

TEN YEAR PACIFIC STATISTICS STRATEGY (TYPSS) Phase II
11TH PACIFIC STATISTICS STEERING COMMITTEE (PSSC) MEETING

Tanoa Plaza Hotel, Suva, Fiji Islands
24th – 27th November, 2015

PSSC-11 Agenda Item 8

Meeting Paper Title: Common Systems¹

1. Purpose of Paper

To remind PSSC members of the range of benefits that should result from regional statistical co-operation in the Pacific Region. To then initiate a discussion on the scope of activity of the PSSC regarding common systems that will be needed in order to lead the region's development of Sustainable Development Indicators and TYPSS, and obtain an agreement on recommendations for the more explicit identification and planning of developments in them.

2. Introduction / Background

The Pacific Region has a high level of co-operation among countries. The paper identifies the scope of this co-operation, including that embraced by TYPSS. The TYPSS project involves a wide range of decisions by PSSC. The Sustainable Development Indicators should be achieved within the framework set by TYPSS. The attached paper draws on papers and discussion at the recent PARIS21 forum on regional statistical co-operation that have relevance to the Pacific region, particularly the place of common systems and tools

3. Key Benefits of regional statistical co-operation

3.1. Adding value to national statistical systems from regional statistics cooperation

As funding sources become more stable, the value derived from established statistical sources by way of normal operations will expand, as long as commitment to integration is consistent, through:

- i. Meeting commitments for the regular conduct of key surveys and availability of other statistical sources
- ii. better integration of sources of data
- iii. broader adoption of statistical frameworks
- iv. ease of data access in a wide range of forms
- v. increase in the range and quality of regional statistical indicators produced by member countries

3.2. Regional economic and political cooperation and integration is advanced through trustworthy and comparable statistics on the matters of concern. Where

¹ A selected summary of thinking contained in reference papers to the recent PARIS21 forum on regional statistical collaboration.

collective leadership of regional statistical cooperation and integration is needed, regional statistics cooperation adds value through:

- i. **Expanding the range of globally comparable statistical measures about the region.**
 - This means that less-developed countries have more to catch up, and this is unlikely to be viable at a country level, without achieving significant commonality in practices and solutions across all countries within a region.
- ii. **Offsetting the disproportionately greater cost and general unaffordability for small countries of a comprehensive national statistical system.**
 - The comparative scale and cost is greater for very small countries, and for those which are within regions that are separated geographically.
- iii. **Increasing the feasibility for countries with limited resources to establish and operate a relevant national statistical infrastructure.**
 - Economic systems have many common elements regardless of the economic position of nations, yet those least endowed or very small countries have a seriously constrained capacity to create sufficient wealth to ever build the required statistical infrastructure by themselves. Partnerships with donors need long term commitments if regularity of key measures is to be the norm.
 - The SPC acts as an integral part of the continuing operations of smaller states, taking a lead in statistical development, analysis, and dissemination. This increases the ability to achieve commonality in survey instruments and practice within the Pacific region. Where this occurs, and where data is available, the variations amongst the National Statistical Systems both in terms of data coverage and statistical methods may then constitute less of a challenge for the consolidation and quality of regional statistics
- iv. **Including in international practices recognition of the nature of the societies and economies of all countries in the region.**
 - The extension of international standards and targets has a disproportionate effect on countries which in the past have had little opportunity to engage in such forums. Participation by the region enables such interests to be made visible, to an extent far beyond that possible for any single developing country.
- v. **Continually advancing the quality of systems in the face of obsolescence in technologies and practices.**
 - This is difficult for even the most economically developed regional groups such as the European Statistical System, and the growth in shared systems, tools and practices has enabled investments of a few to be adopted by many more, and be maintained in relevance.

- vi. **Enabling all countries to benefit from the contributions of development partners.**
 - The complex nature of the relationships among countries means that development partners have different degrees of willingness to support countries in any region. This can undermine the preference for common regional systems and tools, unless development partners change their commitments.
- vii. **Building up and enabling access to the range and mix of skills and capabilities essential for a national statistical system, and to funding the regular operation of major statistical sources.**
 - Even with the ability to exploit common tools and systems, there will often be a lack of skills, and funds for large scale statistical operations including population censuses. Regional centres of expertise have usually been associated with a statistical office in the region, a regional university or the statistical system centre. Small countries may never have the critical mass of staff to develop the required mix of specialist skills. The diverse nature of some regions may constrain the effectiveness of collective initiatives, as can the involvement of different governance structures and obligations.

4. Key Areas of Regional Leadership

4.1. Extending the oversight of standards and classifications to the development of common systems and processes

i. Extending leadership and standards and classifications

National statisticians can primarily influence the scope for publishing timely annual and monthly core statistics at a regional level, because they are most able to influence internal practices that advance harmonisation and collaborate to spread the load regionally. The focus of this is to make what could be available accessible through a common system, and the way in which the SPC is the key access point for Pacific statistics is a good example of this, as is the long history of common standards and even common questionnaires in the small island states of the Pacific.

Contribution to the agenda of PSSC as leadership body	Purpose of regional cooperation/initiatives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve regional customisation of international classifications and standards 2. Endorse harmonisation of statistics through common regional questionnaires and related instruments, methods and practices 3. Agree on survey and census cycles for common sources 4. Development of regional statistical databases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardise Classifications • Set regional standards • Set Common questionnaires • Drive regularity of statistics • Uplift Professional capability • Make accessible available statistics

ii. Strengthening leadership of common systems and tools

Stage B: The Sustainable development goals will replace the MDGs, and they along with the General Data Dissemination Standards of the IMF have created minimum thresholds for regional and international harmonisation of statistics. For developing countries they have necessitated an acceleration in the pace of change that is unlikely to occur without strong regional collaboration.

The commonality of systems and processes broadens the range of co-operation, and the technological and methodological extent of this reaches further into the statistical offices, testing the capability at many levels, and the need to recognize the different areas of expertise among countries that can be spread more widely to the rest.

Contribution to the agenda of regional leadership body	Purpose of regional cooperation/initiatives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exchange experiences and developments 2. Share in development of common systems 3. Join in training programmes 4. Agree on data exchange standards and tools 5. Collaborate in wider regional application of innovations (GPS, PC Trade, Address registers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make legislative authority relevant • Commonality of systems and tools • National statistics office • Statistical frame management • Data storage systems • Data exchange standards/ tools

Systems that need to be in place include:

- i. Statistical training
- ii. Business registers
- iii. Modernised systems and tools
- iv. Geospatial information management

iii. Enabling innovation in the Pacific to reflect the pace of technological change

Achieving the SDG's will require statistical offices to have the means to develop the capability, authority and relationships necessary to lead the statistical system as a whole rather than oversee their agencies, and to ensure that the value that this adds is both recognized and realized. Some of the key elements of such a transformation are regional, whether they be regional training centres, technical working groups. A focus on statistical integration includes microdata analysis, international statistical frameworks and information about previously unexplored fields such as gender, environment, and food security. Development partners need also to transform their ways of working more collaboratively, enabling region wide solutions, and recognizing regional distinctions in fundamental elements of statistical systems.

Contribution to the agenda of regional leadership body	Purpose of regional cooperation/initiatives
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordination of regional statistics development programmes and projects on themes including as National Accounts, Trade, Population, Prices, Gender, Agriculture, Education 2. Join in promoting regional education and training centres for common use 3. Exchange experiences in implementing higher levels of statistical frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration through frameworks (SNA, GIS, Demographic, environmental) • Be a catalyst for government-wide standards • Build national statistical systems • National/regional protocols • Provide necessary regional statistical comparisons

4. Collaborate to develop regionally relevant variants of international standards and frameworks	• Widen means of user support
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Systems and processes that need to be in place include:

- i. Managing statistical confidentiality and microdata access
- ii. Administrative data access
- iii. Statistical exchange (South-south cooperation)
- iv. National statistics planning processes
- v. Address registers
- vi. Harmonisation of statistical sources

5. Key Recommendations

5.1. That the PSSC notes that its regular agenda for action should reflect the mix of activities that it needs to have oversight of.

5.2. That the development of common systems needs to be explicitly planned for so that statistical offices are able to plan ahead for their implementation into their operational processes

5.3. That the next stage of work planning give some priority to identifying plans for common systems

6. References

- *Reports of the PARIS21 Forum of October 2015 will be available on the website in 2016*