

Statistics for Development Division (SDD)

6th Regional Conference of Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS6)

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 03–05 October 2023)

SPC/HOPS6/Session 8 – Working Paper 9

Original: English

SESSION 8: PACIFIC STATISTICS CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

(Document presented by SPC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this session is to present the Statistics Capacity Development Framework for the Pacific that is currently in development and enable engagement and feedback from HOPS participants. This framework aims to respond to the diverse capacity development needs of Pacific Island countries and territories, present capacity actions and delivery modalities at the system, institutional/organisational, and individual levels and propose capacity development priorities. Pacific countries and organisations need to be at the forefront leading capacity development for their national statistics systems and data use for evidence-based policy in their governments. This session also aims to identify the synergies with the development partners to closely work together to support statistical capacity development for the Pacific region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

HOPS is invited to:

- Provide feedback on the key focus areas that have been identified to date and the proposed principles and action areas; and share their views on what has worked and what hasn't in the past through facilitated group discussions in the HOPS session.
- Agree that the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee should monitor progress through a standing agenda item on capacity development outcomes, outputs and activity levels.

Context

In the Pacific region, governments are experiencing an increase in data demands resulting in the production of a wider range of information. This demand will continue to increase due to a range of factors including changes in the governance landscapes, policymaking challenges, demand for efficient in-service delivery, requirements for optimisation of social and economic policy planning and development, environmental monitoring, and disaster management and response. These increasing data demands and corresponding

production require governments and organisations within each national statistical system (NSS) to strengthen capacity and modernise the way data is collected, processed, analysed, and disseminated to be more effective and efficient.

Capacity development has been a long-standing focus for statistics in the Pacific region. A capacity development benchmarking study led to the establishment of the first Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) in 2010. A wide range of activity has been delivered by development partners including support for national strategy development, institutional strengthening programmes, leadership development programmes, short-term regional and country training offerings, the Pacific attachment programme at Stats NZ, and a qualification at the University of the South Pacific. While much progress has been made, more is needed. Both HOPS in 2017 and the evaluation of TYPSS in 2021 highlighted the need for more emphasis to be given to capacity and capability development to enable NSOs to meet challenges and capacity needs.

A strategic approach is needed to lift capacity across the region. This has been included as a key focus area in the new Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030.

KEY FOCUS AREA 1: STRENGTHEN CAPACITY

Stronger national capacities for analysis, interpretation and evidence-based policy

Current state	Future state 2030
Inadequate resourcing (funds, staff, skills, legislation, advocacy) continue to be major constraints on national statistics offices and government agencies in the development of evidence-based policy.	All Pacific Island countries and territories have the technical capacity and statistical capability to manage and implement, analyse, interpret, and use core statistical collections, including greater use and integration of key administrative databases. National statistics systems are adequately resourced, cost-effective, and efficient in delivering relevant, high-quality, timely, and reliable statistics at the required granular levels for reporting and policy analysis.

Purpose of the Statistical Capacity Framework

A capacity development framework is being developed by SPC with input from people across the region as a systemic response to the statistical capacity gaps in the Pacific. This will encompass the different needs for subregions, countries and territories with the aim to optimise resource mobilisation to improve capacity of institutions and skills at the different levels of the statistical workforce in the region.

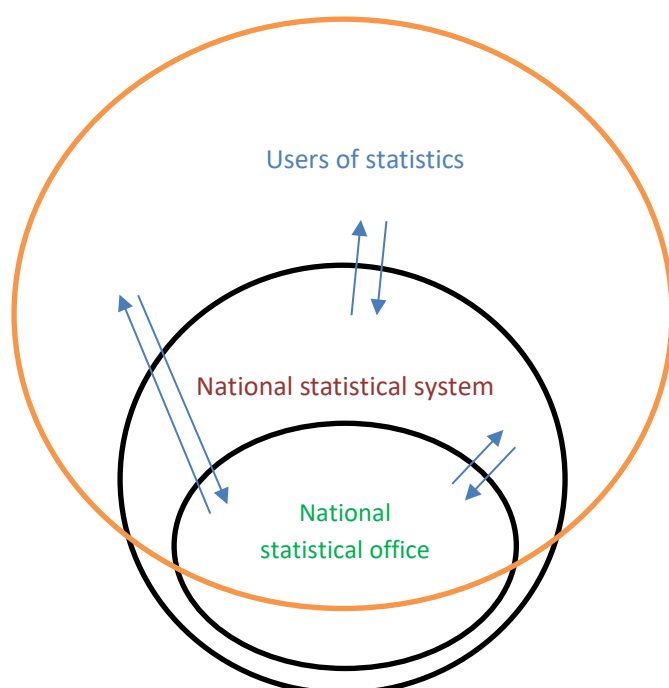
The framework’s proposed vision is for **“more consistent, modernised, coherent, and sustainable statistical development in the Pacific region”**. This is supported by the mission: **“Statistical capacity in the Pacific region is addressed through a well-articulated program of actions that address known capacity needs at the system, organisational, and individual levels.”**

The three key objectives of the framework are to:

- Identify and address the capacity gaps and needs of NSOs, NSSs and national policy analysis staff;
- Establish mechanisms and key priorities for coordinated capacity development; and
- Provide a set of principles for development partners to follow that lead to sustainable capacity development.

The framework’s scope will cover a broad spectrum of government institutions dealing with the data, as depicted by figure 1.

Figure 1 | Institutional mapping for statistical capacity development



The framework will be a success if the following outcomes are met:

- Statistical capacity increases for (a) data producers (individuals and organisations), and (b) data users (individuals and organisations);
- Donors and development partners are complying with the principles, following the coordination mechanisms and allocating resources to the right things (avoiding duplication and working together); and
- There is a demonstrated accumulation of lessons, and these are being incorporated into action.

Framework development process

The framework is being developed based on a comprehensive assessment of capacity needs. The primary mechanism for country engagement and input has been three subregional technical workshops convened by SPC and the UN Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP):

- **Technical Workshop 1 – Nadi, October 2022:** Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu
- **Technical Workshop 2 – Nadi, May 2023:** American Samoa, Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Tokelau and Vanuatu
- **Technical Workshop 3 – Guam, July 2023:** Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Palau and Republic of the Marshall Islands

These workshops generated active participation, engagement and input from both data producers and staff responsible for evidence-based policymaking (data users) who articulated the different needs of their countries and territories for statistical literacy and data use.

The development is also draws on research of existing frameworks, and a structured questionnaire was circulated to collect feedback from individual staff in each Pacific Island national statistical system (NSS). The results of this survey will be presented in the session at HOPS.

Emerging priority areas identified through input

From the technical workshops and research, we have identified a number of priority areas that may help the statistical systems to improve the efficiency in statistical activities and processes. The areas that require more capability and capacity support vary from country to country. These include:

- Data collection skills and assets;
- Data products and dissemination/availability and accessibility;
- Data gaps (including national, regional and global commitments);
- Data analysis and interpretation;
- Data integration and harmonisation;
- Statistical development strategies and plans; and
- Data governance and NSS stakeholder coordination

Proposed principles

The way forward for capacity development needs to be guided by a set of principles agreed by countries, donors and development partners. Proposed principles include:

Multi-level: The framework intends to respond systematically to capacity challenges at the *system*, *institutional* and *individual* levels. The capacity development response needs to be well connected between levels – in that the support at the institutional level needs first to reflect capacity at the system level, and support for individual capacity development is reliant on institutional capacity.

No one-size-fits-all: The framework gives key emphasis to differences between Pacific countries as a one-size-fits-all approach will not generate the desired results. The framework intends to progressively support institutional capacity to introduce and train people in modern statistical activities and processes to fit the readiness of each NSS. Different situations will be susceptible to different modalities as the optimal response that best addresses the challenge, so the framework will encourage a range of actions to fit needs.

Sustainable: Resources should be made available sustainably to ensure that institutions facing skilled workforce-related shortages (like attrition of trained staff) and the onboarding of new staff, can equip themselves with the required skills.

Build on best practice: The framework pays equal attention to developing statistical knowledge that can be easily accessible, translated (if required) into local languages, and built on statistical practices. The emphasis would be to enable the NSS to showcase the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, United Nations Quality Assurance Framework, National and International Statistical Classifications, etc.

Holistic approach: The framework intends to improve skills at all levels of staff roles and institutions within each NSS. Starting from the leadership skills of managers to the development of different statistical workforce groups, the framework intends to work closely with the national statistical leadership for an optimal response to skills development. It applies to both data producers and data users.

Measuring progress

Monitoring of results and effectiveness will include encouraging partners to share their evaluations or after-action-reviews from training they provide, to evaluate the contribution to progress of activities and outputs. Guidance should be provided to enable standardised evaluations and providers will be encouraged to be more rigorous in measuring skill levels before and after training. It would be useful to have regular monitoring reports delivered to responsible committees at national and regional level.

At the outcome level, the Statistical Performance Indicators (SPI) from the World Bank provide an open-source framework for assessing the performance of statistical systems and the efforts to improve them.¹ SPI measures progress of countries around the world on 22 dimensions under five pillars.

This statistical capacity framework has been selected as a key measurement framework for the Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030. It should be instrumental in providing support to countries to reflect performance and enable targeted statistical progress in the region that is well captured, comparable and visible. In some countries where there is no assessment² or little data available on SPI dimensions, the capacity framework aims to provide support to increase SPI reporting and provide an adequate measure of statistical performance.

PILLARS	DIMENSIONS				
Data use (User types)	Legislature	Executive	Civil society	Academia	International bodies
Data services (Service types)	Quality of data releases	Richness and openness of online access	Effectiveness of advisory and analytical services related to statistics		Availability and use of data services
Data products (Topics)	Social (SDG 1–6)	Economic (SDG 7–12)	Environmental (SDG 13–15)		Institution (SDG 16–17)
Data sources	Statistical office (Censuses and surveys)		Administrative data	Geospatial data	Private sector data/citizen generated data
Data infrastructure	Legislation and governance	Standards & Methods	Skills	Partnership	Finance (Domestically and from donors)

¹ See: [Statistical Performance Indicators \(worldbank.org\)](https://worldbank.org)

² Not all Pacific Island countries and territories are World Bank members.

Annex 1: Proposed levels, areas and modalities – for feedback at HOPS

Level 1: System level

	Areas	Rationale	Modalities/Actions
S1	Legislation, statistical Acts, and principles	High level mandate, rules and awareness.	Initiate engagement with MPs, parliamentarians, legislatures, and country system leaders. Review of statistical acts, identification of grey areas and recommendation of ways forward.
S2	Institutional framework	Some countries require support to set up national statistical systems, particularly distribution of responsibilities for different dimensions of statistics, and institutional harmonisation.	Map responsibilities for collection of different statistics in each Pacific Island country or territory. Develop capacity of institutes and standardisation of methodology.
S3	Development and implementation of NSPSs	An NSS-owned integrated National Statistics Development Strategy (NSDS) is required to strategically portray the country specific statistics production and use.	Stage 1 is <i>development</i> or review of NSDSs. Stage 2 on <i>implementation</i> needs additional support. Partners could work with countries to achieve NSDSs goals for collection, dissemination, capacity development, advocacy, coordination, etc.
S4	Leadership development	Awareness and understanding of the importance of statistics and data among executive branches enable important decisions to be supported by relevant, trusted, and objective data, statistics, and insights.	High-level engagement with the public service commission (or equivalent agency) covering TORs, levels and skills and designing a <i>Leadership Training Program in Statistics</i> for senior incoming officers with refreshers as needed. National statistical conferences, regional HOPS conferences, inclusion of statistics on agenda for regional ministers meetings etc.
S5	National assessments	It is important that countries take the lead in conducting regular NSS needs assessments.	The NSO takes the lead every year to run a pre-designed tool with support of partners and country-specific tools. A national assessment could cover data literacy among policy makers, NSS coordination, development of harmonised data ecosystem, relationships between data producers/users, organisational designs, HR policies and overall challenges.
S6	Mapping of national development indicators, SDGs, global and regional indicators	Currently data collected is not fully used to report on multiple fronts for a range of reasons, e.g., lack of analytic capabilities in thematic areas, low national awareness of data.	Closely working with counterparts to map indicators by data source and commitment. National training workshops on indicators operationalisation, calculations, benchmarking, targets and reviewing. Online course content.

Level 2: Organisational level

	Areas	Rationale	Modalities / Actions
O1	Capability framework for workforce development	A skills framework can address capability issues in a more impact and sustainable manner by enabling development of the workforce covering the NSS.	A capability framework defining skills and levels enables workforce development in different areas. This could link all institutions within an NSS and train staff by functional skills from basic to advanced. For example, the Australian Public Service Data Capability Framework defines consistent skills and enables training offerings and career pathways for all agencies.
O2	Resource optimisation (human resources, budget and modernisation)	The need for workforce development for statistical areas in each country. e.g., developing skills to report on global/region commitments; and data profession for NSS	Working with leaders to identify and fill resource gaps: a) creating workforces for different statistical functions, b) supporting distribution of work within NSS. Leadership work based on review of the existing HR policies.
O3	GAMSO, GSBPM and Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA) ³	Implementation of accepted international models supports a modernised statistical system and consistent processes, as well as sound organisational management reducing risks.	Capacity support from partners for implementation of international models to support modernization, resource planning, and standard processes for each statistical phase. Country-level workshops to introduce this and then close collaboration for implementation. Online course content designed and taken up at leadership and staff level.
O4	Quality assurance	It is important that official statistics follow quality standards and principles agreed at global and local level for decision making processes. Every NSS must adhere to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.	Adoption of and compliance with fundamental principles of official statistics and national codes of conduct. High level training for NSS (e.g., online UN sponsored training programmes). Support for uptake and implementation of UN National Quality Assurance Framework roadmap by countries. Online courses designed for people across NSS.
O5	Innovation and communication	An innovative approach for advocacy and communication for data and statistics is needed to identify and focus on the 'user engagement' strategies. Another area for innovation is dissemination focused on interactive 'data products'.	Development of communication strategy for dissemination – high level training on skill sets available for staff of NSS.

³ On Modernization of Statistics: <https://unece.org/statistics/modernization-official-statistics> and GAMSO <https://statswiki.unece.org/display/GAMSO/GAMSO+v1.2>

Level 3: Individual level

	Areas	Rationale	Modalities / Actions
11	Technical skills training	Development of essential skills in different functional areas (sensitive to country-specific requirements).	<p>Provision of quality training material with practical examples.</p> <p>Basic and medium level courses online (also as pre-requisite) and/or in person.</p> <p>Promote existing courses or develop courses (with partners) that address the Pacific region's skills needs.</p> <p>Attachments (short- or long-term).</p> <p>Peer-to-peer support.</p> <p>Country missions, during implementation or work.</p>
13	Organisational skills, teamwork, collaboration, and leadership	To improve the performance of staff, capability development also needs to focus on non-technical skills such as project management, finance and people skills.	General courses covering non-functional/non-technical skills would help improve the output of the NSS workforce.
14	Communication and coordination skills	Communication and coordination capability within most NSSs requires a boost. This should result in more targeted data production, advocacy and use at the country level.	An online communication and coordination course for data people.
15	Performance, career, and incentives	This would enable staff to develop their careers. This needs to be reflected in HR policies, work ethics and staff motivation.	Provide capacity development resources for Human Resources department within an NSS. Offer an online course that covers these areas for HR managers and officers.
16	Introduction to new methodologies and updates on emerging topics	Staff members are enabled to participate in regional workshops, seminars and conferences.	Workshops, seminars, webinars and conferences at regional level should be offered when new methodologies are introduced, or existing ones are updated, or a specific thematic conference is required to bring people to learn new perspectives.