

Measuring and implementing SDG16 in the Pacific

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SUMMARY

The Pacific faces unique challenges in delivering on the UN Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. Strong public institutions and political parties are essential for responding to the agenda's goals in the region. Limited resources necessitates prioritising efforts, and meaningful data on *Sustainable Development Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG16)* is a critical entry point.

This brief explores some of the initiatives across the region to both measure progress on and strengthen institutions. This is

an outcome document of an event held on 6 May 2019 at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji, which explored challenges to measuring and implementing SDG16 addressing peace, justice and strong institutions. The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) produced this document with the support of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Regional Programme - Australia and the Pacific (KAS Australia).

CHALLENGE

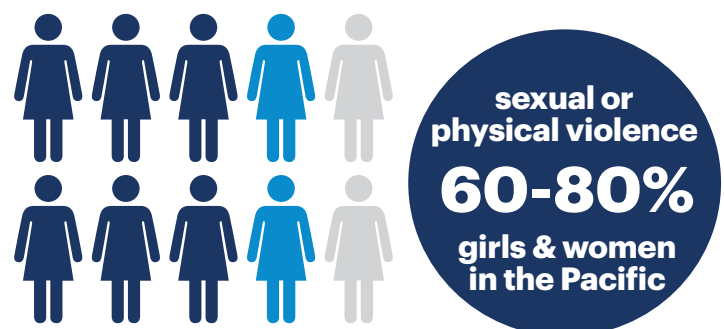
Significant environmental, demographic and socio-economic change is predicted in the Pacific region in the coming years. Some of these include:

Internal challenges: Physical and sexual violence

- The percentage of women in Kiribati, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu who have reported experiences of gender based violence in their life averaged between 60-80 per cent.¹
- There has been internal conflict in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, as well as election-related violence across Papua New Guinea (specifically Highlands, Guadalcanal, Central and Western provinces).

Endemic challenges: Low population, low land fertility, low ability to tap into economies of scale, limited income and geographic isolation

- The Pacific has the population of 11.4 million - the equivalent of metropolitan Paris – in 21 countries and territories spread across one-third of the globe.
- It has a quarter of the world's spoken languages and is the most geographically and culturally diverse region in the world.
- There is limited arable land: all arable land across the Pacific would be able to fit into Fiji three times.



Data source: UN Women (2011)

¹UN Women, "Ending Violence Against Women & Girls Evidence, Data and Knowledge in the Pacific Island Countries", 2nd Edition. 2011. <http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2011/ending%20violence%20against%20women%20and%20girls.pdf?la=en> [Accessed 11 June 2019]

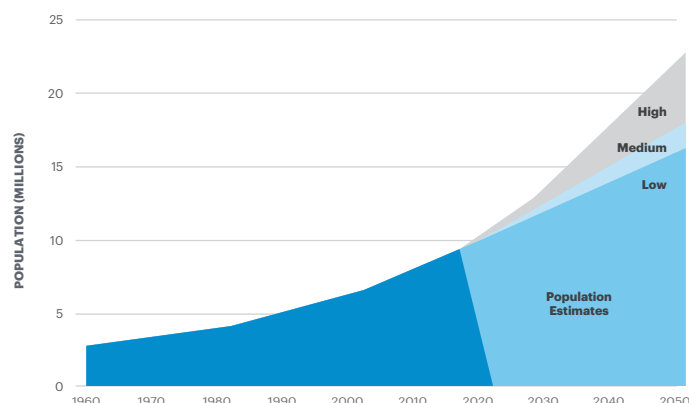
Emerging challenges: Environmental and socio-economic challenges:

- The effects of climate change and natural disasters will have a large impact across the Pacific, with some islands among the most vulnerable to natural hazards in the world.
- Displacement, migration, urbanisation and increasing inequality are all projected to increase.
- The population across the Pacific is predicted to increase by 50-82 per cent by 2050.²

Capacity challenges: The region faces unique governance and resources constraints:

- The Pacific region has a low population spread over vast geography hindering potential economies of scale.
- The region is ranked among the lowest in the world in statistical capacity.³

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF THE PACIFIC, 1960-2050



Source: UNDESA

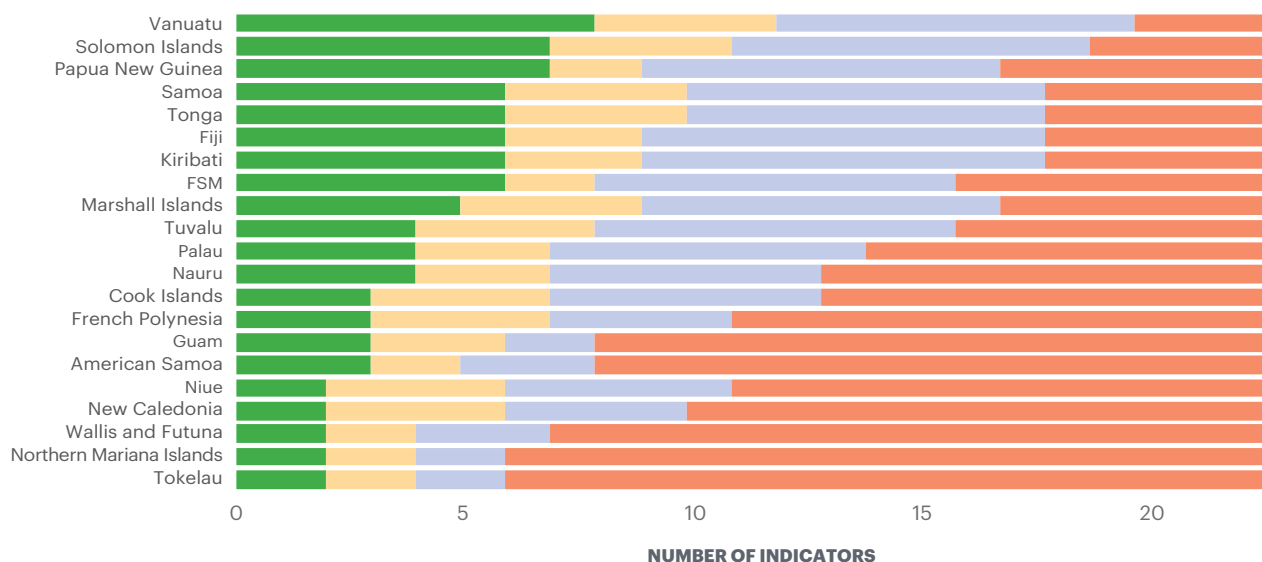
WHAT DO WE KNOW? DATA AVAILABILITY IN THE PACIFIC

Strong institutions are essential to respond to these changes. However, institution building can be slow, challenging and requires prioritisation and effective policy decision making. Meaningful data is a fundamental step to achieving this.

DATA AVAILABILITY OF SDG16 INDICATORS ACROSS THE PACIFIC

ASSESSMENT OF DATA AVAILABILITY OF SDG16 INDICATORS ACROSS THE PACIFIC

- Available / fully covers what the indicator measures
- Available / only partially covers the indicator measure (i.e. not disaggregated, incomplete age breakdown, etc.)
- Proxy measure available or should be able to be calculated
- Not available / unknown



Source: Author's assessment

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL FOCUS ACTIVITIES IN THE PACIFIC

There is a vast range of campaigns and programmes being undertaken by International donors, regional bodies and civil society/non-government organisations and the private sector. Examples include:

In support of SDG 16 the Pacific region, through facilitating bodies such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the South Pacific Community (SPC), has established the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development to assist and support Pacific Islands in the 2030 Agenda. The Pacific SDG Taskforce was created to develop the roadmap and is responsible for its implementation. The taskforce has facilitated a process of prioritising indicators across the region.⁵

Further, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Office in Fiji, in cooperation with KAS Regional Programme – Australia and the Pacific, has organised a series of workshops on political parties in the Pacific. The workshops were held in Suva 2017 and in Port Vila 2018 and convened regional and international experts on the theme of regulating and organising political parties. The overall aim of the dialogue was to promote a common understanding of democratic processes in the South Pacific and to identify possible links for future cooperation. This year's conference is scheduled to take place in September in Honiara, Solomon Islands, and will focus on the regulation and organisation of political parties as well as the inclusion of women and youth.

Also, given the role CSOs can provide in addressing data shortfalls, the work of the Pacific Island Associations of Non-governmental organisations (PIANGO) will be extremely important in the coming years. Strengthening platforms for CSOs and non-government organisations to contribute across the geographic expanse of the Pacific region will allow for data sharing and evidence based policy to be developed in support of the SDGs.⁶

In support of Target 16.2, which seeks to reduce sexual violence and human trafficking, the “We Rise Coalition” was created in 2016 as a partnership between four leading independent feminist organisations: International Women's Development Agency (IDWA), the Fiji Women's Right Movement (FWRM), FemLINK Pacific and Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVAFeq). Through education, mobilisation and empowering women in Fiji, the Coalition is committed to promoting gender and LBT justice and human rights for all through institutional reform and changing attitudes in the country.⁷

In February 2019, the Institute for Economics & Peace released its *SDG16 in the Pacific – Strengthening and Legitimising Institutions to Achieve Sustainable Development* report providing a comprehensive data audit of all indicators available in the region that could be used to measure progress on SDG16.⁴ National statistics offices (NSOs) are crucial to SDG reporting and the work of NSOs across the region and the support they receive through the Pacific Community (SPC), among other intergovernmental bodies, should be highly commended. However, data shortfalls remain a challenge to measure SDG16 in the region.

The report highlights key sources of data that could be used to assist in measuring SDG16:

- Leveraging existing data: Many historical data collection activities (surveys, census, etc.) still offer a wealth of existing information.
- Many third party measures already exist. Civil society organisations (CSOs) play extremely important roles as service delivery providers and data gatherers. For example, women's crisis centres record visits and other aggregated information. This could be used to monitor changes in domestic violence levels and how services are accessed across a country.
- Interim measures, including proxy measures, and incidental data that is already being collected can be used. For example, the severity and causes of violent crime can be inferred through monitoring admissions to medical facilities.

The report proposes how the international and regional communities could focus efforts to capitalise on these three key areas.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Institutions in the Pacific are strengthening, and the democratic environment is changing rapidly, through the rise of social media. However, limited connectivity, weak local governance, and limited service delivery to rural areas pose challenges to the commitment to leave no one behind in SDG implementation. Those remaining farthest behind are often youth, women and any geographically isolated portion of the population. In remote and rural areas, women and youth often play a limited role in decision-making and are at risk of further marginalisation.

As continued strengthening of institutions is critical to achieving the SDG agenda, SDG16 is transformative and necessary.

²UNDESA, 2015 World Population Projections, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/categories/population.html> [Accessed 14 June 2019].

³World Bank, Data on Statistical Capacity, 2018. <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/statisticalcapacity/> [Accessed 10 February 2019].

⁴Ackman, M., Hammond, D., Cooney, C., Liu, L. 2019, “SDG16 in the Pacific – Strengthening and Legitimising Institutions to Achieve Sustainable Development”, Institute for Economics and Peace <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Pacific-Report-2019-web.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2019]. This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.

In support of Target 16.3 which seeks to promote the rule of law at national and international levels and to ensure equal access to justice for all, UNDP has been working in the Pacific, to strengthen key justice institutions and to improve service delivery. UNDP has also been working to empower people to access legal rights and services from these key justice institutions. Non-governmental organisations are being strengthened to deliver accompaniment access to justice services, particularly for impoverished and vulnerable groups.

In support of Target 16.5 which seeks to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms; UNDP has been working with Pacific governments to strengthen their national integrity systems in order to promote 'clean' governments and to create an enabling environment for trade, business, investment and sustainable development to increase in the region. This, in turn, will enhance the delivery of equitable and high-quality services to all Pacific Islanders. It is important to note that all but one Pacific Island countries are parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), and that more and more countries are adopting their national anti-corruption strategies, legislation and setting up anti-corruption institutions. Anti-corruption momentum is on the rise and requires technical support at the national and regional levels.

In support of Target 16.6 which seeks to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; UNDP works with various electoral management bodies in the Pacific to strengthen capacities and manage political change through credible electoral processes. UNDP also works with Pacific parliaments to strengthen the institution to enable it to effectively undertake its legislative, representative and oversight functions. However, the strengthening of democratic governance requires more than well-functioning elections, parliaments, an independent judiciary and other institutions and processes – important though these are. It also calls for a strong culture of democracy, in particular, robust, transparent, internally democratic and accountable political parties where such parties exist, or alternative mechanisms for accountability of elected members where such parties do not exist. Therefore, in the Pacific, UNDP also works with political parties to develop strong, accountable and competent political parties.

In support of Target 16.7 aimed at ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels,

UNDP has been working with governments and parliaments to develop innovative mechanisms to increase their interaction and consultation with marginalised groups, in particular women and youth. Issues of geographic remoteness and access to services can be resolved with responsive government institutions. UNDP is implementing innovative approaches to take central government services out to populations in remote and rural areas to deliver essential basic services by mobile teams. A number of Pacific parliaments, with assistance from UNDP, have been able to undertake public consultation in some of its most geographically isolated parts of the country. To improve transparency and accountability, UNDP has assisted a number of Pacific parliaments undertake an independent analysis of their national budgets, enabling members of parliament to have informed debates on their respective national budgets.

CONCLUSION

The Pacific region is not alone in facing challenges in measuring and implementing SDG16. No country in the world is currently able to measure all indicators, let alone to achieve them. Strengthening and increasing the legitimacy of institutions and the rule of law is fundamental for development outcomes in the Pacific region. This is especially true with significant projected changes relating to the environment, demographics, socioeconomics and measuring peace and stability. Strong institutions are essential to respond to these changes.

Progress in *SDG16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* can be viewed as an enabler for the broader 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In this light, efforts in the Pacific that produce data and evidence to inform policy makers in regards to SDG16 progress is important for two reasons. First, meaningful data is fundamental to assist in informed policy decision making. Secondly, strengthening institutions in an informed and effective manner creates mechanisms for the broader Sustainable Development Goals and the commitment to leave no one behind. Given geographic and capacity constraints, the Pacific should emphasise finding enough information to shape policy to quickly and cheaply guide prioritisation and decision-making. The Institute for Economics & Peace's report, *SDG16 in the Pacific – Strengthening and Legitimising Institutions to Achieve Sustainable Development*, provides a comprehensive data audit of SDG16 and discusses areas for innovation for the region to achieve this development goal.⁸

⁵Pacific Community, "Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific", 2018. <https://sdd.spc.int/en/news/latest-news/171-sdgs-in-the-pacific-booklet> [Accessed 1 January 2019].

⁶Pacific Island Associations of Non-governmental organisations (2019) <http://www.piango.org/home/about-us/about-piango/> [Accessed 11 July 2019].

⁷International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) 2019, *We Rise Coalition* <https://iwda.org.au/a-truly-feminist-partnership-iwda-and-prominent-fijian-womens-rights-organisations-form-the-we-rise-coalition/> [Accessed 20 June 2019].

⁸Ackman, M., Hammond, D., Cooney, C., Liu, L. 2019, "SDG16 in the Pacific – Strengthening and Legitimising Institutions to Achieve Sustainable Development", Institute for Economics and Peace <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Pacific-Report-2019-web.pdf> [Accessed 20 April 2019].

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