

3rd Pacific Statistics Standing Committee Meeting (PSSC)

Noumea, 25 NOVEMBER 2020

Outcome Statement

1. Acknowledgement of partners

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the support and advocacy of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the World Bank for the Pacific statistics system, and the collaboration of partners including Pacific NSOs, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ), UN agencies and the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC).

2. Action on recommendations of the 2019 PSSC Meeting

PSSC:

- i. noted the update from the Director of SPC's Statistics for Development Division (SDD) on progress made in addressing the recommendations from the 2019 PSSC meeting.

3. Overview of progress under the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) 2010–2020 and plans for the review of TYPSS

PSSC:

- i. welcomed the advances made by countries during the life of TYPSS, including implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics, successful planning and conduct of major surveys, and improved capacity in economic statistics;
- ii. noted the need to continue progress in areas such as civil registration and use of administrative data;
- iii. expressed concern about lack of action on the planned review of TYPSS in 2020, which has necessitated postponing the meeting of Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics to April 2021;
- iv. requested that DFAT share the draft terms of reference for the review with partners to allow their input before the TOR are finalised.

4. Implementation of SDD's Business Plan (2018–2020) and priorities for 2021

PSSC acknowledged:

- i. progress on implementing SDD's business plan in 2020, including continued support for regional reporting of the Pacific SDG indicators and preparation of countries' Voluntary National Reports;
- ii. significant advances in data dissemination, including through the ongoing development and expansion of the Pacific Data Hub (PDH) and upgrading of national websites, and encouraged further sharing and use of PICT microdata;
- iii. support for civil registration and vital statistics, including development (with the Brisbane Accord Group) of regional guidelines for IT applications, and congratulated Gloria Mathenge (SDD's CRVS Advisor) on her appointment as Chair of the UN's Global CRVS Group;
- iv. support from SDD and other partners for development of surveys and processes for monitoring COVID impacts, including through rapid assessments to provide data for decision-making on targeted assistance;

- v. the successful piloting, with the International Labour Organisation, of a new module for collecting labour market data through census;
- vi. the development with FAO and the University of Wollongong of the Pacific Nutrient Database and Pacific Food Trade database, which provide valuable information for regional food and nutrition security;
- vii. SDD's provision of virtual assistance, including development of an innovative dashboard to provide census support, during COVID restrictions on face-to-face interaction and training.

5. Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) report

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the report of the PSMB Chair on its work in 2020, which included:
 - a. the establishment of the five-year PACSTAT project, including the terms of reference and administrative processes for prioritisation of research projects;
 - b. interim adoption of a revised methodology for poverty measurement in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), which has been developed with the World Bank in accordance with international standards;
 - c. endorsement of a new Labour Market Module for inclusion in housing and population census following successful piloting of the module;
 - d. support for increased use of administrative data, while recognising the challenges for countries and advocating a step-by-step approach to begin the journey;
- ii. noted PSMB's planned review of its terms of reference, and the relevance of the TYPSS review to consideration of PSMB's role in the regional statistics structure;
- iii. also noted that the three-year term of the current PSMB Chair will end in April 2021 and that the appointment of the next chair will be considered by HOPS.

6. MFAT update / Pacific tourism statistics strategy

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged MFAT's support for Pacific statistics, including for the development of the Pacific Data Hub;
- ii. noted MFAT's suggestion that a review of PSMB could be incorporated in the TYPSS review;
- iii. listened with interest to MFAT's proposal to improve the collection and analysis of Pacific tourism statistics, including through developing a framework showing the many players, their roles and activities as a starting point for greater cooperation in this area;
- iv. noted MFAT's request for PICT feedback on the proposal.

7. Stats NZ update

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged the support provided by Stats NZ through the Pacific Statistics Support Programme;
- ii. noted in particular the benefits of the attachment programme for Pacific NSO staff.

8. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) update

PSSC:

- i. acknowledged Australia's support for Pacific statistics, including economic statistics, and the alignment of ABS activities with DFAT's 'Partnerships for recovery strategy';
- ii. welcomed plans to hold the Pacific Leadership Forum in February 2021, albeit virtually, and looked forward to receiving further details.

9. Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) update

PSSC:

- i. noted the update on PFTAC's operations in 2020, and flexibility in delivering online support during the period of border closures and travel restrictions;
- ii. looked forward to the findings of the mid-term external evaluation of PFTAC's Phase V;
- iii. noted tentative plans to hold a final workshop for all countries involved in the Government Finance Statistics programme, which is due to end in April 2021.

10. University of the South Pacific's Official Statistics Programme update

PSSC:

- i. noted the update and the pleasing increase in the number of students taking statistics courses;
- ii. acknowledged the programme's implementation of the recommendations of the external review of its operations in 2019.

11. Update from NSOs on significant issues, challenges and developments in 2020 (Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Tokelau, Tonga and Vanuatu)

PSSC:

- i. recognised the increased demands on NSOs, including for new data during the COVID pandemic;
- ii. acknowledged the efforts of NSOs to fulfil their functions despite COVID-related cuts in staffing and budgets;
- iii. noted that implementation of new technology, such as CAPI and CATI, is benefiting some PICTs but others, especially small NSOs, need more support in this area;
- iv. recognised the need for improved cooperation from other parts of the national statistics system to ease the burden on NSOs;
- v. recognised the importance of consultation and engagement between NSOs and agencies/development partners, even if the process is virtual as at present;
- vi. acknowledged with appreciation the support from development partners, including for capacity building.

12. Update on agenda topics for the meeting of Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS 6)

PSSC:

- i. agreed that that the planned review of the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) must be completed before HOPS 6, which has been deferred till April 2021 because of the delay in the review;
- ii. agreed that Australia's Deputy Australian Statistician (ABS) will escalate the issue of the TYPSS review to higher levels in DFAT in the next two weeks and will advise the PSSC Chair of DFAT's response, noting the Chair has undertaken to keep PSSC informed of progress;
- iii. noted the short timeline for the review, which necessitates finalisation of the terms of reference before year-end, and appointment of the consultant to allow the review to begin in mid-January 2021;
- iv. requested that the secretariat circulate the draft list of topics for the HOPS 6 agenda to PSSC members, with two weeks allowed for feedback;
- v. further requested PSSC representatives of subregions to contact their constituents in other PICTs to get their feedback on the proposed HOPS 6 agenda;
- vi. acknowledged the value of greater synergy between planners and statisticians in ensuring the use of data in policy- and decision-making, and requested the secretariat to further consider how to increase engagement with planners in HOPS meetings.