

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

TWENTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF PACIFIC ARTS
(Noumea, New Caledonia, 23 – 25 March 2010)

AGENDA ITEM 14

CULTURE STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

(Document presented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, SPC)

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to inform Senior Culture Officials about culture indicators, their purpose, their use, data sources, how SPC can assist countries/territories, and how National Cultural Organizations can work in close partnership with national statistical service providers like the National Statistical Offices to progress the development of culture statistics/indicators in countries and territories.

INTRODUCTION or CONTEXT

1. What is Culture?

The most encompassing definition of culture as developed by UNESCO in its Mexico World Conference on Cultural Policies: *“in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs”*. **In other words**, culture refers to more than languages, artifacts, tradition, and other matters largely of interest to anthropologists, but embraces the overall complexity of any society or social group.

Another definition by Konai Helu Thaman is: *“a shared way of living of a group of people, which includes their accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values, as expressed and constructed in their language, which is perceived by them to be unique and meaningful”*.

2. What is an Indicator?

An indicator is basically a ‘pointer’. It can be an objective measurement, such as a number, a specific rate or a ratio; it can, however, also refer to an opinion, or to a perception that points to a specific condition or situation, and can be used to measure changes in that condition or situation over time. In other words, indicators provide a close look at the results of initiatives and actions or interventions; they provide the benchmarks needed to monitor and measure progress. **For this reason, they are the most important tools for monitoring and evaluating development work (UNESCO, 1977)**. *In Social Indicators (1966)*, R. A. Bauer described social indicators as statistical series and all other forms of evidence that enable us to assess where we stand and where we are going with respect to values and goals, and to evaluate specific programs and determine their impact’.

This definition is useful because it recognizes the normative nature of indicators, in that a change in a particular direction can be interpreted as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘welcome’ or ‘unwelcome’, ‘desirable’ or ‘undesirable’. For example, a rising birth rate will most likely be greeted as welcome news in Japan, Italy and Germany (UNESCO, 1977), whereas it may generate considerably less excitement in countries with persistent high fertility, such as many countries in the Pacific. It also recognizes that indicators can come from ‘all forms of evidence’, both quantitative and qualitative, and that indicators must measure changes over time. Because of their normative nature, care must be taken in defining the norm or benchmark implicit in any indicator against which change is measured (UNESCO, 1977). For example, is the rate of migration of women being compared to the situation of men in a particular country, or to women in other countries?

MAIN TEXT

3. What are Culture indicators?

The preceding definitions show that a culture indicator is a measure that points out something about the state or situation of culture in a country. Culture indicators can be narrowed down to measure more specific areas of culture such as oral culture (expressed/constructed in local languages), traditional practice (skills/values), arts/crafts, cultural sites, songs/dances, etc.

4. What are culture indicators used for?

Once defined and developed, these culture indicators are used by governments, development agencies, non-governmental organizations, media, academic institutions and the private sector, and many other users. The indicators are intended to inform users on various aspects of culture and development, including business investment, allocation of public funds, civil society advocacy or academic research, etc.

From a development perspective culture indicators can be used for monitoring and evaluation of the progress and impact of culture programmes and projects. Culture indicators are also often used to establish benchmarks, objectives, targets, and goals in the policy/planning and other development context.

5. What are the data sources behind culture indicators?

Based on demand, these culture indicators can be collected and summarized from administrative registrations/records, censuses and surveys, participatory assessments, etc. Censuses and a broad range of household surveys are regularly collected by National Statistical Offices in all countries and territories of the Pacific; censuses at 5 or 10 year intervals, whereas household surveys are undertaken with greater regularity. The following is a list of countries undertaking census in 2010-2012:

1	American Samoa (US Bureau of Census) 2010	7	Samoa 2011
2	Federated States of Micronesia 2010		Cook Islands 2011
3	Guam (US Bureau of Census) 2010		Tuvalu 2012
4	Kiribati 2010		Nauru 2012
5	Papua New Guinea 2010		
6	Palau 2010		

Household income and expenditure surveys, demographic and health surveys, agriculture censuses are also being undertaken in some countries during 2010-2012

6. What can you do?

Although we at SPC are working with the National Statistical Offices to incorporate culture concerns into the existing census answer coding schemes, our input is advisory only, and hence National Statistical

Offices are not obliged to incorporate such recommendations. It is therefore, important for National Culture Officials to work with the National Statistical Officers in your respective counties to ensure that culture dimensions are incorporated into existing census/survey instruments, as well as collaborating in new data collection efforts. Furthermore, national culture officials could work with national statistical officials to compile culture related indicators, and interpretation of such indicators and apply into policy/planning areas.

Users Advisory Committees

The usual practice in many countries is that before any major national statistical undertaking like a national census or a major sample survey, Users Advisory Committee's are formed by the National Statistical Offices or whoever is assigned by national governments to lead such national undertaking. These Committees are responsible for the formulation of the questions to be included in the census or survey instruments. To be invited into such committees, National Culture Officials need to inform the National Statistical Officials of their interest in collaborating with them for developing culture statistics and indicators in their country.

Minimum Indicator List and derivation of these indicators

It is the responsibility of National Culture Officials to develop the minimum indicators required as evidence for policies, plans, as well as monitoring/evaluation of various culture projects and programmes. There are various frameworks available including **2009 UNESCO Framework for Culture Statistics** that can be referenced in developing these minimum indicator lists.

Having listed a minimum indicator list for culture, the next step would obviously be to identify the data sources from which these indicators can be mined or extracted. Collaboration with national statistical agencies is necessary to mine the required input data/statistics to compute the listed indicator. There are many external technical assistance providers available to provide support for compiling culture indicators from the above data sources.

7. How SPC can assist

SPC Statistics and Demography Programme and SPC Human Development Programme Culture Adviser are currently undertaking the following:

1. working in collaboration with Pacific countries, review current census questionnaires to incorporate culture specific response categories for existing census questions. For example, census question on household economic activity is reviewed to ensure that household activities specific to culture like making handcrafts or collecting firewood are listed separately as answer categories. We have done that for Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Federated States of Micronesia. Meanwhile, discussions are currently taking place with the Marshall Islands and other countries; and
2. developing minimum indicators to be used within SPC in the following areas:
 - a. competency in language – ability, literacy, frequency by age/sex and language groups;
 - b. living culture – production of food for cultural exchange, use, use of traditional methods of fishing, traditional land use, etc; and
 - c. driving culture – existence of dedicated national cultural policy, Ratification of and implementation of Cultural Rights treaties and convention and Implementation of Model laws on Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture, and on Traditional Biological Knowledge, National proportion of budget allocated to culture, including for protection, preservation (heritage) and promotion.

We (SPC Statistics/Demography Programme) can also provide technical assistance with the computation/compilation of indicators as well as in conducting new household based culture surveys (subject to resource availability). Technical assistance is also available in interpretation of indicators and application into policy/planning areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS or CONCLUSION

National Culture Officials Meeting is invited to:

- i. note the importance of culture statistics/indicators for national culture and development support;
 - ii. work in close collaboration with their respective national statistical services to define, collect, compile, analyse, and use culture and development statistics/indicators for decision support and advocacy across countries and the region;
 - iii. with their respective national statistical services, undertake gap analysis, which would be guided by the outcome of (ii) above, and their need for statistics/indicators for data for decision support;
 - iv. development of a long-term strategic vision and plan for the development and utilization of culture related statistics and indicators;
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