



Pacific  
Community  
Communauté  
du Pacifique

**SPC Headquarters**

95 Promenade Roger Laroque  
BP D5, 98848 Noumea Cedex  
New Caledonia

Email: [spc@spc.int](mailto:spc@spc.int)  
Phone: +687 26 20 00  
Fax: +687 26 38 18

**Siège de la CPS**

95 Promenade Roger Laroque  
BP D5, 98848 Nouméa Cedex  
Nouvelle-Calédonie

Email : [spc@spc.int](mailto:spc@spc.int)  
Tel : +687 26 20 00  
Fax : +687 26 38 18

Pacific Statistics Methods Board Meeting  
Summary Report and Outcomes

**9–10 July 2020**  
**Virtual meeting hosted by SPC**  
**Noumea, New Caledonia**

Prepared by the  
Statistics for Development Division (SDD) of the  
Pacific Community (SPC)

July 2020

Pacific Community (SPC) Headquarters: Noumea, New Caledonia. Regional Offices: Suva, Fiji;  
Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia; Port Vila, Vanuatu. Country Office: Honiara, Solomon Islands.  
[www.spc.int](http://www.spc.int) [spc@spc.int](mailto:spc@spc.int)

Siège de la Communauté du Pacifique (CPS) : Nouméa (Nouvelle-Calédonie). Antennes régionales : Suva (Fidji) ;  
Pohnpei (États fédérés de Micronésie) ; Port-Vila (Vanuatu). Bureau de pays : Honiara (Îles Salomon).  
[www.spc.int](http://www.spc.int) [spc@spc.int](mailto:spc@spc.int)

## CONTENTS

Summary of proceedings .....	3
Session 1: International Development Association (IDA) project – Statistical Innovation and Capacity Building in Pacific Islands (PACSTAT) .....	3
Session 2: High Frequency Phone Monitoring (HFPM) Surveys .....	5
Session 3: Guidelines for monetary poverty analysis .....	7
Session 4: Labour market module in Pacific population and housing census .....	10
Session 5: Update on the outcomes of the October 2019 PSMB meeting .....	11
Session 7. Utilisation of administrative databases in census programmes of Pacific Island countries – a new SPC project.....	12
Session 8. Term of PSMB Chair .....	12
Session 9. Next PSMB meeting .....	12
Meeting Outcomes .....	13

### List of abbreviations

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics	<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>CAPI</b>	Computer-assisted personal interviewing	<b>PICTs</b>	Pacific Island countries and territories
<b>CATI</b>	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing	<b>PSMB</b>	Pacific Statistics Methods Board
<b>DHS</b>	Demographic and Health Survey	<b>RMI</b>	Republic of the Marshall Islands
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization	<b>SDD</b>	Statistics for Development Division (SPC)
<b>HIES</b>	Household Income and Expenditure Survey	<b>SPC</b>	Pacific Community
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>MICS</b>	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund

<p>The Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) met on 9 and 10 July 2020. It was a virtual meeting hosted by SPC, Noumea, and was chaired by Vince Galvin. The meeting, which was held using Zoom, was recorded and the meeting documents and recording are accessible here: <a href="https://sdd.spc.int/events/2020/04/5th-pacific-statistics-methods-board-psmb-meeting">https://sdd.spc.int/events/2020/04/5th-pacific-statistics-methods-board-psmb-meeting</a></p>	
<b>Participants</b>	<p>Board members:</p> <p>Melanesia – Kemueli Naiqama, Fiji</p> <p>Polynesia – Dr Viliami Konifelenisi Fifita, Tonga (Deputy Chair)</p> <p>Small NSOs – Ipia Gadabu</p> <p>Australian Bureau of Statistics – Bruce Fraser</p> <p>Statistics New Zealand – Vince Galvin (Chair), Dr Ofa Ketu'u, Anapapa Mulitalo, Tracey Savage and Temaeti Tupou</p> <p>UN agencies – Chris Ryan (UNESCAP)</p> <p>Observers:</p> <p>Pacific Community (SPC) – Epeli Waqavonovono, David Abbot, Michael Sharp. Alison Culpin, Winston Faingaanuku, Sandra Gianni, Nilima Lal, Gaelle Le Gall, Gloria Mathenge, Scott Pontifex, Elizabeth Ragimana and Toga Raikoti</p> <p>Consultant – Allan Nicholls</p> <p>UNICEF – James Kaphuka and Ronesh Prasad</p> <p>World Bank – Kristen Himelein and Darian Naidoo</p> <p>University of Rome – Giovanni Vecchi (peer reviewer of draft Monetary Poverty Guidelines)</p> <p>World Food Program – André Martinez</p>

### Summary of proceedings

See page 13 for meeting outcomes. Papers and presentations referred to in this report are available online: <https://sdd.spc.int/events/2020/04/5th-pacific-statistics-methods-board-psmb-meeting>

### Session 1: International Development Association (IDA) project – Statistical Innovation and Capacity Building in Pacific Islands (PACSTAT)

*(The IDA project is a standing item on PSMB's agenda, as agreed at the October 2019 meeting)*

1. Michael Sharp (SPC) and Allan Nicholls (independent consultant) presented an overview of PACSTAT, PSMB's involvement in the project, and the preparation of the Project Operations Manual.
2. The objective of the five-year (June 2020–June 2025) IDA project is 'to improve the quality of welfare data collection and accessibility to comparable welfare data in Pacific Island countries'. PACSTAT will:
  - support the capacity of SPC's Statistics for Development Division (SDD) to fulfil its role of 'statistical system leader' for the region;

- increase PSMB’s ability to accelerate the adoption of new, more efficient methods for collecting and analysing data in PICTs, and to promote regional harmonisation and comparability, including by commissioning research and innovative experiments.
3. The Financing Agreement for PACSTAT requires a Project Operations Manual (POM) to be prepared and agreed with the World Bank by the end of August 2020. Allan Nicholls will draft the POM, which will include measures to ensure the transparency, consistency and accountability of project processes. To assist the drafting, PSMB was asked to comment on:
- the timetable for submitting research proposals, evaluation and decision-making,
  - criteria for evaluating proposals,
  - guidelines/pro forma for proposal submission, and for PSMB evaluation, and
  - role of PSMB after it has approved a proposal (e.g. in TOR, monitoring progress, disseminating results to NSOs).

## Discussion

4. Questions raised during the discussion included:
- Who can submit proposals for research and innovative experiments to PSMB?
  - Is PSMB’s role to commission work, or to evaluate proposals and the merit of proceeding with proposals?
  - What are the criteria for evaluating proposals?
  - Do PSMB procedures and decision-making – including documentation and traceability of decisions – need to be formalised further? Under its current model, an idea is championed and brought to PSMB with a recommendation. PSMB discusses the recommendation and makes a decision.
  - Can only IDA-eligible countries take part in the project?
5. Participants reached the view that:
- the POM should establish a mechanism and timeframe for SPC to call for proposals;
  - PSMB’s role will be to: define the research question(s) and methodology for ‘PSMB Commissioned Work’; discuss and endorse selected projects proposed by eligible stakeholders; and define the methodology and direct SPC to administer the research and provide technical input;
  - PSMB, development partners, SPC members and SPC may submit proposals and research ideas;
  - SPC/SDD will filter the proposals received against criteria including PICTs’ identified priorities, relevant strategies such as the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy, likely impact for PICTs, and research gaps;
  - proposals assessed to meet the criteria will be forwarded to PSMB for evaluation, with members to receive the documents two weeks before the Board meets;
  - PSMB may endorse a proposal, reject it, or ask for further work, noting that in previous PSMB decision-making, the Board has been briefed on the conduct of experiments and the results by experts, who have also made recommendations;

6. In this process, PSMB's focus should be on consideration and endorsement of proposals. The Board may have a limited role in formulating project TOR and overseeing projects, and no role in recruiting project personnel.
7. PACSTAT research/experiments can only be conducted in IDA-eligible countries, which is also the case for training funded by IDA. However, project benefits can be extended to non-eligible PICTs through the use of SPC resources.
8. Finally, it was noted that the procedures set out in the POM should accord with PSMB's TOR. Otherwise the TOR will need to be revised.

## **Session 2: High Frequency Phone Monitoring (HFPM) Surveys**

9. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted PICT economies. To provide data on the impacts on people's lives and livelihoods, SPC/SDD in collaboration with the World Bank, UN agencies operating in the Pacific, NSOs and other partners proposes to engage a survey firm to conduct an HFPM survey of households in all PICTs.
10. The aim of the surveys is to gather near real-time information that governments and development partners can use to develop policy responses and mitigation measures.
11. Given the surveys will be partly funded through the IDA project as experimental research to test alternative data collection methods, the survey partners requested PSMB to endorse the piloting of this new method for collecting socio-economic data in the Pacific region.

### ***World Bank HFPM surveys in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands***

12. Since June 2020, the World Bank has conducted HFPM surveys on the impacts of COVID-19 in PNG and Solomon Islands. Kristen Himelein, World Bank, presented an overview of the methodology, methodological challenges, lessons learned, and preliminary results.
13. Survey households were randomly selected from mobile phone subscriber rolls. The surveys involved 15-minute mobile phone call interviews to households using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology. A small incentive (USD 1.70) was offered to survey respondents.
14. For PNG, the results include sources of information; employment before and after COVID-19 (data disaggregated by sex, urban/rural); coping mechanisms (notably, households have reduced the number of children attending school); and health care avoidance.
15. The data for Solomon Islands is yet to be analysed.
16. The PNG sample required substantial reweighting to adjust for bias because only 47% of the population has a mobile phone. Respondents were more likely to be male and

more highly educated than the general population. There are also a disproportionate number of phone users in Port Moresby. In the Solomon Islands survey, the sample skewed more male and younger than the general population. In both cases, the respondents were substantially wealthier than the population generally, as measured by the wealth index from the most recent DHS.

17. Because the respondents were disproportionately from the top of the wealth distribution, there were sample size issues for both surveys in generating representative estimates for the lowest deciles. In PNG, it was necessary to aggregate the bottom four deciles together to have sufficient sample size; the solution for Solomon Islands was still pending. There are plans to mitigate this problem in the next round by oversampling of lower deciles to the extent they can be identified in the sampling frames. Similar problems of sample bias are likely for all HFPM surveys in PICTs.
18. The DHS wealth index, geographic, and demographic characteristics were used to reweight the data. Complex reweighting will also likely be required for the proposed HFPM surveys.
19. Phone companies reassign unused numbers after three months, which complicates contacting or re-contacting households.
20. The results for the PNG survey will be available around the end of July and for Solomon Islands sometime in August. Release of the microdata requires further discussion with the NSOs.
21. Participants acknowledged the limitations of the HFPM survey method but considered it was potentially useful for providing PICT governments with a snapshot of the situation for employment, education, health care, etc. in a crisis. They noted the need for further consideration of sample size, methodology, questionnaire design (including tailoring), funding, data ownership and capacity building, among other areas.
22. Participants were interested in the conversion rate for calls, refusal to participate, etc. This information was not available for the PNG survey but may be available for the Solomon Islands survey.

#### ***Roundtable with stakeholders***

23. In June 2020, SPC brought Government Statisticians, development partners and UN agencies together to discuss the proposed COVID-19 rapid assessment surveys and their implementation in PICTs (see HFPM Concept Note).
24. The Government Statisticians highlighted several concerns (listed in the Outcomes). However, they agreed the surveys would be useful for bringing government and development partner attention to situations requiring an urgent response, such as the withdrawal of children from school in PNG as a result of COVID-19 economic impacts.
25. The dialogue showed the need for improved coordination and country ownership of surveys, and for NSOs to have more input to work done in their countries. There was

support for continuing to hold the roundtable discussions to share information and coping strategies.

### ***National data collection workshops***

26. Chris Ryan, UNESCAP, presented a proposal to work with Government Statisticians and partners to organise a series of national workshops for all interested PICTs with the aims of
  - getting everyone on the same page on the planned rapid assessment surveys,
  - providing feedback on PSMB's recommendations for moving forward with the surveys, and
  - discussing the country's preferred course of action on existing surveys and any new surveys (e.g. on COVID-19 or Cyclone Harold impacts).
27. Participants would include Government Statisticians and key NSO staff, members of national COVID task forces, and relevant line ministry officials and development partners.

### **Session 3: Guidelines for monetary poverty analysis**

28. Kristen Himelein presented the 'Annotated Agenda: Monetary Poverty Measurement Guidelines', which provides peer reviewers' comments on the draft guidelines, areas of agreement, and areas for further discussion. (Giovanni Vecchi, a peer reviewer of the guidelines, joined this session of the meeting.)
29. The **three areas of agreement** are:
  - **Pricing home production and gifts using median unit values** from the lowest area of geographic disaggregation at which stable estimates can be calculated. Reviewers' suggestions on setting a minimum number of observations and including quality checks will also be incorporated in the final guidelines.
  - **Dietary energy requirements** to be based on a normative threshold value (defined as providing the estimated minimum calorie intake consistent with an economically active and healthy life for the average person in the population) from WHO/FAO 2011 *Human Energy Requirements* and the most recently available population pyramid information.
  - **Adjustments to the poverty line over time** – poverty lines should be updated using the CPI in successive rounds up to the point at which they become obsolete. The line should therefore be updated every 5–10 years or when there has been a significant shift in the economic environment. There was general agreement with reviewers' suggestions to update food and non-food components separately, provided appropriate, good-quality CPI measures are available.
30. The reviewers also highlighted that the methodology should fit with the limited analytical capacity of PICT NSOs. In this regard, the World Bank plans to conduct capacity building for NSOs based on experience in running successful programmes in other parts of the world that have lower levels of education than the Pacific. One lesson from other regions is the advantage of a division of labour, with more intensive research-oriented tasks being done at a regional/central level, and NSOs focusing on understanding and implementing the central recommendations. The World Bank

supports this model for the Pacific, noting the IDA project should help develop the necessary capacity and processes.

## **Discussion of areas of agreement**

### *Pricing home production*

31. There was considerable discussion of the practice of using market surveys, or NSO estimates of farm-gate prices, to price home production in the Pacific, particularly to capture seasonal variation in prices. It can also be difficult in PICTs to meet a set minimum number of observations.
32. Concerns about market surveys included poor quality and the discrepancies found when comparing prices from unit values and market values, especially for perishable goods such as fish, which are important in daily diets. Data collected from the field is preferred to estimates of prices.
33. It was agreed the guidelines should stipulate using **'the best available source of data'** for pricing home production.

### *Dietary energy*

34. In relation to the recommendation for dietary energy, there was concern about breaking continuity with UNDP and ADB analyses, and that using the energy consumption of the whole population, rather than 2100 calories, would move the poverty line up; 2100 calories comes from work by WHO/FAO and is a common estimate across the region. Using separate population pyramids will mean there is no comparability across the region.
35. The desire for continuity was recognised. However, it was argued that as the switch to CAPI is breaking series, it is an opportune time to update methodologies. The population pyramid is universally used and is objective. It is also backed by the literature. There is more controversy around the pricing of each calorie and the choice of reference group.
36. There was a comment on the need to change the estimated daily per capita energy requirement (2100 kcal) because it does not reference Pacific populations. In the Pacific, even those in the lower quintile can easily consume 2100 calories simply by eating cassava. (World Bank calculations of daily calorie requirements give a best estimate of between 2300 and 2400 kcal.)
37. The Chair noted the concern about discontinuity.

## **Areas for discussion (including reviewers' areas of disagreement)**

### *Multiplier for prepared meals*

38. Based on the analysis done to date and the reviewers' recommendations, the guidelines suggest adopting a multiplier of 1.25 in the interim. There is agreement the area needs more work and a study proposal will be constructed. The multiplier may be revised.

### *Health spending*

39. Based on reviewers' comments, the guidelines suggest breaking health spending into three categories: preventive, elective, and emergency. Catastrophic spending will be excluded. The questionnaire design will therefore need to distinguish between preventive and elective care, emergency care, and catastrophic spending. The guidelines are preliminary and will be workshopped before they are finalised.
40. It was noted that in past analyses, health spending has been low because health care is free in PICTs, except in countries where private health care is available.

#### *Price deflators*

41. Reviewers disagreed on the best approach to calculating price deflators. A regional basket has been used historically, but recent work suggests a national food bundle and regional median unit values may provide more accurate regional food poverty lines. The guidelines suggest proceeding with the recommendation of using a national poverty line with a Tornqvist deflator and the team will strengthen the supporting documentation.
42. Giovanni Vecchi was not convinced there was a strong enough theoretical argument to support the recommendation. He was happy with the use of subnational poverty lines, though recognised this recommendation has substantial limitations.
43. David Abbott commented that the recommendation is a change from past analyses, which were anchored to 2100 calories, and was not convinced of the need to make the change, given that subregional poverty lines already provide a system of deflators.
44. Kristen Himelein said the trend is to move away from subnational poverty lines because of difficulties in updating them (most countries do not have a subnational CPI).
45. The Chair suggested parking the issue for further discussion as it was clear agreement would not be reached during the meeting.

#### *Non-food component*

46. To compute the non-food component of the poverty line, the guidelines recommend calculating both the upper and lower bound and deciding which is most appropriate. This method is flexible and addresses concerns related to small sample sizes and relatively low poverty rates in PICTs.
47. DA commented that because food poverty is low in most PICTs, the method will mean only looking at extreme ends of the distribution. The lower decile would be included in all calculations. Using the upper bound would increase the poverty line. Previously, the bottom three deciles were included in computing non-food consumption. The suggestion to move to a different method needs more research.
48. GV commented that the suggested method gives a choice of reference groups. The decision is a political one and is transparent. The recommendation is backed by the literature.

#### *Adult equivalence scale*

49. The guidelines recommend updating to the new OECD AE recommendations, i.e. assigning a value of 1 to the first household member, 0.7 to each additional adult, and 0.5 to each child.

#### *Exclusion of the poorest decile*

50. The guidelines suggest excluding the top and bottom deciles as appropriate if there are outliers in the distribution.

#### **Interim adoption**

51. Noting the HIES in Vanuatu, Kiribati and Marshall Islands offer the opportunity to test the guidelines, and that the World Bank proposes to apply the old and new methods to the Samoa HIES data to enable a comparison, the Chair suggested that PSMB adopt the guidelines as interim measures, with unresolved issues to be discussed further at the next meeting.
52. Participants commented on the political significance of poverty incidence and the need to ensure NSOs are comfortable with the analysis of data, not just its collection. The World Bank works closely with Government Statisticians/NSOs to ensure they understand the analysis and can defend it to their government and users.

#### **Session 4: Labour market module in Pacific population and housing census**

53. On behalf of ILO, Michael Sharp (SPC) presented the results of testing a short module on the economic characteristics of the population. The module was developed jointly by ILO and SPC for incorporation in Pacific censuses and was tested during the Kiribati census pilot in May 2020.
54. Analysis of the test results by ILO and SPC confirmed the module performed well. A few issues and omissions were identified, and these will be addressed through minor revisions of some question and answer options, and improvements to interviewer training materials and capacity building.
55. The module aligns with the 19th ICLS (International Conference of Labour Statisticians) standards on statistics of work, employment and labour underutilisation and covers all core and non-core topics recommended in the UN Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, revision 3. It also includes additional topics relevant to PICTs, such as informal employment and participation in own-use production of goods, including subsistence food production. To support consistency across different sources of data, the census module follows the design approach used in the labour force module recently endorsed by PSMB for inclusion in major household surveys in PICTs, including the harmonised HIES.
56. Use of the validated census module in the 2020 round of population censuses will support the production of an updated core set of national labour market statistics necessary to produce the UN-recommended census tabulations on economic activity

and cross-tabulations with other important census topics. It will also enable cross-country comparisons and support longer-term monitoring.

### Discussion

57. Participants acknowledged the contribution of all partners, including the Kiribati NSO, to the development and successful testing of the module and endorsed it for inclusion in PICT censuses following the planned revisions.

### Session 5: Update on the outcomes of the October 2019 PSMB meeting

58. Stats NZ provided the following updates:

- a) **Representation of PICT NSOs on PSMB:** As part of efforts to improve representation of NSOs and support their engagement in PSMB initiatives, the Chair noted plans to invite all PICT Government Statisticians/NSOs to join the next virtual PSMB meeting.
- b) **Update on sampling guidelines:** In March, the sampling subcommittee considered feedback on the guidelines and this has been incorporated. The terminology is now consistent and another case study been added. The guidelines have been circulated for review, but this process was interrupted by the COVID-19 crisis. After the review is completed, SDD will assist with editing and publishing.
  - The subcommittee welcomes feedback from PICTs. The guidelines are regarded as a living document and will be updated as required.
  - At the annual sampling workshop, all participants said the guidelines were useful in conjunction with the workshop – the two worked well together.
  - The Chair thanked the sampling subcommittee for their work on the guidelines.
- c) **2020 sampling workshop** (24 Feb. – 3 Mar. 2020): The annual workshop was supported by Stats NZ and SDD in partnership with the World Bank, UNICEF and ABS. The workshop provided sampling and planning support to NSOs in preparation for household surveys scheduled in 2020–2021 with a focus on HIES, Labour Force Surveys and MICS. There were 18 participants from 8 member PICTs and 10 facilitators.
  - There was good feedback from PICTs, indicating they appreciated the practical nature of the event, including being able to develop a sampling plan, and the opportunity to share experiences with other countries. The workshop will continue as an annual event.
  - Participants asked if the training could be provided via e-learning. The World Bank has experience in this area, with e-learning being a prerequisite for some

shorter courses. There was agreement that some prior e-learning would be useful and could reduce the number of days required for the workshop.

### **Session 7. Utilisation of administrative databases in census programmes of Pacific Island countries – a new SPC project**

59. Gloria Mathenge and Michael Sharp (SDD) presented the rationale and objectives of a new project on use of administrative data sources to meet demands for data.
60. The advantages of administrative data sources include cost efficiency (no enumerators); lower burden on respondents; more frequently updated data; lower non-response rates; and potential to calculate specific demographic rates with no numerator-denominator bias. An increasing number of countries are using administrative registers in place of, or in combination with, a census.
61. The project will be implemented in two phases: (1) raised awareness and knowledge of census methods; international guidance; lessons learned from the adoption of register or administrative data for census statistics in different parts of the world, including Nordic countries, and their development of the use of registers over time; and (2) depending on the progress of the work in phase 1, more in-depth work with PICTs that wish to take the work forward.

### **Discussion**

62. Participants commented as follows:
  - The focus should firstly be on using administrative data sources to estimate change – it is too early to talk about administrative-based censuses.
  - The region has an opportunity to learn about population registers from other parts of the world. Two PICTs are working on ID systems for their citizens, so the work is timely.
  - Registers may have advantages for PICTs, particularly for populations under a certain size. For SIS, such as Nauru, a census requires huge resources and population registers could be more efficient and cheaper. However, any decisions on the issue belong to the respective governments.

### **Session 8. Term of PSMB Chair**

63. The Chair referred to paragraph 3 (b) of PSMB's TOR, which state that 'the term of the PSMB Chair will be for a period of 3 years before the next election'. This means the term of the current Chair will expire in May 2021. He noted the next HOPS meeting may provide input to the appointment of the Chair.

### **Session 9. Next PSMB meeting**

64. PSMB agreed its next meeting will be a virtual one in late August, with SPC to advise the date and prepare the agenda. In addition to the agenda items arising from the meeting (see Outcomes), Nauru proposed that the University of the South Pacific (USP) be approached to establish a centre of excellence for statistics at its Nauru campus and offered to circulate a paper on the proposal.

## Pacific Statistics Methods Board Meeting (PSMB)

9–10 July

### Meeting Outcomes

---

#### 1. International Development Association (IDA) project: Statistical Innovation and Capacity Building in Pacific Islands (PACSTAT)

##### PSMB:

- i. noted the objective of the five-year PACSTAT project is ‘To improve the quality of welfare data collection and accessibility to comparable welfare data in Pacific Island countries’ through activities under three components – Support to the Pacific Statistics Methods Board; Institutional strengthening and implementation support; and Alternative data collection methods;
- ii. noted the request for PSMB’s input to the Project Operations Manual (POM), which is being prepared by a consultant to SPC;
- iii. agreed that the POM will provide a pro forma/template for submission of research proposals from PACSTAT stakeholders, who will include PSMB, and may include Pacific Government Statisticians, the Pacific Statistics Standing Committee (PSSC), Heads of Planning and Statistics (HOPS) and the Donor and Development Partner Group (DDPG);
- iv. agreed that, should PSMB decide to seek external proposals for PSMB Commissioned Work and/or for Innovative Experiments, SPC will be responsible for calling for proposals (within a set timeframe) and evaluating these against criteria including relevance to project conditionalities and priorities, and existing regional strategies such as the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy, with proposals that meet the criteria to be sent to PSMB two weeks before its meetings;
- v. agreed that PSMB’s role will be to: define the research question(s) and methodology for ‘PSMB Commissioned Work’; discuss and endorse selected projects proposed by eligible stakeholders (see iii above); and define the methodology and direct SPC to administer the research and provide technical input; PSMB may have a limited role in formulating/reviewing the TOR for the selected projects (‘PSMB Commissioned Work’ and ‘Innovative Experiments’), but have no responsibilities for recruitment of project expertise and administration of contracts;
- vi. agreed that the draft POM will be presented to PSMB’s next meeting for discussion and that PSMB will be contacted in the interim for feedback on the POM as necessary;

- vii. noted that communication of PACSTAT project results will be included in the POM and that this subject will be discussed at the next PSMB meeting.

## 2. High Frequency Phone Monitoring (HFPM) Surveys

### PSMB:

- i. recognised that rapid assessment surveys, using methods such as high frequency phone monitoring (HFPM) and computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI), can provide governments with timely data on socio-economic impacts during crises such as the COVID pandemic;
- ii. agreed HFPM Surveys are a potentially useful tool for the Pacific's COVID-19 response, but noted
- (a) the need for consideration of sample size, methodology, questionnaire design (including tailoring), funding, data ownership and capacity building, among other areas;
  - (b) agreed to discuss these issues further at PSMB's next meeting when thinking around HFPM Surveys will have progressed following the proposed national workshops, and the lessons learned from the World Bank's recent implementation of HFPM surveys of COVID impacts in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, in particular the challenges of sample bias (respondents were more likely to be male, better educated and wealthier than the general population) and of obtaining sufficient observations from the lowest decile groups;
- iii. recognised the concerns expressed by Pacific Government Statisticians at a recent meeting to share information on proposed rapid assessment surveys on COVID-19, which included:
- insufficient coordination of development partner surveys being carried out in-country, and lack of liaison with NSOs,
  - potential respondent fatigue, which could impact on core collections scheduled by governments,
  - ensuring questionnaire design meets the needs of the NSO and government, not just partner needs,
  - ownership of the data collected by rapid assessment surveys,
  - applicability of the proposed sampling set-up/methodology for the Pacific, and the challenges associated with sample design in small and low-connectivity Pacific states,
  - the implications for NSO funding/resourcing and participation/ownership/ capacity transfer, and
  - data quality;
- iv. endorsed the proposal to support countries in hosting a series of short (2–3 hours) national consultation meetings between government agencies and development partners/donors with three objectives:

- information sharing at the national level on the impacts of COVID-19 on existing data collection plans and options for additional rapid assessment surveys on COVID-19 and other data sources,
  - guidance from PSMB on how to address methodological issues in conducting rapid assessment surveys on COVID-19,
  - agreement (or at least good progress) on the way forward for modifying existing survey plans and the preferred course of action for additional rapid assessment surveys on COVID-19;
- v. noted the outcomes from these national consultations may be used to guide a regional response, which will focus on obtaining the required technical assistance and funding support;
- vi. endorsed in principle the proposal to test the HFPM survey method in experimental research on alternative data collection methods under the IDA project.

### **3. Guidelines for monetary poverty analysis**

#### **PSMB:**

- i. agreed to the interim adoption of the guidelines for monetary poverty analysis, pending further analysis and discussion of specific unresolved issues including dietary energy values, the use of spatial price deflators or subregional poverty lines, calculation of imputed rents, the method of calculating adult equivalents and the estimation of non-food components of poverty at the next PSMB meeting;
- ii. noted the data from the 2019 HIES surveys in Vanuatu, Kiribati and Marshall Islands offer an opportunity to test the guidelines, with country experiences to be reported to PSMB in 2021 after the completion of the three poverty assessments (note that no other poverty assessments will occur between now and the end of 2021, so the April 2021 meeting of PSMB will provide sufficient time for PSMB to review the experiences with Vanuatu, Kiribati and Marshall Islands before other assessments are required);
- iii. further noted the World Bank proposes to compare the results of using both the old and new methodology for poverty calculation based on the Samoa 2018 HIES (timing for delivery to PSMB to be determined);
- iv. recognised the changes in the methodology for calculating monetary poverty will have an impact on poverty lines, and highlighted the importance of ensuring Government Statisticians and NSOs fully understand the proposed changes and are comfortable with defending them to government and other users;

- v. noted the World Bank, with input from SPC, FAO and other partners, will develop reference and training materials on the guidelines to be used in training around the upcoming HIES analysis, including sample Stata / R code.

#### **4. Labour Market Module in Pacific Population and Housing Census**

##### **PSMB:**

- i. noted the results of SPC's successful pilot of a new module on the economic characteristics of the population, developed jointly by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and SPC, in the 2020 Kiribati census pilot;
- ii. recommended that ILO and SPC update the census module by making the proposed minor revisions to address issues identified by the pilot;
- iii. encouraged PICT NSOs to include the validated ILO-SPC census module on economic characteristics in their upcoming population and housing census;
- iv. exhorted UNFPA and other international partners to promote the use of the validated ILO-SPC census module on economic characteristics as part of the 2020 round of population and housing censuses.

#### **5. Update on the outcomes of the October 2019 PSMB meeting**

##### **PSMB:**

- i. welcomed the excellent progress made towards finalising the sampling guidelines and acknowledged the work of the members of the sampling subcommittee;
- ii. asked PICT NSOs to provide feedback on the guidelines, noting it is considered a living document that can be revised as required;
- iii. acknowledged feedback from participants on the value of the sampling workshop held at the end of February 2020 and noted plans to continue the workshop as an annual event, with the possibility of combining prior e-learning and in-person attendance;
- iv. noted the update from SPC on the following items:
  - guidelines for measurement of non-monetary dimensions of poverty in PICTs are still to come;
  - the proposed Pacific Statistical Collections Financing Facility has not progressed since the production of the draft paper;

- comprehensive information on CAPI, including training for statisticians and selection of a CAPI platform, is available in the publication, *The CAPI Effect: Boosting Survey Data through Mobile Technology* (<https://www.adb.org/publications/capi-survey-data-mobile-technology>). SPC-SDD, PSMB, and development partners could supplement the content of this publication (which focuses on three Asian countries) to make it more accessible to Pacific NSOs, ensure specific relevance and applicability to the Pacific region, and draw on lessons learned to date from Pacific NSOs that have implemented CAPI.

## **6. Improving processes for representation of all PICT NSOs on PSMB and supporting their engagement in initiatives**

### **PSMB:**

- i. agreed all Government Statisticians/NSOs should be invited to join the next virtual PSMB meeting;
- ii. noted the role that the PACSTAT project will play in communicating PSMB matters to PICTs.

## **7. Utilisation of administrative databases in census programmes of Pacific Island countries – a new SPC project**

### **PSMB:**

- i. noted SPC is implementing a two-phase project to maximise the use of administrative databases in PICT census programmes, with Phase 1 to focus on knowledge and awareness raising (including drawing on international experiences), and the approaches, potential constraints, benefits and options for greater use of administrative databases for census/population statistics; and Phase 2 to pilot approaches in selected countries.
- ii. agreed the project will be an agenda item at PSMB's next meeting, noting that methodological papers will be available then.

## **8. Term of PSMB Chair**

### **PSMB:**

- i. noted its TOR state that 'the term of the PSMB Chair will be for a period of 3 years before the next election', which means the term of the current Chair will expire in May 2021;
- ii. noted the next HOPS meeting may provide input to the appointment of the Chair.

## **9. Next PSMB meeting**

### **PSMB:**

- i. agreed its next meeting will be an interim one in late August, with SPC to advise the date and prepare the agenda;
- ii. noted the following agenda items were proposed for inclusion in the interim meeting:
  - review of the Project Operations Manual for PACSTAT
  - update on HFPM surveys
  - further discussion of the poverty guidelines
  - methodology papers from the project 'Utilisation of administrative databases in PICT census'
  - software stocktake
  - proposal from Nauru that USP establish a Centre of Excellence for Statistics at its Nauru campus.