



12th Meeting of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) Monday 2nd October 2023, (NEW CALEDONIA)

MEETING REPORT AND OUTCOMES



Background

The Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) was established by the 5th Regional Conference of Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) in 2017 as a technical body responsible for standardizing statistics methods, systems, classifications and processes with the aim of fostering greater harmonisation across the region and generating efficiencies for NSOs and agencies delivering support.

Participants

The PSMB membership includes national statistics office (NSO) representatives for Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and Small Island States, as well as members from development partners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics New Zealand, SPC and UNICEF). Observers are welcome at meetings. The Pacific Community (SPC) convenes the PSMB and provides the Secretariat.

PacStat and PSMB

The Statistical Innovation and Capacity Building in the Pacific Islands (PacStat) regional project, led by SPC and funded by the World Bank, supports the administration of the PSMB and the dissemination of its recommendations. The PSMB is responsible for technical guidance and oversight for statistical research and innovative experiments commissioned through PacStat. PacStat's overall objective to improve the quality of welfare data collection and accessibility to comparable welfare data in Pacific Island Countries.

Minutes

Members

- Chair, Statistics New Zealand – Vince Galvin, Chief Methodologist
- Deputy Chair: Samoa – Leota Aliielua Salani, Government Statistician

- Melanesia – [incoming member to be confirmed at HOPS]
- Micronesia – Aritita Tekaieti, Republic Statistician, Kiribati
- Polynesia – Sione Lolohea, Government Statistician, Tonga
- Small NSO – Taggy Tangimetua, Cook Islands
- Australian Bureau of Statistics – Bruce Fraser, Principal Adviser, Survey Methodology
- Secretariat Lead: SPC Director of Statistics for Development Division (SDD) – Peter Ellis

For the full list of meeting participants see annex two.

Opening

PSMB11 (May 2023) minutes were discussed and endorsed.

Session 1 – PSMB Guidance Notes

1.1 Overview of current Pacific methods guidance available through SPC

Andrea Borlizzi and Evelyn Wareham provided an outline of the different types of guidance available on the SDD website to support the statistical systems of Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs). Andrea noted that two PacStat Guidance Notes have been published (Monetary Poverty Measurement and Microdata Dissemination) and another two are in the pipeline (Sampling Guidelines for the Pacific and Imputed Rents). Guidance is also provided to member countries through conferences and training, technical assistance and publications. The mapping exercise underlines the need to better categorise and organise existing materials so they are easier to access and use. Presenters suggested a review of existing materials to ensure a more coherent structure; investment in a more user-friendly format for its website; and to move forward: new focus areas for guidance.

Discussion

- There is a significant number of resources available that represent a good starting point considering the varying status of capacity and capability in the region. There is, however, a need for additional features that could guide users. When conducting HIES for example, countries would find indicators for data quality or appropriate sample sizes helpful.
- Concerns on ensuring country context when dealing with numerous models, stakeholders and areas were expressed. Recognising that “one size does *not* fit all, methodologies, tools, models and guidelines provided by SPC must have a flexibility that allows countries to adapt them to their country context. International standards must also be contextualised to our region and countries.
- Knowledge transfer is a critical step from regional organisations to country needs. This may need to be preceded by regular refresher courses on fundamental skills of a statistician to complement training that is specific to certain tools or methodologies.
- It is important that SPC consults on user needs of relevant line government agencies when working in-country to ensure NSO and country needs are at the centre. Some countries have established communities of practice for example as a collective approach to competing interests.

Evelyn Wareham expressed appreciation for the discussion, clarifying that statistical systems or tools provided by SPC met international standards and that countries are encouraged to adapt these for their needs. Peter Ellis acknowledged the need for more training that would strengthen fundamental statistician skill set rather than the current trajectory of specialist training.

Outcome: PSMB noted that a wide range of Pacific Methods Guidance has been produced over many years and is available through the SPC website to support statistical practice in the Pacific region. They agreed that SPC needs to review, update and re-categorise the available guidance to enable easy use to support consistent statistical practice across the region.

1.2 Presentation of the Sampling Guidelines for the Pacific (PSMB Guidance Note 2)

Bruce Fraser and Andrea Borlizzi presented the Sampling Guidelines for approval. They noted that development of this guidance began in 2020, and the authors were intentional about ensuring the document was not only readable, but also engaging and interactive using illustrations and Pacific Island case studies, as well as practical components like a formula, if that is what the user needs. It has borrowed from training materials used by Stats NZ and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). For continued relevance and use, the document is intended as a “living document” open to ongoing feedback and refinement. Current chapters cover concepts and notation, survey quality, sampling frames and sample design, using case studies (HIES) to illustrate appropriate application of theory. Andrea Borlizzi discussed the contribution of sampling towards addressing the issue of excessive HIES interview length and burden on respondents. He suggests splitting the set of survey modules into core modules (those used to inform consumption aggregates and poverty analyses, for example) and additional modules (addressing other topics, although in some cases, if they are national priorities like climate change, they might be included in the core modules for a given country). This method would maintain results of the core modules significant at the sub-national level, and those of the additional module at the national level.

Outcome: PSMB approved the Sampling Guidelines for the Pacific and thanked the subcommittee and their organisations for their excellent work to produce this guidance. They noted that SPC will publish the Sampling Guidelines as PSMB Guidance Note 3 and disseminate them to NSOs and partners across the Pacific.

1.3 Presentation of the Guidance Note on Imputed Rents

Jean-Paul Zoyem provided an overview of how this Guidance Note would contribute to a better estimate of the consumption aggregate in the region and inform the link between housing and well-being. The rationale of imputation of housing rents and different approaches were shared, specifically, self-reporting and Hedonic rent imputation models.

Discussion

- Suggestion that other data sources be considered apart from HIES. Census data has more information on housing and features that may be useful for the development of this note.
- There are Pacific-specific features that must be considered as well - island communities mainly live in their own homes and on customary land for example.
- Clarity sought on other approaches like the relative valuation model and the hot deck imputation approach. There was interest in the implications of self-reported rental that are likely be inflated in the first place, on social welfare: a numerical illustration of this approach may be useful.

Outcome: PSMB noted the development of a new draft guidance note on rent imputation to provide guidance for statistics activity in the Pacific. They committed to providing some written guidance to inform finalisation of this guidance for approval.

Session 2: Commissioned Statistical Research

2.1 Commissioned Work 2: Climate Change

Alison Culpin revisited the intentions of the project to improve household data collection related to climate change and assess impact on household assets, adaptive measures by households over time and the reach of climate financing. She provided a progress update. The core module is being tested in the 2023 Kiribati HIES and Cook Islands will include it in full in its upcoming 2023 Climate Change and Labour Force Survey (nationally funded). The Sourcebook is aligned to global frameworks and modalities and is to be presented at the 10th Expert Group on Environmental Statistics (UN Statistics Division, October 2023): Questions around household-level economic and non-economic loss and damage are included in it. Next steps include the development of a full enumerator manual and planning and budgetary allocation for climate change survey works.

Discussion

- Congratulations on reaching this milestone and delivering a strong piece of statistical development work on an important area for the region, which is well regarded internationally.
- Consensus on trialing the Sourcebook in Kiribati and the Cook Islands to allow for assessments and modifications, if any where appropriate before supporting implementation in additional countries.
- Preference for a roll out of the surveys in full, separate from other household surveys, because of time and the demand for climate change related data. Amalgamating surveys will also ease the burden on households/respondents.
- Clarification offered that the funding from Denmark was specific to Loss and Damage as evidence is needed and key for effective climate action. Implementation of the Danish funding is time bound over 3-4 years.
- Concern raised on how all the climate change related work will be coordinated.
- Sharad Tandon pointed out that the World Bank is particularly focusing on migration this year; he suggested not to limit the question on migration due to climate change, but to leave the question open to other possible causes of migration. He also suggested that some data fostered by the Sourcebook might be difficult to find but can be indirectly gathered via HIES data (assessment of consumption and asset changes in places that have been affected by natural disasters).
- James Kaphuka (UNICEF) expressed UNICEF's interest in incorporating the CC Core module into the MICS questionnaire.

Peter Ellis underlined the importance of the coordination question in terms of climate change funding (budgetary allocation for statistics is imperative) and if funding was indeed earmarked for this purpose, then it needs to be coordinated by statistics people.

Outcome: PSMB thanked SPC and PacStat for the strong work to develop the Natural Disaster and Climate Change Survey Sourcebook and approved the Sourcebook for release; they noted the implementation of the survey by some SPC member countries and asked SPC to review the lessons from trials in Cook Islands and Kiribati before supporting further roll out across the region; and they noted that the Sourcebook will continue to be improved based on international practice and experience with its implementation by Pacific Island countries and territories.

Session 3: Proposed Topic for Innovative Experiment 4

Evelyn Wareham presented a synopsis of the innovative experiments implemented to date under the Statistical Innovation and Capacity building in the Pacific Islands (PacStat) project, acknowledging the World Bank investment and discussed the process of identifying experiments. Tuvalu (Long Form Census), Samoa (Food Away from Home) and Vanuatu (Data Science for Climate Change and Natural Disasters) host the current three experiments. One more innovative experiment is needed to explore alternative data collection methods. Experiments are also testing the capacity of both countries and SPC. Two new ideas have been identified for consideration by the PSMB – Citizen-Generated Data to Prevent Gender Based Violence and Social Issues (Vanuatu) and Integrated Data to Support Pacific Priorities for one of the World Bank IDA countries that hasn't had an experiment (Fiji, Kiribati, FSM, PNG, RMI, Solomon Islands and/or Tonga). The former seeks to test the potential of using data innovations to improve statistics related to gender-based violence and social issues and the latter is about piloting the integration of administrative and survey data for government statistical priorities.

Discussion

- The group gave feedback on the two proposed topics. They noted the sensitivity of gender-based violence and the need for a cautious approach to data collection and recommended that this may not be the most suitable topic for testing innovative collection methods like citizen generated data.
- The group supported integrated data as an area for a collections innovative experiment. They discussed stakeholder engagement and regulatory infrastructure as key enablers that can support or present data sharing and integration, asking whether the scope for this experiment could include work

on these areas. Members noted the need for the experiment to be targeted to a specific problem to solve, so that the scope is managed and achievable.

Outcome: PSMB supported integrated administrative data in principle as a useful topic for PacStat Innovative Experiment 4. They asked SPC to develop a full research proposal with a focus on a concrete problem to solve for a country.

Session 4 – Survey response burden

Peter Ellis and Maria Musudroka discussed the growing concern at SPC of the length of some surveys. The average time in Kiribati for HIES was four hours for example, and in Palau, interviews took up to 14 hours (and five visits) to the household. It could be attributed to having too many modules in one survey, but the consequential response burden has both ethical and data quality issues. SPC suggested having a regional standardised review mechanisms for surveys.

Discussion

- Maintaining country priorities and additional modules that aren't core to national data needs is an endless balancing act.
- “Trying to kill five birds with one stone!” which can be motivated by money.
- Response burden can be addressed by including questions that filter out respondents.
- Not asking SPC to manage the response burden but rather provide technical support in data collection, analyses, etc.

Peter Ellis clarified that SPC does not intend to become the arbiter of what national focus should be but it could be helpful in ascertaining options to encourage active management of the response burden.

Outcome: PSMB noted the interview lengths in household surveys in the Pacific can be long, sometimes averaging 3 or 4 hours per interview and with documented cases of over 10 hours. They noted that this may have implications for data quality, budgets, and impact respondents. They asked SPC or others to undertake further research and analysis of options to encourage active management of response burden, for consideration by the Methods Board or other governance committees. And they asked SPC to include assessments of data quality related to length of household survey interviews.

Session 5 – The Pacific e-Commerce database

Dr Kati Suominen and Andrea Ibba (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat - PIFS) provided background on the Pacific e-commerce initiative, which aims to bolster the presence of regional countries on global platforms, enabling PICs to take advantage of e-commerce transactions. E-commerce is a regional priority under the Pacific Aid-for-Trade Strategy (PATs) 2020-2025. Work in this area began on in 2017 focusing on: (i) improving existing indicators; (ii) adding additional indicators; and (iii) capturing e-commerce transactions data. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat works in collaboration with the SPC and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to develop e-commerce statistics for the region which has resulted in 37 e-commerce indicators in the Pacific Data Hub (and the Pacific E-commerce Database). PIFS will be reaching out to national statistics bodies for some support as it moves forward with his project. Dr Suominen emphasised the potential e-commerce represents for both consumers and businesses (both domestic and international), if supported with an enabling environment to realise intentions of the Strategy and to facilitate cross-border e-commerce transactions. Data gaps, however, remain, as regional data is not included in some of the larger and international databases.

Discussion

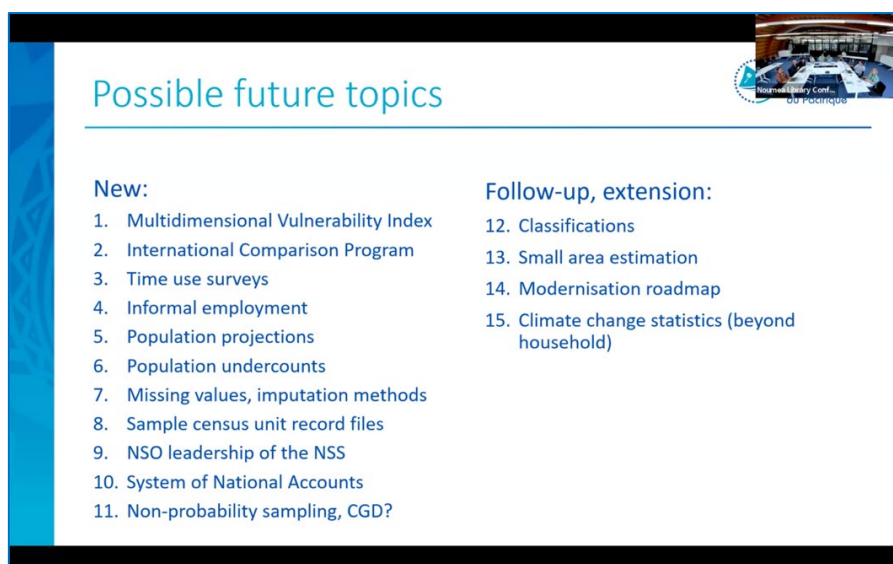
- Concerns expressed on the capacity to regularly update e-commerce related data, considering that many Pacific Island countries are struggling to produce core economic statistics on a regular basis like GDP estimates.

- There may be potential for this project to support NSOs in the areas they may be struggling in. It could also address the gap in international databases where Pacific datasets are absent. SPC could support these areas of work as well by focussing on wider e-commerce statistics work to lift overall commerce statistics.
- SPC has a role of updating existing data in the Pacific Data Hub (PDH). There is potential for a small e-commerce project for PDH, subject to funding. For now, a lot of work revolves around analyses of existing data related to commerce.
- While there are data sets in OECD, WTO, etc, it is not the same as Pacific Island nations producing its own.
- Potential coordination issue with overlaps in existing areas.

Outcome: PSMB noted and welcomed updates on the work undertaken by PIFS, SPC and UNCTAD with regards to Pacific e-commerce statistics. They supported the Pacific E-commerce Database and its initiative. They asked SPC to ensure the broader framework of economic statistics provides context for this work and to work in partnership with economic statistics partners on this (including PFTAC).

Session 6 – Upcoming Areas for PSMB Attention

Peter Ellis presented for discussion emerging areas that may require PSMB members' attention.



Possible future topics

Honourable Conf. Oti Potirigeti

New:	Follow-up, extension:
1. Multidimensional Vulnerability Index	12. Classifications
2. International Comparison Program	13. Small area estimation
3. Time use surveys	14. Modernisation roadmap
4. Informal employment	15. Climate change statistics (beyond household)
5. Population projections	
6. Population undercounts	
7. Missing values, imputation methods	
8. Sample census unit record files	
9. NSO leadership of the NSS	
10. System of National Accounts	
11. Non-probability sampling, CGD?	

Discussion

- Agreement that the list be reviewed to fewer topics, or clustered together into themes that could be the focus on a PSMB session.
- Future topics should include new classifications and potential post-COVID19 shifts in dynamics national offices may be experiencing.
- The members noted that HOPS may inform PSMB with country priorities and/or needs.

Summary of Meeting Outcomes

The Pacific Statistics Methods Board

1. Noted that a wide range of Pacific Methods Guidance has been produced over many years and is available through the SPC website to support statistical practice in the Pacific region.

Agreed that SPC needs to review, update and re-categorise the available guidance to enable easy use to support consistent statistical practice across the region.

2. Approved the Sampling Guidelines for the Pacific and thanked the subcommittee and their organisations for their excellent work to produce this guidance.

Noted that SPC will publish the Sampling Guidelines as PSMB Guidance Note 3 and disseminate them to NSOs and partners across the Pacific.

3. Noted the development of a new draft guidance note on rent imputation to provide guidance for statistics activity in the Pacific.

Committed to providing some written guidance to inform finalisation of this guidance for approval.

4. Thanked SPC and PacStat for the strong work to develop the Natural Disaster and Climate Change Survey Sourcebook and approved the Sourcebook for release.

Noted the implementation of the survey by some SPC member countries and asked SPC to review the lessons from trials in Cook Islands and Kiribati before supporting further roll out across the region.

Note that the Sourcebook will continue to be improved based on international practice and experience with its implementation by Pacific Island countries and territories.

5. Supported integrated administrative data in principle as a useful topic for PacStat Innovative Experiment.

Asked for SPC to develop a full research proposal with a focus on a concrete problem to solve for a country.

6. Noted the interview lengths in household surveys in the Pacific can be long, sometimes averaging 3 or 4 hours per interview and with documented cases of over 10 hours.

Noted that this may have implications for data quality, budgets, and impact respondents;

Asked SPC or others to undertake further research and analysis of options to encourage active management of response burden, for consideration by the Methods Board or other governance committees;

Asked SPC to include assessments of data quality related to length of household survey interviews.

7. Noted and welcomed updates on the work undertaken by PIFS, SPC and UNCTAD with regards to Pacific e-commerce statistics.

Supports the Pacific E-commerce Database and its initiative.

Asked SPC to ensure the broader framework of economic statistics provides context for this work and to work in partnership with economic statistics partners on this (including PFTAC).

8. Noted suggested topics for future PSMB consideration, acknowledging that members will respond on priorities after reflecting on discussions at HOPS6.

Next Meeting: May 2024, Australia.

Annex 1: Agenda

12th Meeting of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) Monday 2nd October 2023

PROVISIONAL AGENDA (updated 21/09/23)

Time: 8.30 am – 3.30 pm Noumea time (UTC+10)

Venue: Library Room, Pacific Community (SPC) Headquarters, 95 Promenade Roger Laroque, Noumea

Time	Item	Lead / Documentation
08.00–08.30	Arrival and greetings - Coffee, tea, water available	
08.30–08.45	Opening, welcome and meeting procedures Opening prayer Review of agenda Approval of previous meeting report and review of actions	Leota Aliielua Salani Chair / Agenda, Previous meeting report
08.45–10.00	Session 1 – PSMB Guidance Notes 1.1 Overview of current Pacific methods guidance available through SPC 1.2: Presentation of the Sampling Guidelines for the Pacific (PSMB Guidance Note 3) 1.3: Presentation of the Guidance Note on Imputed rents	Andrea Borlizzi (Consultant, SPC) Bruce Fraser (Chair PSMB Sampling Committee) and Andrea Borlizzi / draft Guidance Note Jean-Paul Zoyem (Consultant, SPC) / draft Guidance Note
10.00–10.30	Morning Tea / Coffee and Official Photo	
10.30–11.30	Session 2 – Commissioned Statistical Research 2.1 Commissioned Work 2: Climate Change: Final version of the Natural Disasters and Climate Change Survey Sourcebook and Next phase	Monica Madrid Arroyo (Consultant, SPC) / Alison Culpin (SPC) / Sourcebook
11.30–12.00	Session 3 – Proposed Topic for Innovative Experiment 4	Evelyn Wareham (SPC)
12.00–13.00	Lunch	
13.00–13.45	Session 4 – Survey response burden Issues with Respondent burden of interviews and questionnaire length	Peter Ellis / Maria Musudroka (SPC)
13.45–14.30	Session 5 – The Pacific e-Commerce database 5.1: Recommendations on e-commerce indicators (a) draft recommendations	Kati Suominen / Andrea Ibba PIFS draft recommendations
14.30–15.00	Session 6 – Upcoming Areas for PSMB Attention	Peter Ellis
15.00–15.30	Session 7 – Outcomes and Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Approval of meeting outcomes ▪ Concluding remarks ▪ Any other business ▪ Date and agenda for next PSMB meeting 	Chair / Outcomes report
15.30–16.00	Afternoon Tea	With SPC Statistics Collections Team and other NSO heads

Annex 2: List of participants

12th Meeting of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) Monday 2nd October 2023, Noumea

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (updated 28/09/23)

MEMBERS

Organisation/Country	Physical attendance	Virtual attendance
New Zealand	Mr Vince Galvin Chair Chief Methodologist vince.galvin@stats.govt.nz	
Samoa	Mr Leota Aliielua Salani Vice-Chair Governmemnt Statistician aliielua.salani@sbs.gov.ws	
Australia	Ms Denise Carlton Program Manager, Population Statistics Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au Mr Andrew Knott Assistant Director andrew.knott@abs.gov.au	Mr Bruce Fraser Principal Adviser, Survey Methodology bruce.fraser@abs.gov.au
Cook (represent small countries)	Mrs Taggy Tangimetua Government Statistician taggy.tangimetua@cookislands.gov.ck	
Kiribati (represent Micronesia)	Ms Aritita Tekaieti Republic Statistician atekaieti@gmail.com	
Tonga (Polynesia)	Sione Lolohea Government Statistician slolohea@stats.gov.to	
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)		Mr James Kaphuka Statistics & Monitoring Specialist jkaphuka@unicef.org

OBSERVERS

Organisation/Country	Physical attendance	Virtual attendance
World Bank		Mr Sharad Alan Tandon Senior Economist Poverty & Equity Global Practice standon3@worldbank.org
PIF, Nextrade		Mr Andrea Ibba Pacific E-commerce Coordinator andrei@forumsec.org Ms Kati Suominen Nextrade kati@nextradegroupllc.com

SECRETARIAT

Organisation/Country	Physical attendance	Virtual attendance
The Pacific Community (SPC) Statistics for Development Division (SDD) Noumea, New Caledonia	<p>Mr Peter Ellis Director, SDD petere@spc.int</p> <p>Mr Andrea Borlizzi Statistics Advisor, PACSTAT extandreab@spc.int</p> <p>Ms Alison Culpin Social Statistics Adviser alisonc@spc.int</p> <p>Ms Maria Musudroka Team Leader, Data Collection mariam@spc.int</p> <p>Mrs Elizabeth Ragimana Statistics Advisor Governance and Co-ordination elizabethr@spc.int</p> <p>Mrs Evelyn Wareham Manager Statistics Leadership, Governance and Use evelynw@spc.int</p>	<p>Ms Monica Madrid Arroyo Consultant on Climate Change Statistics monicamadrida@gmail.com</p> <p>Mr Andrea Ibba Pacific E-commerce Coordinator andrai@forumsec.org</p> <p>Ms Kati Suominen Nexttrade kati@nextradegroupllc.com</p> <p>Mr Jean-Paul Zoyem Welfare Economist, PACSTAT extjeanpaulz@spc.int</p>
Rapporteur	<p>Ms Ariela Zibiah Email: zibiahariela@gmail.com</p>	