

2019, 2nd Pacific Statistics Standing Committee Meeting (PSSC)

Noumea, 30–31 OCTOBER 2019

Outcome Statement

PSSC:

Keynote address

- i. noted that the 2019 Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) acknowledged the need for increased resourcing for Pacific statistics, which is essential to meet the reporting requirements of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators and to properly reflect the region's progress towards the 2030 Agenda; and
- ii. acknowledged the support of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the World Bank, and the collaboration of partners including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ), UN agencies and the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC).

Agenda item 1: Action on recommendations of the 2018 PSSC Meeting, and overview of progress on the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS)

- i. noted the update from the Director of SPC's Statistics for Development Division (SDD) on progress made in addressing the recommendations from the 2018 PSSC meeting, major developments under TYPSS and plans for the mid-term review of TYPSS Phase 3.

Agenda item 2: Report on the 2019 implementation of SDD's Business Plan (2018–2020)

- i. acknowledged SDD's implementation of its business plan, including support for developing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) and strengthening capacity in National Statistics Offices (NSOs);
- ii. significant progress in improving data dissemination; and
- iii. innovative work on regional reporting of the Pacific SDG indicators.

Agenda item 3: Report from the Chair of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB)

- i. acknowledged the report of the PSMB Chair on its work in 2019, which included:
 - a. producing Pacific-specific Sampling Guidelines, following circulation of drafts for comment;
 - b. providing an evidence-base for decisions on conducting national household income and expenditure surveys (HIES) following analysis of data from the HIES experiment conducted in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI);
 - c. holding a successful sampling workshop that focused on critical practical elements of survey planning; and
 - d. developing updated recommendations for poverty measurement in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs), which will be finalised in 2020; and
- ii. recognised PSMB's value in providing a focus for collaboration between highly skilled people on several key technical issues for Pacific statistics.

Agenda item 4: Summary of decisions on the RMI HIES experiment, and Kiribati's experience of implementing CAPI and recall in the HIES

- i. noted the specific findings of the RMI HIES experiment to test optimised methods for collecting socioeconomic data;
- ii. noted that PSMB has endorsed recommendations for a new regionally standardised HIES data collection methodology in the Pacific region, with further work now planned to support implementation of the recommendations; and
- iii. acknowledged Kiribati's report on its recent HIES, and lessons learned including the benefits of CAPI and how to deal with limited internet connectivity; the appropriateness of a seven-day recall method; and the need to incorporate risk management in all aspects of the survey.

Agenda item 5: Proposal for a Pacific Statistical Collections Financing Mechanism

- i. supported in principle the proposed funding mechanism, which is intended to provide a coordinated approach to funding for Pacific statistics collections and to achieve efficiencies and improved cost effectiveness;
- ii. agreed that further work is needed on the details of how the mechanism will be operationalised, noting current governance arrangements for regional statistics;
- iii. noted that development partners have agreed to look at the pros and cons of options for housing the funding mechanism, i.e. with a UN agency, the World Bank or SPC (by end of December 2019);
- iv. acknowledged the following key considerations raised by NSOs, which will be further developed as part of the proposal:
 - a. governance of the facility, including fair and transparent allocation of assistance;
 - b. responsiveness to country needs;
 - c. role of leading agencies, including SDD as the regional statistics system leader, and the role of development partners;
 - d. national priorities (as articulated in NSDS), which should be primary;
 - e. consideration of realm countries – how would they access the funding mechanism?
 - f. government commitments – what should they look like?
 - g. political empowerment of Government Statisticians; and
 - h. extent to which the funding proposal will build NSO capacity;
- v. agreed that the SDD Director (Eveli Waqavonovono), and the PSMB Chair and Deputy Chair (Vince Galvin and Dr Viliami Fifita) will prepare a note that further explores these NSO considerations (by end of December 2019). The note will also provide input to the mid-term review of TYPPS; and
- vi. in recognition of the limited scope to cover funding gaps for the Five-Year Data Collection Plan, requested development partners to actively investigate with SPC ways in which upcoming funding opportunities could be used to pilot the proposed mechanism to leverage further funding from other partners.

Agenda item 6: Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) update

- i. noted the update on PFTAC's operations in 2019; and
- ii. acknowledged PFTAC's support and technical assistance and the positive outlook for continued funding of the Government Finance Statistics programme, based on strong demand from PICTs.

Agenda item 7: Report on PSMB discussion of methods for monetary and non-monetary approaches to poverty measurement and SDG reporting

- i. recognised the challenges of measuring poverty, including for the SDG indicators, given that concepts of poverty vary with cultures;

- ii. welcomed PSMB's work on developing updated guidelines for monetary poverty measurement and multidimensional poverty measurement; and
- iii. noted that PSMB's recommendations for poverty measurement will be finalised for dissemination in 2020.

Agenda item 8: Update from NSOs on significant issues, challenges and developments in 2019

- i. recognised the high and increasing demands on NSOs, e.g. for SDG-related data, and their efforts to address these demands, including through capacity development and adoption of new technology;
- ii. acknowledged the value of peer-to-peer knowledge sharing between NSOs and the mutual benefits of these arrangements;
- iii. emphasised the value of an up-to-date NSDS for supporting NSO planning, prioritisation and advocacy; and
- iv. acknowledged with appreciation the support from development partners, including for capacity building.

Agenda item 9: Update on .Stat/SDMX Platform, Pacific Data Hub, SDD website and PopGIS

- i. acknowledged the significant progress made by SDD to improve data dissemination and enhance user access, including through:
 - a. the two-year project to revise and update the SDD website based on the findings of the user engagement survey in 2017;
 - b. the creation of the Pacific Data Hub (PDH), which provides a central, sustainable and accessible platform for cataloguing or hosting Pacific data from SPC and other partners and institutions;
 - c. the development of PopGIS 3 (for data visualisation and mapping), which is faster and more responsive than previous versions and can be used on laptops and smartphones; and
 - d. the update of the National Minimum Development Indicators (NMDI) database and its migration to the new 'dotstat' platform linked to the PDH;
- ii. noted that in 2020, SDD's web developer will focus on supporting the repair and upgrading of NSO websites and building their staff capacity; and
- iii. noted the NSO request for more frequent training from SPC, and the request that notices of statistics-related training are directed to NSOs to ensure the appropriate staff attend workshops and other events.

Agenda item 10: Microdata Library and Data Governance Framework

- i. welcomed the establishment of the Microdata Library and Data Governance Framework and SPC's leadership of this new capability for the region;
- ii. noted that SDD is working on guidelines for harmonised structuring of data sets to enhance data sharing;
- iii. recognised countries' concerns about privacy and confidentiality when sharing their data and the need to address related legislative issues; and
- iv. noted that SDD has procedures and protocols in place to manage risks in data sharing.

Agenda item 11: Update on Pacific SDG indicators and reporting

- i. recognised SDD's contribution to regional work on SDG reporting, noting the SDGs have increased demands for data, including data that has not traditionally been required in the

- Pacific, or elsewhere;
- ii. recognised the value of the Voluntary National Review process as a tool for assessing country priorities and progress, noting that to date 13 countries (including Australia and New Zealand) have completed a VNR, and SDD is supporting others planned for 2020;
 - iii. encouraged the use of VNR findings in national policy and planning; and
 - iv. agreed on the need to look beyond traditional data collection methods (such as census and HIES) to new methods, such as use of satellite data, to enable measurement of more indicators.

Agenda item 12: Draft Pacific Roadmap for Gender Statistics

- i. acknowledged the development of the draft Pacific Roadmap for Gender Statistics in a collaboration between SPC and UN Women; and
- ii. supported further work on the Roadmap, noting that the aims include building on already established platforms, developing capacity to use data, and exploring opportunities to re-analyse existing collections.

Agenda item 13: Report from the Chair of the Donor and Development Partners Group (DDPG) Meeting

- i. noted the Chair's report, including that:
 - i. terms of reference (TOR) for the DDPG have been drafted but are yet to be finalised; and
 - j. the DDPG agreed that financing is a challenge, e.g. for upcoming censuses in some Pacific Island countries, and had discussed the proposal for a Pacific statistics funding mechanism.

Agenda item 14: Future investment priorities in regional statistics development (DFAT and MFAT)

- i. noted with appreciation that DFAT currently has intentions to continue funding for statistics at present levels;
- ii. further noted that DFAT is providing some additional support through the Australian Bureau of Statistics for work on civil registration and vital statistics;
- iii. noted with appreciation that MFAT has increased funding this year including for the Pacific Data Hub; provides support for PFTAC and UN agencies; and continues to provide core funding that supports SDD's role as system leader;
- iv. further noted that Stats NZ also provides support for Pacific statistics; and
- v. noted that the next phase of MFAT's collaboration with the UN is currently under discussion.

Agenda item 15: Preparations for the TYPSS Review and ideas for future directions for TYPSS II

- i. noted that TOR for the mid-term review of the TYPSS will shortly be circulated for comment, with the review proposed to take place in the first quarter of 2020;
- ii. agreed that the TOR should include consideration of the potential for advancing the proposed Pacific statistics funding mechanism, and that relevant input will be provided by development partners and NSO representatives by the end of December (as noted under Agenda item 5);
- iii. acknowledged that DFAT will support the TYPSS review, with funding of AUD 80,000 available; and
- iv. suggested the following ideas for the future direction of TYPSS:
 - k. challenges in collaboration between partners;
 - l. data dissemination;

- m. focus on use of statistics in policy making;
- n. sustainability and modernisation of statistics production;
- o. legislative review (e.g. for microdata liberation) and potential for data sharing between line ministries and NSOs; and
- p. Pacific data quality.

Agenda item 16: Topics for the 2020 meeting of Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) and future focus

- i. suggested the following topics for HOPS and areas of future focus:
 - Findings and recommendations of the TYPPS review.
 - Outcomes of PSSC meetings.
 - Reports of PSMB’s work and achievements/DPPG’s work and achievements.
 - Outcomes of 2020 censuses to date, including status and challenges.
 - Status of the proposal for a Pacific Statistics funding mechanism.
 - Consequences of commitments made by governments.
 - IDA project funding for innovative experiments (‘What if we did it differently?’; ‘What data would policy-makers like to have at their fingertips?’).
 - Opportunity for PICTs to provide input to the development of PFTAC’s 6th phase (2022–2027).
 - Greater engagement of planners at HOPS, e.g. through requesting a presentation on their use of data (similarly, representatives of key data users in sectors such as health, gender and population policy could provide presentations).
 - Opportunity to advocate a virtuous circle of data production → use → policy → outcome.
 - Discussion of which issues should go up to FEMM for high-level support.