure increased levels of sustainable returns to the Pacific from all regional cooperative mechanisms, through the incorporation of good governance and security considerations in all sectors and at all levels;
- ways to cost-effectively meet common responsibilities and provide services (such as common regional reporting on international obligations, agreed regional policy frameworks, and regional coordination of development partners); and
- means by which to successfully implement regional cooperation at the national level.

The concept of the proposed Pacific Plan is consistent with the values and principles of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which emphasises freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility in upholding these values. In order to translate these values into actions, the Declaration identifies key objectives in development, governance, peace, security and human rights that are critical for achieving the MDGs. These values are in turn consistent with development priorities in the Pacific Islands region.

#### **MDG REPORTING AND RELATED ACTIVITIES IN THE PACIFIC**

It is the intention of the United Nations that every developing and transitional country produce at least one country MDG report by the end of 2004, in time for the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the MDG process in 2005. Several PICs are in the process of preparing national MDG reports (see table below). National MDG reports provide a situation analysis relative to the MDGs and development and can assist in the setting of national strategies to achieve certain development targets over the next 10 years. Furthermore, MDG reports are tools to assess the effectiveness of policies and to show whether countries have progressed. As such they can help governments move forward and improve development performance.

The Pacific Islands Regional MDG Report serves a similar function at the regional level, which is particularly appropriate in the Pacific region due to the high degree of regional cooperation on development-related issues. The report is intended to supplement the national reports that will be prepared, and to ensure that all PICs are represented in the Secretary-General's 2005 report. This report is the sixth regional report to be prepared, and the first to focus on the Pacific.

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<sup>6</sup> See PIFS 2004; EPG 2004.



**Table 1.2 Pacific Island Country Status on MDG Reporting**

|                      | <b>Task force</b> | <b>Government focal point</b>                         | <b>Non-state actor</b>                                     | <b>Reporting in 2004</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------|---|--|--------------------------|
| Cook Is              | ✓                 | Office of the Prime Minister                          | Cook Islands Association of Non Governmental Organisations | ✓                        |
| Fiji Is <sup>1</sup> | ✗                 | Planning  | Forum of Non-State Actors                                  | ✓                        |
| FSM                  | ✓                 | Department of Health, Education and Social Affairs    | <i>to be confirmed</i>                                     | ✗                        |
| Kiribati             | ✗                 | Ministry of Finance and Economic Development          |  | ✗                        |
| Marshall Is          | (late 2004)       | Economic Policy, Planning and Statistics Office       |  | ✗                        |
| Nauru                | ✗                 |   |  | ✗                        |
| Niue                 | ✓                 | Economic Planning and Policy Unit                     | <i>to be confirmed</i>                                     | ✗                        |
| Palau                | ✓                 | Office of Planning and Statistics                     |  | ✗                        |
| PNG <sup>2</sup>     | ✓                 | Department of National Planning and Rural Development |  | ✓                        |
| Samoa                | ✓                 | Ministry of Finance                                   | Samoa Umbrella Non Government Organisations                | ✓                        |
| Solomon Is           | ✓                 | Department of Planning                                | Development Services Exchange                              | ✓                        |
| Tokelau              | ✗                 | Planning  |  | <i>to be confirmed</i>   |
| Tonga                | ✓                 | Department of Planning                                | Langafonua 'A Fefine Tonga                                 | ✓                        |
| Tuvalu               | ✗                 | Economic Research and Policy Division                 | Tuvalu Association of Non Government Organisations         | ✓                        |
| Vanuatu              | ✓                 | Department of Economic and Sector Planning            | Vanuatu Association of Non Government Organisations        | ✓                        |

<sup>1</sup> Fiji has an MDG report Steering Committee comprising government representatives and UNDP, which regularly reports to nine Summit Working Groups that include government, NGOs and the private sector.

<sup>2</sup> In PNG two NGOs were represented on the national Steering Committee: the National Council of Women and Conservation Melanesia.

A number of countries have undertaken activities to integrate the MDGs into their national planning frameworks, while others have embarked on a range of advocacy initiatives. Countries have also begun the process of preparing national reports. These various activities are illustrative of the growing commitment to MDGs in the region. The process of preparing the regional report increased awareness of the importance of developing improved indicators to measure development outcomes, and of the need to enhance statistical collections.

*National Experiences in Implementing the MDGS in the Pacific*

Approaches to the MDG process vary across the region, but all the countries that have taken significant steps to implement the MDGs have reported positively on their experience.

- In Samoa, 85% of the funds directed at the implementation of the MDG national advocacy programme were directed to NGOs. In addition to conducting numerous advocacy activities, the NGOs produced a “shadow report”. Although some of their conclusions differed from those developed by the government, the report has been accepted and many of the recommendations are being incorporated into Samoa’s National MDG Report. As a consequence, the partnership between the government and NGOs has been strengthened, and the capacity of NGOs enhanced.
- In Fiji the MDG process has been integrated into the mid-term review of Fiji’s Strategic Development Plan. This has enabled Fiji to incorporate and streamline measurable performance and outcome indicators, and integrate existing information requirements with the MDGs. Fiji established a Steering Committee for development of its national MDG report, comprising government representatives and UNDP, which reported regularly to nine Summit Working Groups that included government, NGOs and the private sector.
- In the Cook Islands the MDGs have played a crucial role in the development of a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) for the period 2005-2025. In this process the MDGs played a key role in helping to define a vision and strategic direction for the NSDS. The MDG consultations provided an opportunity to engage all Cook Islanders in a dialogue over development issues, including those living overseas. Targets, goals, timelines and monitoring processes for the MDGs and NSDS were developed through a collaborative process involving government, NGOs and the private sector.
- In PNG, the MDG report preparation process resulted in a two-tiered report: one comprehensive report for “in-country” use, with the express purpose of identifying priority areas of development for provinces as directed by the MDG Steering Committee, and a second “summary” version for submission to the UN. The comprehensive report is already being used in-country. MDGs 1–5 have been disaggregated by province and mapped to highlight priorities. A composite MDG index was developed using 24 variables from MDGs 1–5 and used to rank provinces, highlighting development priorities for each province.

At the regional level, significant activities and decisions have included:

*Regional Social Development Workshop (2002)* — UN agencies in the region and the PIFS recognised the need to promote better understanding of the MDGs and their implementation in the Pacific.

*Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) 2002* — Forum economic ministers requested that PIFS consider the issue of the MDGs and their implementation in the Pacific, asking for a status report at the 2003 meeting.

Regional Workshop on MDGs, March 2003 — The workshop was held primarily to assist countries better understand the rationale for incorporating the MDGs into their national processes, to review how to achieve this, and to address the issue of tailoring the MDGs to Pacific circumstances. Key outcomes from the multi-donor funded workshop:

- The MDGs are relevant to the Pacific as universal aspirations and are often reflected in long-standing national development plans and strategies. However, the ways in which the MDGs are given shape — through specific targets and indicator — need to reflect national circumstances and realities.
- The Pacific faces its own unique challenges and attention should be directed to overcoming these when addressing the MDGs. These constraints include human capacities, financial resources, an unstable policy environment, security concerns, etc. Ideally, such constraints should be addressed in concert with development partners, and by prioritising and customising the MDGs and their associated indicators to better reflect the Pacific context.
- Each country produced a national action plan for implementing the MDG framework. Countries also assessed their capacity to produce a national report by the end of 2004. The action plans included activities to strengthen advocacy, implementation, monitoring and reporting, and identified areas in which technical assistance and other support was required.

FEMM 2003 — FEMM recognised the value of the MDGs in national planning and development frameworks but expressed concerns about the added reporting burden to the UN from the MDGs.

Pacific Islands Forum, 2003 — Leaders recognised the broad relevance of the Millennium Development Goals to the Pacific, particularly if modified to better reflect Pacific circumstances. They also recognised the value of the MDGs in focusing and enhancing planning for sustainable development, and in improving monitoring mechanisms.

MDG Workshop, August 2003 — A strategy to assist PICs in compiling and adapting MDG indicators was piloted in Vanuatu. Carried out by SPC with the support of the Vanuatu Government and in close consultation with UN agencies (UNFPA involved).

UN/CROP MDG Working Group – In 2004 the UN/CROP MDG Working Group was established to assist PICs in implementing the MDGs. Technical working groups were formed to: assist with the integration of the MDGs into PIC development goals and strategies, provide background papers for regional meetings (such as the FEMM and the annual Pacific Islands Forum), and assist with MDG reporting. This regional report is a product of the UN/CROP MDG Working Group process.

CROP Heads Meeting June 2004 – The heads of CROP organisations acknowledged that while national MDG reports would assist in providing a situation analysis relative to MDGs and in setting national strategies to achieve development targets, a Pacific regional report was also necessary at this time. The tailoring of globally agreed targets and indicators into country specific targets in line with national development priorities and plans was acknowledged as a priority. CROP agreed to: assist PICs in the development and use of Pacific tailored MDGs as a tool for monitoring and evaluating implementation of development objectives; incorporate the MDGs as appropriate into organisation annual work programmes and corporate plans; and use the development of the Pacific Plan to further tailor any future regional reporting on the MDGs. CROP agreed that the UN/CROP MDG working group would continue to operate under the umbrella of the CROP Sustainable Development Working Group during the current MDG country reporting phase in order to facilitate cooperation between regional and international organisations on delivery of MDG-related assistance to countries.

## **OVERVIEW**

This Pacific Islands Regional Millenium Development Goals Report reviews the state of development in the Pacific Islands against the MDGs and their associated indicators and targets. Where time series data are available achievements over the last decade are analysed. The report provides a summary view of regional progress with respect to the MDGs, highlights existing policies and agreements and ongoing processes relevant to achievement of the goals and targets, and makes recommendations relating to improved data definition, collection and measurement.

The report demonstrates that substantial progress has been made against certain indicators and that the region will meet some MDG targets. It also shows that the Pacific region compares relatively favourably to other regions in a number of areas. The progress that has been made toward some development goals clearly illustrates that the efforts by the region's people, governments and development partners have resulted in positive outcomes.

The report highlights the fact that progress towards the MDGs varies significantly across the region, and in many cases within countries as well. Slow progress (and in some cases a worsening of status) with regard to certain indicators demonstrates that greater efforts will need to be made if the Pacific is to achieve the MDGs. Indeed, in some sectors — in particular health — there is a real risk that some of the region's gains could be reversed.

### ***The region at a glance***

Although considered an irrelevant concept in the Pacific a decade ago, poverty (or hardship, a term often preferred in the Pacific) has emerged as a significant concern (MDG 1). Economic growth is a necessary part of the solution to the problem, as are appropriate policies that target the needs of the poor.

Primary school enrolment (MDG 2) is relatively high in the Pacific, although significant room for improvement remains in some countries, and those nations with rapid population growth will be challenged to provide sufficient facilities and resources for expanding student populations. Ensuring that education effectively addresses both individual and societal needs remains a problem across the region, and will require improvements in the provision of both formal and non-formal education.

Women have made significant progress toward equality and empowerment (MDG 3), but remain disadvantaged in many areas, including education, employment, and political representation. Realisation of gender goals requires identification of specific needs and implementation of policies and programmes to address them.

Child and infant mortality (MDG 4) are declining in most of the region, but significant regional and sub-national disparities remain. A continuing emphasis is needed on basic health care, including provision of immunisations, as well as more effective education regarding nutrition. In some countries, improvements in child health and mortality will require progress in addressing communicable diseases, including malaria and diarrheal diseases.

Significant improvements have been made in maternal health (MDG 5) in recent decades, but this progress is not uniform across the region. The situation with respect to maternal health in the Pacific Islands cannot be effectively assessed using measures such as the maternal mortality ratio. Improving access to quality obstetric care — including emergency services — is the primary requirement for realising further reductions in maternal mortality.

The region's "double burden of disease" (stemming from significant rates of both communicable and noncommunicable diseases) has the potential to negatively affect social and economic development (MDG 6). Reducing the communicable disease burden requires targeted interventions to increase awareness of and reduce exposure to disease, and improved diagnostic and treatment capacity. Reduction of the non-communicable disease burden requires changes in behaviour and lifestyle, and enactment of appropriate policies to create an enabling environment.

The importance of environmental sustainability (MDG 7) is broadly recognised and widely reflected in both regional and national policies, but progress in implementing these policies is uneven. Accurate assessment of the state of the environment in the region is significantly hampered by problems with data quality and comparability. Some environmental issues facing the region are global in scope (e.g. global warming and associated sea level rise), and can only be effectively addressed through action by the international community.

Although Pacific Island countries (PICs) continue to receive very high amounts of aid (in per capita terms), their share of global overseas development assistance (ODA) is declining, and major regional donors are directing a declining proportion of their assistance to PICs (MDG 8). The small size of their economies, remote locations, and lack of development and infrastructure make it difficult for PICs to be competitive in the global marketplace, and this is reflected by their collective USD 2 billion trade deficit. Increased regional cooperation, through mechanisms such as PICTA (a regional trade agreement ratified by nine PICs) may help the region address some of these issues.

Many of the development challenges discussed here are the focus of current programmes, both at the regional and national levels, while in some cases strategies are still under development. It is promising that the countries of the region have reached agreement — in a variety of areas, as evidenced by the many declarations, strategies and actions plans referenced in this report — on how to address pressing development problems, including those to which the MDGs are relevant. While financial, human and physical resources are obviously needed to implement those agreements, sustained political commitment is also crucial. Regional collaboration has a very useful and indeed essential role to play in the Pacific, given the small size of most PICs, but such collaboration will not succeed without concerted efforts at the national level.

The preparation of this first regional MDG report has required a careful assessment of the quality and coverage of statistical data, and has highlighted the need for more accurate, relevant and up-to-date data, and particularly time series data, from which trends can be derived. There is a need for comparable national-level data to enable assessment of regional differences and allocation of development assistance. Disaggregated country data (i.e. at island or provincial level, and by socioeconomic and ethnic groups) is also needed, in order to allow analysis of what are often very significant sub-national differences in development progress. This need is heightened by rapid urbanisation, growing inequality and ongoing social and cultural changes. There is also a need to improve analytical capabilities, and to make better use of the information that is currently collected. These findings relating to the state of knowledge about development concur with and amplify the findings of a previous assessment of the Pacific region's progress toward the MDGs (see ADB 2003).

Although they need to be addressed, the existing weaknesses in the information base should not be used as an excuse for inaction. The challenge for the region is how to progress beyond agreement over policies, plans and strategies. Achieving the MDG targets necessitates taking actions and making changes that will benefit the most disadvantaged in society, who very often lack effective representation. Pacific Island leaders have already committed to achieving the MDGs, and their leadership will be crucial in championing the cause of development that targets the poor, and in realising progress toward the goals. Innovative solutions are needed to address the familiar but increasingly urgent development problems discussed here. The Pacific Plan now under development should provide one avenue by which new approaches to the development issues highlighted by the MDGs can be implemented.

### ***Achieving the MDGs***

As discussed in detail throughout this report, and summarised below, a number of MDG targets and indicators need to be made relevant for the Pacific (i.e. made into “Pacific Development Indicators”), against which Pacific regional progress can be more meaningfully assessed. Development and subsequent use of such indicators will facilitate reporting by PICs, both regionally (to Pacific Islands Forum Leaders), and internationally (against many international conventions and agreements, including the Millennium Declaration). The MDGs must also be made relevant at the national level, and the process of achieving the MDGs must involve effective and inclusive national consultation processes for tailoring the globally agreed targets and indicators into country specific targets that accord with existing or new national development priorities and plans. Building national ownership and capacity for monitoring of and reporting on progress are key elements of this process. Sub-national and gender-based analysis are also crucial to facilitate a better understanding of the impact of development on marginalised and disadvantaged groups in Pacific Island societies.

As outlined in the introduction, the MDG process to date has involved significant cooperation, and this process will continue as countries move to adapt the MDG targets and indicators to suit their individual situations. The UN/CROP MDG Working Group will promote appropriate targets and indicators for the region based on technical expertise drawn from various sectors. The MDG Working Group will also liaise with the wider donor community to facilitate MDG-specific projects and outcomes. In addition, UN/CROP members will continue to provide technical assistance and training that can assist PICs in implementing the MDG framework.

Regional organisations and UN agencies have identified the following areas in which assistance can be provided to countries in tailoring targets and indicators:

- Evaluation of data quality, suitability and availability in the compilation of indicators for monitoring the MDGs;
- Assistance in strengthening the links between statistics and planning in the development planning process;
- Linking the MDGs, tailored targets and indicators to processes of development planning, budget allocation and development performance monitoring;
- Locating the MDGs in the human rights framework (e.g. ICESCR, CRC and CEDAW) and identifying connections between the Millennium Declaration and human rights goals;
- Supporting poverty analysis processes and promoting the findings of such analyses in raising awareness of poverty in the region, for the purpose of integrating this into the MDG monitoring processes;
- Promoting a participatory process in various ways, including supporting research efforts of civil society organisations; and
- Priority setting, recognising that in many countries, not all MDG targets can be met simultaneously. Tailoring therefore needs to cover both the capacity to measure specific indicators, and the likely timeframe for achievement, given budget constraints.

While not explicitly included in this list, of overriding importance is a requirement for improved governance. An inclusive and transparent development planning, budgeting and monitoring process that ensures the needs of all sectors of society are fully taken into account when setting development priorities, is a central pillar of good governance, and fundamental to the achievement of the MDGs.

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