

# 8<sup>th</sup> Pacific Statistics Methods Board Meeting (PSMB)

26 and 27 October 2021 (virtual)

## Meeting Summary Report

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**The Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB)** was set up by Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics in 2017 to support the development and use of best practice standards and methods by Pacific National Statistics Offices (NSOs).

**Board members:** Four Government Statisticians represent Polynesia (Tonga), Melanesia (Fiji), Micronesia (Guam) and small NSOs (Nauru). The Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics New Zealand, and UN agencies each provide one representative.

**Observer:** World Bank.

**Secretariat:** Pacific Community (SPC).

**PACSTAT** is funded by IDA (World Bank) and implemented by SPC.

PACSTAT's objective is to improve the quality of welfare data collection, and access to comparable welfare data in Pacific Island countries.

The five-year project (2020–2025) will assist SPC's Statistics for Development Division (SDD) to fulfil its role as statistical system leader for the region. It will also assist PSMB to (1) support NSOs to adopt new, more efficient methods for collecting and analysing data, and (2) promote regional harmonisation and comparability of data, including by commissioning research and innovative experiments.

<https://sdd.spc.int/innovation-sdd/statistical-innovation-and-capacity-building-pacific-islands-project-pacstat>

### Engaging National Statistics Offices in PSMB's work

PSMB's structure does not work well for Pacific NSOs according to a recent survey and feedback from some Government Statisticians. There is not enough communication with NSOs that are not directly represented on PSMB, and low awareness of its role and outputs. PSMB agreed that a working group will review PSMB's terms of reference and report back to the next meeting on ways of increasing engagement with all NSOs and ensuring PSMB is approachable and responsive to their needs. Suggestions included:

- inviting all Government Statisticians to PSMB meetings;
- making sure PSMB's recommendations for NSOs are practical and include clear guidelines on implementation; and
- supporting NSOs' access to up-to-date technology and equipment.

### PACSTAT – Statistical innovation and capacity building in the Pacific Islands

#### **Microdata access consultancy**

Professor Wadan Narsey will carry out a policy review of microdata use in the region and provide a report to the first meeting of PSMB in 2022 and a policy brief for Government Statisticians.

Professor Narsey emphasised the importance of recognising countries' concerns about open data, including their unease about maintaining the privacy of individuals in small populations and the potential for misuse of data. However, there are ways of archiving and anonymising microdata, including through SPC's Pacific Data Hub – Microdata Library.

PSMB fully agreed on the need to respect data sovereignty and supported exploring a tiered approach, e.g. Tier 1, open access; Tier 2, less access; Tier 3, restricted.

#### **Proposals for statistical research and innovative experiments**

Four proposals were received in response to PACSTAT's request for research proposals (Survey module on household impacts of climate change; Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) modules on 'food away from home'; Inclusion of depreciation of public capital stock in national accounts; and a Dashboard to monitor economic recovery from COVID impact). The project committee will evaluate the proposals and decide whether to proceed with them. There will be another RFP round before the next PSMB meeting in 2022 and it is hoped that NSOs will consider putting forward their own proposals.

### **Guidance notes**

PACSTAT plans to produce a series of practical guidance notes for NSOs in 2022, with topics to include: microdata dissemination; the HIES experiment in Marshall Islands and resulting recommendations; sampling; poverty measurement; and, potentially, administrative data.

### **Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Plus (MICS Plus)**

MICS Plus is a new initiative of UNICEF's MICS programme to support countries to conduct frequent phone surveys of households. The survey uses short telephone interviews with one adult household member to collect representative data on issues best measured frequently, such as child well-being and emergency monitoring. It provides real-time reporting that can be used for policy and decision-making. A MICS Plus is currently planned for Samoa and Fiji. PSMB endorsed UNICEF's conduct of MICS Plus in Pacific Island countries and territories, noting it had previously endorsed MICS. <https://mics.unicef.org/mics-plus/methodology-and-use>

### **Pacific Observatory – a World Bank project**

The Pacific Observatory is designed to improve welfare for the poor and vulnerable by expanding socio-economic information for better, data-driven policy-making. The project will use non-traditional data sources to complement official statistics, e.g. mobile phone surveys; geospatial/satellite data; administrative data including tax records; call detail records; web-scraping; air freight and shipping data; tourist arrivals; and fishing revenue. In Year 1, the project will expand high-frequency phone surveys to several countries (beyond the current surveys in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands) and will develop and test a phone survey method for rapid roll-out in crisis situations. The World Bank plans to establish the Pacific Observatory as a lasting resource that can be handed over to regional partners to run.

### **Asian Development Bank (ADB) projects**

ADB is currently carrying out three projects in several Pacific countries and territories:

*Strengthening economic statistics for measuring progress toward sustainable development goals*

<https://www.adb.org/projects/54260-001/main>

*Strengthening digital information of national statistical data systems*

<https://www.adb.org/projects/54350-001/main>

*Data for development (Phase 2): Agricultural Statistics/Sampling Component*

<https://www.adb.org/projects/51193-002/main>

PSMB welcomed ADB's support of the region's statistical capacity, and its collaboration and coordination with other Pacific organisations including SPC.

### **Next PSMB meeting**

PSMB will next meet in March–April 2022 (most likely, virtually) with the dates to be confirmed. The agenda will include:

- the review of PSMB's terms of reference and improving interaction with NSOs
- an update on the census programme and lessons learned
- results of the World Bank's poverty studies
- support for NSO capacity in economic statistics and measurement of the informal sector

### **Further information**

The full report of the meeting and the presentations can be found at:

<https://sdd.spc.int/events/2021/10/8th-statistics-methods-board-meeting-psmb>

Or chat to SDD staff directly at <https://sdd.spc.int/>