

SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

REGIONAL MEETING OF HEADS OF PLANNING AND HEADS OF STATISTICS (HOPS)

(Noumea, New Caledonia, 22–26 July 2013)

**Session 5: New and innovative statistical tools and systems have been introduced -  
Testing of new thematic modules in the Vanuatu Pacific Living Condition (Hybrid) survey**

(Document presented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary debrief of the testing of two new thematic modules as part of the Vanuatu Pacific Living Condition (Hybrid) survey development. This survey prototype was designed with three objectives in mind:
  - a. to develop a household survey instrument that could be used across the Pacific and thus provide access to comparable development statistics across key sectors, in response to a priority request by Pacific Leaders in the original Pacific Plan;
  - b. by combining core elements from major Household surveys, provide countries with access to key national and international development indicators, required for monitoring and reporting on policy performance and development progress;
  - c. being able to capture all major statistical indicators in one survey, reduce data collection costs, undertake collections more frequently and provide feedback on policy performance and development progress on a more regular basis than every 5 years.

**Key Achievements**

2. Successful capture of data related to *cultural practice*, and thus be able to provide countries for the first time with access to data informing on the current prevalence of *indigenous language skills and use, traditional production skills, and people's access to and use of customary land, forest and marine resources*;
3. Capture all eight population-based *National Minimum Development Indicators* (NMDI) cultural indicators, for which thus far, no regular data source was available.

**Main Challenges faced**

4. None really – the main challenge ahead will be to convince policy-makers and statisticians, that a regular collection of cultural statistics will not break the bank, but instead provide both valuable insights into cultural development and rich contextual information for informed social and economic policy analysis.

**Recommendations**

5. With all countries undertaking regular household surveys, and Pacific people proud of their cultural roots and heritage, include the module in regular household surveys to provide an important barometer of social and cultural development.

## **Background to Development of the Pacific Living Conditions (Hybrid) Survey**

1. In 2007, following publication of the Pacific Plan illustrating Pacific Leaders' vision for the future of the region, some 40+ representatives of a broad cross-section of the statistical community of the region convened in Noumea for workshop to discuss the "Future of Statistics in the Pacific Region", that would help translate Leaders' aspirations into meaningful and practical directions. In terms of tangible outcomes, agreement was reached on
  - a. pursuing a greater standardization of methods, classifications, definitions, standards within the Pacific context;
  - b. data/indicator needs required, leading to definition of national minimum indicator datasets; and on
  - c. Best practice data collection/processing guidelines to be developed and promoted by regional agencies (such as, but restricted to, SPC and PFTAC).
2. Commissioning of the Regional Statistical Benchmarking Study by PIFS and SPC was a first attempt to develop a regional statistical development framework, which was followed by SPC's Ten Year Pacific Statistics Strategy 2011 – 2020, and a concomitant Phase 1 Pacific Statistics Action Plan 2011 – 2014.
3. The design and subsequent testing in Vanuatu of the Pacific Living Conditions survey, also known as the Hybrid survey, which combined key thematic ingredients from existing Household surveys, notably HIES and DHS, was a logical step forward in developing a (light) modular survey instrument that could become the cornerstone of a regionally-coordinated regular survey program,
  - a. providing a core set of comparable development statistics and minimum indicator datasets for all countries as envisaged by Pacific Leaders,
  - b. capturing the required input data to generate standard HIES and DHS outputs, and given its modular design,
  - c. provide opportunities for countries to customize their surveys by including customized modules to address specific national (and regional) information demands.
4. Combining the core elements of the HIES and DHS, in terms of providing countries with key development (e.g. MDG) indicators, this survey will be less expensive than running two fully-fledged HIES and DHS to merely collect statistics than cannot be generated (yet) from administrative databases and management information systems. And running it in shorter time intervals (every 2-3 years) would provide countries with better quality data for progress monitoring.
5. It's modular structure, also lends itself to lower survey costs/increase cost-efficiency, by providing a platform for other government agencies to buy space on this survey platform every 2-3 (or 4-6) years, without having to pay extraordinary costs to mount a household survey on its own. Paying greater attention to, what used to be called *Omnibus*-surveys, will lower both survey costs and survey fatigue (amongst the general public and NSO staff).

## **Illustrating the use of a stand-alone Survey Module 6: *Cultural practice***

6. With culture representing a strong foundation of sustainable development in many Pacific island countries, yet little factual information available on various manifestations of "cultural practice", we developed a "*Culture statistics*" module for inclusion in Pacific Living conditions survey, that captures three basic manifestations of cultural practice, as reflected in SPC National Minimum Development Indicator database:
  - a. indigenous language skills and use,
  - b. traditional production skills, and
  - c. people's access to and use of customary land, forest and marine resources.

7. In a groundbreaking study on ‘well-being’ in Melanesia, the authors found a strong positive correlation between subjective well-being and free access to land and natural resources (customary usage rights) in Vanuatu. This access, according to Jamie Tanguay, when coupled with traditional skills to make productive use of natural resources, *provides a unique indicator of poverty risk, whereby policy makers can balance information coming from the cash and traditional economies, where people with no or limited opportunities in the cash economy can be considered as lower poverty risk if they have both access to traditional land and natural resources as well as the skills to make productive use of these resources*”.
8. Apart from providing rich contextual information for informed social and economic policy analysis, information on various aspects of cultural *practice* provides value in its own right, particularly in societies where culture and tradition represent a much valued heritage.
9. In addition to the three expressions of cultural practice alluded to earlier, Module-6 of the Pacific Living Conditions survey, also contains a section on people’s perceptions of their current and recent well-being regarding seven criteria (health, family, day-to-day living, access to food, living conditions, sufficient money to get by, neighborhood), as well as their principal worries and concerns today, and what the future may bring.
10. With analysis still underway, we have just concluded a preliminary analysis of the 8 *cultural practice indicators*, to be able to show some preliminary results at this meeting (Appendix-1), and we are happy to report that with the inclusion of this module in routine Pacific island household surveys, all 12 NMDIs pertaining to culture can be readily captured, thus allowing for a periodic monitoring of cultural practices, as reflected in indigenous language skills and use, traditional production skills, and people’s access to and use of customary land, forest and marine resources.

### **Additional stand-alone Survey Modules**

11. As stated earlier, the survey’s modular structure has the potential to provide other sectoral data users with a low-cost option to undertake specific thematic enquiries. To illustrate this potential, a *daily food diary* was developed and included in this survey, to establish dietary patterns of ni-Vanuatu households, particularly of school-age children and people in the labor force, to ascertain the compatibility of “fuel’ intake (food-groups) with a day’s learning and economic activity. Data analysis of this module has not yet started.

**Annex-1: Pacific Living Conditions (Hybrid) Survey - NMDI Indicators of Cultural Practice**

NMDI Code	NMDI Name	NMDI Indicator Description	Value	
HD-CUL 1.1	Kastom Ability	Ability to speak in kastom/vernacular languages	National	94%
			Urban	89%
			Rural	98%
HD-CUL 1.2	Kastom Frequency	Frequency of use of kastom/vernacular languages	National	72%
			Urban	52%
			Rural	85%
HD-CUL 1.3	Read/Write Cultural Group	Proportion of population in specific language community able to read and write in their first language of their cultural group	National	61%
			Urban	69%
			Rural	56%
HD-CUL 1.4	Read/Write Cultural Group	Proportion of young people in specific communities able to read and write in their first language (15-24 years)	National	56%
			Urban	60%
			Rural	54%
HD-CUL 1.5	Traditional Production Skills	Proportion of households with basic traditional production skills (composite indicator)	National	64%
			Urban	48%
			Rural	73%
HD-CUL 1.6	Traditional Fishing Methods	Proportion of population fishing with traditional methods (spear)	National	37%
			Urban	35%
			Rural	39%
HD-CUL 1.7	Customary Land Use	Percentage of population who use customary lands for housing and subsistence agriculture	National	83%
			Urban	61%
			Rural	92%
HD-CUL 1.8	Customary Land Access	Proportion of population with access to customary lands	National	87%
			Urban	64%
			Rural	100%