

Statistics for Development Division (SDD)

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SESSION 2 – PACIFIC REGIONAL STATISTICAL METHODS BOARD

(Document presented by the Secretariat)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The establishment of a Pacific Regional Statistics Methods Board (PRSMB) will ensure relevant best practice standards that are 'fit for purpose' for use in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) for a suite of core censuses and surveys. This is an important development, given the increasing demand for timely and quality statistics, and the increased interest from technical agencies that want to support data collection in the region.

PURPOSE OF SUBMISSION

2. The purpose of this paper is to:
 - propose that a PRSMB be established in line with recommendations from the Statistics for Development Division's Performance Improvement Framework (2016), the 13th meeting of the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (2016), and the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) Mid-Term Evaluation (2017);
 - propose terms of references, including membership, for the newly established PRSMB; and
 - seek endorsement by Heads of Planning and Statistics for recommendations made herein.

RATIONALE AND BACKGROUND

3. During Phases 1 and 2 of TYPSS, regional standardisation of methods, systems, standards, classifications and procedures improved, driven by a strong focus on data collection. This development, together with the increasing demand for timely and quality statistics, has resulted in increased interest from technical agencies that want to support data collection in the region.
4. In view of this, the establishment of a PRSMB is timely as we move into Phase 3 of TYPSS. A PRSMB will be able to assess and approve standards and methods that can be put into census and survey-specific Pacific data collection manuals for those major national collections named in Section 2 of Annex 1 below.

5. Regional comparability will become increasingly important for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Data requirements for reporting against the indicators underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be achieved if the region has formally approved standards and methods manuals that countries can use to guide census and survey development, collection and production.
6. The SDD's Performance Improvement Framework (2016), the 13th meeting of the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (2016) and TYPSS Phase 2 Mid-Term Evaluation (2017) were unified in their view that a statistical methods board be established to ensure that standardisation in methodologies, systems, standards, classifications and procedures continue to be applied for major statistical collections, whether they are supported through the regional technical partnership programme or being undertaken without outside agency support. This submission, and the proposal for a PRSMB, is a direct response to those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

7. It is recommended that HOPS approve the:
 - establishment of a PRSMB as per the recommendations of the TYPSS Mid-Term Review Report and the SDD Performance Improvement Framework Review and Pacific Statistics Steering Committee 13; and
 - proposed terms of reference (Annex 1) or, if further modifications are required, to be signed off through circulation in January 2018.

ANNEX 1: DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Role

The role of the Pacific Regional Statistical Methods Board (PRSMB) is to ensure that relevant best practice standards are developed that are ‘fit for purpose’ for use in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) for a suite of core censuses and surveys.

2. Scope

The scope of PRSMB’s functions are:

- a. Focus its work on the following core group of censuses and surveys, including:
 - population and housing censuses,
 - household income and expenditure surveys,
 - demographic and health surveys,
 - disability surveys, and
 - multi-indicator cluster surveys.
- b. Assess and approve proposals put forward by the Statistics for Development Division (SDD) on: questionnaire design, sampling methodologies, classifications, collection tools and systems, and quality assurance processes.
- c. The type of issues in scope of the Board’s considerations include:
 - timing and scope of historical revisions (e.g. proposed revision to household income and expenditure survey methodology in 2018);
 - implementation of changes in methodology, standards and classifications;
 - proposals to diverge from existing standards and classifications;
 - proposals to change the methods for collection, editing and processing; and
 - changes to member countries’ national core statistics collection calendar of events.
- d. Take relevant opportunities to support the use of Board-approved standards when appropriate to do so.

3. Membership

- e. PRSMB will be chaired by the Chairperson of HOPS, with a deputy chair to be elected by the PRSMB during its meeting.
 - f. A Secretariat will be provided by SDD.
 - g. Attendance for PRSMB members will be compulsory. If board members are unable to attend, they must send suitable representatives.
 - h. PRSMB members will include representatives of: SDD, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics New Zealand, World Bank and 3 Pacific government statisticians. Ideally, it will be relevant to have representatives who are also methodologists in the board.
 - i. Presenters, observers and invited members.
8. PRSMB members may nominate people from their respective agencies who have authored and/or co-authored papers in partnership with SDD, to attend board meetings to present the paper and answer

questions. PRSMB may co-opt a member country's government statistician or relevant staff member as, and when, required.

4. Procedures

- a. Meetings: Meetings will be held once a year the day before the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC) meets (usually around the end of October).
- b. Servicing: PRSMB will be serviced by SPC's SDD, which will submit standards to the board for review and approval. SDD will provide secretarial services to the board.
- c. Reporting: The board will come under the umbrella of the PSSC, and will provide an annual report to PSSC outlining progress and achievements. Matters requiring a broader view and/or guidance will be referred to PSSC as they arise.
- d. Timing: The board secretariat will distribute the agenda and papers to the board and invited members one week prior to the meeting date and release draft minutes one week after the meeting. Papers should be submitted to the secretariat no later than five working days prior to the meeting taking place.
- e. Papers (general): The board will:
 - review all submitted papers to ensure that all relevant information has been provided,
 - make all decisions on submitted papers,
 - endorse papers that propose changes to methods in the above national collections, and
 - endorse papers in principle, but require further work at its request.

Members wishing to present papers should notify the secretariat of their intention to do so as early as possible in the meeting cycle. In principle, papers should be investigated and discussed in advance of PRSMB meetings.

- f. Retention of papers: All papers submitted to PRSMB will be stored and archived by SDD. This will ensure that papers are easily located in the future and that member countries, technical partners, donors and consultants working on these collections have easy access to them.
- g. Structure and content of papers: A detailed style guide should be followed for any papers submitted.
- h. Urgent issues and/or changes: New methods requiring immediate clearance and implementation outside the PRSMB meeting will be considered through circulation to PRSMB members for a decision, although the aim is to limit the need for urgent changes. Urgent changes implemented without PRSMB scrutiny should be documented for review at the next available meeting as ex-post changes.
- i. Out-of-session papers: In some cases, papers may need to be circulated for the record, or for information only. Before submitting a paper out of session, papers must be signed off by the Director of SDD. This is to ensure that the content will not require discussion. Out-of-session papers will be noted on the agenda but will not be presented for discussion.
- j. Action items: An action item should be created when further work is required on a presented paper that will need to be reviewed and monitored by the PRSMB as it progresses. The PRSMB will determine, after a paper is presented, if any actions are required.
- k. The chair and secretariat: The chair should endeavour to reach a consensus position on recommendations but otherwise will, depending on the balance of opinion, either signal endorsement with reservations, or rejection. The secretariat is responsible for:
 - organising meeting times and venues;

- calling for agenda items and accompanying written material;
- circulating the final agenda and accompanying written material;
- managing and following up on outstanding action items;
- preparing the minutes of the meeting and seeking clearance from presenters;
- filing approved papers and associated documents electronically within SDD; and
- creating and maintaining a ‘methods’ corner on its website, where all documents and standards endorsed by PRSMB can be uploaded to inform all member countries, technical partners, donors of the board’s decisions.

The presiding chair will undertake a formal handover to an incoming chair, in order to facilitate a smooth transition and maintain momentum. The chair and secretariat will be jointly responsible for ensuring that the purpose of each item on the agenda is clear and unambiguous.