



ABS PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN PACIFIC STATISTICS

Pacific Statistics Standing Committee Meeting 25 November 2020

2020 Information Update





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In October 2020 the Australian government announced that annual official development assistance funding to the Indo-Pacific region would remain at \$4 billion. DFAT also announced a new *2020-21 Partnerships for Recovery Strategy* targeted at addressing the COVID environment, with three focus areas:

- Health Security
- Stability; and
- Economic Recovery.

The Australian government continues to give high priority to the Pacific, with the focus firmly on assisting regional countries with COVID-recovery. From the perspective of ABS' work in the region, DFAT wants all programs to adopt a 'COVID pivot' to ensure that our support and activities are aligned to meet Pacific countries' COVID priorities and recovery efforts.

Over the course of 2020, in the absence of being able to provide our usual fly-in-fly-out mode of in-country technical assistance, the ABS has switched to virtual delivery for all forms of assistance, using workshop style meetings and a range of technology such as Zoom, Webex and Microsoft Teams Meeting.

This form of support has its challenges, but has demonstrated that we can find new ways of working effectively with our Pacific colleagues.

The following provides a summary update on the range of activities supported by the ABS during 2020.

Pacific Leadership Forum

- In lieu of the usual ABS annual three-day Pacific Leadership Forum gathering with Chief Statisticians, planning is under way to host a three hour virtual PLF in February or March 2021, to be followed by one or two further two or three hour sessions, based on issues of mutual interest identified by the group.
- The sessions will address leadership issues for NSOs arising from the COVID environment. The first workshop will provide a platform for Chief Statisticians to share the challenges and opportunities presented during 2020 by the COVID pandemic. It will allow NSOs to share information and approaches to meet their government's information needs in the COVID environment.

Macroeconomic statistics

- A series of six regional (to approx. 10 NSOs) workshops were delivered by Michael Morgan on measurement of CPI during COVID-19





- Vanuatu – Scoping for assistance for a CPI rebase is complete, and assistance commenced virtually. It will be supported by Chris Hinchcliff and Michael Morgan, and anticipated to take 24 months.
- Supported Quarterly National Accounts training (facilitated by PFTAC) to Cook Is, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.
- Support to Fiji around quality assurance for 2020 National Accounts compilation.
- Work is now under way to support Fiji for the development of a Rapid Style Business Impact Survey Questionnaire.
- ABS continued to provide ongoing Seasonal Adjustment advice to Fiji through remote assistance using consultant, Denis Horton.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

- ABS in-country CRVS work with NSOs cannot proceed due to international travel restrictions.
- The ABS CRVS team will assist SPC with a review of the BAG group, which is currently underway. ABS are reviewing the template for gathering information from BAG partners, focus countries and funding partners.
- ABS worked with international donors, including WHO, and provided virtual training to regional doctors to correctly certify deaths due to COVID.

Gender Statistics and COVID

- The ABS contributed to work under the UN Women’s ‘Woman Count’ initiative, including the development and implementation of the Pacific Gender Statistics Roadmap; ‘Unlocking the Lockdown: gendered effects of COVID on achieving SDGs in Asia and the Pacific’ and a gender sensitive response to COVID statistics project.
- ABS also contributed to the development of course content for APEC’s Online Gender Data training, including a short video (at DFAT’s request) by Australian Deputy Statistician Paul Jelfs.

Samoa - NSDS

- Samoa BoS, through the Australian High Commission in Apia, has requested ABS assistance to develop a new 10-year National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS). We are currently in discussion with a consultant to progress this work over the next six months.

Methods Board

- The ABS continues to be represented by Bruce Fraser as an active participant on the Methods Board.

