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

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**Strategic direction of the Committee on Statistics****Subregional developments in official statistics****Note by the secretariat\*\****Summary*

The member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) include a broad range of countries in terms of statistical capacity, geographic location, size and level of development. The international dialogue on monitoring and accountability for the development agenda beyond 2015 has highlighted the need for a multi-tiered monitoring and review framework that encompasses subregional, regional, national and global monitoring.

The present note provides an overview of the ESCAP Pacific subregions in terms of statistical capacity development, including priorities and challenges for official statistics. It also highlights existing subregional monitoring mechanisms for sustainable development goals and statistical capacity development initiatives.

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**I. Introduction**

1. This paper highlights recent statistical developments in the 22 Pacific countries and territories. The paper is based on a recent review of the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (2011-2020)* and guidance provided by the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) in coordinating TYPPS implementation. This paper also includes contributions from the PSSC Chair.

\* E/ESCAP/CST(4)/L.1.

\*\* The present note has been issued without formal editing.

## II. Pacific

### Background

2. In the Pacific, statistical capacity development is guided by the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy* which was adopted by the Heads of the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories national and territorial statistical agencies at their triannual Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) meeting in July 2010. The TYPSS development was initiated by SPC following the call from Pacific Leaders in the original *Pacific Plan* and the recognition by Pacific Forum Economic Ministers at their 2009 Meeting of the need for a regional approach to elevate the level of statistical development in the Pacific region. The TYPSS provides the framework for improving the range, timeliness and quality of official statistics through statistical compilation and analysis, national statistical planning, donor coordination and better resource utilization.

3. The TYPSS identifies a number of sectoral priorities and outline a series of short and long-term programs to contribute to national statistics capacity development and regional coordination and capability. TYPSS implementation was decided to be progressed through phased action planning, Phase-1: 2011-2014; Phase-2: 2015-2017; Phase-3: 2018-2020. A Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) was established to monitor the implementation. The PSSC is currently composed of representatives from national statistical offices, ministries of planning and representatives from development partners.

4. TYPSS Phase-1 focused on building the capacity to achieve six objectives: (a) countries undertake key statistical collections as scheduled; (b) countries produce an agreed core set of statistics across key sectors; (c) countries have the national capacity (or national capacity supplemented with regional capacity) to undertake agreed core and some specialist statistical functions; (d) national and regional statistics are accessible and are being utilised; (e) new and innovative statistical tools and systems are introduced; and (f) national and regional statistics governance is functioning effectively.

5. In 2013, a review of the TYPSS Phase-1 was completed and presented to the Pacific Heads of Planning and Statistics meeting in July 2013. Based on the review and an in-depth consultation process, an independent design team was commissioned to prepare a strategic action plan for Phase-2 (2015-2017), which was endorsed in principle by PSSC in October 2014.

### Achievements

6. The development of the TYPSS was a major achievement for statistical development in the Pacific. The same can be said for it being implemented jointly by Pacific island countries and territories and a number of regional partners, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC), the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century (PARIS21), Statistics New Zealand (SNZ), the University of the South Pacific (USP), the World Bank and the United Nations system.

7. The TYPSS Phase-1 review highlighted that since its start in 2011, there had been considerable achievements in the statistical capacity of national statistical systems; the availability of, and better access to, national and regional data through SPC's Prism website and NMDI database; improvements in data quality and timeliness, and access to a broader range of statistics and development indicators, with greater disaggregation by gender and other socio-economic dimensions, as well as at different levels of geography. The progress was achieved through stepped-up efforts to undertake more regular national statistical collections, as well as growing financial support from development partners. A few key achievements include:

a. Of the fifteen Pacific island countries and six territories targeted under TYPSS, every single one completed at least one census during the 2010 round of censuses, and most completed a census report, including a comprehensive demographic analysis. Furthermore, four countries completed a demographic health survey (DHS) and five countries completed a household income and expenditure survey (HIES) between 2011 and 2014.

b. The countries in the region have worked collaboratively with SPC to develop a detailed future plan for core data collections over the coming three years.

c. The *Brisbane Accord Group*, a consortium of technical agencies, universities and professional networks, has been highly successful in raising the profile of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in the region. And its close collaboration with countries and territories in the implementation of the *Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan* (2011-2014) has resulted in both a growing regional commitment to improve CRVS, and in tangible outcomes in several countries.

d. Sharing of skills and resources across the region has been improved, including through South-South technical assistance implemented by SPC. This involves technical support from one NSO to another. Recent examples include Vanuatu statisticians providing expertise to the Cook Islands and Solomon Islands with scanning of their census data; Samoa assisted Tuvalu with management support for census field work, and supported Niue in the compilation of their national accounts; and Fiji assisted several countries with improving their business registers and processing their Household survey data. Plans are in place to expand this initiative in facilitating professional attachments of NSO staff to another NSO – the first one planned for April 2015.

e. National account production across the Pacific has improved in timeliness, quality, methodology and regularity, thanks to stepped-up activities by PFTAC and SPC.

8. The achievements in statistical capacity are partially due to a growing recognition by Pacific island governments of the importance of statistics, with commensurate improvements in resources allocations in some countries. Additionally, a number of national and regional leadership initiatives and technical trainings have resulted in improved national statistical system leadership and management by the senior staff.

9. Progress in statistical capacity has also benefited from improved partner coordination, with the PSSC adding tangible value, and the ability of some partners, including SPC, to provide external support which is flexible and responsive.

10. Despite these many achievements, gains are reversible and possibly not sustainable in all cases. Statistical achievements and success require long-term political support. The countries that have made the most progress are also those where the NSOs have solid budgetary support from their Governments, allowing them to undertake core collections on a regular basis. These are in the minority, with most Pacific island countries and territories struggling to self-finance the HIES or DHS, and some having to also rely on external financial support to a population and housing census, which in all countries is mandated by law.

### **Priorities and challenges**

11. Pacific island Governments, and national statistical offices, have emphasized that a national strategy for statistics (such as a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, *NSDS*) is essential for guiding national statistical capacity development. In this regard, a national strategy must be country owned and driven by national priorities; build on accountable and transparent partnerships; maximize the utilization of resources and efficiency; focus on innovation, common systems and standards, and leverage off change; include a commitment to excellence and quality; and focus on clear and achievable outcomes.

12. Phase-2 of the TYPSS highlights the need to move toward a broader focus from National Statistical Offices (NSO) to National Statistical Systems (NSS). This is in recognition of the fact that integrated and coordinated systems are required for improving both statistical production and the use of statistics. Pacific NSS's need to engage more with data users to foster national level policy analysis and monitoring of interventions and improve coordination between members of the NSS. This is particularly important for the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). SPC and Paris21 have been assisting countries to develop National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). As of early 2015, three countries have completed their NSDS, one is nearly there, two other countries appear on track to complete their design by the end of 2015, with further developments planned in four countries during 2015-2017.

13. The Pacific has experienced a growing demand for statistics, but national resource allocation is not commensurate with the increase in demand. For this reason, improving administrative data and associated management information systems, and pursuing technological advances and innovations for statistics are essential. Additionally, continued dedicated financial support to statistics remains a priority. This has been recognized as necessary by Pacific island countries (as highlighted in last year's SAMOA Pathway statement at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Small Island developing States in Samoa), and will become even more critical as the post-2015 development agenda rolls out.

14. The Pacific has seen great achievements in social statistics, but further improvements in economic statistics, food security, environment and climate change statistics and other emerging areas is necessary for providing the information necessary for integrated policy making and monitoring, including monitoring of the SDGs.

15. In the Pacific, development partners have made an important contribution to the progress in statistical development; however, greater coordination is necessary to reduce duplication and ensure that resources are effectively utilized, aligned with national priorities and encourage

synergies. The *Brisbane Accord Group* for CRVS provides a model for such coordination.

16. In addition to the priorities of the Pacific in terms of statistical capacity, there is also a need to continue to monitor statistical capacity across the region. Many countries lack experienced mathematical statisticians, data analysts, economic statisticians, communications personnel and programmers.

17. Phase-2 of the TYPSS is guided by the vision for: “*A core set of statistics that informs the development of all Pacific island countries and territories, supports regional benefits and is respected and utilized in global reporting.*” To implement this vision, TYPSS Phase-2 is guided by five major objectives:

a. “Pacific island countries and territories have the technical capacity (either in-house capacity or through timely accessible technical support), to manage and implement all core statistical collections, including key administrative databases, as required by national development plans, including national strategies for the development of statistics.

b. Pacific island countries and territories are producing the agreed core set of statistics across key sectors including but not restricted to economics, population, CRVS, education and health, as required by their national plans and agreed-upon regional and international reporting frameworks, with timely analysis and dissemination of results to national users

c. All countries and territories have in place some form of national statistics strategy or plan in line with their national development strategies.

d. National level statistic stakeholders are advised on an ongoing basis about emerging statistical tools and systems, processes for effective data analysis, communication and quality assurance and Pacific interaction and proposed responses to international statistical standards.

e. National and regional statistics governance is functioning effectively:

- Technical assistant inputs are in line with country and territory priorities, transparent to all stakeholders and are delivered efficiently across the region.
- Pacific leaders receive recommendations about priorities for statistical collections at national and regional level with accompanying data about resource and technology requirements
- TYPSS phase 2 operates in a coordinated and efficient manner with the best use being made of available technical assistance and informed progress assessment being made available to PSSC.”

## Conclusions

18. The Pacific has a detailed regional plan for the development of statistics, the TYPSS, and a regional governance mechanism to guide plan implementation. There is a need to build synergies and information exchange between the Pacific sub-region and the wider Asia-Pacific region to further advocate for the need for statistics for evidenced-based policy making, to provide a platform for exchanging information, best practices

and innovations in statistics across Asia and the Pacific, and to ensure that Pacific countries have a strong voice in regional and international intergovernmental fora.

19. The demands on NSSs across the Asia-Pacific region are high; and will increase with the post-2015 development agenda. In the Pacific the reality is that national priorities and statistical information needs must take precedence, noting that some countries do not and possibly will never, have the national resources to compile basic statistics not including many of the indicators required for international development reporting.

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