



Pacific Statistics Governance Framework
3rd Donor and Development Partner Group (DDPG) Meeting
7th November 2022

MEETING REPORT AND OUTCOMES

Background

The Pacific Statistics Donor and Development Partner Group (DDPG) was established by the 5th Regional Conference of Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) in 2017 as a technical body responsible for bringing together development partners and donor agencies with the aim to have regular forums, and better co-ordination of their actions and resources in support of statistic governances and developments in the Pacific.

Participants

The DDPG membership includes representatives from donors and development partners including Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS); Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia (DFAT); Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), New Zealand, Statistics New Zealand; United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and World Bank. Observers are welcome at meetings. The Pacific Community (SPC) convenes the DDPG and provides the Secretariat.

DDPG

The Pacific Regional Statistics Partnership Program and the five-year National Statistics Collection Plan, led by SPC and funded by principal funding agencies DFAT, MFAT and World Bank, supports the administration of the DDPG and the dissemination of its recommendations. The DDPG provides a platform for greater and more consistent engagement by donor agencies and development partners with PICTs and NSOs.

MINUTES

Participants

For a list of participants, including observers and presenters, see annex one.

Session 1: Introduction

SPC's presentation highlighted the key focus areas for the meeting including discussions of the Pacific National Statistics Offices (NSOs), the Strategic framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030 (TYPSS II), and co-ordination support and connection mechanisms with the Donor and Development Partners.

Session 2: Draft DDPG Terms of Reference (TOR)

The Chair and SDD presented the DDPG TOR and noted that it was drafted before DDPG's 2019 meeting.

Discussion: Members commented on the TOR with ABS highlighted that DDPG started as there were no coordination mechanisms in the region with other partners, resulting in burdensome disruption of NSOs

ambitions. UNFPA added that UN agencies in the Pacific through the UN coordination system, and the UN system new five-year plan could do better in sharing information and support collaboration and perhaps other UN agencies could also join DDPG. Stats NZ expressed appreciation on the need for internal coordination, so agencies do not overburden NSOs. ABS and Stats NZ meet monthly to ensure collaboration and avoid duplication.

There was discussion on whether SPC should be at the centre of all co-ordination (like hub and spokes) or facilitate a more web-like coordination structure; and it was agreed that while SPC has a responsibility to facilitate and enable coordination, by no means should all communication and coordination have to go through the SPC.

Statistics Meetings: timing and sequence

The DDPG members had considered and agreed on the timing and sequence of the statistics meetings:

- The DDPG meeting will be held after PSSC and HOPS rather than before. Partners will then have a clear idea of current PICT/NSO priorities and needs.
- SDD will remain as the secretariat of DDPG with the role of the Chair to be defined, including the period of office. New Zealand will be the next Chair of DDPG as already prescribed.
- Members/participants should be given more time to familiarise themselves with the new Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030 (TYPSS II).

Outcome: The DDPG

- requested SDD act as a welcoming ‘front door’ to agencies and potential development partners for the region, informing them of current work in the region, supporting more co-ordination.
- will hold meetings after PSSC and HOPS in future so partners can discuss current PICT/NSO priorities and needs.
- agreed that development partners should be proactive in coordinating their work with National Statistics Offices and with each other to avoid duplication, overburdening NSOs and fatiguing survey respondents.

Session 3: Summary of PSMB Principal activities since 2019

The PSMB Chair, Vince Galvin and SDD presented a summary of the PSMB principal activities since 2019. The PSMB Chair noted that PSMB has recently revised its TOR, including an increase in NSO representatives from four to five.

PSMB work to date includes, sampling guidance and workshops, guidance on monetary poverty measurement, guidance on HIES following a successful experiment in Marshall Islands, and PACSTAT projects including improving microdata access and use; climate change data collection; and initial work on developing administrative data.

New PACSTAT projects, include a Food Away From Home experiment in Samoa; the Tuvalu long-form census; and the Vanuatu project on modernising official statistics.

Challenges for PSMB, related to improving engagement between NSOs and PSMB, support for dissemination and implementation of the standards and methods that PSMB develops, providing guidance to NSOs in a usable form, and recognising the differences in needs, staffing, and capacity.

Discussion: World Bank’s noted that PSMB is a good place for development partners new to the region to start engagement. SPC supported more focus on administrative data for both PSMB and DDPG, including the possibility that this might require and lead to bigger bilateral projects. ABS suggested considering holding PSMB in Australia, to facilitate access to experts.

Outcome: The DDPG

- noted the PSMB principal activities since 2019, the new PACSTAT projects and the challenges faced by PSMB.
- recognised the need to improve coordination between data providers and data users, and requested SPC to work with NSOs to assess each PICT's priorities and gaps as part of assessing which surveys are essential.

Session 4: Update of Five-Year Collection Programme and Pro-forma costing

SPC updated the meeting on the current SPC Five-Year Collection Programme for the PICT statistical collections from 2021 to 2024, highlighting the following:

- SDD has supported 11 censuses in the past 2 years in addition to HIES, which are important for economic measures. Rapid assessment surveys (RAS) have become prevalent since COVID.
- The costs of PICT annual core survey and census collections is estimated by SPC to be about USD 65 million per year, whilst the total annual NSO budget is only USD 24 million and aid around USD 10 million. Excluding Fiji and Papua New Guinea (PNG), the cost is USD 15 million. PICTs can finance three quarters of their collection's costs, leaving a shortfall of around USD 3.5 – 4 million that small PICTs may require from development partners and donors to complete their core collections.
- Limited access to PICT microdata is an issue for researchers and others. SDD is addressing barriers such as trust in data confidentiality. FEMM with statistics, a standing item on its agenda may be able to provide more support and advocacy for access to microdata.

Discussion: There was discussion about whether Rapid Assessment Surveys needed to continue because of their burden to respondents and bias because they depend on mobile phone owners. Stats NZ pointed out that the seven RAS run by Stats NZ in Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau, funded by MFAT, had questions developed by the countries and have provided useful information, e.g., on labour movement and vaccination.

The meeting supported maintaining the Five-Year Collection Programme. The meeting supported the view that donors should be supporting PICT priorities. Data users should be engaged from the beginning of the data collection process, with a MEL plan for National Statistics Development Plans.

Outcome: The DDPG

- acknowledged the value of the Five-year Collection Programme for NSO and development partner planning.
- recognised the significant gap in resources for Pacific statistics, noting the cost of core collections in Pacific Island countries could be as much as USD 65 million per year.
- noted that rapid assessment surveys became prevalent during the pandemic and recognised their usefulness in providing information in crisis situations.

Session 5: Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022-2030 (TYPSS II)

SPC presented the draft Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2023 (sometimes called TYPSS II) which he will present to PSSC for discussion. The draft includes a vision, theory of change, key focus areas, a comprehensive set of actions for change, and principles for implementation. It also proposes that HOPS meet every two years, rather than every three years as at present. TYPSS II is not a substitute for NSO planning, and it is not owned by SPC, but rather should be own by FEMM or HOPS.

Discussion: Stats NZ expressed that a clear problem statement is needed, and the ownership statement should be clarified. ABS emphasised the importance of there being plans beneath the framework to support its actual implementation; and that the Framework needed a clear summary for its range of readers including non-NSO decision-makers in PICTs, donors, and development partners.

Outcome: The DDPG: noted the presentation of the Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030 (TYPSS II) and suggested adding a summary and clear statements on ownership and accountability.

Session 6: Future actions to improve partner co-ordination-open discussion.

DDPG members discussed how to improve partner co-ordination:

- During COVID, although ABS talked to NSOs about RAS and economic data and provided effective virtual rather than in-person assistance, this did not support relationship building. The Pacific Statistics Leadership Forum (PSLF) is back and will be held from 8 to 12 May 2023 in Brisbane, back-to-back with PSMB. It is hoped this will improve the building of relationships.
- UNFPA agreed that relationships suffered with reliance on virtual communication during COVID. UNFPA has worked with UNICEF on MICS to avoid duplicating effort and is embarking on a new five-year work plan 2023–2027 that includes data availability in UNFPA’s mandate, e.g., on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence.
- The Chair noted Kiribati’s successful census, and the NSO’s general ability to increase its capacity and confidence with online training support from SPC and other partners.
- A significant challenge, of concern to MFAT and others, is collecting and integrating data on climate change in PICTs and attempting to complement the scarce data that exists.
- Stats NZ suggested the seven RAS funded by MFAT, all virtual and led by the NSOs themselves, were examples of successful capacity building in a virtual relationship. Stats NZ will be supporting census and population estimates in the next 12 months.
- The World Bank’s priority for the Pacific is to improve monitoring of poverty. Three PACSTAT projects are up and running with SPC. The Bank is also supporting the Tonga and Kiribati HIES and possibly the Solomon Islands HIES.
- The Pacific Observatory (funded by DFAT) has run phone surveys and the data is in the Pacific Data Hub. There are plans to continue general economic surveys. The Bank provided direct technical assistance on poverty measurement to several PICTs successfully. Concerns about NSO burden and response fatigue were also noted.
- Chris Ryan of ESCAP in supporting PICTs to implement the SDGs and produce VNR has developed an SDG tracker and a national SDG indicator framework. The aim is to help PICTs simplify the work required. ESCAP will hold a workshop on indicators for PICTs and would like development partners to attend. SDD has been involved through its work on Pacific indicators.
- DFAT considers SPC to be the leader of the regional statistical system and is working with SPC on providing funding support of AUD 7.5 million over five years for statistics.
- In addition to its support through SPC, DFAT is also working with the World Bank on the Pacific Observatory and supporting the most vulnerable groups in the Pacific through other funding mechanisms, including disability groups and women (‘Women Count’ programme with UN Women).

Session 7: Appointment of next Chair

- MFAT was confirmed as the next DDPG Chair.

Closing

- The Chair thanked all participants for their contribution to the discussion.

SUMMARY OF MEETING OUTCOMES

The Donor Development Partners group:

1. requested SDD act as a welcoming 'front door' to agencies and potential development partners for the region, informing them of current work in the region, supporting more co-ordination.
2. will hold meetings after PSSC and HOPS in future so partners can discuss current PICT/NSO priorities and needs.
3. agreed that development partners should be proactive in coordinating their work with National Statistics Offices and with each other to avoid duplication, overburdening NSOs and fatiguing survey respondents.
4. noted the PSMB principal activities since 2019, the new PACSTAT projects and the challenges faced by PSMB.
5. recognised the need to improve coordination between data providers and data users, and requested SPC to work with NSOs to assess each PICT's priorities and gaps as part of assessing which surveys are essential.
6. acknowledged the value of the five-year Collection Programme for NSO and development partner planning.
7. recognised the significant gap in resources for Pacific statistics, noting the cost of core collections in Pacific Island countries could be as much as USD 65 million per year.
8. noted that rapid assessment surveys became prevalent during the pandemic and recognised their usefulness in providing information in crisis situations.
9. noted the presentation of the Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030 (TYPSS II) and suggested adding a summary and clear statements on ownership and accountability.

Annex 1: List of participants and Documents

Participants

Chair, Ms Katrina Lourie, Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Mr Jonathan Perotti, DFAT
Ms Yelena Hill, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)
Ms Teresa Dickinson, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
Mr Andrew Knott, ABS
Mr Vince Galvin, Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ)
Ms Ofa Ketu'u, Stats NZ
Mr Chris Ryan, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
Ms Sandra Paredes, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
Mr Taufik Indrakesuma, World Bank
Mr Peter Ellis, Director SDD, Pacific Community (SPC)
Mr David Abbott, Manager, SPC
Mr Michael Sharp, Manager, SPC
Mr Phil Bright, Manager, SPC
Ms Alison Culpin, Statistics Adviser, SPC

Agenda and Presentations:

The agenda and presentations are available at: <https://sdd.spc.int/events/2022/11/3rd-pacific-statistics-ddpg>