



**PACIFIC ISLANDS  
FORUM SECRETARIAT**

# The **2020** Biennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report





## Foreword



The 2018 Pacific Quadrennial Report was the first Pacific regional report on progress under the 2030 Agenda and the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway.

This Biennial Report does not provide a progress update on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or address all regional priorities. It focuses on how the region is progressing against the nine action areas in the 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development Report (PSDR). This is in line with the 2015 commitment of our Pacific Islands Forum Leaders when they called for the Sustainable Development Goals to be contextualised to Pacific realities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented disruption in the Pacific and will likely undo gains previously reported in 2018 as well as in the last two years. Pacific leaders acted quickly to limit our exposure to the virus, their robust and timely public health and border protection measures have, so far, protected the region from a public health catastrophe. However, COVID-19 has exacerbated the persistent vulnerabilities and dependencies that continue to challenge our development.

Good progress was being made in ensuring the sustainability of the fisheries sector, improving returns and increasing community involvement in tourism and in addressing the high cost of remittances, but all have been heavily impacted by COVID-19. The future of tourism and level of remittances remains uncertain and the need for social protection has intensified, with the virus impacting the most vulnerable more intensely. Many Pacific economies are facing the grim prospect of recession.

Our vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters continues. As we came to grips with COVID-19, several Pacific countries were hit by Tropical Cyclone Harold, causing loss of life and devastation. This heightens the necessity for the region to implement effective policies and programs that strengthen resilient communities. Implementation of the 17 SDGs will support this resilience and must progress across the region.

The 2030 Agenda is our global roadmap to mitigate the continued impact of COVID-19 and maintain momentum towards greater resilience. We require an increase in investments to strengthen platforms to fight pandemics, climate change and natural disasters. These investments need to focus on our education and health systems, water and sanitation, combined with measures to reduce poverty, food insecurity, inequality and overall wellbeing.

Progress in achieving gender equality continues to be hampered by social, cultural and economic barriers. Despite progress, the region must remain resolute to realize gender equality in the face of challenges that widen the inequality gap.

More than 1 million persons with disabilities in the Pacific still face deep inequalities and multiple barriers. They are still over-represented among the poor, have significantly less economic opportunities than persons without disabilities and women and girls with disabilities are still more likely to experience violence.

The need for accelerated action to reform national economic and labour policies targeting key growth sectors remains. Women are under-represented in formal employment across the region and there are limited job opportunities for the region's youth population.

Despite progress being made under the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Roadmap, substantial efforts are still required to strengthen leadership, governance and financing to accelerate national action to halt or reverse the crisis, as well as promote the wellbeing of all Pacific people.

The Cleaner Pacific 2025 integrates strategic actions to address municipal solid waste, asbestos, electrical and electronic waste, healthcare waste, chemicals, used oil and lubricants, marine litter, ship-sourced pollution and disaster, sewage and trade waste. However, there remains a need for some Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs) to elevate waste management in their development agenda.

Some SDG data gaps have been addressed since 2018 which is enhancing the region's capacity for the measuring and reporting against, critical issues of poverty, gender equality, and disability. National statistical systems in the region are

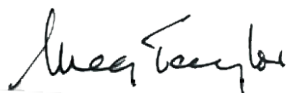
still heavily dependent on external technical and financial support. There is a need for additional resources for national and regional statistical stakeholders, to ensure that high quality data is produced to guide and monitor economic and social development and to meet reporting obligations.

By 2019, nine Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) had been completed in the region which confirmed that country systems, institutional arrangements, policies and processes are largely in place. Four more countries reported to the 2020 High Level Political Forum (HLPF).

A regional set of targets and indicators have been used to account for national priorities and monitor the region's progress against the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR) and other key global and regional sustainable development commitments, including the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED).

The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated our pre-existing vulnerabilities and dependencies. When we are faced with our next challenge, we must ensure we are better able to deal with the impacts. This 2020 report requires us to learn from our past and to maintain our forward momentum. It is our opportunity to be decisive, to rebuild better and to maintain our ability to work as a Blue Pacific collective.

As Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, I thank all who have worked to produce this report. I thank the hard work of our member countries, the Pacific Steering Committee for Sustainable Development and the support provided by technical advisers from the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies, the United Nations (UN), private sector and civil society.



**Dame Meg Taylor**

**1 October 2020**



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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

- ADR:** Annual Development Reporting Mechanism  
**APFSD:** Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development  
**ADB:** Asian Development Bank  
**AML & CTF:** Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Finance  
**AP-DEF:** Asia-Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility  
**BBNJ:** Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction  
**BPA:** Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action  
**CROP:** Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific  
**CBID:** Community Based Inclusive Development  
**CEDAW:** Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women  
**CRPD:** Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
**DDPG:** Donor and Development Partners Group  
**DPOs:** Disabled Peoples Organizations  
**DCRP:** Disaster and Community Resilience Programme  
**DRP:** Disaster Resilience Programme  
**DFA:** Development Finance Assessment  
**DRR:** Disaster Risk Management  
**ECOSOC:** United Nations Economic and Social Council  
**ESCAP:** United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific  
**EEZ:** Exclusive Economic Zone  
**ECHO:** Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity Priority  
**EVAWG:** Ending Violence against Women & Girls  
**FIG:** Forum Island Countries  
**FPR:** Framework for Pacific Regionalism  
**FEMM:** Forum Economic Ministers Meeting  
**FPO:** Framework for Pacific Oceanscape  
**FRDP:** Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific  
**FADs:** Fish Aggregating Devices  
**FFA:** Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency  
**FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
**GPI:** Gender Participation Indices  
**HLPF:** High Level Political Forum  
**HPV:** Human Papillomavirus Virus  
**HIES:** Household Income and Expenditure Survey

**IANZ:** Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand  
**ILO:** International Labor Organization  
**IAEG:** The Inter-Agencies Expert Group  
**IOM:** International Organization for Migration  
**IUU:** Illegal Unregulated & Unreported  
**IMO:** International Maritime Organization  
**IDMC:** International Displacement Monitoring Centre  
**JICA:** Japan International Cooperation Agency  
**JICA:** Japan International Cooperation Agency  
**LGBTQI:** Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer & Intersex  
**MDGs:** Millennium Development Goals  
**MICS:** Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys  
**M&E:** Monitoring & Evaluation  
**MTOs:** Money Transfer Operators  
**MTR:** Mid Term Review  
**MSW:** Municipal Solid Waste  
**NCDs:** Non-Communicable Diseases  
**NHRI:** National Human Rights Institutions  
**NPS:** National Payment Systems  
**NDMO:** National Disaster Management Offices  
**NSDS:** National Sustainable Development Strategy  
**NMDI:** National Minimum Development Indicator  
**OECD:** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development  
**ODA:** Official Development Assistance  
**OPOC:** Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner  
**PHPC:** Pacific Humanitarian Pathway for COVID-19  
**PFRPD:** Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
**PLGED:** Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration  
**PAPRI:** Pacific Payment Remittance and Securities Settlement Initiative  
**PICTs:** Pacific Island Countries and Territories  
**PacREF:** Pacific Regional Education Framework  
**POA:** Pacific Ocean Alliance  
**PSDR:** Pacific Sustainable Development Report  
**PARIS21:** The Partnership for the Development of Statistics in the 21st Century  
**PRP:** Pacific Resilience Partnership



**PRM:** Pacific Resilience Meeting

**PIEMA:** The Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance

**PFSD:** Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development

**PCRIC:** Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company

**PSMB:** Pacific Statistics Methods Board

**PPE:** Personal Protective Equipment

**PDH:** Pacific Data Hub

**PRSD:** Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development

**SPC:** Pacific Community

**SREM:** Strategic Roadmaps for Emergency Management

**SAMOA Pathway:** SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action

**SPTO:** South Pacific Tourism Organization

**SMEs:** Small Medium Enterprises

**TVET:** Technical and Vocational Education and Training

**TYPSS:** Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy

**TWG:** Technical Working Groups

**UNFPA:** United Nations Population Fund

**UNDESA:** United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**UNICEF:** United Nations Children’s Fund

**ULABs:** Used Lead Acid Batteries

**UNFCCC:** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNCTAD:** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

**VNR:** Voluntary National Review

**VAWG:** Violence Against Women and Girls

**VDS:** Vessel Day Scheme

**WEO:** World Economic Outlook

**WTO:** World Trade Organization

**WCPO:** Western and Central Pacific Ocean

**WCPFC:** Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

**WBG:** World Bank Group

## Executive Summary

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1. The theme of this, the first Pacific Biennial Sustainable Development Report is “*Ensuring Pacific People’s well-being through the Blue Pacific identity, the proposed 2050 Strategy and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”.
2. This Report responds to the Leaders vision for “*a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity so that all Pacific people can lead free healthy and productive lives*”.
3. This Report for Sustainable Development has been produced by the Secretariat under the guidance of a Pacific Steering Committee with the support of technical advisers from CROP agencies, the UN in the Pacific, Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations in the region. It provides an update on the 2018 Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report and the region’s progress in meeting the expectations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as measured through the SDGs.
4. This Report has been prepared as the global community faces a public health crisis and economic upheaval resulting from COVID-19. As a result, progress made by 2018 and 2019 in meeting the SDGs must be tempered by the knowledge that the region, like the rest of the world, faces major challenges as a direct consequence of the pandemic.
5. This Report covers:
  - a. **Impact of COVID-19:** Information on the pandemic and its impact on the capacity of PICTs to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
  - b. **Sustainable development progress since 2018:** Details the progress made at both national and regional levels across the nine outcome areas identified in the Quadrennial Report:
    - i. Addressing vulnerability and increasing inequality;
    - ii. Tackling gender gaps and high youth unemployment;
    - iii. Continuing to promote sustainable and equitable economic growth;
    - iv. Intensifying multi-sector efforts with increased finance to address non-communicable diseases;
    - v. Strengthening efforts to tackle the dual threats of climate change and disasters;
    - vi. Addressing the consequences of population growth and poor waste management practices;
    - vii. Continuing to address de-risking issues and the high cost of sending remittances;
    - viii. More effective use of existing and new finance and stronger coordination; and
    - ix. Increasing investment in the collection and use of timely and accurate disaggregated data.
  - c. **The Voluntary National Review (VNR) Process:** Examines the VNR processes adopted across the Pacific since 2016, including:
    - Lessons learned;
    - Opportunities for strengthening capacity in ways that involve all stakeholders at national and sub-national level;
    - Ways to strengthen the links between plans and budgets;
    - Ways to build and sustain data to better inform policy, planning and budgets;

6. Nine Forum member countries produced VNR reports by 2019 and presented them to the ECOSOC - HLPF, with four more reporting in 2020. The nine VNRs completed by 2019 confirm that while country systems, institutional arrangements, policies and processes were largely in place there remain a number of issues. These include:
- i. Human and institutional capacity constraints;
  - ii. Lack of ownership and political will to effectively respond to the cross-sectoral nature of sustainable development;
  - iii. Lack of awareness and engagement of stakeholders within government agencies, civil society and the private sector;
  - iv. Lack of alignment at national level with global and regional commitments, including the importance of localising global goals, targets and indicators;
  - v. Insufficient financial resources and capacity for resource mobilisation;
  - vi. Paucity of data and limited capacity to collect and analyse data.

**d. Key Regional and International Advocacy Engagements**

7. Both the Quadrennial and now the Biennial Report are key elements of the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, endorsed by the Forum in 2017. The roadmap includes the need for strategic engagement and communications support, consequently this report includes an update on some of the key regional and international advocacy engagements undertaken since 2018.

**e. Progress under the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED)**

8. This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) and marks a decade to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is eight years since Pacific Forum Leaders committed to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) in 2012, invigorating collective efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower Pacific women and girls to actively participate in economic, political and social life. As requested by the Leaders, the report includes a review of progress under the PLGED. This review draws on an analysis of country progress reports for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25-year review submitted in 2019.
9. To support national efforts and work together as a region, the following actions are recommended based on a review of progress made in the Pacific since the publication of the first Quadrennial Report on Sustainable Development in 2018.
- i. **To address vulnerability and increasing inequality** in the region, it is recommended that PICTs:
    - a) Review and, where appropriate, strengthen existing social protection and economic empowerment measures by revising relevant legislation, policies, programs and budgets to address inequality with a specific focus on the most vulnerable in the community that includes women, children, youth, LGBTIQI and people living with disabilities.
    - b) Develop education policies and programs to promote disability inclusive education including strengthening support services, availability of assistive technologies and inclusion of disability inclusive education in teacher training curriculum.
    - c) Mainstream an inclusive approach to ensure all development (including COVID-19 response and recovery) delivers shared benefits that include vulnerable groups.
  - ii. **To tackle gender gaps in employment and high youth unemployment**, it is recommended that PICTs:
    - a) Ratify the 2019 ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (Convention

- 190), a new international law providing protection, particularly for women workers.
- b) Strengthen economic opportunities for all employees, including women and youth, by advocating for decent work opportunities for all; by undertaking comprehensive reviews of employment policies; and by identifying opportunities for employment both within the Pacific Region, as well as in programs such as the seasonal work programs.
- iii. To continue to **promote sustainable and equitable economic growth**. With a focus on sustainable tourism and fisheries, it is recommended that PICTs:
- a) Continue regional and global efforts to address the lack of data, methodologies and limited statistical capacity in the region to monitor SDG14 progress. This recognizes that the ocean is transboundary in nature with wider blue ocean related economic implications for key industries such as energy, shipping, fishing and tourism.
  - b) Develop relevant policy frameworks, monitoring systems and capacity development to support private sector led sustainable tourism, with an emphasis on increasing the capacity of small to medium enterprises to be able to access finance for clean energy and green technology.
  - c) Adopt the Action Plan for the Regional Longline Fisheries Strategy that is currently under development with appropriate timeframes and indicators to measure progress.
  - d) Support the work of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to improve labour standards and address modern slavery conditions in the fisheries sector.
- iv. To **intensify** multisector efforts with increased finance to address the impacts of **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**, PICTs are encouraged to:
- a) Continue taxation, policy and legislation actions to change risk behaviours and effectively address NCDs. In particular controlling marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restricting trans-fat in the food supply, prohibiting tobacco industry interference, and further raising taxes on unhealthy products in line with global recommendations.
- v. To build resilience and strengthen efforts to tackle the dual threats of **climate change and natural disasters** in the region, PICTs are urged to:
- a) Ensure that local, national and regional climate change adaptation planning processes are effective and informed by up-to-date, robust information on vulnerabilities, current and future risks; and by building resilient communities and ecosystems that ensure the region is benefiting from the latest technology.
  - b) Increase the flexibility and agility of the region's disaster preparedness and response, to effectively deal with different disaster/emergency scenarios, including displacement in a 'fit-for-purpose' and 'cost-effective' manner.
  - c) Develop policies and programs that enhance the region's capacity to more effectively manage migration linked to climate change.
- vi. Address the consequences of growing populations and **poor waste (both solid and hazardous) management**. The link between sustainable waste actions and biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, gender inclusiveness and the health and wellbeing of PICT communities is clear. It is recommended that PICTs:
- a) Continue to implement the Pacific Regional Waste and Pollution Management Strategy 2016-2025 (Cleaner Pacific 2025), by developing good practices on waste management; by helping communities and local authorities develop capacity and institutional mechanisms for targeted waste streams (used oil, disaster wastes, marine debris); by promoting sustainable financing mechanisms; by addressing the problem of waste generated outside the region polluting the Pacific ocean; ocean; and promoting better outcomes across region through a Community of Practice.
- vii. In taking steps to address **de-risking issues and the high cost of sending remittances, and enhance the**

**impact of labour mobility on human development**, it is recommended that PICTs:

- a) Continue to be guided by Forum Economic Ministers Action Plans and the support provided under the World Bank Group Pacific Payment Remittance and Securities Settlement Initiative (PAPRI) and the associated Pacific Payments Project (2013-2022).
  - b) Improve the implementation of seasonal worker schemes and strengthen the pre-departure and post-return assistance to migrant workers and their communities.
- viii. To strengthen **coordination and collaboration** to achieve sustainable development, it is recommended that PICTs:
- a) Continue to more effectively utilise financing options; coordination mechanisms; local, national and regional capacities and institutions to strengthening planning, budgeting and implementation as identified in nationally designed monitoring and reporting processes. Where appropriate, draw on the lessons learned through the Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes.
  - b) Utilise the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development as a mechanism for sharing lessons learned and best practices and encourage coordination, cooperation and partnerships within the region as envisaged in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and as a Blue Pacific Continent.
  - c) Continue to build closer partnerships within Asia and the Pacific as envisaged in the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development to address transboundary issues and promote wider regional cooperation.
- ix. To strengthen the commitment to the **collection and analysis of timely, accurate and disaggregated data** for evidence-based policy, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and accountability, PICTs and development partners are encouraged to:
- a) Support the establishment of a Pacific Statistical Collections Financing Facility to address national statistical collection budget gaps and support technical assistance for the production of high quality and timely data.
  - b) Strengthen national/local capacity in planning, monitoring and evaluation based on contextually and culturally appropriate analysis and use of data.
- x. 2020 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) and eight years since Leaders committed to the **Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED)**. It is recommended that PICTs:
- a) Continue to work as a collective and accelerate action to address the root causes of gender inequality. The region must remain resolute to realize gender equality, particularly with the escalating threat of climate change, global health pandemics, and emerging challenges that are expected to widen the inequality gap.

## Section 1 Introduction

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1. The 2018 Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report (PSDR) highlighted three policy platforms that shape Pacific conversations, prioritization and accountability for sustainable development. These platforms are:
  - the 2014 Framework for Pacific Regionalism which commits the region to work together to address common challenges, harness shared strengths and ensure that individual and collective advancement brings benefits to all Pacific people to achieve “a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity”;
  - the 2014 SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action SAMOA Pathway which is a global undertaking that reinforces the “special case of the small island developing states guiding collective development support for SIDS”, including the 14 Pacific SIDS; and
  - the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development that was agreed by Pacific Leaders in 2017 and which provides guidance on areas of regional support for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the Pacific through activities that strengthen: leadership and coordination; advocacy and communications; monitoring through the use of Pacific relevant indicators; integrated reporting; and supporting the means of implementation. The 2018 Quadrennial Report is a central pillar of the roadmap.
2. In committing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs Pacific Islands Forum Leaders recognized the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Leaders also agreed that the globally developed set of SDG targets and indicators needed to reflect the Pacific context and called for a country-led, open and inclusive process to identify a regional set of indicators that account for national priorities that could be used to jointly monitor the regional progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR).
3. This report continues to recognize the importance of regional cooperation through the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, Boe Declaration on Regional Security and Kainaki II Declaration on Climate Change.
4. The Report recognizes the centrality of the Blue Pacific continent and the ongoing work to produce a 2050 Strategy for the Pacific. This Blue Pacific continent has at its core the protection and sustainability of people’s wellbeing and believes that everyone everywhere, regardless of geography, sex, age, culture, religion, income or political beliefs must have access to the goods and services required to live well.
5. Pacific Leaders have emphasised the collective priorities of the region reaffirming our Blue Pacific approach with the following principles of:
  - a) One Blue Pacific – recognizing and engaging with the full Forum Membership;
  - b) Regional priorities – embedding and progressing the Forum’s regional priorities;
  - c) Partnership approach – joint planning, programming and delivery by both the Pacific Islands Forum and Forum Dialogue Partner(s); and strengthening partnerships within the Pacific and beyond as stipulated in the *Framework of Pacific Regionalism*;
  - d) Use existing mechanisms – aligning with, and seeking to build on existing regional and international mechanisms, processes and meetings; and
  - e) Collective outcomes and impact – developing joint outcomes statements and outlining a clear process for follow-up and implementation.
6. The 2030 Agenda provides a global roadmap to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters on overall sustainability and calls for greater investment to strengthen the resilience of national and regional platforms to fight climate change, natural disasters and pandemics such as COVID-19. It is clear that there is a need for significant investments in areas such as health, water, sanitation, combined with measures to reduce poverty, food insecurities and inequality.

7. The Quadrennial Report recognized that while some progress has been made, considerable challenges remain. It noted that Pacific vulnerabilities are increasing, inequalities are deepening and access to infrastructure and basic services remain elusive for some. The report also recognized that there are opportunities for accelerating development in the Pacific through the greater use of Pacific specific know-how; by acknowledging the regions significant biodiversity, oceanic resources and ability to work as a Blue Pacific collective; by increasing access to the use of ICT and by the greater use of renewable energy.
8. This 2020 Biennial Sustainable Development Report builds on the findings of the Quadrennial Report and provides an update of progress made across the region since 2018, including an update on the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. The report was considered by the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) as Ministers had “tasked the Pacific Steering Committee for Sustainable Development, in collaboration with FEMM Officials, to consider and prioritize actions for Economic Ministers emerging from the recommendation in the first quadrennial report, and report back to the FEMM in 2020”.
9. Wellbeing is the recognition that everyone everywhere, regardless of geography, sex, age, culture, religion, income or political environment must have access to all the goods and services required to live well. This lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and is reflected throughout this report.
10. Vanuatu has highlighted the need to focus on the wellbeing of people and the role Pacific cultures must play in the design and implementation of national development strategies in this region. In localizing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, Vanuatu has underlined the importance of culture under the banner of “wellbeing”. SDGs and Wellbeing indicators have been integrated into the “Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) 2016-2030”, locally referred to as the “People’s Plan”.
11. There is a growing global consensus for including wellbeing indicators to monitor national development with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recently stating that “there is now a solid and well-established case for looking ‘beyond GDP’, using wellbeing metrics in the policy process and assessing economic growth in terms of its impact on people’s wellbeing and on societies’ standard of living<sup>1</sup>.”
12. Based on this work by OECD, New Zealand has developed The Living Standards Framework which explores ways to develop measures of wellbeing to inform economic progress and public policy. The Living Standards Framework measures and analyses the dynamics of wellbeing, as well as risk and resilience across a broad range of economic, social and environmental domains. The framework includes a ‘dashboard’ or database of indicators known as the Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand (IANZ) that will support progress towards achieving national priorities and the SDGs. Alongside this work, New Zealand is also considering broadening these domains and indicators to include those unique elements of wellbeing relevant and important to Pacific New Zealanders<sup>2</sup>.

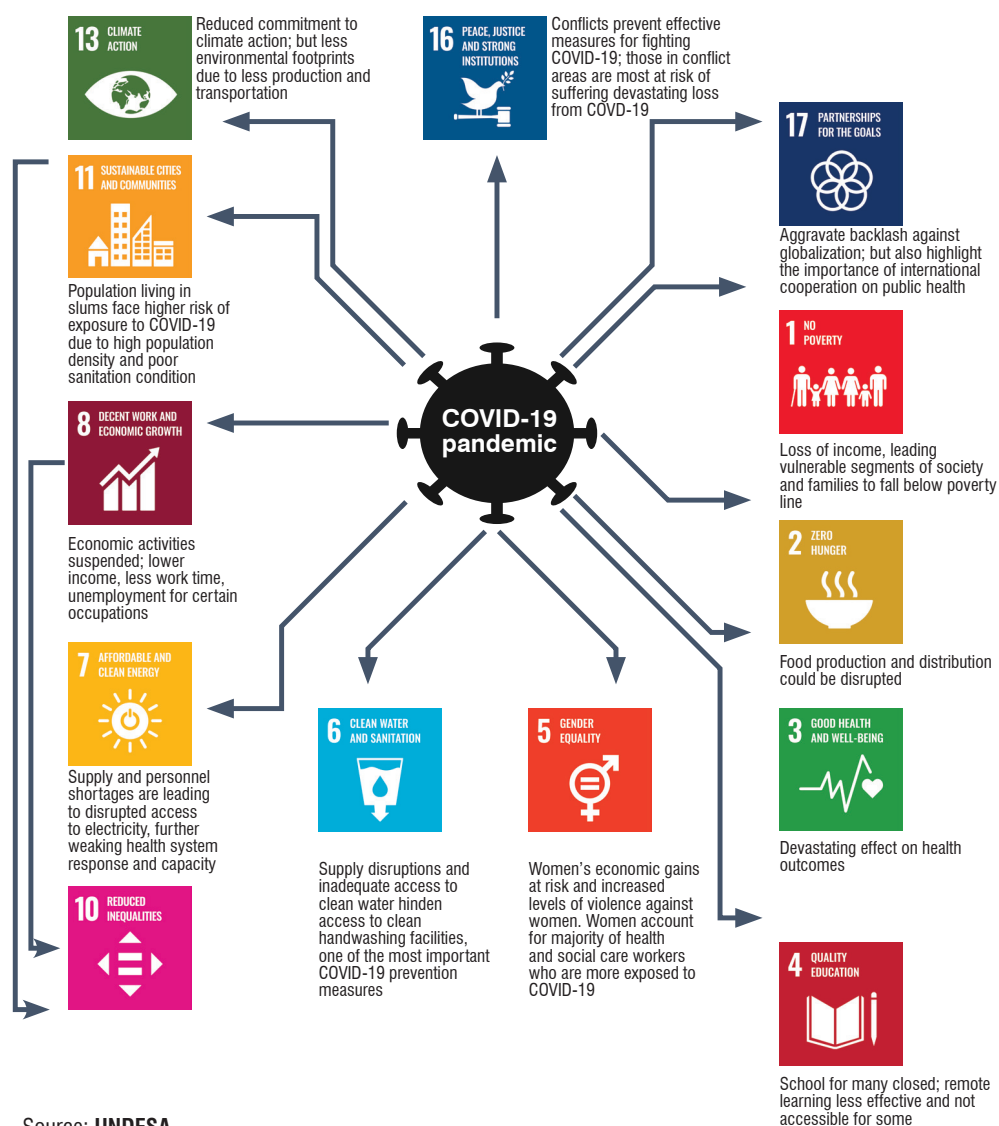
1 OECD SDD/DOC (2019)2, Statistics and Data Directorate working paper No. 102, 18 September 2019

2 “Pacific Perspectives on the Living Standards Framework and Wellbeing”. NZ Treasury consultative paper 2017

## Section 2 Impact of COVID-19

13. In December 2019, an outbreak of COVID-19 escalated to become a global health and economic crisis. The pandemic has intensified at an alarming rate with over 7 million across 215 countries and territories affected. This pandemic is not just a health issue, it is a human crisis that strikes at the core of all communities and impacts entire populations in varying degrees.
14. Timely border protection measures have, for the most part, protected the Pacific from the worst of COVID-19. Countries are now considering ways to revive economic activity and production, with many Pacific economies facing the grim prospect of recession.
15. COVID-19 added to an existing political, economic and environmental context, which for the Pacific includes our vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters. As a consequence, it further challenges our capacity to address the wellbeing and resilience of our people.

Figure 1: POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON ALL SDGs



Source: UNDESA



16. COVID-19 requires the Pacific region to take stock, adjust and be better prepared for the next global crisis. The 2030 Agenda provides the global roadmap to mitigate the impact of shocks on overall sustainability. It calls for greater investment to achieve progress on the sustainable development goals and measures to strengthen the resilience of national and regional platforms to fight climate change, natural disasters and pandemics such as COVID-19.
17. Combating the first wave of COVID-19 and limiting the spread of the virus required significant investments in health and services for water and sanitation combined with measures to reduce poverty, food insecurities and inequality.
18. COVID-19 lockdowns aimed at flattening the curve to slow or stop the spread of the virus, providing enough time for vital medical facilities and supplies to mobilize and cope with the influx of infected people. Economic policies that provide low interest rates, wage subsidies and monetary assistance are an effort to mitigate the economic impact of the lockdown.
19. Statistical data investments for monitoring the SDGs will likely continue to suffer post COVID-19. Current statistical SDGs data investments are not meeting reporting needs, with only one-half of data being available for regional progress reporting. It is envisioned that with COVID-19, funding will continue to be a problem. The virus will likely cause changes to current statistical survey methodologies of face to face interviewing. With current systems in the Pacific struggling to capture disaggregated data this will certainly hinder evidence-based policies and mobilization of resources for recovery.
20. In March 2020, it was estimated by the UN that COVID-19 requires at least 10 % of Global GDP, further affirming the need to collectively work together to mitigate the economic and social hardships that will follow the pandemic. It should be noted that these estimates are preliminary projections that correlate with the lockdown and subsequent timeframes required to re-establish stability.
21. To prepare and respond to the threat of COVID-19, Pacific countries put in place exceptional measures to control the movement of people and goods. In some cases, these measures are restricting the movement of medical and humanitarian supplies, equipment and personnel by the WHO and other actors. Pacific Islands Forum Leaders have recognised COVID-19 as a major crisis and have invoked the Biketawa Declaration to collectively respond to COVID-19, as one Blue Pacific family. The Forum has established the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C) to ensure required medical and humanitarian personnel and equipment can efficiently reach Member countries.

**The Pacific Humanitarian Pathway provides political leadership and regional coordination between Pacific Islands Forum Member states. It responds to requests for support from PICTs to combat COVID-19, together with partners including the Pacific Community, WHO, UN, Forum Dialogue Partners, Pacific private sector and civil society.**

22. Forum Islands Countries (FICs) are highly susceptible to global economic shocks. The economic impact of COVID-19 will be hard-hitting noting the:
  - a) impact across the globe, including FICs' key development partners, trading partners and markets;
  - b) limited capacity to respond to this crisis given the fiscal resources of FICs; and
  - c) COVID-19 containment measures that continue to create economic uncertainty.
23. Noting the urgency to manage the wider economic effects, Cook Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu issued supplementary budgets to respond to the ailing economic conditions as well as to provide additional resources for COVID-19 response.

24. A Strategic Analytical Report, produced by the Pacific Fusion Centre on the impact of COVID-19 on Pacific Islands, emphasizes that it is causing unprecedented disruption in the region, and the recession will be long-lasting<sup>3</sup>. With governments facing pressing public health and economic threats, other sectors are likely to be under-resourced and low on national priority lists. Food and fuel security challenges, unless addressed, will be an enduring issue. Tourism may never return to pre-COVID-19 levels. The World Tourism Organisation predicts a 20-30% decline in tourist arrivals globally, far higher than the 4% decline experienced during the financial crisis. Aviation services will be slow to recover.

**A Pacific Trade Invest Network survey in May 2020 gathered data from 157 businesses across 16 Pacific Islands. Over 75% of businesses have been negatively impacted by COVID-19.**

**Businesses are showing a significant decline in revenue; Fiji is the highest at 93%, followed by Vanuatu at 85%, Tonga at 81% and PNG at 58%. Whilst 65% of responses were confident that their business will survive the COVID-19 crisis, their main concern is the uncertain timing of return to business as usual. 48% don't expect revenue to return to pre-COVID levels until 2021 or later. This indicates a slow recovery for the private sector in the Pacific.**

25. Most FICs are at high risk due to an elderly population and a high incidence of underlying health conditions. This is a key reason why all FIC governments put in place strict containment measures<sup>4</sup>. COVID-19 is also a social crisis with implications across all segments of the population. It is uncertain how Pacific countries will cope and recover given weak social protection systems and large vulnerable populations.
26. Globally 243 million women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. The number is likely to increase as security, health, and money worries heighten and tensions are accentuated by confined living conditions.
27. While it is too early for comprehensive data in the Pacific (and globally) on COVID-19 and Violence Against Women and Girls, there are already many deeply concerning reports of increased violence against women, which is now being called a 'shadow pandemic'. Emerging data shows that since the outbreak of COVID-19, violence against women and girls, and particularly domestic violence, has intensified<sup>5</sup>. Countries in the Pacific, such as Fiji and Samoa, are reporting an increase in calls to the helplines. At the same time, Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji have also had to deal with Tropical Cyclone Harold, which has severely affected response efforts and worsened the situation for women and children.

**Fiji's national domestic violence helpline recorded 527 genuine calls in April alone. 50% of the calls were made by women indicating that the violence experienced was related to COVID-19, linked directly to the restrictions of movement and economic strains on families<sup>6</sup>.**

28. The ILO<sup>7</sup> estimates even a small contraction in per capita income or consumption of 5% could lead to an increase in the incidence of income-based poverty for the first time since 1990, creating between 9 and 35 million new

3 Strategic Analytical Report, Pacific Islands: Impact of COVI-19, Pacific Fusion Centre, April 2020

4 PIFS, An Overview of the Probable Impacts of the COVID-19 on the Forum Island Countries, May 2020

5 UN Women, COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, April 2020: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

6 Samoan Observer, Domestic violence continues amidst lockdown, March 2020: <https://www.samoanobserver.ws/category/samoa/60987>

7 ILO, COVID-19 and the world of work: Impact and policy responses, March 2020

working poor in developing countries in 2020. Remittances are an important source of foreign exchange earner for some FICs, and in most cases, is the sole source of income for individuals and families in these FICs. Rapidly weakening labour market conditions (measured by increasing unemployment claims and expected increase in unemployment) in FICs' major remittance sending countries (namely, American Samoa, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, USA) is a concern. Apart from the labour market conditions that drive the remittance trend in these selected FICs, cyclical factors (such as economic growth in remittance sending countries, cost of, and channels of sending remittances to FICs, and variations in exchange rate) may affect remittance inflows.

**Unless dramatic action is taken to protect the economies of developing countries and address social disruption, the COVID-19 pandemic could set the fight against poverty back by a decade, and in some Pacific Island countries by as much as 30 years.**

29. While the situation is changing rapidly, initial efforts by Pacific nations to stop the introduction and spread of the virus have been effective. However, if the current situation degrades, early and coordinated national responses to the pandemic can have a significant impact on the final transmission scenario. Initial community transmission trajectories are similar globally, but the curves diverge based on the range of measures taken to curtail transmission.
30. The World Economic Outlook (WEO) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted a contraction in the global economy by 3.0% in 2020 which is much larger than the impact of the Global Financial Crisis in 2007-2008.

**Economic losses will lead to a dip in the regional GDP by almost US\$950 million to US\$37.5 billion in 2020 (equivalent to 2.5% of the regional GDP), compared to an earlier projected figure of US\$38.4 billion.**

**It is important to note that PNG and Fiji constitute 86.4% of the regional GDP. Excluding PNG, the largest economy and outlier in terms of its' economic magnitude, the regional loss is around 5.9% or loss of US\$605 million over regional GDP of US\$10.5 billion.**

31. The depth and duration of economic disruption will vary in each country and the degree of economic downturn will depend on two factors, the public health response and the economic policies implemented to manage the inevitable downturn. There are a broad range of scenarios. On one end of the spectrum, if at a national level there is a broad failure of public-health interventions combined with ineffective economic policy shifts, we will see a pandemic escalation and a prolonged downturn without economic recovery. Conversely, if at the national level we see rapid and effective control of virus spread combined with effective economic policy interventions, the virus will be contained, and the country will have strong growth rebound.
32. With the rapid spread of COVID-19, Pacific Island countries and destination countries for Pacific migrants have put in place mobility restrictions. These include border closures to passengers travelling from high risk countries, reduced scheduled flights, compulsory quarantine on arrival and suspension of labour mobility schemes. In addition to mobility restrictions currently in place, the cascading impacts of COVID-19 on the global economy is projected to lead to a global recession, including the loss of 25 million jobs and loss in labour income amounting to around USD 860 billion. This indicates that direct mobility restrictions and the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are likely to significantly affect the scope and nature of ongoing seasonal work and temporary migration opportunities. This could affect remittance-dependent households and countries in the Pacific region.
33. The onset of COVID 19 and the region's continuing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters heightens

the need for effective policies and programs. These should focus attention on building resilient communities while seeking to progress implementation of the 17 SDGs and fulfil the Pacific's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

34. There is a need to better understand the socio-economic impacts of COVID 19 at country and sector levels to devise effective policies and strategies for resilience against future pandemics and crises including climate change. A number of socioeconomic impact surveys and assessments are being planned or undertaken, including by CROP and UN agencies in the Pacific, which will inform the way the Pacific responds as a region and in the context of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway. Given the focus on regional cooperation and response, there is also a need to better understand the different transmission channels through which COVID-19 has impacted the Pacific. Some analysis has been done of key transmission channels for the Asia Pacific region and for the SIDS which could be elaborated or contextualized to provide a better understanding of the regional and multi-country dynamics in the Pacific that need to be strengthened.



## Section 3 Progress since the 2018 First Quadrennial Report

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35. The 2018 Quadrennial Report highlighted that while some good progress had been made, significant challenges remain if the region is to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report noted that many people in the region continue to be vulnerable, with deepening inequality and difficulties in accessing infrastructure and basic services. Despite the ongoing challenges, the 2018 report considered a number of opportunities to accelerate development. These specific actions and the progress made since 2018 are discussed in more detail below. For each of the nine action areas, challenges, lessons learned and next steps have been identified.

### 3.1 Addressing Inequality (SDGs 1,2,3,4,5,8,10)

36. In the 2018 report, it was recommended that targeted interventions were required to support the most vulnerable communities in the region. In particular, there was a need to increase financing for social protection; strengthen implementation of the priority actions identified in the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED); and the implementation of the Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD).

#### 3.1.1 Social Protection (SDGs 1,2,3,5,8,10)

37. Social protection is a key driver of sustainable development and is an integral element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Increasing social protection coverage for the poor and vulnerable is one of the targets of (SDG1) on ending poverty and is a fundamental element of (SDG8) on decent work and economic growth. Widening and deepening social protection coverage will also be instrumental in making progress towards many of the other goals, such as ending hunger (SDG2), good health and wellbeing (SDG3), achieving gender equality (SDG 5) and reducing inequalities (SDG10).
38. Social protection measures can be broadly grouped into three categories: (i) social insurance; (ii) social assistance; and (iii) social transfers. Under social insurance, people draw from the pool when they experience permanent change like retirement, social assistance includes school feeding programs, free health care or free education; and social transfers, on the other hand are regular and predictable transfers, often as cash, provided by the state (or sometimes by non-state actors), as part of a social contract with its citizens. Social transfers include child support, orphan care and disability grants, social pensions and transfers to poor households.
39. Following the success stories of the contribution of cash transfer programs in reducing poverty in industrialized nations for over 50 years, similar programs have been launched in the last two decades in developing economies.
40. Traditional forms of social protection, such as the Pacific's clan and extended family structures, have always played an important role in mitigating the impact of economic pressures on households. The kinship system, referred to as *veiwekani* in Fiji, *fa'a-Samoa* in Samoa or *wantok* in PNG and the Solomon Islands, sustains individuals and groups on a daily or occasional basis. Remittances, from migrants to urban areas, overseas and temporary migrants to other countries also play an important role in supporting families. Nevertheless, continued urbanisation and migration have weakened family ties leading to the gradual erosion of informal systems leaving an increasing proportion of the population without adequate social protection.
41. All PICTs maintain national social insurance or social security schemes, such as national provident funds and social security systems, primarily for those in formal employment. Nine countries provide universal non-contributory pension schemes for the elderly; five deliver disability benefits (the Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, Palau, RMI), but only Fiji, the Cook Islands, Niue and Nauru have benefits targeting children. The Cook Islands, Nauru

and Niue have one-off lump sum payments for new-born and infants and Kiribati is working with UNICEF on a submission to parliament on childcare allowance.

**Existing social protection systems in the Pacific cover only about one-third of the estimated total number of potential beneficiaries. There is significant scope for expansion of these programs. There is also significant variation in government spending on social protection programs across the region.**

- 42. In 2015, social protection expenditure in the five Micronesian countries was an estimated 9.2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), up from 7.6% in 2012. The social protection expenditure in the five Melanesian countries amounted to 4.0 and 4.6% of GDP in 2012 and 2015 respectively and in three Polynesian countries total expenditure was 2.3 and 2.9% of GDP in 2012 and 2015 respectively.
- 43. Strengthening social protection floors, linked to economic and social rights, involves states assuming responsibility for the wellbeing of their people by ensuring social security guarantees and income security across their lifetime. In recent years, and especially since 2016, social protection has been actively promoted by international financial institutions and donor agencies as a means of achieving SDG 1 (End Poverty) through catalysing inclusive growth. It is also clear with the advent of COVID-19 that the need for social protection has intensified, with the virus impacting the most vulnerable more intensely.

Several Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) have introduced a range of social protection programmes to support vulnerable, disadvantaged or marginalized groups within their populations. These go beyond minimum wage increases, increasing existing allowances or introducing ‘cash transfer’ systems. The following actions are being taken by PICTs:

	poverty/destitute allowances and/or food voucher programs;	bus fare concessions;	funds for orphaned children in need;	insurance schemes;
increasing access for voluntary contributions to social pension schemes and provident funds;	temporary support for populations affected by natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, volcano eruptions;	various job training/skill training including business training to help transition social protection beneficiaries to self-employment	distributing seedlings, poultry and livestock upon request	providing unconditional (or conditional) ‘cash transfers’, vouchers or goods and services

### 3.1.2 Achieving Gender Equality<sup>8</sup> (SDGs 4,5,10)

- 44. Almost all countries have adopted gender policies and strategies, including gender-inclusive disability policies. In 2019, the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) passed the Gender Equity Act, legislation requiring progressive

<sup>8</sup> This summary draws on analysis of country progress reports for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25-year review submitted in 2019 with a focus on updating information contained in the 2018 PSDR (SDG 5) and the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration

realisation of gender equality and women's rights and also embedding government's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

45. There is increasing discussion and engagement between national women's machineries and government offices mandated for climate change, disaster risk responses and management. Many of the women's machineries are playing a role to coordinate and ensure protection in humanitarian response efforts.
46. The region has also demonstrated its commitment to women's human rights through the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, Pacific Platform for Action for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030 which was endorsed by Ministers in 2017 and which committed countries to accelerate progress towards achieving gender equality and the promotion and protection of the human rights of all women and girls<sup>9</sup>. However, while many are engaged in global reporting processes, resources for integrating gender equality priorities and implementation remain limited. Despite modest increases in government budget allocations in some nations, there is still a need for adequate and sustained financing.
47. Progress in achieving gender equality continues to be hampered in the Pacific by social, cultural and economic barriers. These barriers include harmful social norms and exclusionary and discriminatory practices; gender equality not being systematically integrated into legal and policy frameworks and limited resources and capacity within governments to address gender inequality issues and the development and implementation of gender responsive policies and programs.
48. The absence of disaggregated data by gender, age, location, and disability and limited access to development-oriented research constitutes a major obstacle to inform gender responsive policies and processes. Technical assistance is ongoing to improve data collection and analysis within national statistics offices, government departments and civil society organisations. However, current funding and technical support is not commensurate with needs.
49. Gender inequality in the region is manifested in the high prevalence of violence against women<sup>10</sup>. Women and girls with disabilities are 2 – 3 times more likely to face physical or sexual abuse. In Fiji a National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) is being developed that will be the first in the Pacific and only the second in the world after Australia. In Solomon Islands, a Domestic Violence Counselling Guideline has been developed and again this is the first in the Pacific and one which received cabinet endorsement in February 2020. In Kiribati, for the first time ever, data is now available on men's perpetration of intimate partner violence alongside women's experiences. This research is providing a rigorous evidence base to inform primary prevention policies and programming.
50. Development partners are supporting the conduct of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS); and PICTs can include a module to derive statistics on the prevalence of gender-based violence<sup>11</sup> and other indicators. Kiribati released results in 2019, and Tonga, Tuvalu and Samoa will release statistics in 2020, with more countries to follow in 2021. The prevalence rates for Kiribati reflect the magnitude of this fundamental gender inequality, with more than one-in-every-two women aged 15-49 experiencing intimate partner violence (53%). The FSM is implementing action plans for each State to address ending violence against women.
51. Sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, universal access to health care and services remain to be addressed. In 2018 UNFPA<sup>12</sup> began a regional program aimed at reducing unmet needs for family planning in the

<sup>9</sup> (<https://www.spc.int/sites/default/files/wordpresscontent/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PPA-2018-Part-I-EN2.pdf>).

<sup>10</sup> The Pacific Partnership is a EUR22.7 million programme, funded primarily by the European Union with targeted support from the governments of Australia and New Zealand and cost-sharing with UN Women. The programme has three outcome areas being jointly coordinated by the Pacific Community (SPC) Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (Forum Secretariat) and UN Women Fiji MCO that is also leading overall programme coordination. More here: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/ending-violence-against-women>

<sup>11</sup> The module used is the domestic violence module from the Demographic and Household Survey programme. Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

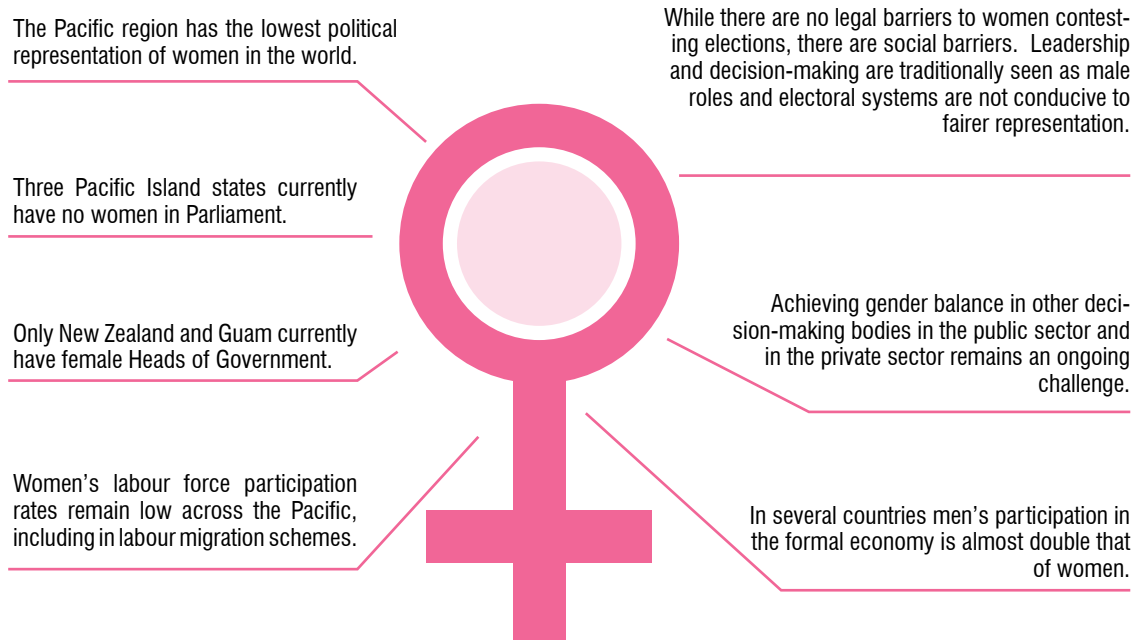
<sup>12</sup> UNFPA Pacific Sub Regional Office (PSRO) A Transformative Agenda for Women, Adolescents and Youth in the Pacific: Towards Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning 2018-2022



region to zero. Incidences of women’s cancers, namely breast and cervical cancers, remain especially high.

52. Child obesity and stunting are concerns, with school screening in Palau between 2017 and 2018 indicating increased NCD risks for both sexes; 36% of school age girls and 40% of boys were overweight or obese. An emerging health concern and social issue is drug use. In the absence of facilities to rehabilitate addicts, the spread of hard drug use within several of the PICTs is challenging and implies increased risks of violence and crime.
53. Most nations are close to achieving gender parity in primary enrolment while secondary enrolment shows girls outnumbering boys. While a number of PICTs have introduced policies to ensure girls can complete their education even if they become pregnant as adolescents, data suggests that social stigma and family pressure may still cause these girls to drop out. The low investment in inclusive education and disability-friendly schools remains a barrier to education for women and girls with disabilities.

## WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING HAS PROVEN FRAGILE



54. A significant gap between men and women’s economic participation remains, with women under-represented in formal employment across the region. Women occupy only one-third of all wage employment across Melanesia<sup>13</sup>. In several countries men’s participation in the formal economy is almost double that of women. Women’s labour force participation rates are consistently low across the Pacific, including in labour migration schemes. Women are over-represented in informal employment. Among Pacific Island market vendors, women comprise on average 75-85% of all operators. Likewise, a significant proportion of informal agricultural workers and farmers in the Pacific are women, where significant disparities exist. The FAO reports a significant gap in rural women’s and men’s farmers income in Fiji, with women farmers earning 25% less than men<sup>14</sup>. Informal work exacerbates vulnerability due to lack of safety nets or entitlements, including leave, insurance or pensions.

13 <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/181270/gender-statistics-pacific-tim.pdf>  
 14 FAO 2019 Gender Assessment Fiji <http://www.fao.org/3/ca6670en/ca6670en.pdf>

### 3.1.3 *Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (SDGs 4,8,11)

55. Pacific Leaders have demonstrated their commitment to realize the rights of persons with disabilities through the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the adoption of the 2016 – 2025 Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD); and enactment of national disability policies and legislation. The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development prioritizes the empowerment of persons with disabilities as a key issue requiring collective attention and action.
56. Of particular importance is the crucial role played by National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). Australia, New Zealand and Fiji have fully operational A-rated NHRIs and other PICTs have other mechanisms, such as Ombudsman’s offices, but with varying levels of budgets and mandates. NHRIs are critical tools that enable citizens to complain about state actions that contravene or abuse human rights. Whilst many PICTs currently have Universal Periodic Reviews, these are inaccessible for most citizens. A locally based, well resourced, A-rated NHRI ensures that individual citizens can hold governments to account for their actions.
57. As at December 2019, 13 Forum Island countries<sup>15</sup> have ratified the CRPD with several countries (Fiji, RMI, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu) conducting legislative reviews as part of their ratification process as well as an obligation (CRPD 4.3<sup>16</sup>) to identify the scope and need for national legislation and policies to be amended to be CRPD compliant. The RMI (2015) and Fiji (2017) have enacted comprehensive disability rights legislation translating most CRPD provisions into national legislation.

**The Republic of Marshall Islands efforts to empower persons with disabilities through country-led initiatives is considered global best practice. Much of this work was undertaken under the partnership of ESCAP, PIF and PDF with funding from the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disability.**

58. Despite these commitments, more than 1 million people with disabilities in the Pacific still face deep inequalities and multiple barriers; are still over-represented among the poor; have significantly less economic opportunities than persons without disabilities; and women with disabilities are still more likely to experience violence. Children with disabilities remain less likely to benefit from education, despite expenditure for disability inclusion being concentrated in education, social protection and health. A 2018 specialized survey in Tonga on persons with disabilities highlighted challenges faced by persons with disability in their day-to-day activities, community engagement and accessing government services. Women living with disability felt discriminated against because of their gender in community activities, education, employment and health.
59. Fiji nearly doubled its domestic budget allocations for programs addressing persons with disabilities as a result of the disability allowance scheme. However, most Pacific island countries allocate only 0.1% or less of their GDP for disability inclusion activities and are still heavily reliant on official development assistance (ODA) to fund disability specific actions.
60. Eight Pacific island countries have included the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions (WGSS) in their national population census and surveys: Kiribati (2015), Palau (2015), Niue (2016), Samoa (2016), Tonga (2016), Fiji (2017), Tuvalu (2017) and Solomon Islands (2019). PNG and Vanuatu are also considering the use of

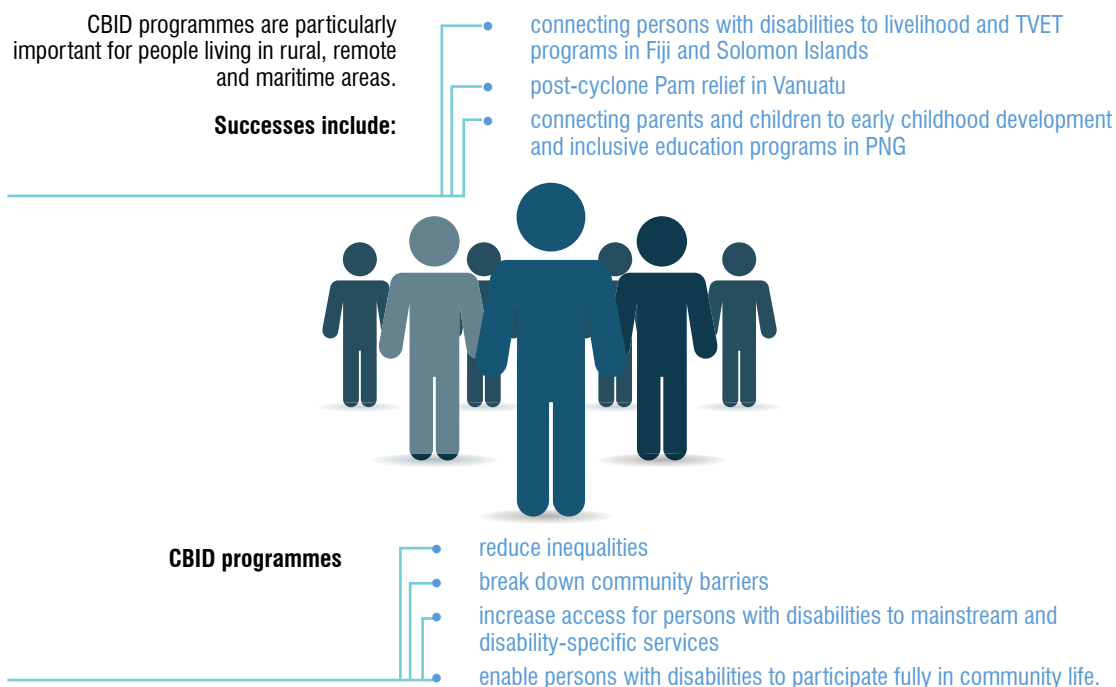
15 2019: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

16 In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations

the WGSS in their 2020 census. Kiribati, Palau, Samoa and Tonga have produced monographs using their census data which will inform national planning and monitoring efforts, so activities are responsive and relevant to the needs of persons with disabilities.

61. In 2009, it was estimated that less than 10% of children with disabilities in the Pacific have access to any form of education. Recent census reports in Samoa, Kiribati and Palau indicate that persons with disabilities are less likely to ever attend school and have lower literacy. Efforts are currently underway to ensure that disability inclusive education, is embedded in the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) so that persons with disabilities are able to access education through mainstream education. There are successful programs in the Pacific including the Vanuatu Skills Partnership and the establishment of a disability-inclusive post school education programs and TVET creating opportunities for youths with disabilities through skills acquisition.

## PICTS ARE USING COMMUNITY BASED INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT (CBID)



62. PICTs have included the unmet health needs of persons with disabilities as part of efforts towards universal health coverage and have developed specific disability-inclusive health policies and plans. Most countries have committed to and have introduced reforms to achieve inclusive education, however little progress has been made.
63. Engagement between governments and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) have improved in line with the CRPD principle of “nothing about us without us”. This will ensure policies and responses meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
64. With an ageing population and the continuing rise in non-communicable diseases related disability, the need for assistive technology will increase. There continues to be a gap in accessibility, affordability and quality of assistive

technology in the region. A recent 2017 review of national budgets indicate that there is minimum allocation for procurement of assistive technology and/or investment in the workforce required to deliver assistive technology. WHO in consultation with Pacific member states, has developed a Western Pacific Regional Framework on Rehabilitation which emphasizes the important role that rehabilitation and the provision of assistive technology plays in universal health coverage and creating an enabling environment for persons with disabilities.

65. The Pacific Disability Forum, with UN Women, DPOs and relevant stakeholders have developed 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Toolkits', specific for women and girls with disabilities in Fiji. These have been adapted for Kiribati and Samoa, including producing kits both in the local vernacular and English languages. These toolkits focus on ensuring support services are responsive to the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities and were launched in 2019.
66. Significant steps have been taken towards inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk response and recovery. DPOs have been actively involved in responses to TC Pam, Winston and Gita. A toolkit has been developed by the Pacific Disability Forum to ensure disability inclusive DRR planning, response and recovery. The use of existing social protection schemes to channel support post-disaster (such as in Fiji and Tonga) and the proper utilization of CBID programs in emergency relief has demonstrated that the stronger the national system for persons with disabilities is, the more responsive and effective post-disaster relief will be. Persons with disabilities are often left out of disaster preparedness programs. Recent simultaneous events such as COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold have pushed both governments and communities to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in disaster preparedness plans and communication.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

67. Challenges and lessons learned include:
  - i. the major challenge of securing adequate and sustained national budget funding for the full implementation of social inclusion and gender equality policies, legislation and services.
  - ii. the establishment of Disabled People's organisations in PICTs has been a positive initiative. It is important that these organisations continue to receive funding support in the face of COVID-19.
  - iii. much of the legislation in the PICTs is inconsistent with the CRPD. For example, while new mental health legislation has been adopted or is under consideration in most PICTs, it is crucial that legislation, policies and approaches need to be CRPD compliant to ensure persons with psychosocial disabilities are not further marginalized. This includes looking at options other than institutionalization.
  - iv. Persons with disabilities remain largely excluded from the labour market due to the lack of general accessibility to basic services such as education, health and support services. Some PICTs have amended or enacted legislation to tackle some of these barriers. For example, Part 4 of Fiji's Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018 stipulates that all persons with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others.
  - v. There continues to be a shortage (and absence in most countries) of sign language interpreters impacting participation of deaf children and adults in every-day life. Furthermore, most sign language interpreters are untrained, which restricts access to information and marginalizes deaf communities in the Pacific even more. In addition, some countries do not have a recognized or universal sign language which makes communication within the deaf community difficult.
  - vi. PICTs recognize that implementing inclusive education is the best way to provide education for children with disabilities and that the first step to do this is to identify and remove barriers such as providing accessible transportation and minimize reliance on special schools which provide mainly primary level education and are only available in urban centres. Disability disaggregated education management information systems (EMIS) are pivotal for providing data to monitor progress towards SDG4. Fiji has recently validated and implemented a method for disability disaggregation of its education administrative data which has been recognized globally as a novel and useful solution used by UNESCO and UNICEF

in their programs as an example of best practice.

- vii. Recent data from across the Pacific shows that women and girls with disabilities continue to have fewer opportunities for inclusion and participation than the rest of the population and continue to face multiple layers of discrimination. Women and girls with disabilities experience additional and different forms of violence such as withholding of medication and assistance, forced sterilization and denial of food and water.

### Next Steps

68. The following emphasize further action required to address the needs of the most vulnerable in the Pacific:
- Progressively increase domestic resource allocations towards disability-inclusive approaches and programs, including community support services, social protection and economic empowerment measures;
  - Prioritise the importance of ensuring gender equality in all government policies and programs, with a focus on meeting the commitments made with the 2012 PLGED;
  - Promote gender and social responsive budgeting to address issues of social inclusion, gender equality and issues faced by people with disabilities;
  - Continue to include the Washington Group Short Set of Question on Disability in national census and surveys and undertake data analysis and disaggregation in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs);
  - Place greater emphasis on disaggregation of data by all types of disabilities from all sources;
  - Advocating for the ratification for ILO convention C159 - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), which provides better opportunities for persons with disabilities to have access to decent employment opportunities;
  - Develop education policies and programs to address disability inclusion at all levels of education including strengthening support services, availability of assistive technologies and inclusion of disability inclusive education in teacher training curriculum;
  - Ensure bilingual education for deaf children across all levels of education; and
  - Increase inclusion and involvement of women and children with disabilities in all regional and national initiatives for gender equality and women's empowerment.

### 3.2 Tackling gender gaps in employment outcomes & high youth unemployment (SDGS 8)

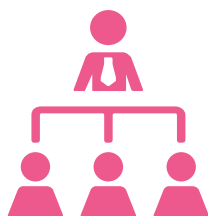
69. The 2018 report calls for accelerated action at the national level to reform economic and labour policies that target key growth sectors; strengthening the role of Young Entrepreneur Councils already active in a number of countries in the Pacific to support young entrepreneurs, including those working in the informal sector and by encouraging a greater emphasis on jobs in the green economy.
70. Being in paid employment does not always guarantee decent remuneration, the financial capability to balance paid and unpaid work and the ability to meet the costs of living. There have been some small increases in minimum wages across the region, notwithstanding resistance from the private sector based on the high cost of doing business; slow, or stagnant economic growth and broader arguments such as productivity ratios (i.e. growth in GDP per person employed). The Quadrennial report noted that more work is needed to measure income inequality, and this remains an issue in 2020.

**Women succeed despite laws, policies, social norms, violence, harassment, and institutions that hold them back. Economic empowerment is a powerful lever for change and can drive gender equality and intergenerational benefits for women, their families, communities, and countries.**

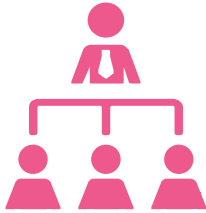
**Every day, women and young people demonstrate they can build informal and formal businesses out of very little capital, create networks to maximize limited resources, and shoulder disproportionate caretaking responsibilities, which often include cooking; fetching water; growing food; cleaning; and caring for children, the sick, and the elderly.**

71. The average Pacific labour force participation rate for women is estimated at under 40%. The rate amongst young people aged 15–24 is considerably lower, partly due to increased education and training enrolment, although evidence suggests that the transition from education to employment is not universal or linear. While the demand for labour increases slightly each year, the number of people wanting to enter the labour market is far greater, and many lack the skill sets to enter or re-enter the market. ILO statistics on women's share of employment in managerial positions from 13 PICTs (including Australia and New Zealand), averages at 32%, well below parity, ranging from 18% to 43%. Statistics on employment in senior level positions in the public sector over 2005 – 2016 showed considerable improvement, but more recently the share has plateaued, with women under-represented in management positions in sectors traditionally male dominated such as infrastructure, utilities, security, trade and finance.
72. Pacific economies are generally characterised by a large informal sector that is comprised of household-based small scale agricultural and livestock production, micro-business activities and the provision of a range of services. The formal sector is dominated by the public sector with private sector varying in size from very small in atoll states to relatively large in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.

## PACIFIC WOMEN AT WORK

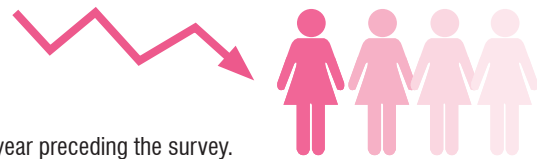


- In almost all countries in the region, women dominate unpaid or very low paying informal sector work, especially in agriculture.
- Their labour force participation rates have been much lower than the rates for men.
- The proportion of economically active women has declined in FSM, Kiribati, Niue, Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu (Regional Review for Beijing+20).
- Women are mainly engaged in household and care-giving work - in Palau 75 % of this work is done by women. In Palau 75% of women were in the labour force; 54% were in paid employment, 2% self-employed, and 16% unpaid family workers (Census, 2015).
- Samoa indicated a slight increase in women employees in the public sector to 28% in 2016 compared to 22% in 2011.
- Fiji's statistics on gender differentials in labour force participation show that men's participation is 76% compared to women at 37%.
- More disturbing is a steady decline in the number of women in paid employment from 39% in 2002, to 33% in 2011 and to 31% in 2017.
- The unemployment rate for women in 2017 remained at 7.8%, the same as in 2011, and more than double the men's unemployment rate of 2.9%.
- A joint ADB and ILO Report showed that more than half of employment in Fiji is in the informal sector, 'leaving workers without income security or social protection and vulnerable to shocks';



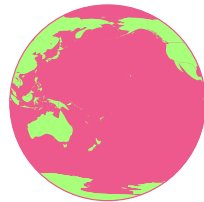
- most female workers are in informal employment and ‘engaging in subsistence activities’; and urban workers’ average earnings are more than double those of rural workers.
- Women’s employment figures in the Solomon Islands Public Service were high, at 44%.
- However, an ADB study showed that women held only 5% of senior management positions and 22% of middle-management posts.

### Solomon Islands Demographic and Health Survey, 2015:



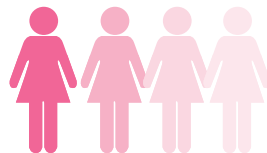
- More than 50% of the women surveyed were unemployed in the year preceding the survey.
- 37% of women who indicated that they were employed about half were not paid.
- Outside of the capital, Honiara, women worked in the agricultural sector and 80% of them were not paid and were subsistence agriculturalists ‘producing food for their own family’.

### Labour force participation rates



- Above 70% for men in Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
- Samoa has only 42%.
- Among these countries, with the exception of Cook Islands where women’s labour force participation is 73%, the gender participation indices (GPI) for Tuvalu 0.57, Samoa 0.62, Tonga 0.63 and Nauru 0.69 are all very low.
- Labour force participation rates can be inflated by the inclusion of subsistence workers as part of the employed population; according to the ILO definition of the labour force, subsistence workers should not be included in the employed population.

### Women in paid employment



- Cook Islands and Niue have higher proportions of women in paid employment, 59 % and 56 % respectively.
- Nauru has 35 %, Tonga 30 %, Kiribati 26 %, Vanuatu 23 %, Samoa 20 % and Solomon Islands 18 % (ADB, 2016, UNCTAD, 13).
- At the sector level women hold a majority of low paid service positions in several PICTs including Cook Islands (93 %), Samoa (89 %), Nauru (80 %), Tuvalu (77 %) and Kiribati (66 %) (UNCTAD, 14).
- However, for Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, women are mostly engaged in agriculture, with 71 % and 67 % respectively engaged.
- By contrast, 59 % of employed women work in the manufacturing sector in Tonga

73. Overall, women's relatively lower participation in the labour force in PICTs, their much smaller numbers in - and even absence from - senior manager positions in both the public and private sectors, their higher numbers in the informal sector and especially in agricultural production, reflect gender inequality and the urgent need to address women's economic empowerment. A number of initiatives can accelerate this progress, including: removing structural barriers, the provision of investments in growth sectors to incentivize increased women's participation (such as ICT, green jobs, agriculture and natural resources, investments in affordable care options, investments in protections for informal sector workers, and provision of finance for women-led small and medium enterprises.

### Actions taken

74. Strengthening social protection floors has been discussed under Section 3.1.1 along with actions being taken by a number of Pacific Island states.
75. Some countries have enacted laws and introduced policies to address sexual harassment in the workplace, improve facilities and safety for women market vendors, and increase access to both credit facilities and export markets for goods and services supplied by women in business. Legislative initiatives have included the institution of minimum wage regulations in Fiji and the Marshall Islands, the provision and extension of maternity leave in nearly all countries, the institution of paternity leave in some countries, the explicit proscription of sexual harassment at the workplace in Fiji, and criminalisation of gender-based violence in nearly all countries.
76. Some governments, in many cases in collaboration with NGOs and financial institutions, have taken measures to promote the development of small businesses, including cultural / handicraft businesses and food production and processing. There have also been specific steps taken to promote and support women producers, in some cases with increased access to formal and non-formal education and training. There is a need for small and medium scale business support with easy to follow guidance and support for business development – including small loan schemes, tax breaks and other facilities. Examples of initiatives taken include:
- Samoa and the Marshall Islands and the revival of traditional knowledge and skills in fine mat production, and other artefacts by women, including young women;
  - Programs for young people, including young mothers and 'school drop outs' and women who are taught basic skills, including leadership, 'work ready' and micro-business skills, financial literacy with some countries providing 'start up' funding support and micro-credit facilities as well as savings schemes;
  - National gatherings and exhibitions are held to promote handicrafts and local (organic) products, as well as regional and international 'trade shows' and expositions;
  - Internships, scholarships for technical and vocational training of kitchen hands, chefs, waitresses, and culinary skills using traditional practices;
  - Short-term labour migration to Australia and New Zealand has increasingly included more women and contributed to women's economic empowerment;
  - An increasing number of countries are holding 'career expo' events; and
  - Increased number of resource centres, extension centres and networks supporting income generation programs including micro business 'incubator' projects.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

77. The following are challenges and lessons learned:
- i. Nearly all countries have adopted enabling policies and strategies towards the economic empowerment of women. Some countries have reflected that increased numbers of women holding decision-making positions in elected offices and in professional fields have helped to drive gender related policies (e.g. Palau and RMI) while in other countries such as Kiribati a broader political will for gender equality and



There have been significant improvements in market facilities and security for women market vendors in PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands. The Markets for Change Project (M4C) which UN Women started in Fiji in 2014 involved 6 market vendor associations. This number doubled in 2018 with 12 such associations comprising 3,500 members. Women led 9 out of the 12 associations and also held 50 percent of the leadership positions. Vanuatu's UN Women M4C project which also began in 2014, has 3,700 members and covers markets in four provinces. All leadership positions are held by women.

women's human rights have helped drive policy change and commitment for gender equality. However, these policy changes have not been matched with adequate resourcing and many women face extreme difficulties starting businesses, getting loans, getting bank accounts therefore leaving them vulnerable to unlicensed money lenders. Systemic change in supporting small businesses is required.

- ii. Although gender parity has been attained in education in most countries, and women and girls have demonstrated higher achievements in tertiary level education, this is not reflected in their share of formal sector employment. There is scope for more jobs for women in the public sectors of several countries. There is also a need for more vocational and technical training for women, including training for non-gender stereotyped occupations, so that gender segregation in labour markets is reduced.
- iii. In aggregate terms, workers' in vulnerable employment (defined as working in the informal and subsistence sectors as family and own account workers) remains unchanged with 84 % of women and 71 % of men affected. For women, the burden of unpaid household and care work also means a significant opportunity cost with regards to accessing training and opportunities to achieve economic independence.
- iv. No PICT has instituted mechanisms for gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and gender audits of their public expenditures. Gender budgeting is challenging and requires not only national level political will but also specific technical knowledge and robust national budget systems. Raising awareness about and undertaking gender responsive budgeting in the region remains aspirational.
- v. No disaggregated data by gender, age, location and disability is available to inform economic policies empowering women and young people. This is a major obstacle. Work to improve data collection and build capacity for evaluative analysis of statistics is ongoing as part of development partner technical assistance to national statistics offices, gender and youth government offices and civil society organisations, but funding and technical support is currently not commensurate with need.
- vi. The newly adopted ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (Convention 190, 2019) is an important new international law providing protection particularly for women workers and should be ratified by the PICTs.

Table 1: KEY LABOUR FORCE INDICATORS

PICT	Labour Force Participation Rate		Gender gap	Paid Employment Rate		Women's Share of Wage Employment in non-Agricultural	Year and Source
	Male	Female	(male - female)	Male	Female		
Cook Islands	67.0%	56.2%	10.8%	63.5%	54.5%	48.1%	2015-16 HIES
FSM	38.0%	26.4%	11.6%	29.1%	18.0%	38.7%	2013 HIES
(Fiji	58.6%	24.2%	34.4%	56.6%	22.3%	NA	2017 Census)
Kiribati	65.1%	52.9%	12.2%	42.6%	28.7%	43.4%	2015 Census
Marshall Islands	49%	27%	21.7%	48.0%	26.5%	34.9%	2011 Census
Nauru	78.6%	52.0%	26.6%	67.9%	40.6%	37.4%	2012-2013 HIES
Niue	66.8%	55.7%	11.1%	66.6%	55.4%	48.0%	2017 Census
Palau	72.6%	55.2%	17.4%	71.7%	54.6%	39.7%	2015 Census
PNG	62	62	0				2009-10 HIES
Samoa	55.6%	30.2%	25.4%	37.7%	24.1%	37.9%	2013 HIES
Solomon Islands	49.0%	27.1%	21.9%	39.3%	21.8%	35.4%	2012-2013 HIES
Tonga	56.2%	38.4%	17.8%	49.6%	31.6%	43.6%	2018 LFS
Tuvalu	53.4%	35.1%	18.3%	40.0%	25.9%	38.9%	2015-2016 HIES
Vanuatu	54.0%	46.1%	7.9%	48.8%	40.4%	47.6%	2018 HIES

Source: Calculated from Pacific Microdata Library 2020. <https://microdata.pacificdata.org/index.php/home>

### 3.3 Prosperity and Equitable Economic Development (SDGs 7,8,9,10)

78. The Quadrennial Report called for specific action to continue the promotion of sustainable tourism and fisheries while conserving and protecting the region's natural resources and environment.

#### 3.3.1 Oceans (SDGs14)

79. The Pacific people, through their leaders, continue to reaffirm their role as guardians, custodians and stewards of the ocean. They have successfully advocated for increased ocean consideration at the international level, including through UNCLOS; UN Fish Stock Agreement; Rio+20 Ocean Package and the 2030 Agenda with the inclusion of SDG 14 on oceans being a Pacific-led endeavour; the 1st UNOCUN Oceans Conference; new legal instrument for BBNJ; Ocean-Climate Dialogue at the UNFCCC; as well as more current discussions on the implications of sea level rise on maritime boundaries delimitation. This leadership stems from the depth and extent of connections Pacific peoples and communities have with the Ocean.
80. The Framework for the Pacific Oceanscape (FPO) is our Pacific guide. Leaders have nominated the Pacific Ocean Commissioner as the high-level official to champion Pacific Ocean priorities, decisions and processes at the national, regional and international levels. As Pacific Ocean Commissioner, Dame Meg Taylor is supported by the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC). The OPOC aims to enhance the implementation of Pacific regional ocean governance through improved coordination of the wide ocean community within and beyond the Blue Pacific region, in particular through Pacific regional organisations (CROP) and the Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA). In addition, ESCAP reports on oceans and ocean-related developments discussed at the 2020 Commission Session 76 can offer a solid basis for dialogue and cooperation within the wider ocean community of Asia and the Pacific<sup>17</sup>.

17

Changing Sails: Accelerating Regional Actions for Sustainable Oceans in Asia and the Pacific' (ESCAP, 2020) and 'Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2020: Leveraging Ocean Resources for the Sustainable Development of Small Islands Developing States' (ESCAP, 2020)

81. The 2019 meeting of the Pacific Ocean Alliance highlighted the need for a stocktake of the Blue Pacific Ocean governance and the implementation of various instruments, frameworks and initiatives to assess their progress and impact in the region. The stocktake is expected to provide leaders with information to improve decision-making for preserving the health, productivity and resilience of the Blue Pacific Ocean while recognising that the ocean is transboundary in nature with wider blue ocean related economic implications for key industries such as energy, shipping, fishing and tourism.
82. There are ten SDG14<sup>18</sup> targets with only SDG14.5<sup>19</sup> on Conservation of Coastal and Marine areas progressing in line with the target. There are six SDG 14 targets with allocated dates, four of these targets (14.2<sup>20</sup> to 14.6<sup>21</sup>) are due in 2020. In addition, it is important to also consider other relevant SDG targets that are linked to the achievement of SDG14. A lack of data, methodologies and limited statistical capacity in the region has hampered monitoring of SDG14 progress to date. FAO and SPC are developing a proxy for 14.4<sup>22</sup> on fish stocks, and PICTS are progressively completing the surveys necessary to calculate indexes for 14.6 and 14.b<sup>23</sup>.

**3.3.2 Fisheries**  
(SDGs 8,12,13,14)

## THE TUNA FISHERY AND COASTAL FISHERIES REPORT CARD 2019

Progress has been made against the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries with goals and targets that are consistent with SDG14.

**The four goals of the Roadmap are:**

- Sustainability
- Value
- Employment
- Food security.

To meet the SDG14.6 target, the World Trade Organization (WTO) in their 11th Ministerial Conference agreed to develop disciplines on fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

83. An assessment of the key commercial tuna stocks (skipjack, albacore, yellowfin and bigeye) in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO) shows that they are all in the “healthy” area. However, there is no room for

18 SDG 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.  
 19 SDG 14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information.  
 20 SDG 14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.  
 21 SDG 14.6 By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation.  
 22 SDG 14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics  
 23 Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

complacency with the biomass of most stocks continuing to decline and a need to address weaknesses and gaps in the management measures currently in place.

84. In terms of value, the Regional Fisheries Roadmap sets a target of increasing the share of the catch value taken by members of the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) fleets by 25% over 5 years. The share taken by FFA fleets has increased significantly with the value share rising from 31% in 2013 to 49% in 2018 which exceeds the 2020 target. This growth has been achieved largely from the purse seine vessels operating under the Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) while the low levels of returns from the longline fishery indicates the challenges faced in achieving the economic potential of this sector.
85. The Roadmap anticipated an increase of 18,000 jobs from the 2013 total. In 2017, the total direct employment in the fishing industry was recorded at around 22,500 jobs, an increase of around 7,000 since 2013. The current trends indicate that the targets remain achievable.
86. To address IUU fishing, overcapacity and overfishing, SDG14.6 sets the target to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing and eliminate subsidies that contribute to IUU fishing by 2020. The WTO 11th Ministerial Conference directed that an agreement on disciplines to prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies be concluded in December 2019. While the Trade Negotiations Committee failed to conclude the negotiations by the end of 2019, Members remain committed to conclude the fisheries subsidies negotiations by the 12th Ministerial Conference, scheduled for 8-11 June 2020.

#### **Actions taken**

87. To address the under-performance of the longline fishery, the Forum Fisheries Ministers adopted a Regional Longline Strategy that specifically addresses the region's shared objectives that includes the establishment of zone-based limits for longline fishing within Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZ) and action within the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to constrain longline fishing activity on the high seas.
88. There is ongoing work in the region to explore the use of new technology in the fight against IUU fishing, where the Australian Government made a significant commitment to tackling IUU fishing through the Pacific Maritime Security Programme. An aerial surveillance programme is also in place which significantly boosted the capacity of FFA Members to survey their vast EEZs.
89. There have been a number of initiatives to increase the supply of tuna to local markets, including by increasing landings from commercial tuna fleets. Several countries now require licensed vessels to land to onshore bases with by-catch going to the local markets. Many countries have programs to increase tuna catches by artisanal fleets, mainly by provision of anchored fish aggregating devices (FADs).

#### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

90. While increased economic returns have been achieved from purse seine vessels, this has slowed in recent years. The longline fishery is working out ways to improve their performance and will require a high level of regional and international coordination as the majority of the vessels are not owned in the Pacific.
91. Continued coordination and collaboration among CROP agencies are essential to support the work towards ensuring sustainability of the major tuna stocks and strengthening monitoring, surveillance and compliance efforts to achieve sustainable and equitable economic growth.
92. Impacts of climate change and natural disasters will add pressures on fisheries, therefore mobilizing investments for access and management of data on coastal fisheries is critical.

### Next Steps

93. The following are some key next steps for making further progress to promote sustainable fisheries:
- The Pacific WTO Members are committed to engaging in the negotiations on fisheries subsidies<sup>24</sup> and to finalize it by the 12th Ministerial Conference while noting that any outcome should not unnecessarily constrain the ability of SIDS to develop their fisheries sector and that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for SIDS should be an integral part of the negotiation.
  - An Action Plan for the Regional Longline Strategy is under development which will have appropriate timeframes and indicators so that progress against the Strategy could be measured and assessed.
  - Continue coordination and collaboration among CROP agencies and key stakeholders in promoting efforts for sustainable and equitable economic growth from fisheries.
  - The new coastal fisheries governance arrangements are now established, and these have supported regional action on coastal fisheries and aquatic biosecurity since 2019.

### 3.3.3 Sustainable Tourism (SDGs 8,12,14)

94. As the Pacific completed the regional tourism planning period 2015-2019, renewed efforts were being made by the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and its members to refocus pathways necessary for achieving the collective vision of 'Pacific Islands' empowered and benefitting from sustainable tourism'. The new SPTO Strategic Plan 2020-2024 endorsed at the 29th Council of Tourism Ministers Meeting held in Niue in October 2019 reaffirms the commitment of SPTO member countries to sustainable tourism and outlines three priority areas for the next five years, namely: i.) sustainable tourism planning and development; ii.) marketing; and iii.) research and statistics. The SPTO Strategic Plan provides the foundation for meeting the specific SDGs 8, 12 and 14.
95. As a crosscutting sector, sustainable tourism is a major contributor to economic development, underscoring the need for environmentally responsible, socially equitable and culturally acceptable development. It contributes to the achievement of all 17 SDGs. These efforts are also aligned to regional efforts coordinated by CROP agencies and partners, specifically the Clean Pacific Strategy and efforts to address marine litter, improved coastal tourism development through Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines, enhancing access and use of environmental data in tourism development planning and monitoring, enhanced engagement of women and youth and support for cultural heritage tourism and creative and cultural industries through the Regional Cultural Strategy, the Pacific Resilience Partnership, and support for Small Island States and the Pacific Ocean Alliance initiatives in promoting sustainable marine tourism amongst others.

### Data Availability

96. Despite a number of initiatives, there continue to be deficiencies in Pacific tourism statistics, with data quality issues; consistency and data coverage; statistical capacity gaps in agencies; and an inadequacy of resources allocated for maintaining and improving tourism statistics in countries. The Partnership for the Development of Statistics in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and the SPTO have identified several challenges regarding complexity in data collection; varied timelines for data submissions; use of manual data processing systems; data quality issues; and capacity constraints. A regional assessment of tourism statistical systems was recently completed and will inform the development of a Regional Tourism Statistics Strategy that will address these challenges. The assessment looked at the current state of tourism statistics and how the region could progress towards implementing a statistical framework that would support the measurement of sustainable tourism to address key policy issues.

97. Since 2018, through Auckland University of Technology's Tourism Research Institute (TRI), MFAT has supported the Pacific Tourism Data Initiative which monitors tourism in PICTs. The PTDI operates an International Visitor Survey (IVS), Business Confidence Index in Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. A Consumer Attitudes survey also operates in Niue only, and TRI manages similar programs funded by other organisations in Cook Islands, PNG and Yap. As a result, there are 7 Pacific tourism destinations all with existing, consistent IVS monitors in place. AUT/TRI and SPC are currently in discussions on developing a closer future working relationship on Pacific tourism research and dissemination. TRI, SPTO and SPC will all be key players in development of a Regional Tourism Statistics Strategy.

### **Actions Taken**

#### *Outcomes from the UNESCO Roundtable on Sustainable Tourism for Green/Blue Livelihoods in the Pacific*

98. Through a SPTO and UNESCO partnership, a regional roundtable was held in October 2018 in Samoa focusing on the importance of people-centred tourism approaches. Decision-making by empowerment of local communities are essential components of Pacific wellbeing. The Roundtable focussed on promoting and protecting cultural heritage and traditional knowledge and capitalizing on our traditional voyaging heritage and stewardship of our oceans and lands. Tourism development must bring positive change to the lives of Pacific people and improve social inclusion of marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, vulnerable communities, women and girls and people with disabilities. Strengthening of data collection and robust monitoring systems must also guide the Pacific's efforts to promote and resource sustainable tourism.

#### *Regional Sustainable Tourism Framework*

99. In March 2020 SPTO hosted the Regional Sustainable Tourism Workshop. It was agreed that a Regional Sustainable Tourism Framework be developed by 2021 to better coordinate and align regional sustainable tourism initiatives in the region recognising the challenges faced by countries as they navigate towards sustainability. This work is ongoing and with the current COVID-19 outbreak putting tremendous pressure on the sector, this is an opportune time for the Pacific to reflect on improved approaches to sustainability while also recognising SDGs as pivotal to achieving sustainability.

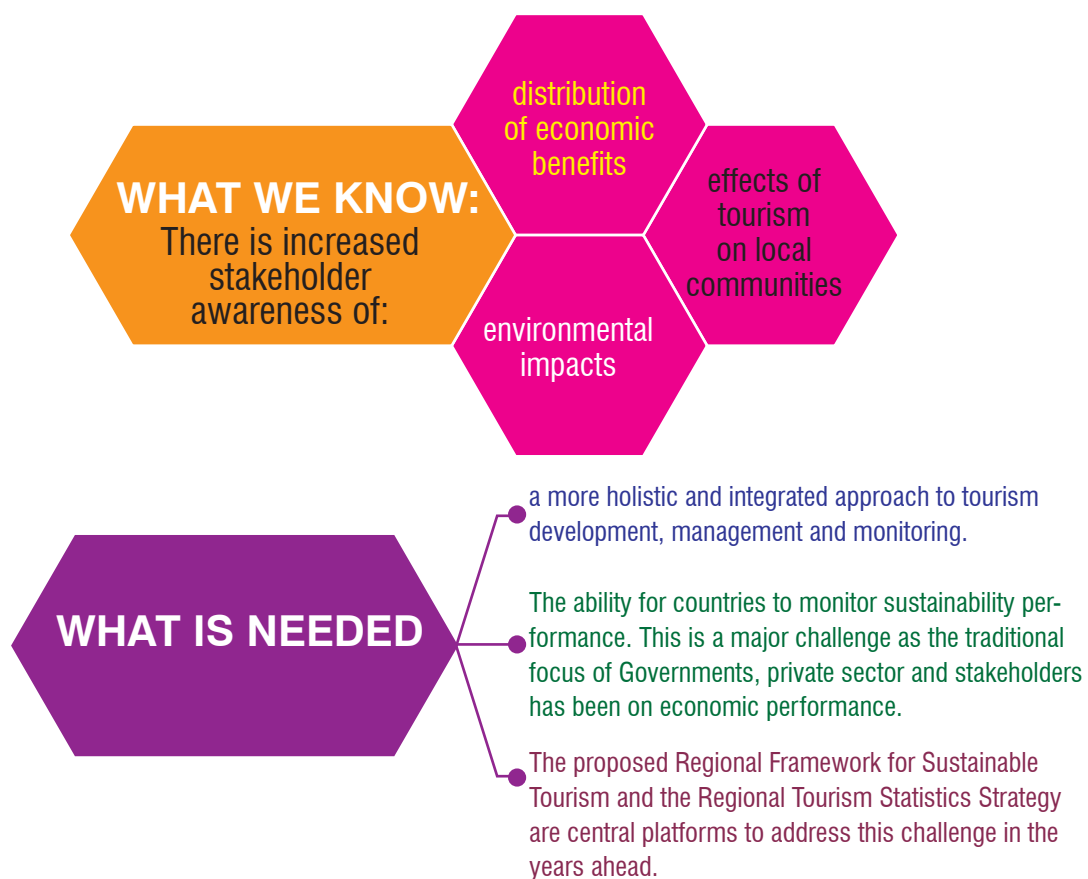
#### *Pacific Tourism Statistics Assessment*

100. Human resource development is vital in Pacific Island countries to enable competitive tourism product development. Whilst Pacific Islands offer outstanding tourism resources, much work is still required to fully develop these into commercial tourism products targeted towards responsible and sustainability conscious visitors. SPTO, in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation is carrying out a study to identify practical, high priority (low cost vs. high return) steps that can be taken to further the Pacific's tourism product offerings. The research is now at its final stage and will be available later this year.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

### TOURISM IS THE HARDEST HIT SECTOR IN THE PACIFIC DUE TO THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Sustainable tourism can be a stimulus to assist recovery.



### Next Steps

101. Tourism will change in the coming years as global travel trends and consumer preferences shift. COVID-19 presents the Pacific with an opportunity to rethink its tourism development and marketing and reaffirm commitments to sustainable and climate resilient tourism. For the Pacific to make a difference in developing tourism sustainably, donors and international partners are requested to increase resources to support SPTO and its member countries in developing the relevant policy frameworks, monitoring systems, capacity development and support for the private sector. A specific focus will be on assisting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to access incentives and SME friendly financial instruments for clean energy and green technology.

### 3.4 Progress on implementation of the Pacific Non-Communicable Diseases Roadmap (SDG3)

102. The 2018 report recognized the impact that Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are having on the populations of the Pacific and underlined the need for an intensified multi-sectoral response to the crisis. The inaugural Joint Forum Economic and Health Ministers Meeting held in the Solomon Islands in 2014 endorsed the Pacific NCDs Roadmap. The Ministers committed to five key areas:
- strengthening of tobacco controls with an incremental increase in excise duties to 70% of the retail price of cigarettes;
  - increasing the taxes imposed on alcohol products;
  - improving policies on food and drink products directly linked to NCDs;
  - enhancing primary and secondary prevention of NCDs; and
  - strengthening the evidence-base for programme effectiveness.
103. The Roadmap includes a menu of over 30 multi-sectoral interventions that are considered suitable for the Pacific. The Pacific Monitoring Alliance for NCDs Action (MANA) was established and a mutual accountability mechanism using the MANA Dashboard was developed. Implementation of the Roadmap recommendations will contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3: ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, specifically SDG 3.4: reduce by one-third premature mortality from NCDs by 2030, and Healthy Island Vision 3: people work and age with dignity.

## PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PACIFIC NCD ROADMAP



### LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

- In 2019-2020, five additional PICTs (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru and Tokelau) have established a multi-sectoral NCD taskforce to oversee the implementation of their national NCD plans, resulting in a total of 10 PICTs to date, of the 21 PICTs in total.
- Three more PICTs (Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tokelau) have developed a national multi-sectoral NCD strategy resulting in a total of 16 PICTs.



### PREVENTIVE POLICY AND LEGISLATION

- Most PICTs have maintained implementation of both tobacco (19 PICTs) and alcohol (20 PICTs) taxation measures.
- One additional country (Tuvalu) adopted a taxation measure to discourage unhealthy food/beverage choices, resulting in 14 PICTs in total.
- Overall, the level of tobacco and alcohol preventative policy/legislation implementation in PICTs have remained unchanged.
- Most have legislation to create smoke free public places (17 PICTs); have health warnings on tobacco packaging (16); restrict advertising (17) and have measures in place to restrict sales and licensing (15).
- Most have licenses to restrict sales of alcohol (20 PICTs) and regulate drinking and driving (18).





### **DIET AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

- This category has seen the most progress with one more country (Tonga) putting in place a policy to reduce salt consumption resulting in 16 PICTs in total
- four additional countries (American Samoa, Cook Islands, Samoa and Tuvalu) have policies to limit trans-fat in the food supply (from none to now 4 PICTs in total)
- two countries (Cook Islands and Samoa) have put in place policies to restrict marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children resulting in 4 PICTs in total
- two more countries (Nauru and Tonga) have policies to encourage healthy food choices in schools resulting in 13 PICTs in total.



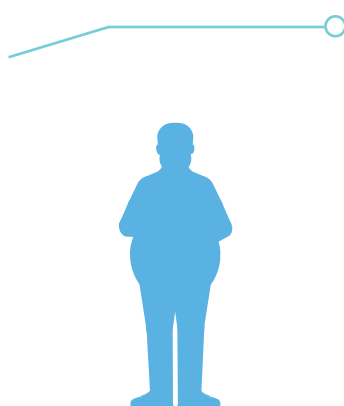
### **HEALTH SYSTEM RESPONSE**

- In 2019-2020, Samoa, Tuvalu and Wallis & Futuna have legislation to provide maternity leave and breastfeeding facilities, resulting in a total of 11 out of 21 PICTs.
- Most PICTs have national guidelines in place for the diagnosis and management of at least one of the four main NCDs and have essential NCD medicines included in the national list of essential medicines.



### **MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- The monitoring of adult and adolescent NCD risk factor prevalence data continues in 16 PICTs.
- Eighteen PICTs have functioning systems for generating cause-specific mortality data on a routine basis.
- The most progress under this category was seen with child growth monitoring where three additional PICTs (Tonga, Tuvalu and Wallis & Futuna) have now collected child growth data bringing the total to 13 PICTs.



### **OTHER AREAS**

- To address the growing burden of childhood obesity in the Pacific, in 2019, Pacific Health Ministers committed to support Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity Priority (ECHO) measures such as physical activity promotion, fiscal measures and restriction of marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children.
- The Pacific ECHO network established in September 2017 and endorsed in April 2018 by the Pacific Heads of Health have identified 4 strategic priority areas which include: (i) Physical Activity; (ii) Restriction of Marketing of Unhealthy Foods and Non-alcoholic Beverages to Children; (iii) Fiscal Policies implementation; and (iv) Obesity Surveillance.
- Recognizing the need to strengthen NCD related laws in the Pacific, Health Ministers approved the development of a Pacific Legislative Framework for NCDs, and work is in progress. The proposed framework will be regionally owned and will guide the strengthening of NCD related legislation.

### Challenges

104. Despite some progress in addressing NCDs in the Pacific, substantial efforts are still required to strengthen leadership, governance and financing to address NCDs. There is a need to engage more non-health sectors and dialogue with CSOs and increase youth engagement to address NCDs in a sustained ‘whole of government and whole of society approach’ at the national level.
105. Good progress has been made on strengthening taxation measures in PICTs, however, there is a need to further raise taxes on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods and drinks in line with global recommendations and reduce taxes on healthy alternatives such as fruits and vegetables.

**While strong policies and legislation are in place in some areas, there are several gaps that hinder addressing NCDs. These include:**

- **preventing tobacco industry interference,**
- **limiting trans-fats in the food supply,**
- **restricting marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children,**
- **restricting marketing of breast milk substitutes, and**
- **enforcing policies and legislation.**

### Next Steps

106. Governments need to accelerate national actions to effectively address NCDs to halt or reverse the crisis, as well as to promote the wellbeing of all Pacific people by ‘leaving no one behind’. There is a need to:
  - Recognize the progress made for the implementation of the Pacific NCDs Roadmap and commit to a whole of government approach to tackling NCDs at the national level.
  - Acknowledge that further NCDs related taxation, policy and legislation actions are needed to change risk behaviours and effectively address NCDs. This is to control marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, restrict trans-fat in the food supply, prohibit tobacco industry interference, and further raise taxes on unhealthy products in line with global recommendations.
  - Commit to increase the funds and explore ways to establish sustainable funding mechanisms to tackle NCDs at the national level.
  - Link trade and health and undertake impact assessments of trade liberalisation towards NCDs prior to commencing and establishing new trade agreements. Ensure that trade and health linkages are considered in the context of the regional approach to strengthen Regional Quality Infrastructure systems.
  - Ensure multi-sectoral active engagement in the NCDs Roadmap and implementation.
  - Increased investment for advocacy through Early Childhood Development programs.

### 3.5 Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (SDGs 11&13)

107. The Quadrennial Report highlighted the need for the region to continue efforts to tackle the dual threats of climate change and disasters by strengthening resilience. This is guided through the Framework for Resilient Development (FRDP) in the Pacific.

**In this last decade, the Pacific has had some of the worst natural disasters ever documented. The World Risk Index 2019 shows that island states have a high or very high level of disaster risk.**

**COVID-19 is a crisis exacerbated by climate change. It has shown that the Pacific must rely on our regional and national institutions, partnerships, mechanisms and resources. Hazard risk analyses and risk informed development promoted through the FRDP becomes even more relevant. Streamlined disaster risk reduction and climate smart development will enhance the resilience of our countries and peoples.**

### Data Availability

108. Efforts to consolidate and improve data and information accessibility is demonstrated through initiatives such as INFORM by SPREP, the Pacific Environmental Portal,<sup>25</sup> the Pacific Data Hub<sup>26</sup> and national portals to host and share climate and disaster related data and information. The data collected by countries monitors progress of achievements against global, regional and national targets. The data needs to be disaggregated by sex, age and disability to the extent possible to identify vulnerabilities. Sex and age disaggregated data in disaster risk reduction and climate change policy formulation is largely lacking. This makes it impossible to identify the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys, or understand the full scope of disaster impacts.
109. The collection of quantitative data on adaptation is generally associated with a longer time horizon to gauge effectiveness. This is challenging and is further compounded by the donor funding cycles and funds received, which are considerably less than the adaption needs indicated by countries in national adaptation plans, NDCs and the Regional Synthesis Report of Pacific Climate Change and Disaster Risk Finance Assessments. In addition, the capacity to sustain initiatives beyond project lifetimes is determined by Governments' ability to support. Hence the need for coherent reporting across the plethora of frameworks.

### Actions taken

110. The following is a summary of actions taken in the region:
- **Enhancing Regional Coordination:** Recent scientific studies have highlighted the increasing risk for small island states. Long term investments and a move towards programmatic, regional, and sector-wide initiatives in concert with reform processes is imperative for PICTs to adapt, mitigate and respond to shocks from climate change and disasters.

The coordination of partners, CROP, UN partners and civil society organisations is necessary to ensure that resources are maximized and lessons shared. The Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) provides opportunities for cooperation, and information sharing through the Pacific Resilience Meeting (PRM) and the Technical Working Groups (TWG). The PRP Taskforce provides guidance to policy makers and resilience practitioners through a range of initiatives. The PRP can facilitate enhanced regional coordination through its inclusive and multi-stakeholder membership.

- **Strengthening Coordinated National and Intra-Regional Disaster Response Efforts**  
Recent disasters in the Pacific have highlighted the need for increased coordination among key national response agencies in conjunction with regional and international partners. This will improve responses

25  
26

<https://pacific-data.sprep.org/>  
<https://pacificdata.org/dashboard/sdg-13-climate-action>

provided to communities and support national recovery initiatives. SPC through its Disaster and Community Resilience Programme (DCRP) is providing a responsive and adaptive service to the Pacific made possible through partnership arrangements with existing initiatives.

The capacity of National Disaster Management Offices (NDMO) and sector focal points is being strengthened to enhance their role as national coordinators for response efforts as well as building a regional pool of disaster management practitioners in the Pacific. In addition, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) alongside project partners the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Platform for Disaster Displacement, is strengthening NDMO's operational capacities for early warning, evacuation and contingency planning under the EU-funded Pacific Response to Disaster Displacement project. Under this initiative, IOM is also facilitating the provision of advice on guidelines and policy instruments concerning human mobility, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction through the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Programme funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security.

To strengthen coordination of response efforts at the national level the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA) project is supporting NDMOs, Fire & Emergency Services and other key national response agencies with the development of Strategic Roadmaps for Emergency Management (SREM) across the Pacific<sup>27</sup>. At the regional level, SPC and PIFS through PIEMA are developing a Regional SREM. This will shape a plan for how the Pacific can best use the regional expertise, assets and people at its disposal to support national responses. It is aligned with the priorities of both the Boe Declaration Action Plan and the FRDP.

**Risk Informed Investment and Resourcing:** Future risk scenarios are a useful tool to help inform and drive increased investments in 'resilient development'. Both the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu are using scientific risk assessments as the basis for infrastructure investments and long-term adaptation plans to protect vulnerable coastlines and communities. Fiji has used lessons learned from relocating communities to enact the Climate Relocation and Displaced Peoples Trust Fund and has developed the Fiji: Planned Relocation Guidelines. The Government of Fiji supports building climate resilient communities, including informal settlements with UN-Habitat and other partners.

Countries are continuing to explore ways to lessen national exposure and vulnerability to risks through a mixture of national and regional financing instruments and measures. At the regional level, both the Pacific Catastrophe Risk Insurance Company (PCRIC) and the Asian Development Bank's Disaster Resilience Programme (DRP) have demonstrated their utility. In the immediate aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Gita, Tonga received USD 3.75 million from the PCRIC and USD 7 million from the DRP. Ongoing work on the Pacific Resilience Facility (led by PIFS) and the Pacific Islands Climate Change Insurance Facility (led by SPREP) is testament to efforts at the regional level to strengthen the collective financial resilience of Pacific Island countries.

Multilateral Climate Finance is increasingly provided through the Green Climate Fund and the Climate Change Adaptation Fund. Pacific Island Countries also continue to pursue the establishment of effective end-to-end multi-hazard early warning systems including strengthening institutional capacity of agencies, modernising infrastructure and systems, improving risk information systems, developing impact-based forecasting platforms and implementing requisite preparedness activities<sup>28</sup>.

**Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** There is greater recognition of the importance of the participation by women and other vulnerable groups in DRR activities. UN Women, UNDRR and IFRC are working with the Solomon Islands Government to ensure that the national and community disaster risk governance is gender responsive and resilience is built to reduce vulnerabilities to natural or man-made

27 So far 2 SREMs have been endorsed in Niue and Cook Islands, while a further 4 have been drafted for Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga. In the pipeline for development are SREMs for Nauru, Tuvalu, RMI and Palau. The SREMs will address barriers and opportunities for enhanced coordination, for better disaster management. It recognises that the best laid plans and intentions are ineffective, unless they are backed up by commitment, ownership and a practical pathway to success. SREMs will, overtime, build the way disaster management agencies prepare for and respond to disasters more effectively and efficiently. Local ownership, leadership and engagement are the key ingredients that underpin this work.

28 Samoa and Tonga have benefitted from such investments through the World Bank funded Pacific Resilience Program.

hazards. The Government is supported to extend the national protection committee to provincial level to ensure gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in disaster preparedness and response efforts.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

111. There is an increasingly complex array of programs, stakeholders, and partners involved in the Pacific development space. This underscores the critical need to strengthen member countries leadership to enable them to guide how initiatives and partners respond adequately to their needs.
112. Capacity constraints continue to be a major challenge for the region, including capacity to plan, develop and manage projects, particularly large and costly projects as well as capacity to gather, analyse, store and use data. A solid evidence base around vulnerabilities is critical for effective resilience measures. If data is available, it is often dispersed amongst the agencies that collect it.

### Next Steps

113. To accelerate progress the following actions are needed:
  - Strengthen capacity building at all levels, enhance data and information collection and storage through national and regional climate change portals and, invest in stronger systems and processes, including improved M&E, reporting and verification and knowledge brokerage. This will improve resilience actions through learning and enable countries to adapt and respond in an effective manner to the dual threats of climate change and disasters<sup>29</sup>;
  - The Pacific NDC Hub, launched in 2020, tells us that emissions in most countries are increasing, therefore a significant shift towards 100% renewable energy and decarbonization of the transport industry, among other sectors, is required along with increased emphasis on energy efficiency;
  - An effective early warning system is critical. Partnerships are needed across various stakeholder groups such as private sector, civil society and partner agencies to ensure that warning messages reach the ‘last mile’ and elicit the right response from the public. The private sector has a key role in ensuring that early warning messaging is user friendly, and actionable given the investments in communication infrastructure;
  - Support for building resilient ecosystems through transformational adaptation approaches. This is especially important for low-lying atolls which require radical systems-level change, including the creation of safe locations for eventual retreat from vulnerable coastal areas in a dignified and planned manner. It should also ensure national adaptation planning processes are effective and informed by up-to-date, robust information on vulnerabilities, current and future risks;
  - Ensure that the region is benefiting from the latest technological innovations especially in key sectors such as environment, energy, water and sanitation, health and education;
  - Strengthen country-led collaborative approaches and partnerships across various stakeholder groups and at all levels to ensure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of the management and implementation of resilience actions;
  - Strengthen and customise disaster preparedness and response efforts at regional, national and local levels to meet the region’s needs to respond effectively to different disaster/emergency scenarios in a fit-for-purpose and cost-effective manner with a sustainable funding model to ensure continuity; and
  - Improve access to and effective use of climate and disaster finance across the region and continue to explore innovative financing instruments and measures that lessen national exposure and vulnerability to risks;
  - Ensure that disaster risk reduction and management is gender responsive and socially inclusive to build resilience of the most vulnerable communities and marginalized groups;

29

SPREP in partnership with JICA and the Government of Samoa provide training opportunities through the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) to address key capacity limitations in the areas of climate change adaptation, mitigation and access to climate change finance. Both BSRP and PIEMA projects have assisted in improving the capacity and knowledge of disaster management practitioners in the Pacific through the provision of training of the regional accredited Working in Emergency Operation Centre (WEOC) and Introduction to Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) courses, and the Pacific Incident Management Systems (PacIMS) awareness course. Furthermore the PIEMA project is working with relevant stakeholders in Fiji and Vanuatu (as pilot sites) to develop a more sustainable national capacity development model that aims to reduce dependency on training provided by external partners and includes contextualising training to be fit-for-purpose in the Pacific.

- Support women’s organizations and networks to be involved in setting the agenda for disaster risk reduction and climate change in the region;

### 3.6 Waste Management (SDGs 12)

114. The 2018 Report emphasized the importance of specific actions to address the consequences of growing populations in the Pacific. Poor waste management practices are contributing to increased volumes of solid and hazardous wastes that are threatening land and ocean resources.
115. SPREP in partnership with JICA and the Government of Samoa provide training opportunities through the Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC) to address key capacity limitations in the areas of climate change adaptation, mitigation and access to climate change finance. Both BSRP and PIEMA projects have assisted in improving the capacity and knowledge of disaster management practitioners in the Pacific through the provision of training of the regional accredited Working in Emergency Operation Centre (WEOC) and Introduction to Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) courses, and the Pacific Incident Management Systems (PacIMS) awareness course. Furthermore the PIEMA project is working with relevant stakeholders in Fiji and Vanuatu (as pilot sites) to develop a more sustainable national capacity development model that aims to reduce dependency on training provided by external partners and includes contextualising training to be fit-for-purpose in the Pacific.
116. The Cleaner Pacific 2025 was prepared in collaboration with JICA and SPREP Member countries and territories to address priority waste and pollution issues in the region. These priority issues include: municipal solid waste, asbestos, electrical and electronic waste (e-waste), healthcare waste, chemicals (such as persistent organic pollutants, ozone depleting substances and mercury), used oil and lubricants, marine litter, ship-sourced pollution, disaster waste, and liquid waste (such as sewage and trade waste). The strategy integrates actions to address these issues and incorporates lessons learned from the implementation of regional strategies that it replaces. It is an overarching framework, and its implementation is supported by international, regional and national policies, plans and strengthened partnerships.
117. Almost all Pacific island countries lack comprehensive data on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (11, 12 and 14) which specifically address waste, chemicals and pollution. While Cleaner Pacific 2025 has performance indicator targets covering various aspects of waste and pollution management, the methods or systems to achieve these have not been institutionalised yet. The accompanying Implementation Plan specifies activities that will assist in achieving these targets.
118. No new data has been collected since that reported in 2018. The following data is still considered for planning purposes:

#### SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN 18 PICTS



- Over 1.16 million tonnes of Municipal Solid Waste was generated in 2013.
- This is projected to reach more than 1.59 million tonnes by 2025.
- 88% of the urban population (and 47% of the national population) across 18 PICTs have access to regular collection services
- 7 PICTs (American Samoa, Guam, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, and Wallis and Futuna) have complete national coverage.
- Organic waste accounts for about 44% of the waste stream
- Recyclable waste (paper, plastics, metals and glass) comprises an additional 43%
- Waste disposal on land, via dumps and landfills, is the main method of MSW disposal in Pacific island countries and territories
- There are over 333 temporary dumpsites, 96 open dumps, 34 controlled dumps and 15 sanitary landfills.

119. As PICTs develop economically, the proportion of packaging waste (plastics, paper, metals and glass) will likely increase as the standard of living increases and as populations become increasingly urbanised and reliant on imported goods. The vast majority of recycling activities in PICTs are led by the private sector and are driven by prices in the international recycling commodity markets, typically East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand.
120. A JICA-funded study concluded that the 2011 recycling rate was 48 per cent for potentially recyclable goods in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. For non-commercial waste where disposal is adequate, assistance is rendered through the Moana Taka and Swire Shipping Partnership to destinations within their Asia-Pacific shipping network.

## HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT

### Healthcare Waste

- According to WHO only 10–25% of healthcare waste is regarded as hazardous waste.
- Improper management can introduce damaging substances into the environment, and poses occupational and public health risks to patients, health workers, waste handlers, waste transporters and communities.
- The indicative healthcare waste generation is 0.8 kg per occupied bed. Baseline e-waste assessments in nine Pacific island countries were completed in 2013 and 2014.



### E-waste

- Current e-waste management practices in the region include repair and cannibalisation of spare parts by privately run service shops; acceptance, dismantling and export by private recyclers; and disposal in dumps and landfills with domestic rubbish.
- There are no known regular collection programmes for e-waste in the Pacific.



### Asbestos-containing material

- The EU PacWaste Project estimates more than 285,784 square metres and 267 cubic metres of ACM are distributed across the Pacific
- This is in stockpiles, abandoned infrastructure and occupied buildings
- 87% is considered high risk.
- ACM in Nauru accounts for 74% of the total regional ACM, and all of it is considered high risk.

### Used oil

- More than 8 million litres of used oil are generated annually
- 45% (or 3.92 million litres) is exported or reused to supplement fuel sources for boilers and diesel generators
- the remainder goes to stockpiles or to unacceptable disposal methods (over 2.96 million litres).

### Other hazardous waste:

- 80–90% of Used Lead Acid Batteries (ULABs) can be recycled due to the relatively high market value for lead. (Leney 2015).
- With the exception of PNG, no PIC is believed to have significant Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) stockpiles.
- In 2010, the average emission of mercury to air from all of Oceania was estimated at 22.3 tonnes or 1.1% of the global emissions.
- All Pacific island countries have ratified or acceded to the Montreal Protocol, and most have established systems to reduce the consumption of ozone depleting substances.

121. More information may be available once waste audits have been undertaken through ongoing regional projects.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

122. The following are some of the key challenges and lessons learned:
- Proliferation of e-waste, containing hazardous materials and likely to spill into the environment, demands proper management;
  - Limited human resources to undertake both implementation and regulation exacerbated by high staff turnover, ‘brain drain’, a lack of institutional support for trainees to apply new skills, unsupportive study leave policies and insufficient numbers of staff available to work on waste and pollution-related issues;
  - Inconsistent and unreliable waste collection service in rural areas and on the outer islands particularly for bulky waste, green waste, or potentially hazardous waste due to insufficient budget allocation, improper waste collection equipment and unpaved, narrow roads to informal settlements;
  - Poor segregation system and collection network for recyclables; little to no domestic and international demand for recyclables; high shipping costs; and low awareness of quarantine regulations at the destination ports;
  - Construction of cost-effective sanitary landfills on coral atolls and prevalence of waste picking;
  - Capacity to minimize the harm caused by chemicals to human health and the environment is limited by lack of management plans, lack of proper collection systems, sub-standard storage and treatment facilities, insufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), high cost of clean-up, treatment and disposal. This lack of capacity creates a build up of hazardous waste stockpiles around the region and while there have been efforts to remove these legacy wastes, they are building up again;
  - Non-compliance with Basel and Waigani Convention and other licensing system requirements;
  - Very little awareness of the marine litter problem in some countries;
  - Excess packaging, waste production and certain modes of waste management contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and the health of the protective ozone layer;
  - Ad hoc coordination mechanisms on disaster debris management; and
  - Countries drawn to an easy solution to address mounting garbage through waste-to-energy systems.

### Next Steps

123. There is significant increase in investment in the waste and pollution sector in the region. The following are ongoing and pipelined projects to build the capacity of countries to address growing waste and pollution issues:
- Enhance sustainable management of solid waste in the Pacific region based on the Cleaner Pacific 2025, including the development of a monitoring mechanism for solid waste management, sharing of good practices, strengthening of regional capacity on disaster waste management, and examining practical and sustainable 3R+Return systems in the region<sup>30</sup>.
  - Assist PICTs to ensure the safe and sustainable management of waste with regard for the conservation of biodiversity, reduction of marine litter, health and well-being of Pacific island communities, and climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements<sup>31</sup>. The targeted waste streams are hazardous wastes (specifically asbestos, E-waste and healthcare waste); solid wastes (specifically recyclables, organic waste, disaster waste and bulky waste) and related issues of wastewater (water impacted by solid waste)<sup>32</sup>.
  - Support achievement of cleaner coastal environments for PICTs by implementing the agreed actions under

30 Japanese Technical Cooperation Project for Promotion of Regional Initiative on Solid Waste Management in Pacific Island Countries (J-PRISM) Phase 2 funded by JICA and implemented in collaboration with SPREP

31 Countries participating in the PacWastePlus programme are: Cook Islands, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

32 European Union funded PacWastePlus Programme.



the Marine Litter Action Plan for sustainable oceans in the Pacific through the adoption and implementation of legislated or voluntary single-use plastic bags, levies and other instruments; encouraging local and visiting consumers (women, men, girls and boys) to use less single-use plastics and more alternative products; by targeting sectors, companies and businesses to adopt plastic reduction measures; to help identify and adopt alternative products and practices<sup>33</sup>.

- Improve sanitation, environmental, social and economic conditions in PICTs through proper waste management by addressing the need to develop good practices on waste management; by helping communities and local authorities develop capacity and institutional mechanisms for targeted waste streams (used oil, disaster wastes, marine debris) and promote sustainable financing mechanisms; and provide opportunities to disseminate outcomes across the region through a Community of Practice. Sustainable waste actions will be linked to the conservation of biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, gender inclusiveness and the health and wellbeing of PICT communities<sup>34</sup>.
  - Build human and institutional capacities in PICTs to be able to comply with the regulatory framework of IMO. This covers safety, security and environment, with a focus on addressing ship-sourced pollution such as oil spills, invasive species, ships waste (including marine plastic pollution) and port environmental management<sup>35</sup>.
  - Under development is a Pacific Child project to prevent pollution of the environment by removing 28,000 tons of plastic waste; remove and destroy 105 metric tons of toxic chemicals; remove and recycle 5,000 tons of recyclables; and avoid the use of 2.5 metric tons of mercury. The project is due for submission to the GEF Secretariat in June 2020<sup>36</sup>.
124. There is a need for some PICTs to elevate waste management in their development agenda and give it the resources required. Waste management must sit prominently on development plans and strategies given its potential impact on economies.

### 3.7 Safe and cost-effective remittance processes (SDGs 8)

125. The 2018 Report calls for a continuation of measures to address de-risking issues and the high cost of sending remittances to the Pacific as guided by the Forum Economic Ministers action plans.
126. Remittances are important in many Pacific economies and communities. The latest World Bank data for Tonga, Samoa and Marshall Islands, shows that remittance inflows account for about 38.5 %, 18.4 % and 13.5 % of their nominal GDP respectively. Apart from being an important source of income for families and foreign exchange reserves for governments, remittances are an important buffer in periods of economic shocks and natural disasters. During the 2007-8 global economic and financial crisis and when countries are struck by a natural disaster, remittances had a counter-cyclical impact in Pacific economies. For example, figure 2 shows remittance inflows increasing during these difficult times as the Pacific diaspora sent money home to assist families and communities rebuild and recover from these shocks.

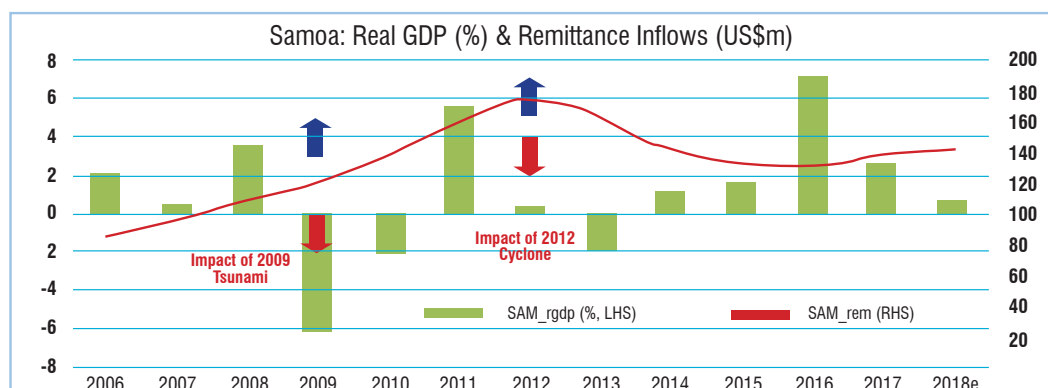
33 Australian-funded Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP)

34 The Sustainable Waste Actions in the Pacific (SWAP) Project funded by the French Development Agency (French: Agence française de développement (AFD))

35 The Pacific IMO Environment Programme managed through SPREP under the framework of the Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL) and the Cleaner Pacific 2025

36 The GEF ISLANDS Programme is a \$60 million global chemical and waste management initiative aimed at assisting 30 Small Island Development States (SIDS) from the Caribbean, Indian Ocean and Pacific. Each SIDS region projects is valued at \$20 million

Figure 2: COUNTER-CYCLICAL INFLOWS TO DISASTERS



Source: PIFS; based on World Bank Remittance Database

127. The recent positive outlook for Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. labour markets and current labour scheme (offered by Australia & New Zealand) were expected to have a positive impact on remittance flows to Pacific island countries. However, de-risking<sup>37</sup> threatens to inhibit critical remittance inflows to Pacific countries. COVID-19 will have a significant impact on inflows of remittance to the Pacific region as countries respond to the threat of the virus. The global economy is likely to slow down significantly in 2020, and unlike recent global economic shocks, the impact of COVID-19 is likely to be far reaching as countries shut down economic and social activities, directly affecting demand for labour and family incomes.

**The cost of sending remittances to the Pacific is over 10%. This is higher than the global average and 7% higher than the target set by the SDGs. Australia and New Zealand have taken action, but continued effort is required for the Pacific to realise the 3% target.**

128. Money Transfer Operators (MTOs) provide safe, reliable and economical channels for sending and receiving money. The size of transactions sent to the Pacific via remittance channels are generally small (averaging AUD200-250 per transaction) but make a great difference to the lives of people in Pacific Island Countries, often allowing families to invest in education, medical care and small enterprises. In recent years, MTOs have struggled to maintain services, as they need reliable correspondent banking relationships to transact funds across borders. In the Pacific, with limited financial sector development and limited number of commercial banks, MTOs offer cheap, reliable and accessible support for families to finance basic goods and services. The closure (or anticipated closure) of Pacific focused MTOs in major remittance sending countries<sup>38</sup>, due to stringent compliance of Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism Finance (AML & CTF) legislation by commercial banks, will increase costs and limit access to services and remittances inflows to the Pacific.

129. In summary, the following is expected to impact remittance inflows to the Pacific:

- i. The full social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are still unfolding. However, it is anticipated that the slow-down in the global economy will impact jobs and incomes and reduce the capacity to

37 De-risking refers to financial institutions terminating or restricting relationships with customers (which includes money transfer operators) to avoid risk. Because of the closure of their bank accounts by corresponding banking.

38 Because of the closure of their bank accounts by corresponding banking.

- maintain remittance inflows to the Pacific in the short-to-medium term;
- ii. The cost of remittances in the Pacific is still above the SDGs target and requires a collective effort from all relevant stakeholders; and
- iii. As called for by Forum Economic Ministers in their recent annual meetings, de-risking issues must be dealt with by all concerned stakeholders both at the regional and international levels.

### 3.8 Mobilizing Additional Financing and Strengthening Development Cooperation (SDGs 16,17)

130. As noted in the 2018 Quadrennial Report, implementation of the 2030 Agenda the SAMOA Pathway and other regional and global commitments requires unprecedented domestic and international investments. While maximizing the effective use of domestic resources is important, access to ODA and other external development financing is of particular importance for the smaller island states of the Pacific given their limited access to domestic sources of finance, their vulnerability to climate change, natural disasters and the impacts of COVID-19. Accessing ODA and other external development financing is most successful when it is provided through a partnership arrangement which is mutually respectful and accountable.
131. Development financing options in the PICTs include:
- i. foreign capital or foreign direct investments and loans;
  - ii. inflow of unrequited transfers including remittances and foreign aid;
  - iii. build-up of domestic sources of finance;
  - iv. generation of net foreign reserves through exports, fishing licenses, tourism earning, etc., and;
  - v. investments in national economic resilience and insurance through regional platforms such as the Pacific Islands Risk Insurance Company and the proposed Pacific Resilience Facility.
132. In recent years, a number of PICTs have adopted measures to strengthen their national public finance management systems (PFM) through the development of PFM Roadmaps that use the outcomes of the Public Expenditure Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessment to identify required reform actions. These roadmaps continue to be monitored and refined based on actions completed.
133. The Asia-Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility (AP-DEF), is a knowledge-centered platform designed to support countries to implement national agendas on development finance and cooperation. As a platform for regional dialogue, cooperation, and sharing of country knowledge and experiences, the facility has responded to the growing demand from countries in Asia Pacific for reforms to ensure the better management of domestic and international sources of finance for development.
134. Development Finance Assessments (DFA) have been used across Pacific countries to:
- strengthen their development finance strategies for national plans;
  - to make development cooperation more effective;
  - to identify domestic resource mobilisation reforms;
  - to help identify opportunities for public investment to leverage other sources of finance for sustainable development; and
  - to assess the enabling environment or potential levers for innovative finance, private investment or blue finance (such as blue bonds, ecosystems insurance, and other innovative financing instruments related to the blue economy).
135. The DFAs carried out in the Pacific have led to the following actions in each PICT:
- i. Solomon Islands developed an Integrated Financing Framework that commits the government to a

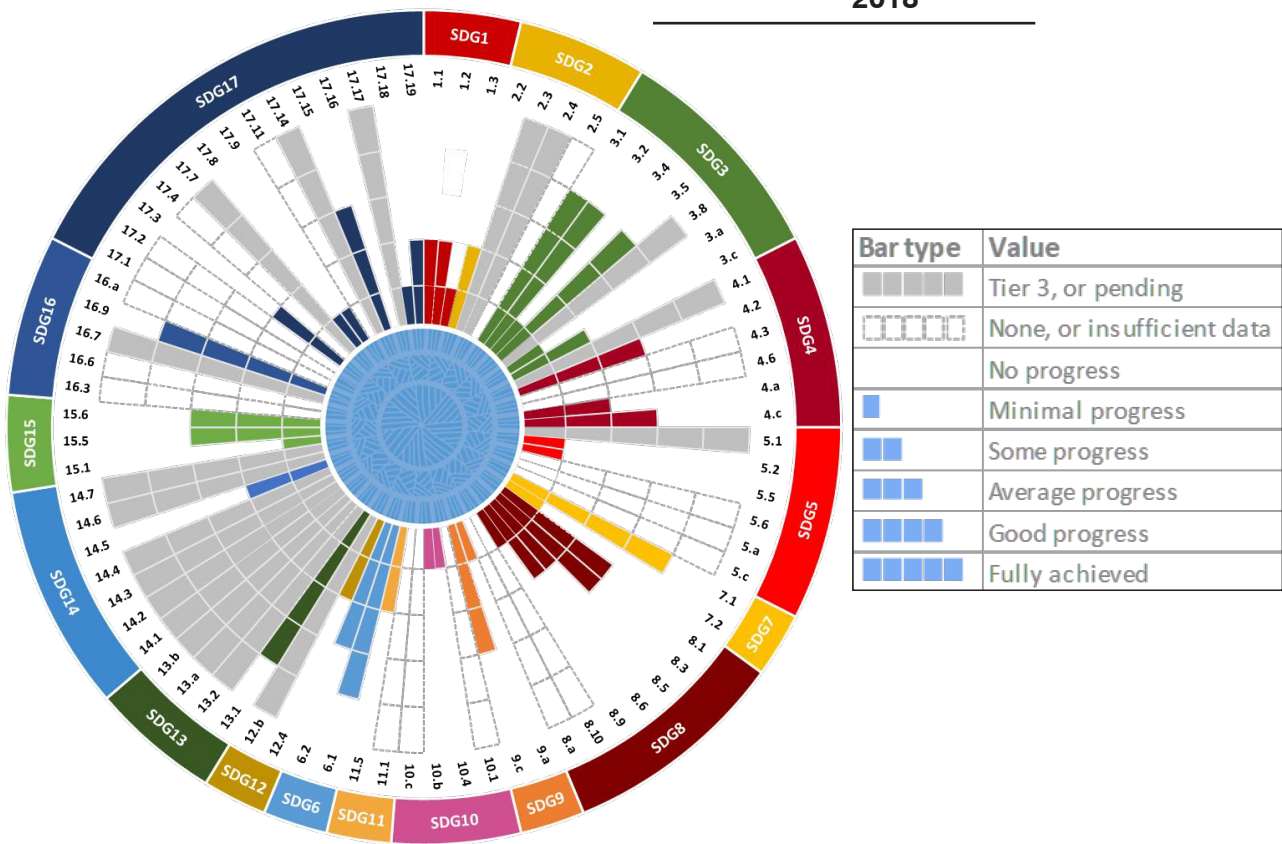
number of reforms designed to boost financing for the National Development Strategy which is managed by a cross-governmental committee of key ministries that implement each aspect of public and private financing policy.

- ii. Timor Leste's DFA presents an analysis of the current trends in public and private financing and forward-looking scenarios, based on a wide-reaching data collection exercise. The DFA recommendations and action plan includes the establishment of an overarching financing strategy; a national investment promotion strategy; and an integrated infrastructure investment strategy. There is an oversight process and governance structure that is led by the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Finance.
- iii. The Marshall Islands DFA was the basis for the 2019 Economic Statement focus on post-compact financing strategy, with the findings incorporated in the upcoming new National Development Plan.
- iv. Samoa's DFA identifies a process for reforms to streamline budgeting and planning processes within MOF.
- v. PNG's DFA informed the Development Cooperation strategies of 2015 and 2018.
- vi. The Fiji DFA is yet to be finalized, however, the DFA findings were used to strengthen related policies and strategies and the Voluntary National Reporting (VNR) by the Fiji Government to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York.

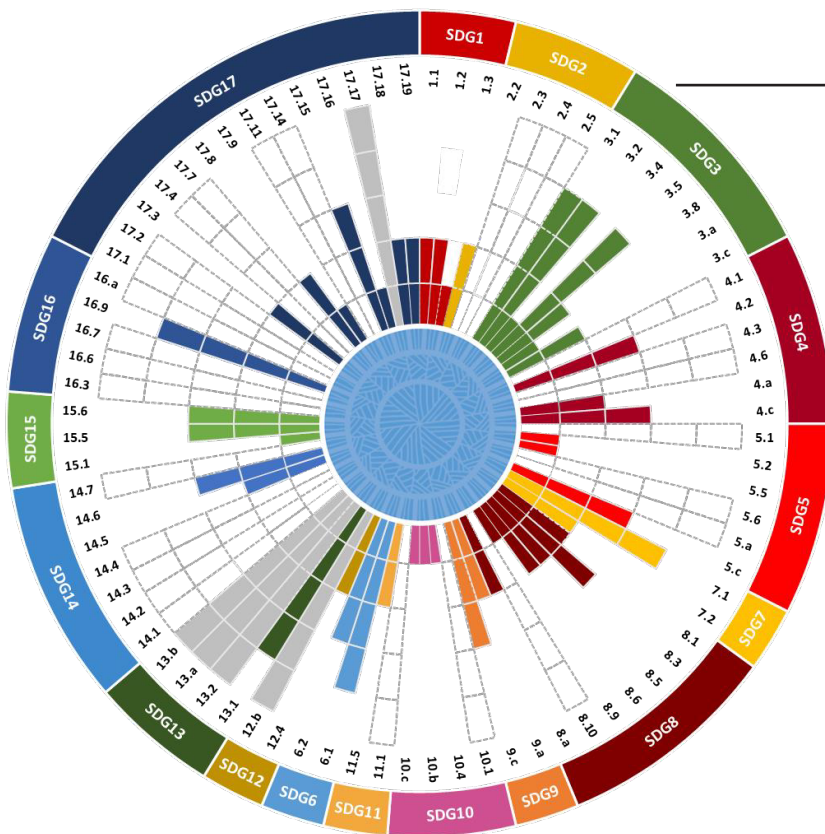
### **3.9 Increasing Investment in Timely, Accurate and Disaggregated Data (SDGs 17)**

136. At least two data points are required for each indicator between 2015 and 2030 to effectively measure progress against the 132 Pacific SDG indicators and targets endorsed in the PRSD. The demand for up-to-date statistics, across many development themes, places a significant strain on the limited human and financial resources of PICTs national statistical agencies and their technical development partners.
137. Statistical development in the Pacific region is guided by the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS). Technical and financial support is made available to PICTs from national governments, regional organisations, bilateral and multilateral partners. The importance of statistical governance, and resourcing to strengthen statistical capacity, is recognized under SDG17.
138. Following various national, regional and global efforts to develop suitable methodologies, an increasing number of indicators can be reported.
139. In the 2018 Quadrennial Report, 48 % of the 132 SDG indicators had baseline data. The Inter-agencies Expert Group (IAEG) have made amendments to the SDG indicator framework since this time and the Pacific now has 55 % of its indicators with baseline data under this new framework.

2018

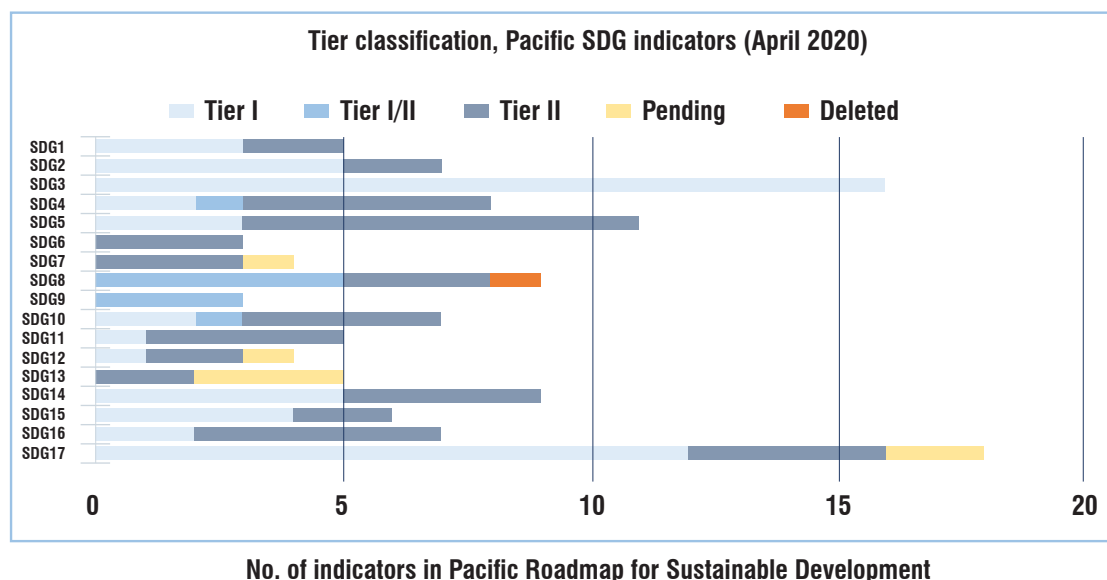


2019



## Data Availability

Figure 3: TIER CLASSIFICATION OF 132 PACIFIC SDGS



140. SPC is improving access to Pacific data through the creation of the Pacific Data Hub (PDH) which provides a central, sustainable and accessible platform for cataloguing or hosting Pacific data from countries, supported by SPC and other partners, agencies and institutions. The Pacific Microdata Library located on the PDH is promoting secure data discovery and re-use, while also serving to safely archive PICT data collections. There are currently 579 surveys in the Library (as of March 8, 2020) with over 1,000 citations credited in journal articles, reports and research papers. Work is ongoing to facilitate access to this data between the countries and users.
141. SPC has also established a .Stat/SDMX database platform in the PDH into which the National Minimum Development Indicator (NMDI) database is being migrated to provide a more user friendly and accessible indicator dataset. A new round of population projections were compiled in 2019 taking into account the most recent census data and these will be available on the .Stat platform early in 2021.
142. PICTs are scheduled to conduct 81 statistical collections from 2019 to 2023, to enhance national monitoring and evidence-based decision-making, and meet regional and global reporting requirements.

## Actions taken

143. A number of specific SDGs data gaps have been addressed since 2018, accelerating the availability of disaggregated data in the region. This is enhancing the region's measurement of, and reporting against, critical issues of poverty, gender equality and disability. Examples of activities include:
  - i. an experimental Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) in RMI, to assess methods of collection of household consumption data and to test the inclusion of complementary survey modules to increase the production of complementary data and reduce the need for stand-alone surveys;
  - ii. a Pacific Roadmap for Gender Statistics is a collaboration between partners and countries (led by SPC and UN Women). The Roadmap will support capacity development of users to apply the data, while also exploring opportunities to re-analyse existing collections to help address indicator disaggregation needs across all Goals; and

- iii. disability questions (using the Washington Group set) are now routinely included in census and surveys conducted in the Pacific. Data analysis and report writing workshops have yielded six country Disability Monographs, allowing better identification of the prevalence of disability and the situation of children, women and men with disabilities.
144. The Pacific Statistics Method Board (PSMB) was set up in 2018 to assess different methodologies for collecting and compiling statistics, with a view to developing guidelines for best practice in Pacific country National Statistics Systems.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

145. National statistical systems in the Small Island Developing States of the Pacific region are heavily dependent on external technical and financial support. There is a need for additional resources to be provided to national and regional statistical stakeholders to ensure that high quality data are produced to guide and monitor economic and social development and to meet national and international reporting obligations.
146. There is scope to increase efficiency in the conduct of statistical collections in the Pacific region through:
- i. financing a logical order of statistical collections;
  - ii. aligning PICTs collection schedules;
  - iii. standardizing instruments and methodologies; and
  - iv. partnership approaches to technical assistance (incl. South-South).
147. Since 2018 an additional seven PICTs have compiled national strategies for the development of statistics; these are now at various stages of approval and implementation. Terms of reference for the Donor and Development Partners Group (DDPG) were approved at the DDPG meeting in 2019. The intent of this group is for data collection work in the PICTs to be better coordinated with joint support offered through CROP and UN agencies.

### Next Steps

148. One proposal for accelerating progress is the establishment of a Pacific Statistical Collections Financing Facility. The Facility will support PICTs to fill statistical collection budget gaps and provide additional resources to technical partners who support PICTs with the production of high quality and timely data. The proposed establishment of the financing facility (and the partnership approach for delivery of technical assistance) aligns with TYPSS Phase 3, FEMM's endorsement for financing of the 5-year statistical collection plan and Heads of Planning and Statistics approval in relation to delivery of technical assistance.
149. DFAT has committed to funding a mid-term review of the final phase of TYPSS in 2020, to consider whether a second ten-year strategy to 2030 should be developed when TYPSS concludes in 2020.





## Section 4 Voluntary National Review Process in the Pacific Context

### 4.1 Background

150. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out nine principles<sup>39</sup> for ensuring the effective follow-up and review of sustainable development progress at national, regional and global levels. The nine principles emphasise how important it is to (i) be voluntary and country - led; (ii) track progress in implementing the universal goals and targets; (iii) maintain a longer-term orientation; (iv) be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent; (v) be people centred, gender sensitive and respect human rights; (vi) build on existing platforms and processes; (vii) be rigorous and evidence based, informed by country-led evaluations and data; (viii) enhance capacity building support for developing countries; and (ix) benefit from the active support of the United Nations system and other multilateral institutions.
151. The handbook produced by UNDESA provides guidance for countries undertaking Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). It is updated annually and recognizes that VNRs are an important part of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and emphasizes that the process for carrying out the VNR should not be seen as separate from the implementation of the SDGs or existing national planning and budget processes.

**Nine Forum member countries have already produced VNR reports and presented them to the ECOSOC - HLPF, with four more to be undertaken in 2020.**

152. The VNR process is ‘voluntary’. The global commitment and presentation in New York provides an opportunity for countries to examine their own planning, budget, implementation and monitoring processes. This also helps the countries to test their policies, process and capacities to meet the principles outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The review undertaken at the Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development in 2020 of the VNRs produced between 2016 and 2019 offers a useful basis for comparing experiences with neighbours beyond the Pacific.

### 4.2 The VNR Process as a Capacity Building Opportunity

153. Prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Pacific, through the implementation of the MDGs and the Forum Compact, had sought to strengthen their planning, aid management, public financial management and budget systems and processes.
154. Under the Compact a peer review process involving a small team of peers from the region would provide guidance, offer recommendations, share experiences and learn from each other. The focus was on how the Forum Island country, under review, could more effectively use development resources for a better life for their people and make progress towards the achievement of their national priorities. The Forum Compact peer review process considered many of the same issues that are addressed through the VNR process.
155. For the VNR process to be a capacity building opportunity, a clear strategy is needed to enhance national planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and reporting systems and processes. The strategy should identify the steps required to: prepare the plan; identify who will be involved, how it will be resourced: how it will be monitored;

and how it will be integrated with the other functions of government. Further, in capturing the most appropriate institutional arrangements for achieving sustainable development - locally developed tools and guidance notes should be put in place and updated on a regular basis. The tools and guidance notes could be accompanied by targeted in-country training programs with opportunities for cross-country sharing of experiences and mentoring. This would help ensure adoption of international best practices and encourage longer-term sustainability of the systems and processes.

156. Leadership and sustained commitment at both the political and official levels of government is of paramount importance. This is needed for any changes in the institutional arrangements to be developed and to ensure effective compliance and follow-up in meeting the principles for sustainable development, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda. It is essential that the demand for change comes from within each country and is tailored to the national context. This may be guided, but not driven, by development partner support for it to succeed.
157. As there are already many planning and budget tools with accompanying guidance notes available, the VNR process provides an opportunity for adjustment if required. It is also important that there is effective coordination among regional, multilateral and bilateral development partners to avoid duplication and mixed messaging. In considering the activity and associated processes for improved planning and budget alignment, a 'whole-of-government' approach is imperative. In addition, the processes must reflect and build on the relationships that the government machinery has with the Parliament, Audit Office, Ombudsman, media, civil society and the private sector.

### 4.3 Lessons Learned from the Pacific

158. The nine VNRs completed by the Forum member countries confirm that while country systems, institutional arrangements, policies and processes were largely in place there remain a number of challenges, including:
  - Human and institutional capacity constraints;
  - Lack of ownership and political will to effectively respond to the cross-sectoral nature of sustainable development;
  - Lack of awareness and engagement of stakeholders both within government agencies, civil society and the private sector;
  - Lack of alignment at national level with global and regional commitments, including the importance of localising global goals, targets and indicators;
  - Insufficient financial resources and capacity for resource mobilisation;
  - Paucity of data and limited capacity to collect and analyse data.
159. Many of the challenges of data availability, capacity constraints and ways to ensure the effective inclusion of all stakeholders were evident when FICs were reporting progress under the MDGs.
160. Samoa was one of the first countries to undertake a VNR globally, with a presentation at the July 2016 High Level Political Forum (HLPF). The report gave most attention to the steps required to integrate the SDGs into their national development processes, rather than any detailed analysis of progress made in sustainable development as the country transitioned from the use of the MDGs as a monitoring tool to the more comprehensive set of targets and indicators included as part of the 17 SDGs framework.

**Given the breadth and depth of the 17 SDGs and 169 targets, the demand for quality statistics has increased significantly and remains a challenge for small island countries. All countries need to tailor the SDGs targets and indicators to their respective contexts. (Samoa 2015 VNR)**

161. Kiribati and Australia produced VNRs that were presented at the 2018 HLPF and were the first reports from this region to encounter the challenges of reporting progress against each of the SDGs. The preparation of the Kiribati VNR coincided with the mid-term review of the Kiribati National Plan (KDP) and revealed a number of areas that required strengthening for more effective monitoring and evaluation. Of particular concern was that while there is a clear convergence of focus areas across the KDP and SDGs there was significant fragmentation and a mismatch of indicators for monitoring progress. Institutional capacity to design and implement appropriate multi-sectoral interventions and the availability of appropriate and flexible financing also continue to be seen as major inhibitors to the long-term sustainable development progress in Kiribati. A key positive highlighted in the Kiribati report was the emergence of key partnerships in some sectors that has helped reduce fragmentation of effort and duplication.

**The national scorecard, embodied in the Kiribati Development Plan (KDP) 2016-2019, is fully integrated with the SDGs, and groups goals into six Key Priority Areas as a way of localizing the SDGs into Kiribati activities. The mid-point of implementing the KDP, was an opportune time to review progress on their development agenda. (Kiribati VNR 2018)**

162. The Australian VNR provides lessons on the importance of recognising the role of others beyond government in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. However, it also reflected the added complexity resulting from the different roles and responsibilities at national, state and district levels. The report states that “coordinating action in a federated structure can add complexity and contestability, with multiple levels of governance and overlapping or separate competencies. For Australia, many of the SDG targets are in the purview of sub-national levels of government. This enables empowered action by those entities and in some cases can spur action through competition and benchmarking but can also lead to fragmentation that undermines the benefits of a system-based approach. The VNR provided an opportunity to showcase some of the work of sub-national levels of government and to encourage engagement with the SDGs<sup>40</sup>”.

**A lot of organisations are seeing the power of the SDGs as a holistic framework and approach to environmental health, human wellbeing, economic sustainability and long-term profitability. The SDGs provide a tool for organisations to identify and mitigate risk and opportunity, including in areas they might previously not have seen as linked to core business....Australian VNR, Interlinkages Section**

163. Five Forum members<sup>41</sup> undertook the VNR process and made presentations at the 2019 HLPF. While all the reports were different in their approach, all demonstrated that many of the challenges of data paucity and capacity remain prevalent across the region. The Fiji VNR reflected on the opportunity that the process allowed the government to “take stock of the policies developed and actions taken in implementing the SDGs<sup>42</sup>, the achievements thus far and opportunities that exist, establish what works and what does not, and highlight the effectiveness of our governance systems and our institutions in facilitating the implementation of the SDGs.” It also noted that as was learned during the MDGs monitoring process, data paucity can adversely impact the quality of national reports. As part of the VNR process Fiji undertook, with UN support, a comprehensive baseline assessment of data held by various government departments, NGOs and academia. This exercise revealed (i) problems with a lack of data for monitoring progress under SDG 11, SDG 12, SDG 13 and SDG 14; (ii) the need for a number of the global indicators to be adapted for the Fiji context; (iii) the importance of considering the use of proxy data; and (iv) that

40 Australian VNR, page 12

41 Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu

42 Fiji VNR, Conclusions, page 83

a number of indicators were not mainstreamed into either the five-year or twenty-year national development plans

164. The Nauru VNR highlighted the importance of aligning the VNR process with a review of its National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) and the necessity for the NSDS to recognize the synergies between the 2030 Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway and other relevant international and regional commitments. The VNR process identified the importance of stakeholder consultations and most importantly the need for a sustained effort to retain effective institutional structures for monitoring the NSDS, using nationally tailored SDG targets and indicators. It was also recognised that given the limited planning and statistical capacity in Nauru, it was important to be realistic in developing a monitoring and evaluation system for the NSDS.

**New Zealand's first VNR report covers all 17 SDGs through a national lens, reflecting the country's belief in productive, sustainable and inclusive development to ensure no one is left behind. The report highlights challenges as well as successes, provides a baseline for future reporting, and identifies areas where more work is needed. The country's size, location, history, values and the partnership between the Crown and Maori are reflected in the review. In particular, it acknowledges that the special status of Maori, as the tangata whenua or indigenous people of New Zealand, is fundamental.**

165. The VNR indicates that new thinking is needed to achieve the vision captured within the SDGs and through their Living Standards Framework, New Zealand have started developing a broader set of measures that puts sustainable inter-generational wellbeing at the centre of policy-making and the management of the country's resources. A set of metrics – Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand (IANZ) is also being developed and as with the Living Standards Framework, IANZ goes beyond traditional economic measures such as income and GDP, and includes wellbeing and sustainable development. IANZ supports the development of the Living Standards Framework as well as monitoring and reporting against the SDGs. Both the framework, the IANZ together with the Government's science advisers, provided an evidence-based foundation for New Zealand's first Wellbeing Budget that was delivered on 30 May 2019.
166. As with the Australian VNR report, the New Zealand report recognizes the country's commitment to supporting the SDGs alongside international partners. New Zealand's development cooperation responds to the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development finance needs of developing countries. Sixty percent of New Zealand's development cooperation goes to the Pacific region with a strong focus on improving Pacific prosperity and economic resilience. The VNR report highlights some of the crucial work being undertaken across New Zealand and through their international assistance by individuals, businesses and community groups to achieve the SDGs and also inform their approach to trade, the environment and security.

**In its first VNR, Palau noted that over the previous three years, it had systematically pursued a rigorous process of assessing its pathway to 2030. Eight inter-sector working groups, led by government ministries, but including representatives from civil society, and semi-private organizations were involved in the preparation of the country's first VNR. The groups selected an initial set of 95 SDG global targets and associated indicators that collectively constitute the country's National SDG Framework. This framework is expected to improve implementation and reporting on national priorities and the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs.**

167. The VNR was an opportunity for the Palau government to: 1) improve policy-level decisions and national budgeting centered on data-based reporting; (2) improve tracking of financial flows for key priorities – initially

climate change and the SDGs but ultimately for other priorities that cut across sectors and agencies inclusive of gender and human rights; (3) increase capacities for information management; (4) increase opportunities to engage local communities and non-state actors around sustainability; and (5) provide a foundation for updating and transforming the national master development plan (“Palau 2020”) into the National Sustainable Development Plan<sup>43</sup>.

168. Tonga’s VNR report was seen as an opportunity to share the national development agenda and account for progress made, including implementation of the SDGs. It outlines strategic steps needed to further strengthen the implementation and delivery of Tonga’s development results, while highlighting, inter alia, that improved collaboration amongst stakeholders is instrumental for the effective implementation of the country’s development agenda. The VNR process demonstrated the challenge of strengthening collaboration across and within Government line ministries, and with civil society stakeholders in a consistent way. The fact that Tonga’s central and coordinating arms of Government, as well as line Ministries, have limited staffing and institutional capacities exacerbate the situation.
169. Despite these challenges, the Government of Tonga considered that the approach adopted in the preparation of its first VNR was successful because Government line ministries and relevant stakeholders had jointly participated in the process and drafted the report. This helped ensure the direct involvement of civil society organizations and a space for Government representatives to dialogue with colleagues from both within their own ministry, as well as other Government ministries. This dialogue revealed that there are a lot of programs that can be better coordinated and integrated.

**Overall, Tonga’s 2019 VNR process “reinforced good practices, and provided lessons for ongoing reforms needed to fully implement the national development and SDG agenda, through strengthened use of national planning systems, well-coordinated statistical system, forming durable partnerships, and leveraging ownership and leadership across the community<sup>44</sup>.”**

170. The Government of Vanuatu reviewed its progress of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs incorporating Vanuatu’s SAMOA Pathway priorities through the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Vanuatu 2030 – The People’s Plan emphasizing the importance of seeing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs through the lens of the country’s own development agenda. As part of their MTR and VNR process, the Government of Vanuatu, invited a team of senior Pacific officials<sup>45</sup> to undertake an in-country peer review, that considered Vanuatu’s national development planning, budgeting, public financial, aid management and monitoring institutions, and systems, as well as review the development of Vanuatu’s first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

43 Palau VNR, Integrating the SDGs into Government Processes, page 4

44 Tonga VNR, Creating Ownership of the SDGs, page 11

45 The Review team comprised of Mr Wilson Gusamo (Government of PNG), Ms Francella Strickland (Government of Samoa), Ms Suzanne Bent (Government of Australia) and Ms Vani Catanasiga (CSO Representative from the Fiji Council of Social Services).

171. The peer review team, assisted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, consulted with various Government departments, representatives of development partners, non-government organisations and the private sector in Port Vila before presenting recommendations to the Government and the development partners.

**Vanuatu was the first Pacific Country and first country globally to volunteer to open up its Voluntary National Review Reporting on the SDGs process and Report to review by peers. As a consequence, the government continues to demonstrate its willingness and commitment to open up policy making processes for review to strengthen the implementation, monitoring, and reporting on progress of both the NSDP and the SDGs, which are aligned within their National Framework, through an already developed annual development reporting mechanism (ADR).**



## Section 5 Key Regional and International Advocacy Engagements

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172. The 2018 Pacific Quadrennial Report is the Pacific's regional report on the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway which emphasizes the importance of a collaborative and inclusive development partnership between Pacific countries and regional and international partners. Evidence-based reporting and strategic engagements in regional and international platforms remain important for the Pacific as they provide opportunities to leverage support and advocate for its development challenges. Key engagements such as the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) have seen a steady increase in participation from Pacific countries since 2017 and an ongoing commitment to undertake VNRs as shown by reports to the HLPF.
173. The Quadrennial report identifies the APFSD as an important multi-stakeholder platform that provides an opportunity for the Pacific region to advocate priorities and shared accountability for transboundary issues, leverage support including broader regional cooperation, and inform knowledge sharing and reciprocal learning. Furthermore, the report called for alignment of the Pacific and Asia Pacific regional reporting processes to reduce the reporting burden.
174. Further strengthening its collective advocacy, the Pacific also convenes under the Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (PFSD) to prepare for APFSD and support those countries presenting VNRs to the HLPF. The PFSD has been convened for two years, with its first meeting held in 2018 in Nadi, Fiji and its second in Apia, Samoa, in 2019. The PFSD is an opportunity for Pacific countries to come together to share perspectives and experiences from their sustainable development journeys and agree on common approaches including vis-à-vis the APFSD and the VNRs.
175. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), offers opportunities for Pacific governments to foster closer relationships and collaborate more effectively with other ESCAP members on issues of concern. The 76th ESCAP Commission Session on May 21st 2020 under the theme of "Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development" agreed on ways to collaborate to reduce the shipping connectivity divide and promote green shipping; promote sustainable fisheries; address the marine litter crisis; and enhance oceans data and knowledge. The Prime Minister of Fiji and the Prime Minister of Tuvalu as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum advocated for Pacific Ocean interests and the necessity to build back better from COVID-19 through closer regional collaboration and the sustainable management of the oceans.
176. The 76th Commission Session also received an Asia-Pacific SIDS report which recommended how their blue economy could be leveraged to scale up investment in sustainable fisheries and sustainable tourism. The Session theme and this report were the basis of two resolutions, one on Oceans and another on COVID-19.
177. The VNR processes discussed in the previous section have provided key advocacy opportunities for Pacific countries. The regional peer review of the process, which was considered a global best practice at the HLPF, involved country, development partner and civil society representatives. The peer reviews highlight the willingness by the Pacific to open its policy making processes for review and learn from the good practices of its neighbours.
178. The PSDR, an outcome of collective regional efforts to inform policy decisions, has been a critical document in guiding the Pacific's advocacy and engagement at key regional and global forums and most recently at the UN Climate Action Summit, the UN SDGs Summit and the SAMOA Pathway High Level Meeting at the UN General Assembly in September 2019 in New York.
179. The SDGs Summit saw Member States commit to a 'Decade of Action' and pledged to bolster efforts to implement the 2030 agenda. This includes mobilizing adequate and well-directed investments in data and statistics and



- empowering cities, local authorities and communities. Member States emphasized poverty eradication as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development for the next ten years. To enable transformative changes towards sustainable development there is a need to promote research; expand capacity-building initiatives; and harness innovation and technologies towards advancing and promoting the use of scientific evidence from all fields.
180. The outcome of the SAMOA Pathway Mid-Term Review (MTR) summit highlighted the actions required to advance progress of sustainable development for small island developing states. SIDS were committed to five priorities for the next five years: i.) Climate Emergency and DRR; ii.) Sustainable Management and Use of the Oceans; iii.) Regional Integration; iv) Social Inclusion, Poverty Alleviation and Gender Equality; v.) Data, Policy Coherence and Partnerships.
  181. The Pacific's intervention and contribution at the MTR Summit emphasized that climate change and resilience building, remain a priority for the region. Access to concessional financing and connectivity are among the key challenges. There is a need for financial resources to break the cycle of poverty and inequality and to adapt to climate change; to facilitate access to loans and private finance; to enhance national statistical capacity and to improve monitoring and evaluation systems.
  182. With the support of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, six Pacific media representatives attended key global high-level events<sup>46</sup> in 2019. Their coverage told the Pacific's story in the context of the global discussions, communicating sustainable development achievements and challenges in the Pacific region. Facilitating participation of Pacific media representatives in key SDG events will hopefully be sustained to further strengthen the engagement of the public with national, regional and global development processes.
  183. The Fifth Pacific Urban Forum (PUF5)<sup>47</sup> was held in Nadi, Fiji, in July 2019. Following the adoption of the New Urban Agenda at the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and a renewed recognition of the many opportunities and challenges associated with urbanization in the Pacific, the forum adopted a declaration reaffirming commitment to the Pacific New Urban Agenda and its accelerated implementation to achieve sustainable urbanization in the Pacific. The Pacific New Urban Agenda focusses on: i. Social equity with particular emphasis on housing, informal settlements and social inclusion; ii. Environment, Resilience and Urbanization including sustainable urban infrastructure, drawing on the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Platform of Action; iii. Urban Economy focussing on sustainable livelihoods and the role of urban areas as engines of growth and iv. Urban Governance with emphasis on local data and local capacity needs.

46 2019 HLPF and UNGA.

47 Report of the Fifth Pacific Urban Forum [https://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/info/news/pdf/PUF\\_5\\_Final\\_Report\\_reduced\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/info/news/pdf/PUF_5_Final_Report_reduced_web_version.pdf)



## Section 6 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration

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184. This section provides a progress report on the implementation of the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration and draws on an analysis of country progress reports for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25-year review submitted in 2019.
185. 2020 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA), a decade to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 8 years since Pacific Forum Leaders committed to the Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED) in 2012, invigorating collective efforts to lift the status of women in the Pacific and empower Pacific women and girls to actively participate in economic, political and social life.
186. Despite the progress in the region, gender inequality persists. It is critical that in the remaining decade of the 2030 Agenda, the Pacific continues to work as a collective and accelerate actions to address the root causes that further perpetuate gender inequality. The region must remain resolute to realize gender equality particularly with the escalating threat of the climate change crisis, global health pandemics, and emerging challenges that could widen the inequality gap.

### Gender Responsive Government Programs and Policies

187. The Pacific has demonstrated some progress in its commitment to mainstreaming gender equality. However, it has not seen any significant changes to gender equality in leadership, economic control or access to leisure time. Of the 14 independent Pacific island countries, only Tonga has not made a commitment to CEDAW. Palau has signed the convention, indicating preliminary commitment while the other 12 states have ratified. Pacific French territories are committed to CEDAW through French ratification.
188. Data and evidence are critical tools to influence change and this is increasingly recognized by gender equality advocates within governments. There is a lack of disaggregated data by gender, age, location, types of disability to inform gender responsive policy implementation and decision-making. Work to improve data collection and build capacity for evaluative analysis of statistics is ongoing and regional partners continue to provide support.
189. Formal social safety nets vary from country to country and it can be difficult for women living in rural, remote and maritime areas; those working in the informal sector and women with disabilities to access the application processes. At the same time, traditional systems of family and clan obligations are eroding due to rural-urban and international migration. This disproportionately increases risk of economic and social hardship for all women, particularly single mothers, older women and women with disabilities.
190. Many of the efforts to alleviate women's poverty in the Pacific are initiatives funded by multilaterals, donors and non-government organisations. Women's savings clubs, financial inclusion initiatives, training programs and cash transfer pilots are largely delivered with development funding. Some governments seeking to adopt social protection mechanisms, however a lack of government ownership of gendered poverty problems is a persistent challenge in the region.
191. While the BPA called for gender analyses of the impact of macroeconomic policies on inequality and the wellbeing of women and families, and for the adjustment of policies 'to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services', no assessments, reviews or modifications of such policies have been made in Pacific countries. Employment creation and social protection are still premised on the idea that people can be motivated to pull themselves out of poverty. It is also imperative that analysis and frameworks address women's participation in the informal sector, where the majority of women work, without protections in place.

192. Gender responsive employment policies that support maternity and parental leave, promote women in leadership, subsidize childcare, enhance job security, eliminate harassment, and provide support to women employees who are victims of violence is an emerging policy area in the Pacific. Public Service Commissions across the region have generally addressed maternity leave, and in some cases allowed women time to breastfeed infants at work. In the private sector the International Finance Corporation is introducing pilot programs in Fiji and Solomon Islands, aiming to clarify through business case development, that employers will profit from a stabilised, protected workforce with gender balanced leadership<sup>48</sup>. A number of countries – Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands have developed specific policy direction on women in the economy within their gender policies.

### Decision-making

193. In the Pacific advancing women in leadership and decision-making extends beyond attempts to elect women to local and national governments. Promoting shared decision - making at the household level, in communities, and in management of natural resources is a key step in the process of changing social norms about women's rights to participate across all levels of society.
194. Efforts to pass and implement temporary special measures have had mixed success in the region. In Samoa a 10% quota for women in the national parliament has worked well, and Vanuatu has measures that reserve one seat for women on local governments, which, in some areas, appears to have encouraged women to contest seats more widely. In 2014 Solomon Islands passed the Political Parties Integrity Act that requires parties to reserve 10% of candidatures for women. The Act includes incentive grants for parties that support women in specific ways but does not sanction parties who fail to attract women applicants.
195. In many Pacific countries, the political environment is not attractive to women. Adversarial norms and standards of electioneering and parliamentary procedure can be intimidating and mask harassment, bullying and abuse. The numbers of women in public service leadership positions seem to indicate that many women find it easier and more secure to follow a career path in government civil service than in politics.

### Women's Economic Empowerment

196. The Pacific has a limited number of formal sector jobs, most of which are in the public service. Women's participation in the labour force varies from country to country but lags men's participation rates. Women in employment are still subject to entrenched social hierarchies that make them more likely to be discriminated against during hiring and promotion processes. Even though gender parity has been achieved in higher education this has not translated into an increased share of female employment. In informal sector employment, where the majority of women are employed in roles such as agriculture workers or market vendors, women have few protections or entitlements from abuse and unfair treatment and women outnumber men in most areas classified as vulnerable employment.
197. In all Pacific island countries women commonly undertake non-paying work, including subsistence agriculture, as well as unpaid household and care-giving work. Women are also heavily involved in lower earning informal sector work such as marketing agricultural and fisheries produce, and other types of micro-enterprise. There are significant rural to urban variations in women's engagement in the formal labour force and women in urban areas are more likely to be in secure paid employment than rural women. Women's participation in agriculture and marketing is vital to food security across the region and should be invested in as a high-level priority, including rapid scaling up on market infrastructure, seed funding for micro entrepreneurs and cash transfers. There is a need to accelerate investments in the informal sector to improve protections, enable women to expand micro businesses and to ensure effective operation of informal sector workers during the COVID-19 crisis.

48 See <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/395547/ifc-lays-out-huge-business-cost-from-domestic-violence>; and [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/regionext\\_content/ifc\\_external\\_corporate\\_site/east+asia+and+the+pacific/news/postcards-wakamere-cta](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/regionext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/east+asia+and+the+pacific/news/postcards-wakamere-cta); see also <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/1b4a8a82-b335-4528-b6d2-c876cc449f3f/Fiji-TACKLING+CHILDCARE.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=mHY7FID>

198. Women's economic empowerment is an ongoing area of work in the region and recent efforts to engage rural women more actively in different levels of agricultural and handicraft value chains are showing positive results. There is a need to extend work in value chains across all sectors, ensuring that women are able to move up the value chain and don't languish, where they currently are, in the labour intensive, low value work.
199. Women's financial inclusion is unequal and low. Many women remain unbanked and access to finance is difficult for many women, making them vulnerable to payday lenders and microfinance schemes charging extraordinary interest rates. There are continuing challenges linked to access to collateral and credit and other financial services, however a number of collaborative development initiatives are improving financial literacy and inclusion. The absence of gender-disaggregated data to inform women-empowering economic policy making constitutes a major obstacle.
200. Central and private sector banks across the region have undertaken financial inclusion initiatives that aim to empower women and enable them to maintain more control over earnings. In Fiji and Solomon Islands, national financial inclusion taskforces have done sex-disaggregated surveys on financial inclusion and decision-making on household income<sup>49</sup>. Introduction of 'mobile money' that allows transactions by mobile phones can benefit women who may have less access to transportation and financial services. This needs to be associated with increased access to ICT technology for women to be successful. Development partners such as UN Women are supporting women's economic advancement in the economy in Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands through the Markets for Change program which builds financial and leadership skills through market-based programs run in collaboration with local governments<sup>50</sup>.
201. There is a clear overlap with women's ability to be empowered economically and their experience of violence by intimate partners. Women who are victims of violence in the home are less likely to have control over decision-making and their own incomes.

### Ending Violence Against Women

202. Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive manifestations of gender inequality in the Pacific. It reflects attitudes about male privilege, the lower status of women in social systems and the related unequal power dynamics at play within families and communities. In the Pacific the most widespread form of violence against women relates to intimate partner violence and/or domestic violence. Physical and sexual violence against women and girls perpetrated by strangers is also reported at levels higher than world averages<sup>51</sup>. Violence against women and girls with disabilities is also reported to be high<sup>52</sup>. While the global average of intimate partner physical and sexual violence for women is 30%, rates in the Pacific are much higher.
203. In 2019 the Regional Working Group on the Implementation of Domestic Violence Legislation was established. This brought together the lead coordinating Ministries in the countries and states that had passed Domestic Violence/Family Protection legislation. The focus on the regional group is to continue the momentum and share best practices on implementation of the law between Pacific governments. The working group is being supported by the Pacific Community.
204. Although positive changes have been made in law and policy, women are still hesitant to report violence against them. This reluctance indicates a high level of stigma against women who want to exercise their rights to a peaceful and safe life. Data on reporting rates shows that many women never tell anyone they have been victimised. When women do report they most often turn to family or friends. Demographic and Health Surveys done in the Pacific ask questions about if and when male and female respondents feel violence is justified. A significant percentage

49 2016. Pacific Financial Inclusion Program. Benchmarking Financial Inclusion in Fiji, Samoa and Solomon Islands: Findings from the first national demand-side surveys  
 50 2015. UN Women. Markets for Change Project. [https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20easia/docs/publications/2016/02/m4c\\_regionalbrief\\_17feb16\\_email.pdf?la=en&vs=3159](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20easia/docs/publications/2016/02/m4c_regionalbrief_17feb16_email.pdf?la=en&vs=3159)  
 51 Links to multiple studies on Violence Against Women in the Pacific can be found on the website of the Australian government program Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development. <https://pacificwomen.org/our-work/focus-areas/ending-violence-against-women/>  
 52 2013. UNFPA. A Deeper Silence. <https://pacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPAReport-ADeeperSilenceA4PublicationLR3%283%29.pdf>

of both men and women were reported to have agreed that violence is justified for some perceived transgressions, signalling how much more re-socialisation work is needed. In addition, the lack of economic independence for a woman may also be a factor for not leaving a violent relationship. Overcoming the persistence of violence against women requires understanding that attitudes may also be ingrained in the value systems of senior decision makers in law courts, governments, police and among front line health care providers. Many of the key services are based in the urban centres, making it challenging for those in the outer islands to access support.

205. Over the past 12 years governments, civil society groups and development partners have supported surveys on violence against women to establish baseline measures on types of violence, incidences and impacts on women. However, these surveys did not capture information on sexual harassment, cyber violence and online stalking. Almost every Pacific country has baseline surveys that are dated and need to be revised. Unfortunately financing for updates has not eventuated.
206. In several countries there has been very strong engagement of women's groups and non-government organisations in collaboration with governments to address Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) through advocacy, research, public education, victim counselling, and training that also targets men.
207. Services for survivors of violence vary from urban to rural areas and from country to country. Rural women are much less likely to have easily accessible health and protection services, and in many cases, economic controls imposed by abusive partners prohibit them from traveling to seek help. Services for survivors are generally funded by development partners and delivered through specialised non-government organisations. These organisations provide both services and advocacy. Women are supported to seek medical care, find safe shelter and counselling, and – if they choose to report – service providers can assist with visits to police, courts and applying for protection orders. In line with the PLGED, countries are developing essential services packages and delivery protocols designed to provide consistent approaches to ensuring survivors are treated fairly and informed of all options available to them.
208. In late 2018 development partners announced a new 5-year regional partnership to end Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV). The €19.5m Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2018-2022) will strengthen partnerships among development partners, non-state actors and governments to promote gender equality, prevent violence against women and girls, and increase the quality of services to survivors of violence<sup>53</sup>. A primary focus of the Pacific Partnership is to focus on primary prevention of VAWG, investing in programs and policy development across all sectors that aim to transform harmful social norms that condone or perpetuate violence against women and girls.
209. Access to justice is also very challenging for rural women as many issues are still first brought forward to church leaders or traditional decision-making bodies that are not required to follow legal, policy or good practice precedents. For urban women, access to justice can also be difficult as negotiating legal systems can be costly and complex<sup>54</sup>.
210. The numbers of cross-sector interventions to end violence against women are increasing. In sectors such as environmental protection, fisheries, and rural development some development partners are integrating gender awareness into their programs along with guidelines on zero tolerance for violence against women.

## Health and Education

211. Pacific strength is recognised in the agreed regional positions on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as well as support for comprehensive SRH services, which are inclusive of access to screening, prevention and

53 Pacific Islands Forum, <https://www.forumsec.org/reference-group-on-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-welcomes-gender-declaration-2/>. UN Women <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/fiji/ending-violence-against-women/pacific-partnership>

54 2009. P.I. Jalal. Law for Pacific Women: A legal rights handbook. Suva. See also 2016. Government of Australia. Conflict Management and Access to Justice in Rural Vanuatu. <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/conflict-management-access-justice-rural-vanuatu.pdf>

treatment of reproductive cancers including cervical and breast cancer, and emergency contraception. However, despite this, SRHR for women of all ages and abilities remains an area of challenge in the Pacific. Maternal health indicators have improved across almost all countries; however unmet need for contraceptives, adolescent pregnancies and addressing the SRHR needs of women with disabilities remain problematic.

212. Most Pacific countries have achieved universal access and gender parity at primary level. Several Pacific governments, in recognition that primary and secondary education is a right for all citizens, have introduced laws and policies to ensure that education is accessible to all. Curriculum reviews are underway in several countries, and this is to incorporate values of social citizenship and human rights in the school curriculum. The adoption of new, rights-based initiatives to provide a supportive environment for girls to pursue their education has been gaining traction whereby several Pacific countries have ended the practice of expelling girls who become pregnant while at school and are supporting their re-entry to school following childbirth. Related to that is the concerns about safety from sexual harassment and assault that can prevent rural girls in some Pacific countries from attending boarding schools to complete their secondary education. Policies on bullying and sexual harassment in schools have been introduced by several countries.

### Challenges and Lessons Learned

- i. It is important to recognise traditional Pacific women's leadership and the strengths of cultural and traditional structures in advancing women in power and decision-making, but at the same time acknowledge and work to change the negative patriarchal aspects of culture and traditional structures that restrict and obstruct women's access to leadership opportunities and decision-making.
- ii. There is a lack of representation and space, and direct engagement of women with disabilities and LGBTI+ women and gender non-conforming people in all areas of leadership and decision-making arenas.
- iii. Impacts of environmental degradation and the climate crisis intersect with structural inequalities such as gender-based violence and discrimination. This is particularly acute for those living in small island states and territories. There is an urgent need to link climate, social, economic and environmental focused development initiatives, and to place gender equality and human rights at the core of all climate responses. We must ensure that safety and wellbeing, access to justice, health, democratic participation, and ecological sustainability are the ways we define and measure progress towards climate justice and sustainable development.
- iv. Women's ability to fully participate in the economy is restricted by outdated regulations and legislation compounded with a lack of accountability and enforcement. Consideration to be made for legislation that include required shifts in work around women's economic empowerment, including attention to gender and micro, meso and macro-economics, and recognition and redistribution of unpaid care work and the reproductive economy.
- v. There is a need to better understand how social norms are entrenched in the stratification and hierarchy within our societies, which includes an understanding of how social norms and stereotypes are linked back to culture, religion, and tradition, and aim to transform social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Within this, is the need to work to counteract attitudes by which women and girls regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion.
- vi. There is a need for high level political leadership and resources to prioritise the high levels of reproductive cancers as an urgent and topline Pacific gender, women's human rights and development priority. Policies, programs and access to commodities remain inconsistent, including screening of cervical cancer. Universal coverage of HPV vaccines remains a key gap in meeting the needs of women's access to quality SRH services.
- vii. There is a need to improve working conditions for women by supporting the introduction and strengthening of

violence and harassment policies, and conduct gender audits to identify measures to ensure gender equality at all levels, establish respectful and safe workplace environments for women and men, and enable reconciliation of work and family responsibilities

### Next Steps

213. To progress the commitments made by Leaders in the 2012 PLGED, national governments are encouraged to strengthen national budgets allocations to address the underlying constraints to achieving gender equality. As noted in the 2018 Pacific Quadrennial Report, on average, budgets for national women's offices are less than 1% of national appropriations and only a few sector ministries make specific budget allocations to address gender issues.
  
214. In order to make progress on the following recommendations, it will be important that evidence-based policies and programs are supported by appropriate budget allocations.
  - i. Design and implement national policies that are evidence-based and aimed at transforming those social and cultural norms that condone violence against women and girls, and work to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion.
  - ii. Governments adopt, review, and implement legislative measures to address all forms of sexual and gender-based violence in all areas of life.
  - iii. Collect, collate, analyse and disseminate reliable, comparable and anonymized data and statistics on a regular basis, disaggregated by sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation (where sexuality is decriminalised in the region), age, ethnicity and disability, among other variables, at the national and local levels. Use this data to inform and effect policy changes.
  - iv. Ensure equitable and universal access to available, accessible, acceptable, affordable good quality and gender-responsive health services and preventative health information including SRHR for all women and girls throughout the life cycle.
  - v. Support and strengthen existing regional and national coordination mechanisms to address gender-based violence to avoid duplication and accelerate coordinated actions across all sectors.





## Section 7 Recommendations

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215. The onset of COVID-19 and the region's continuing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters heightens the necessity for the region to implement effective policies and programs that focus attention on building resilient communities while seeking to progress implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals across the region and fulfil the Pacific's commitment as part of the global partnership for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
216. In order to support national efforts and work together as a region in the context of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development and the SAMOA Pathway, the following actions are recommended based on a review of progress made in the Pacific since the publication of the first Quadrennial Report on Sustainable Development in 2018:
- i. To **address vulnerability and increasing inequality** in the region, it is recommended that PICTs:
    - a) Review and, where appropriate, strengthen existing social protection and economic empowerment measures by revising relevant legislation, policies, programs and budgets to address inequality with a specific focus on the most vulnerable in the community that includes women, children, youth, LGBTIQI and people living with disabilities.
    - b) Develop education policies and programs to promote disability inclusive education including strengthening support services, availability of assistive technologies and inclusion of disability inclusive education in teacher training curriculum.
    - c) Mainstream an inclusive approach to ensure all development (including COVID-19 response and recovery) delivers shared benefits that include vulnerable groups.
  - ii. To **tackle gender gaps in employment and high youth unemployment**, it is recommended that PICTs:
    - a) Ratify the 2019 ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (Convention 190), a new international law providing protection, particularly for women workers.
    - b) Strengthen economic opportunities for all employees, including women and youth, by advocating for decent work opportunities for all; by undertaking comprehensive reviews of employment policies; and by identifying opportunities for employment both within the Pacific Region, as well as in programs such as the Seasonal work programs.
  - iii. To continue to **promote sustainable and equitable economic growth**. With a focus on sustainable tourism and fisheries, it is recommended that PICTs:
    - a) Continue regional and global efforts to address the lack of data, methodologies and limited statistical capacity in the region to monitor SDG14 progress. This recognizes that the ocean is transboundary in nature with economic implications for key industries such as energy, shipping, fishing and tourism.
    - b) Develop relevant policy frameworks, monitoring systems and capacity development to support private sector led sustainable tourism, with an emphasis on increasing the capacity of small to medium enterprises to be able to access finance for clean energy and green technology.
    - c) Adopt the Action Plan for the Regional Longline Fisheries Strategy that is currently under development with appropriate timeframes and indicators to measure progress.
    - d) Support the work of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) to improve labour standards and address modern slavery conditions in the fisheries sector.
  - iv. To **intensify** multisector efforts with increased finance to address the impacts of **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**, PICTs are encouraged to:
    - a) Continue taxation, policy and legislation actions to change risk behaviours and effectively address NCDs. In particular controlling marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children,

restricting trans-fat in the food supply, prohibiting tobacco industry interference, and further raising taxes on unhealthy products in line with global recommendations.

- v. To build resilience and strengthen efforts to tackle the dual threats of **climate change and natural disasters** in the region, PICTs are urged to:
  - a) Ensure that local, national and regional climate change adaptation planning processes are effective and informed by up-to-date, robust information on vulnerabilities, current and future risks; and by building resilient communities and ecosystems that ensure the region is benefiting from the latest technology.
  - b) Increase the flexibility and agility of the region's disaster preparedness and response, to effectively deal with different disaster/emergency scenarios, including displacement in a 'fit-for-purpose' and 'cost-effective' manner.
  - c) Develop policies and programs that enhance the region's capacity to more effectively manage migration linked to climate change.
  
- vi. Address the consequences of growing populations and **poor waste (both solid and hazardous) management**. The link between sustainable waste actions and biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, gender inclusiveness and the health and wellbeing of PICT communities is clear. It is recommended that PICTs:
  - a) Continue to implement the Pacific Regional Waste and Pollution Management Strategy 2016-2025 (Cleaner Pacific 2025) by developing good practices on waste management; by helping communities and local authorities develop capacity and institutional mechanisms for targeted waste streams (used oil, disaster wastes, marine debris); by promoting sustainable financing mechanisms; by addressing the problem of waste generated outside the region polluting the Pacific ocean; and promoting better outcomes across the region through a Community of Practice.
  
- vii. In taking steps to address **de-risking issues and the high cost of sending remittances, and enhance the impact of labour mobility on human development**, it is recommended that PICTs:
  - a) Continue to be guided by Forum Economic Ministers Action Plans and the support provided under the World Bank Group Pacific Payment Remittance and Securities Settlement Initiative (PAPRI) and the associated Pacific Payments Project (2013-2022).
  - b) Improve the implementation of seasonal worker schemes and strengthen the pre-departure and post-return assistance to migrant workers and their communities.
  
- viii. To strengthen **coordination and collaboration** to achieve sustainable development, it is recommended that PICTs:
  - a) Continue to more effectively utilise financing options; coordination mechanisms; local, national and regional capacities and institutions to strengthening planning, budgeting and implementation as identified in nationally designed monitoring and reporting processes. Where appropriate, draw on the lessons learned through the Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes.
  - b) Utilise the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development as a mechanism for sharing lessons learned and best practices and encourage coordination, cooperation and partnerships within the region as envisaged in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and as a Blue Pacific Continent.
  - c) Continue to build closer partnerships within Asia and the Pacific as envisaged in the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development to address transboundary issues and promote wider regional cooperation.
  
- ix. To strengthen the commitment to the **collection and analysis of timely, accurate and disaggregated data** for evidence-based policy, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and accountability, PICTs and development partners are encouraged to:
  - a) Support the establishment of a Pacific Statistical Collections Financing Facility to address national

- statistical collection budget gaps and support technical assistance for the production of high quality and timely data.
  - b) Strengthen national/local capacity in planning, monitoring and evaluation based on contextually and culturally appropriate analysis and use of data.
- x. 2020 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA) and eight years since Leaders committed to the **Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED)**. It is recommended that PICTs:
- a) Continue to work as a collective and accelerate action to address the root causes of gender inequality. The region must remain resolute to realize gender equality, particularly with the escalating threat of climate change, global health pandemics, and emerging challenges that are expected to widen the inequality gap.





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