

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Statistics

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Review of progress by partners with respect to the
collective vision and framework for action**

**Advancing official statistics for the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development: initiatives by global, regional
and subregional organizations to implement the
collective vision and framework for action****

Summary

ESCAP member States include a broad range of countries in terms of statistical capacity, geographic location, size and level of development. Implementing the Collective Vision and Framework for Action for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires national, subregional, and regional activities.

The present paper contains an overview of subregional development of two groups of countries, namely: the countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries and the countries of the Pacific subregion.

I. Introduction

1. This paper highlights recent statistical developments in two subregions, the countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) and the countries of the Pacific subregion.

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** This document is being issued without formal editing.

II. Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries

A. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Statistical Capacity Building Programme for National Statistical Offices

2. Accurate, timely, reliable and consistent statistical data is of utmost importance for policy making and strategy development in any country. However, the member countries of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have varying levels of capacities for producing statistical data in accordance with relevant internationally-accepted statistical standards. Against this background, the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) (“the Centre”) carries out an important role in strengthening and improving National Statistical Systems (NSSs) in OIC countries with a view to producing better national statistics and thus helping policy-makers introduce better national policies and strategies. In this context, the Centre contributes significantly to enhancing the technical capacities of the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of member countries. For this objective, the Centre carries out a flagship statistical skills development initiative titled ‘OIC Statistical Capacity Building Programme (StatCaB)’ (“the Programme”).

3. The Programme was initiated in early 2007. In a short period of time, it has become the leading capacity development programme of the Centre which acts as an exemplary model for the establishment of other capacity building programmes. To trigger the statistical cooperation linkages and thus contribute to the efforts of OIC countries in improving their statistical systems, the Centre collects information from the NSOs of OIC countries by conducting biennial questionnaires. The findings from these questionnaires enable the Centre to assess the needs and capacities of NSOs of OIC countries. Based on these corresponding needs and capacities, a matching is done among OIC countries to organise short term statistical courses, study visits, and technical missions. In its purest form, these statistical outreach activities facilitated among member countries through the Programme is built upon the South-South Cooperation (SSC) modality. To increase the visibility of the Programme and the contributions of member countries into the Programme, the Centre regularly reports the implemented activities at not only the OIC level but also international levels.

4. The statistical activities facilitated by the Centre for the benefit of OIC countries unlock opportunities to transfer knowledge among them and hence contribute to the harmonisation of national statistics production processes with international standards and norms. The impact brought about through the Programme results in more activities sought by the OIC countries. This is an exemplary indication of the solidarity among the members and embodiment of the SSC principles.

5. In addition to key actions under six strategic areas highlighted in the Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP) for Sustainable Development Data which calls for a commitment by governments, policy leaders and the international community, the Programme strongly contributes to the collective vision outlined by the ESCAP Committee on Statistics in the document titled ‘Advancing Official Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ and more specifically to the Strategic Action Area E: ‘Having requisite skills sets’ which has been proposed in the aforementioned document. This is supported by the Programme through

identifying and coordinating existing resources, including South-South and triangular cooperation mechanisms, to strategically address the needs, and identify resource gaps. The biennial questionnaires circulated by the Centre focus on the specific needs of the OIC countries based on the Classification of Statistical Activities (CSA Rev I – Oct. 2009) and have been expanded in 2015 to include ‘Professional Skills for Official Statisticians’ on top of the five CSA domains already covered. This expansion has been a result of the need communicated by the OIC countries for covering the soft managerial issues pertaining to the effective running of NSOs in an era of fast changing socio-economic circumstances demanding agile statisticians.

6. Since the inception of the first Programme activity in 2007, the Centre has organized over 375 statistical capacity building programmes including 242 short-term statistics courses, 59 international workshops, 46 study visits, 21 technical missions and 7 OIC Statistical Commission sessions with the participation of experts and high-level officials from the NSOs and other constituents of the NSSs of OIC countries. In total around 6,000 experts and statisticians almost from all NSOs of OIC countries but also from their line ministries and governmental bodies benefited from these activities provided by 24 OIC countries.

7. Despite the challenges faced regarding the distance, language and security concerns among OIC member countries, the Centre tries to address these by diversifying the types of statistical activities. In addition to short term statistics courses, study visits and technical missions facilitate the mobilisation of the staff, transfer of knowledge and sharing of best practices among OIC countries. In addition, the Programme activities are mainly implemented in three official languages of the OIC; namely, Arabic, English and French, to access a broader audience. Furthermore, the materials used in the Programme activities are made online available at OIC-StatCom website free of charge to enable quick access to them whenever necessary.

8. As a way forward, over a period of five years, the Programme aims at reaching some 600 activities, increasing the number of provider member countries to 30, and focusing on activities in relation to Sustainable Development Goals indicators.

III. The Pacific countries

A. The Pacific Community (SPC)

9. The 2017 Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) meeting¹ approved a revised governance structure for statistics in the Pacific region with the aim of creating a clear governance framework with a strong strategic, oversight and guidance component. This governance structure has five primary components, supported by the the Ten-year Pacific Statistics Strategy and Statistics for Development Division of the Pacific Community:

1. Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM)

10. Within this framework HOPS’s preferred option was that statistics and data should become a formal, annual standing agenda item at the FEMM, as most Pacific Ministers in charge of statistics are also those in charge of

¹ 5th Regional Conference of Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS); Working Paper 2 – p. 2.

economic issues. By strengthening the FEMM's focus in statistics and data, it would become the strategic guidance and decision-making body in regional statistics governance with the ability to push significant issues to Pacific Island leaders via the traditional Pacific Forum Islands Secretariat (PIFS) process. FEMM 2018 in Palau approved this proposal.

2. Heads of Planning and Statistics Meeting (HOPS)

11. At the next level in the regional statistics governance structure would be the HOPS meeting. HOPS would meet every two-three years at the most senior officials' level possible and thus provide a regular institutional interface between NSOs, development partners and SPC to help build the relationships which are crucial to the successful implementation of the Ten-year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) and other statistics initiatives in the Pacific.

12. The role of HOPS would be to provide senior-level strategic oversight, guidance, recommendations and decisions on the matters placed before it. These recommendations would then, through active cooperation and collaboration between SPC and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), be discussed during the standing agenda item on statistics at the FEMM.

3. Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC)

13. The PSSC would evolve into an official subsidiary body of HOPS, as the "Pacific Statistics Standing Committee". PSSC would meet in years when HOPS does not meet and would be a space for members to share updates on progress in various statistics related activities, monitoring implementation and progress of the TYPSS and other essential statistics-related processes and identifying priorities for NSOs and development partner attention. The PSSC would be able to make decision on operational matters but would be empowered to make recommendations to HOPS on strategic issues of importance for statistics development in the Pacific region.

4. Donor and Development Partners Group (DDPG)

14. The fourth element of this regional governance structure was to formally create the DDPG. This group would ensure that all relevant development partners were provided with a means to provide concrete input into statistic governance in the Pacific, better coordinate their action and resources. The DDPG would meet annually, prior to the meeting of PSSC and HOPS meetings, thus also providing a platform for greater and more consistent engagement with Pacific and Island Territories (PICTs) and NSOs. SPC-Statistics for Development Division (SDD), as an intermediary between its Member States and development partners would be responsible for convening the development partner group.

5. Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB)

15. The final aspect of this revised governance structure would be to create, under the auspices of SPC-SDD, a PSMB². The PSMB would be a technical body with the role of reviewing technical proposals on methodologies, identifying areas requiring research to identify best practices

² 5th Regional Conference of Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) Working Paper 2 – p. 3

and making appropriate recommendations. The purpose of PSMB would be to standardise 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.

Ten-Year Pacific Strategy for Statistics (TYPSS)

16. Although not a formal component of the governance structure the TYPSS provides an essential foundation in identifying and regularly updating, a schedule of priority core collections for Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). These scheduled core collections enable SDD and other development partners to programme their financial and technical assistance in support of Pacific statistics development.

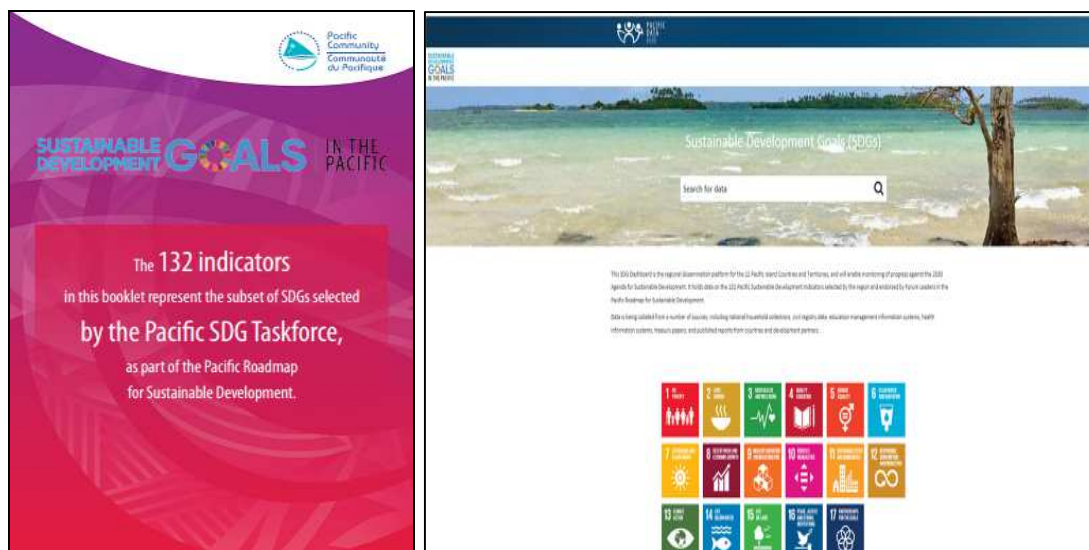
17. The TYPSS was developed in recognition of the constraints and challenges facing PICTs in their statistical development and the need to address the challenges in a systematic manner. The TYPSS was funded by Australia and came into effect in 2010. The overall objectives of TYPSS focus on improving PICT national data collection activities including coordinated data collection technical support, and standardised tools, methods, systems and processes. In its first two phases (2010-2017), TYPSS gave high priority to ensuring that high-quality data, conforming to international standards, were being collected on a timely basis.

18. It is envisaged that TYPSS will continue beyond 2020, especially with the increased demand for Pacific statistics under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. TYPSS provides a framework where NSOs, development partners and donors coordinate and understand clearly their roles in meeting the demands of users, national, regional and global, for timely, disaggregated and quality statistics.

Reporting obligation of Pacific member countries under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Samoa Pathway and Framework for Pacific Regionalism

19. The Pacific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Taskforce, which represent the 22 Pacific island member countries in the development, compilation and reporting on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Goals indicators endorsed a sub-set (132) of the global SDG indicators as the Pacific Headline SDG Indicators. Statistics for Development Division of SPC has been tasked to coordinate, compile and disseminate data related to the 132 Pacific SDG indicators and this initiative is going really well. SDD has produced a small booklet on behalf of member countries that describe the 132 Pacific SDG Indicators and the data availability by member countries. In the next few months, SPC will also launch a Pacific SDG Dashboard where the 132 indicators will be live and will automatically update once there is new information received from latest census, survey or administrative data source.

Figure 1.
SDGs in the Pacific Booklet 2018 and Pacific SDG Dashboard



Statistics for Development Division of the Pacific Community (SDD)

20. The proposed governance model would allow all parties to have far greater and more regular strategic engagement around statistics issues. Moreover, by formalising a development partner group as part of Pacific statistics governance, it would foster deeper understanding and cooperation between the members of the DDPG and the beneficiaries of development assistance in the statistics field. The revised governance framework would also create a platform where the statistics agenda in the Pacific is driven by the countries themselves, with inputs and support from the DDPG and regional agencies.

21. In order for this governance structure to be fully functional, the HOPS meeting agreed that SDD should be recognised as the Pacific Statistics System Leader. In this capacity SDD is the principal agency responsible for the implementation, coordination and reporting on TYPS. It is also responsible for coordinating the Pacific Regional Statistics Partnership Program and of the 5-Year National Statistics Collection Plan. In addition, SDD acts as the secretariat not only to the HOPS but also to the PSSC, DDPG and the PSMB. In its broader role SDD also provides secretariat services for the Brisbane Accord Group (BAG) with its brief on Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) and to the Pacific SDG Taskforce Data Working Group.

22. Where appropriate SDD participates and supports Pacific NSOs in many of the regional and international statistics fora including the UN Statistical Commission Annual Meeting; ESCAP Committee of Statistics biennial session; ESCAP Regional Steering Group on Population and Social Statistics, Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, and Regional Programme for the Improvement of Economic Statistics in Asia and the Pacific; PARIS21 Steering Committee Annual Meeting; ABS-led Pacific Statistics Leadership Forum; and Pacific SDG Taskforce Meeting.

23. SDD is participating in two major data dissemination projects: i) an SPC corporate data portal – the Pacific Data Hub, and ii) an improved and scaled-up SDD statistical indicator database with data explorer capability; this will be an important component of the redevelopment of the SDD website. The new website will incorporate the latest “stat suite” and Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) software, with SPC-SDD becoming members of the OECD Statistical Information Systems Collaboration Community (SIS-CC). In addition, the World Bank funded microdata access project will further enhance data dissemination and use through the establishment of the Pacific Data Archive³. This project will establish a secure archive for Pacific datasets with protocols and technical guidelines for the production of harmonized datasets and for user-access subject to individual national legislation.

24. The new SDD website and platform will therefore provide detailed metadata for all available Pacific datasets and enable easy access to the data through a visual data explorer, and via machine-to-machine transfer. Wherever possible the data available in the indicator database will be curated and verified through quality assurance checks based on the standards set by the Methods Board, in line with global best-practice.

25. Key datasets such as the 132 Pacific SDGs indicators, and an improved replacement for the popular National Minimum Development Indicators (NMDI) database⁴ will be accessible directly through the main SPC data-portal, which will then link to the SDD indicator database for additional functionality.

26. The new SPC-SDD website-redevelopment, the preparation of the data and its uploading into the new website will require some additional resources for SPC-SDD. Improving access to data, improving the quality of data and the wider dissemination of both data and analyses, will lead to greater use of the data for policy and academic research, and will ultimately lead to better development outcomes for all the people of the Pacific region.

³ World Bank Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building (TFSCB): Improving Data Dissemination and Use in Pacific Islands Countries

⁴ www.spc.int/nmdi.