

10th Pacific Statistics Steering Committee Meeting

Novotel Hotel, Nadi, Fiji

25th – 29th May 2015

Agenda Item 5: TWG IT – Progress and Plans

4.15 – 5.00 pm Wednesday 27 May 2015 -

Chief Statistician, Nauru to lead discussion on progress report

Technical Working Group discussion paper on progress and plans on Information, Communication and Technology

Purpose of Paper:

This paper provides an update to the 10th meeting of the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) about progress, findings and plans made by the Information and Communications Technology – Technical Working Group (ICT-TWG), since its inaugural meeting in May 2014. The ICT-TWG is guided by the principles adopted for Phase 2 of the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy. The full report is annexed.

Background/ Introduction:

The survey of ICT capability across the Pacific National Statistics Offices (NSOs) was conducted between May and October 2014. There were 16 responses. Two duplicates were removed resulting in 14 responses in the analysed result set. Overall 22 member states of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) had been targeted.

Standards and a guidelines matrix were put together after the ICT-TWG Meeting in May 2014 , outlining the Bronze, Silver and Gold Standards for small, medium and large NSOs. The results from the survey largely align with the capabilities reported in the survey, however there are some gaps. The survey also highlighted some opportunities for greater South-South Cooperation.

Discussions were had on the progressive monitoring of staff capacity and ICT capability over time. It is envisaged that NSOs would make the individual decision to progress to a higher standard. The TWG found that a minimum standard should be established of a size that could realistically be attained. The ICT-TWG wants to adopt a position that is encouraging, rather than prescribing.

Key Issues:

- **Internet Connectivity**

Access speeds vary significantly across countries and outages are a common occurrence, particularly in small and medium agencies. These can be lengthy ranging from 1 hour to more than a week. The frequency of occurrences can sometimes be weekly or daily.

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The survey did not ask about Internet data quotas, but experience suggests it could be a barrier to broader use of the Internet and Cloud-based servers.

- **Power Reliability**

Outages are common in some NSO's, however most had some form of back-up power available.

- **Backups/Disaster Recovery**

While most agencies have on-site back-up, many don't have off-site back-up. The ability to use back-ups to recover is patchy, with only a small number of agencies testing back-ups; and nearly half unable to recover if all their equipment were damaged or lost.

- Different-size NSOs equalled different needs and different capacity.
- There are differences between what could be the Minimum today, the Optimum today and the Possibilities for tomorrow; and obstacles in funding exist accordingly.
- Complexity in highly technical ICT documents would require the use of ("plain English") language that can be easily understood and readily applied.

Recommendations:

- **Use of common software**
 - Maintain support for the CPro freeware (US Census Bureau and others) as the common tool for NSOs in Pacific Island Countries (PICs).
 - Microsoft Access as a simple commercial database tool to be recommended and further training to be made available.
 - Specialist statistical programming platforms such as (Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Statistical Analysis System (SAS), etc are less common and costly but should not be discounted but further assessed on their feasibility.
 - Other standardised or common IT capabilities and common tools (software such as StatisticsNZ's PCTrade) are to be resourced and supported.
- **Mobile Internet/Cloud**
 - Trial and explore the possibilities of utilising mobile internet services through smartphones or tablets.
 - Investing in, and developing a new knowledge-sharing ICT infrastructure for the region.
- **ICT Planning Documents**
 - All NSOs to develop ICT planning documents, through sharing of knowledge and PSSC-driven support.
 - ICT plans to be incorporated into National Strategies.

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- Develop plans that produces a less risky ICT environment in NSOs, reducing possible loss of data.
- **Training and Capacity building**
 - Increasing capacity in NSOs on ICT and common statistical software utilising existing courses and workshops by the University of the South Pacific (USP), the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), SPC and other participating agencies.
 - Support the use of South-South cooperation where expertise is available.
- **Vision**
 - Countries and PSSC to share a vision of what the 23rd statistics office should be.
- **Enabling legislation**
 - PSSC to endorse the recommendation for NSOs to review existing legislation that enables the vision of PICs to produce more timely and high-quality statistics; through improved coordination, effective sharing, and dissemination; via the use of technological solutions in the region (or global) digital society