SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

REGIONAL MEETING OF HEADS OF PLANNING AND HEADS OF STATISTICS (HOPS)
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Session 2: Education Statistics
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Pacific Countries have acknowledged the importance of good information for decision making, as reflected in the Pacific Plan's call for an upgrade and extension of country and regional statistical information systems and databases.

2. The improvement of education statistics (quality, timeliness) and associated *Education Management Information Systems* (EMIS) feature as one of four strategic statistical priorities in the first Phase (2011–2014) of the *Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011–2020*.

Key outcomes

3. To set things in motion, the *Statistics for Development Division* (SDD) team recruited a dedicated Education/Database Specialist in 2011 to support governments with developing, maintaining and utilising information derived from education (EMIS) system databases.

4. Major achievements of the project so far include:
   a. development of a comprehensive, user friendly online portal related to PICTs specific Education Statistics (www.spc.int/prism), and reporting of international Education indicators (MDG/NMDI, PEDF);
   b. development of standardised Education module for Pacific Island Household surveys;
   c. production of national and sub-national school age population projections by single year of age and gender; and
   d. development of a access and equity profiles for Pacific Island Education countries.

Challenges

5. A 2012 Pacific Ministries of Education meeting, and a more recent rapid sectoral review revealed a range of common EMIS challenges and weaknesses, highlighting a lack of a coordinated approach to support EMISs in the Pacific.

6. There are some technical challenges for which countries will need external support, such as sustaining routine processes of data collection, processing, analysis, reporting and use which will require long-term, consistent and high quality external technical advice. While not a highly complex endeavour, managing the data and making the best use of information technology (including databases) requires technical skills which are not readily available in many PICs.

Plan forward/Recommendation

7. To make this happen, a regional EMIS support facility at SPC is being proposed to create a mechanism as a more coordinated approach to support EMIS's in the Pacific. It would be responsive to requests from countries and be able to operate at a regional, sub-regional or bilateral basis.

8. It is envisaged that the proposed regional facility will be established at SPC and PIFS commencing in early 2014.

9. With inter-agency coordination key to overall success, look to *Brisbane Accord Group* as a viable regional model of interagency technical coordination and collaboration, which could work effectively education sector.

INTRODUCTION

1. Pacific Countries have acknowledged the importance of good information for decision making. The Pacific Plan Good Governance section includes the upgrading and extension of country and regional statistical information systems and databases. The region has also established the Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) and Action Plan. Strengthening administrative data from education systems is a key element of the plan and fits into the activities listed under the Pacific Statistics Strategy Action Plan, Phase 1 (2011 – 2014) Regional Initiatives for Strengthening Statistical Services through Regional Approaches.

2. Furthermore, strengthening EMIS resources in PICTs is an important component of a country's National Statistical System and therefore fits into actions currently underway for implementing a strategic approach for statistical capacity through the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) co-ordinated by SPC SDD.

3. This paper provides an update of the progress made with the Education Statistics being developed for the pacific region. Included in the paper will be the following information:
   a. background on PIC Education Statistics -Education Management Information Systems (EMIS)
   b. an update on ongoing work and proposed regional EMIS facility
   c. key achievements thus far
   d. challenges encountered thus far
   e. future strategy for completion of the project.

BACKGROUND

4. Various attempts have been made in countries in the Pacific region regarding the development of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) within the Ministries of Education. The focus in EMIS development historical has been focused on the technology aspects which includes hardware purchasing and software development. Unfortunately very little focus has been directed towards the building of capacity of the human element of EMIS which has become the major challenge for the Pacific region.

5. Efforts in developing EMIS have been coordinated in collaboration with donor agencies and development partners who have interests in education development in countries in the Pacific. The results of such attempts have been mixed with some dome degree of success having been recorded. However, the fact remains that most such attempts have lacked sustainability by countries to continue with the development of EMIS which could be mainly attributed to lack of local expertise and resources.

6. Reviews[1] of EMIS in some of the regional countries have highlighted issues and challenges faced in their development and the extent of their usefulness in the overall development processes of education systems of countries. It is recognized that EMIS are powerful tools for educational development if fully functional and is a worthwhile investment for both countries and donors/development partners. It is in this respect that AusAID has shown great interest in supporting EMIS in the Pacific countries.

7. A workshop of Pacific Ministries of Education in March 2012 funded by SPC and a recent rapid review revealed a range of common EMIS challenges and weaknesses. There is currently no coordinated approach to support EMIS in the Pacific.

8. Since early 2012, the SPC SDD team has included an Education/Database Specialist position to specifically support PICT governments with developing, maintaining and utilising information derived from education (EMIS) system databases. To date, technical assistance has been provided to PICT education agencies in Vanuatu, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Cook Islands. In addition, SPC has hosted training attachments for MoE staff from the Solomon Islands and Tonga. The issues and topics covered in both the TA and attachments have included: EMIS database development; data extraction and verification; population projections; analysis of Education Access and Equity; development of Education modules for household surveys; and assisting countries in production of their annual statistical outputs.

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[1] AusAID conducted a Rapid Review of EMIS in 6 Pacific island countries while UNESCO also conducted review in selected countries.

WHERE ARE WE AT NOW?

9. At this point in time a regional EMIS facility based at SPC is being proposed to create a mechanism as a more coordinated approach to support EMIS's in the Pacific. It would be responsive to requests from countries and be able to operate at a regional, sub-regional or bilateral basis. It is envisaged that the proposed regional facility will be established at SPC and PIFS commencing in early 2014. The regional facility will have <u>four main goals</u> and <u>two</u> main <u>objectives/components</u> as follows. This takes into account the critical importance of relationships to effective delivery of targeted assistance.

   - **Goal 1**: All Pacific children have access to basic education
   - **Goal 2**: Education is of an acceptable quality to guarantee numeracy & literacy and provide a basis for learning beyond primary school
   - **Goal 3**: Young people have opportunities to access the skills needed to connect to further education, training& employment
   - **Goal 4**: Increased numbers of young people gain valued professional technical or vocational qualifications through post-secondary education and training.
   - **Component 1:** SPC EMIS systems in the Pacific are operating efficiently and effectively to produce, analyse and disseminate quality education data for the purpose of national education planning, budgeting and policy development
   - **Component 2**: PIFS Quality up-to-date Pacific education data are being reported against agreed standard indicators, which are used to inform policy making at the regional level.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

10. The main achievement of the project thus far are as follows:
   a. Development of a comprehensive, user friendly online portal related to PICT specific Education Statistics on its regional PRISM website including collection education statistics digests, online downloadable excel tables as well as reporting of international Education indicators (MDG/NMDI, PEDF).
   b. Development of standardised Education module for Pacific Island Household surveys
   c. Production of school age population projections by single year of age and gender.
   d. Development of a access and equity profiles for Pacific Island Education countries.
   e. Collaboration with UNESCOs Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education with regard to data quality assessment, data analysis with a view to formally incorporating these in the proposed regional facility.
   f. Increased collaboration between Ministry of Education and NSOs in many PICs including Census Analysis and HIES questionnaire design.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED THUS FAR WITH IMPLEMENTATION

11. There are some technical challenges for which countries will need external support. Sustaining the routine process of data collection, processing, data analysis and reporting and use would require long-term, consistent and high quality external technical advice. While not a highly complex endeavour, managing the data and making the best use of information technology (including databases) requires technical skills which are not readily available to many PICs.

12. While there are technical challenges relating to ICT and database support, this cannot be approached in isolation from the fact that good statistics are derived from good collection processes. Technical advice needs to support efforts to get better data quality through higher response rates for all education levels.

13. Education schools census data quality continues to impact on the calculation and validity of national level education indicators in the region. This may continue perception of unreliable and unrealistic statistics and baseline indicators hindering effective education M&E, planning and policy-making resulting in a lack of buy-in by countries to support project activities.

14. PICT Ministry of Education staff are typically under-resourced with regard to EMIS related activities. Where a capacity constraint exists activities are hampered and stalled. Another challenge has been key MoE EMIS related staff leaving, leading to a skills shortage and knowledge drain.

FUTURE STRATEGY

15. Experience in other statistical areas shows that managing a regional mechanism will be challenging. A coordinated approach, bringing together all technical partners, is currently practiced in the area of Vital Statistics/Civil Registration via the Brisbane Accord Group. A similar coordinating mechanism might also work quite well for EMIS. SPCs assessment is that the key to this group's success is that all partners have a tangible technical role to play, and a vested interest that their commitment of resources (financial, technical, time) has a tangible impact.

16. here is wide variation in the region when it comes to international reporting and the Monitoring and Evaluation of the PEDF framework. Currently there is no regional database for PEDF monitoring. Rather than develop an entirely new database for the PEDF M&E framework SPC believe this resource can be effectively linked to the existing and well designed SPC Statistics for Development web projects - PRISM (www.spc.int/prism), NMDI (www.spc.int/nmdi). This online database will become mechanism to assist PIFS monitoring of the PEDF enable users to generate reports to Ministers and also provide countries a way to report to international reporting requirements such as EFA, MDGs.

17. The facility will collaborate with ABS, USP, UNESCO and UNSIAP with a view to establishing a collaborative partnership of statistical training providers for effective delivery of *e-learning* courses. The collaborative partnership is also expected to accelerate the expansion of e-learning as a modality for training in education statistics.

DISCUSSION POINTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The meeting is invited to comment on:
    a. Increased collaboration between Ministry of Education and NSOs
    b. Proposed new regional support facility for EMIS at SPC
    c. Use of the NMDI database for monitoring and evaluation of Education Statistics
    d. Potential to develop online learning materials for training in data analysis