

**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 12

Meeting Paper Title: Report from Addis Abbaba Meeting

1. Purpose of Paper

- To update on recent statistical developments in the Pacific Island region, and a needs assessment for ongoing regional support to statistical capacity development and SDG monitoring

2. Introduction

2.1. With the post-2015 Development Agenda indicator list being finalized at this very moment, for submission to the United Nations' Statistical Commission in March 2016 prior to its ultimate endorsement at the 2016 General Assembly, it is timely to reflect briefly on the positive impact the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have had on statistics across the Pacific Island region – as indeed it has had on statistical development across developing nations – to celebrate tangible achievements, recognize remaining challenges, and acknowledge that many of the achievements made are easily reversible if development technical and financial support would come to an abrupt halt.

3. Key Issues

3.1. SOME POSITIVE EFFECTS OF THE MDGS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICS

3.2. Across the Pacific Island region, as throughout the developing world, the MDGs have succeeded in highlighting the importance of having reliable and timely statistics in order to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate development policies. Meanwhile, the agenda on aid effectiveness reinforces an evidence-based results-driven culture. In this context:

- The demand for statistics has been stimulated, and collections of core economic and socio-demographic statistics, and the compilation of associated development indicators, has increased substantially.

- National development plans and policies reflect a stronger use of statistics in planning decisions and evaluation.
- Support has been strengthened, with statistics now featuring prominently in bilateral and regional development partnerships.
- Significant progress has been made in data sharing across sectors and subsequent cross-tabulation of data, adding value to the statistics available.
- And a *Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011–2020* was developed, providing support for countries developing their own national strategies (NSDSs) to strengthen their national statistical systems.

3.3. In terms of tangible, visible outcomes, national statistical agencies in collaboration with regional, bilateral and multilateral support, have managed to step-up national and regional statistical collections on a previously unseen regional scale, attracting recognition well outside the Pacific region, as illustrated in a few examples:

a. 2010 World round of population censuses

During the most recent round of population and housing censuses worldwide (2005 – 2014), all 22 Pacific Island countries and territories managed to undertake at least one census, with 7 managing to undertake two such collections. This represents 100% coverage, the highest regional coverage across the world.

b. Household surveys

With most population-based MDG indicators derived from population censuses and household surveys, the past decade has seen a huge upsurge in economic and social surveys.

- In 2000, only 3 out of 15 Pacific island countries were able to provide relevant statistics on poverty, with such data derived from *Household Income and Expenditure Surveys* (HIS). Ten years later, 14 out of 15 countries were able to do so, and by the end of 2015, 9 countries will have 2 or 3 data points at their disposal, enabling the assessment of poverty and hardship over time.
- Prior to the onset of the MDG period, only 1 of 15 Pacific Island countries had access to comprehensive social, demographic and health statistics, many of which can only be derived from *Demographic Health Surveys* (DHS); by the end of 2015, 9 countries had undertaken such a survey, with 2 countries (PNG and Samoa) having collected such data twice, which boosted their MDG monitoring and reporting capability, as well as establish much needed benchmark against which to measure future developments.

c. Regional core development indicator database (www.spc.int/nmdi)

This substantial step-up to fill existing data-gaps, also identified in the 2008 Regional statistical benchmarking study and the 2011–2020 Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy as a key strategic priority to get Pacific statistical development on sound footing, provided the catalyst to respond to Pacific Leaders call in 2005 for greater use of common statistical classifications and systems, and the development of core statistics across sectors. In 2009-2010, SPC developed what is now known as the *National Minimum development Indicator* (NMDI) database, containing some 200+ development indicators across many sectors, with all population-based MDG indicators contained in a thematic subfolder.

Having established a user-agreement with *Google Analytics* 3 years ago, its use has expanded beyond the region, with UN agencies and the World Bank amongst its key users; this has also helped the gradual acceptance of Pacific island national statistics in global MDG reports in recent years.

d. Routine collection of Social Statistics

Social statistics across education, health, and vital statistics have been strengthened through coordinated regional programs, resulting in better investments in health spending and for the first time (in many instances) providing empirical data for planning instead of countries having to rely solely on modelled estimates driven by other parts of the world.

3.4. BUILDING ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MDGS

3.5. Notwithstanding these substantial developments across the region over the past decade, which also saw the growing recognition of the importance of national statistical systems across the region as illustrated by the number of countries having developed, or currently developing *National Strategies for the Development of Statistics* (NSDS) in partnership with Paris21 and SPC, regular monitoring of MDG progress has remained challenging. This has been mainly due to:

- An early top-down approach, where development objectives and indicators were not sufficiently discussed with developing countries in general, and statisticians in particular;
- The need for substantial structural and cultural change to improve the collection and use of statistical data from routine administrative systems, which has required national statistics office to move beyond their traditional areas of practice to forge relationships with other sectors and address underlying infrastructure and process weaknesses;
- And weak ownership by several countries, where monitoring of development progress has been largely *ad hoc*, managed and financed from outside government planning and statistical departments, without explicit links to

national requirements to regularly monitor and report on policy performance, and to account for results.

3.6. The latter underlines an earlier observation that many **tangible achievements are easily reversible, if technical and financial development support would come to an abrupt halt** – a situation that is not helped by absence of functioning domestic administrative database and associated management information systems resulting in a sole reliance on irregular and expensive household and other types of surveys.

3.7. In this context it is not surprising that with greater efforts by countries and concomitant support by financial and technical partners to boost national administrative databases and associated Management Information Systems, this situation can be readily improved. This is illustrated by progress over the past 12 months in improving countries' ***Education Management Information Systems*** (EMIS) thanks to multi-year dedicated financial support from Australia, which means that in mid-2015, key Education MDG indicators (net enrolment rate and gender parity indices for primary and secondary education) are now available for all 15 Pacific Island countries, with most reasonably up-to-date (not older than 2-3 years).

3.8. It should go without saying that similar achievements are possible, most importantly in areas like ***Civil Registration and Vital Statistics*** (CRVS) and **economic administrative databases** (e.g. tax data and trade statistics), once greater attention is paid to these strategic opportunities by governments and their development partners.

3.9. POST-2015 ROADMAP

3.10. The recent Third International Conference on Financing for Development held in Addis Ababa 13 – 16 July, provided a unique opportunity for Pacific island countries and Small Island Developing States alike to press home the **dual message**, that

- data and evidence should remain at the heart of the discussion to guide and monitor implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and
- administrative databases and associated management information systems are integral to the sustainability of evidence-informed decision-making and good governance. Only with readily available data, that is up-to-date and just a mouse-click away, will planners and policy-makers be able to guide and improve the provision of critical services, such as with education and health – the very sectors still in need of substantive additional investments in data and systems.

3.11. A recent upsurge in meetings and conferences, studies and reports discussing the data revolution and its critical importance as a necessary, not merely an enabling

condition for the SDG agenda to get off to a solid start, has highlighted the need for increased investments in development data to strengthen the planning and design of new development initiatives, their management and regular monitoring of progress. A study by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network estimates that “*IDA-eligible countries will need to spend US\$ 1 billion a year to upgrade their statistical systems and carry out regular data collection for the SDGs*”¹. **Annual cost estimates** for 77 IDA and blend countries are split over 5 areas, with national survey programs and populations censuses accounting for just under US\$ 500 million, followed by investments into 2 key administrative data/associated management information systems (CRVS 220 million; EMIS 90.5 million), Geospatial systems (80 million), Environmental monitoring (34 million) and economic statistics².

3.12. The study calls on donors not only to *maintain current contributions to statistics of around US\$ 300 million per annum, but to go further and leverage US\$100-200 more in ODA to support country efforts, with recipient countries asked to commit to fill the gap, mobilizing domestic resources behind clear national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDSs)*”.

3.13. From those present in Addis it transpired very quickly that additional development finance along the lines outlined by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, would be very hard, if not impossible to come by. With no new substantive financial pledges many of us had hoped for to come out of Addis, not all is doom and gloom, with substantive investment pledges by Canada and Australia in the area of CRVS in 2014, and more recently by the World Bank in a Household Survey Financial supprt facility.

- **Canada’s** announcement in July this year of establishing a Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics at a cost \$16 million complements its commitment to CRVS, as first illustrated in its contribution last year of \$100 million dedicated to CRVS in the Global Financing Facility (GFF) in support of *Every Woman Every Child*, Canada helped establish in 2014.
- Acknowledging that most countries do not have high-quality data on birth, deaths, and risk factors for non-communicable diseases, **Bloomberg Philanthropies** and **Australia** earlier this year announced a 4-year, \$100 million private-public partnership that will assist 20 developing countries to strengthen their birth and death registration, as well as improve mechanisms for collecting risk factor data.
- And more recently the World Bank announced the establishment of a \$ 300 million fund over five years to support Household economic surveys in IDA eligible

¹ Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *Data for Development: A needs assessment for SFG Monitoring and statistical Capacity building*, April 17, 2015

² *ibid*, Table-7, page 30.

countries, which is also a much valued contribution to global statistical development initiatives.

3.14. While highly valued, very generous and providing a solid start and foundation – much larger resources are required over the coming years, to assist IDA-eligible countries to upgrade their statistical systems and carry our regular data collections for the SDGs as alluded to earlier:

- Costs to support these countries' national survey programs and populations censuses account for just under US\$ 500 million annually – at the moment, \$60 million (per annum) would be available from the World Bank for Household surveys.
- With \$220 million required per year for CRVS activities - \$25 million annually for 4 years are forthcoming from the Bloomberg-Australia Data for Health partnership, with another \$100 million (unsure about period) pledged by the Canadian government.

3.15. POST-2015 CHALLENGES FOR PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

3.16. Turning to current Pacific island regional statistical development efforts under Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011 – 2020, our current **most pressing financial shortfalls** are in our regional CRVS and regional Household survey programs, with funding secured for our recently setup EMIS regional technical support facility until 2017.

3.17. Regional CRVS program, 2016 – 2020³

3.18. As referred to earlier, investment in this regional program to support national CRVS development efforts is absolutely mission-critical for countries to have real-time access to accurate population statistics, including improved coverage of deaths and the reported causes of death. Its obvious value in informing health policy, program development and prioritization of activities, is complemented by the ability to monitor progress with access to real time data. Functioning CRVS and associated Health Information systems not only cut out the long-time lags inherent in Household surveys, but also significantly improve data and information quality, with sample surveys not the best source of reliable mortality indicators given sample-size/standard error interactions, and methods of estimating measures of life expectancy from census data potentially affected by high adult mortality from non-communicable diseases. These systems are also critical for capturing information on causes of death which is critical if programs to reduce mortality in the region are to be effective. The Pacific Island Region

³ See Annex-1

has declared an emergency due to the number of early adult deaths as a result of non-communicable diseases. Beyond the obvious health issue, the loss of family members, skilled workers and community leaders in their prime is a significant limitation to development overall in this region, and therefore of critical importance.

3.19. Additional benefits include reduced costs and greater efficiency of monitoring investments in health by lessening dependence on costly surveys, such as DHS or MICS. And formal registration of births is also essential for identity management, and to address human rights commitments such as the International convention of the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by all Pacific Island countries.

3.20. Estimated annual cost: **US\$ 2,7 million** (US\$ 13,5 million over 5 years)

While this may seem high to some, this figure is well in line with annual cost estimates for all 77 IDA eligible countries at US\$ 220 million.

3.21. Regional Household Survey Program, 2015 – 2018

3.22. Complementing up-scaled efforts to build and sustain administrative databases currently underway with the regional EMIS technical support facility currently being established in SPC to improve education statistics and Education Management Information systems, and attempts to secure financial support to build on early achievements in improving the regional CRVS infrastructure, is an urgent need to recapitalise the SPC Regional Household Survey Support programme, which has been in existence for eight years, supported by the Asian Development Bank and the Australian Government, and which enabled Pacific island countries to undertake much needed Household surveys, mainly HIES and DHS on a regular basis during this period. Many core development indicators, particularly pertaining to current MDG goals 1 – 6, which will remain part of the SDG agenda can only be obtained from such surveys, and/or will only be available until tangible progress is made with ongoing EMIS and CRVS system developments; some, pertaining to poverty and sexual and reproductive health measurements can only be obtained from HIES and DHS survey modules respectively.

3.23. Estimated annual cost: **US\$ 1,4 million** (US\$ 4,1million, between 2015 – 2017).

See Annex-2.

3.24. Additional SDG data collection challenges

3.25. The upcoming international SDG agenda represents a massive step-up from the current MDG agenda, as illustrated in a doubling of development goals (from 8 to 17), a near ten-fold increase in targets (from 18 to 169), and an, as yet unknown increase

in development indicators (from 60 to currently 320+). This presents a huge challenge for national statistical systems in terms of additional data collections, largely in areas they have never engaged in before.

3.26. The good news is, that unlike at the onset of the MDGs, statistician and thematic subject matter specialist have been invited early on, to provide advice on the feasibility, suitability and relevance of an initial list of potential indicators emerging from deliberations by the Open Working Group, and the establishment by the United Nations Statistics Division of an Interagency Expert Group (IAEG) on SDG indicators to progress this work.

3.27. Somewhat more sobering is the reality highlighted by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's estimates referred to earlier, that "*IDA-eligible countries will need to spend US\$ 1 billion a year to upgrade their statistical systems and carry out regular data collection for the SDGs*".

3.28. Implications for Pacific Island countries and other SIDS

3.29. It should by now go without saying, that without continued and stepped-up international financial support, Pacific island countries as well as most other SIDS, will not be able to cope with additional data collection requirement to establish required statistical benchmarks for the full SDG agenda, addressing 17 goals, 169 targets, and more than 320 development indicators.

3.30. While the recent Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa provided a unique opportunity for SIDS to address current, and more than likely future financial shortfalls to address data requirements to adequately benchmark and regularly monitor development progress against all 169 SDG targets, this meeting did not provide the type of breakthrough most of us in the Pacific Data and Analytics community had hoped for: to lay the foundation for "*strengthening available and accessible data and statistics systems in SIDS by launching new partnership initiatives or scaling up existing initiatives*"⁴.

- Just looking at basic numbers, this meeting provided a unique opportunity for SIDS to make a case for greater recognition of their unique development challenges. Although small in term of population size and economic weight, they do after all represent about one fifth (38) of the world's countries.

⁴ SAMOA Pathway: Outcome document of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, Apia 1 – 4 September 2014, paragraphs 114:a, and 115:b respectively

4. Key Recommendation

4.1. PSSC to Note

5. Annexes

Annex I: A Regional Programme to improve Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the Pacific

Annex II: 2015 – 2017 Regional Household Survey Programme Funding Requirements (US \$)

A Regional Partnership to Improve Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the Pacific Islands

Resourcing needs for the next phase Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (2016-2020)

A reliable CRVS system underpins sound policy, planning and monitoring

It provides countries, donors, and development partners access to real-time data supporting:

- universal health care (UHC)
- maternal and child health
- reductions in mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

The Pacific has an NCD crisis, with life expectancies remaining unacceptably low. CRVS data can provide real-time information to monitor and respond to the crisis.

Additional benefits include reduced costs and greater efficiency of investment monitoring by lessening dependence on costly surveys (such as the DHS or MICS) and censuses.

- An average DHS survey in the Pacific (excluding PNG) costs \$400,000 USD
- The DHS captures 14/18 Health-related MDG indicators, equating to \$28,600/indicator, every 5 years

Formal registration is essential for identity management and to address human rights commitments such as the International Convention on Rights of the Child - ratified by all Pacific Countries.

Political support has been given by both the Pacific Ministers of Health (in 2011, 2013 and 2014) and the Heads of Planning and Statistics (2013).

Demand for assistance is increasing.
As significant improvements have been made, many remaining priorities are more challenging and require higher levels of support.

Regional support is needed to address common challenges faced by Pacific Island Countries in improving their CRVS systems

Regional support allows the Pacific to share lessons and experiences and to take advantage of innovative approaches such as:

- integrating verbal autopsies into routine data collection systems
- rolling out mobile phone technology to improve birth and death registration.

Common challenges include:

- widely dispersed populations;
- poor transport and communication links;
- capacity issues related to specialised skills and services;
- vulnerable infrastructure and government structures;
- high cost for accessing basic supplies and services



The Brisbane Accord Group of technical agencies, through the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan, is a proven and effective mechanism for providing regional support

Improving vital statistics in the Pacific Region requires a diverse set of technical expertise that is not available in any one agency. Recognizing this, development partners came together in 2010 to form the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG).

The pursuit of these activities is guided by the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP), which sits under the Ten Year Pacific Statistic Strategy (TYPSS) 2011 – 2020.

BAG partners are actively working in all 15 Pacific Island Countries, including Solomon Islands and PNG (priority countries under the Commission of Information and Accountability for Women and Children's Health) and the 3 US territories.



Key areas of need for regional investment in CRVS for the Pacific Islands

BAG partners are committed to the PVSAP and will continue to provide support to countries within existing resources. There is however a need to scale up investment at the regional level to meet the growing demand for support and build on existing momentum. Additional support would add value to current activities, allowing donors to maximize the impact of investments in the region.

Structural component	Approximate Cost over 5 years (USD)	Expected outcomes/ Added value
1. Central Hub to facilitate data sharing, coordination, and to provide basic support to countries. This support function is essential to implementing components 2-5.	\$5.8 M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countries are supported to implement national improvement plans, and improve registration coverage and data quality - Better integration of CRVS into existing Governmental systems - Improved data quality and reporting for development indicators such as the MDGs - Countries publish Vital Statistics reports - IT best practices are agreed upon and observed
2. Capacity Building at national and regional level through training and trainee positions	\$2.2 M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More sustainable data collection and quality control - Up-skilling of young professionals from the region - Facilitates more south-south collaboration to build a stronger regional capacity - Improved usage of vital statistics in policy - Quality improvements in death certification and medical coding - Country staff are trained in data analysis and report writing
3. Specialised skilled support	\$1.15 M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved coverage of hard-to-access remote populations using innovative approaches such as mobile phone technology or verbal autopsy (VA) - Increased investment effectiveness through support to core functions
4. Regional mortality coding support	\$2.5 M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved availability and quality of cause of death data - Development of sustainable coding capacity - Best practices in coding and record management - Coding support provided for VA results
5. In-country Support for selected countries with higher levels of complexity	\$1.6 M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countries facing specific coordination and implementation challenges (FSM, RMI and PNG) are supported to develop and implement national CRVS improvement plans. - Significant improvement in investment effectiveness

Support for a regional Pacific approach is consistent with the goals outlined in the Global Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Scaling Up Investment Plan 2015-2024



2015 - 2017 Regional Household Survey programme funding requirements (US\$)					
Countries	Survey	2015	2016	2017	2015 - 2017
MELANESIA					
Fiji	DHS		669,900		669,900
Solomon Islands	Ag Census		333,000		333,000
Vanuatu	HIES			509,700	509,700
MICRONESIA					
Federated States of Micronesia	Ag Census		279,600		279,600
Kiribati	HIES		308,750		308,750
Marshall Islands	HIES, DHS		196,100	244,650	440,750
Nauru	Multi-Purpose, DHS		132,050	138,850	270,900
Palau	LFS, Tourism Survey		209,700	120,400	330,100
POLYNESIA					
Cook Islands	HIES	138,350	138,350		276,700
Niue	HIES	21,850	21,850		43,700
Tonga	HIES	184,450	184,450		368,900
Tuvalu	HIES, DHS		137,850	138,850	276,700
TOTAL BUDGET		344,650	2,611,600	1,152,450	4,108,700

Notes:

- PNG: has plans for 2016 DHS and 2017 HIES, but PNG survey budgets are outside regional funding envelope.
- Samoa: 2015 surveys funded, but no other survey planned for period (2016: Population census).
- Tokelau: 2015-16 HIES funded, no other surveys planned (2016: Population census)