

MISSING DATA, MISSING REGION, MISSING WOMEN

Pacific Data in Multinational Reports of Development Agencies

The Pacific Women's Network Report by Rishu Shrestha and Dimity Fifer

The genesis of this Research Report was the growing disquiet among Pacific Women's Network members about the gaps in data on international indicators tracking progress on health, education and empowerment for Pacific Islander women. We found that global multinational agencies working in development were publishing reports with multiple gaps in Pacific country data in the Tables, Graphs and Appendices. Rows of dashes were where there should have been numbers and Notes to Tables stating 'Data Not Available' were commonplace. When checking each new Annual Report or Statistical Yearbook it became apparent that there were other themes emerging besides that of missing data.

The inclusion of the Pacific as a region in a global report is not a given. Where the Pacific is included, different classifications are used - including Oceania, East Asia and the Pacific, Western Pacific, Asia-Pacific - and one can never assume what number of Pacific Island countries will be included. Global maps make no attempt to reference the spread and number of Pacific Island countries. Even United Nations (UN) agencies have no consistent nomenclature for the region. Rarely does the acknowledgement of the sub regional areas of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia appear. Reports of well over 100 pages beautifully formatted with pictures illustrating global activity and accompanied by extensive narrative, have no Pacific Islander faces and no Pacific case studies. However, a picture does emerge - one of missing data, missing countries, missing region.

Statisticians talk of data insights and the use of data to 'look across' themes and issues. So the research question became, what if research was undertaken to gain an insight across multi-national development agency reports to gain better insight into how the Pacific region, Pacific island countries and Pacific Islanders, in particular women, were being included and represented. What is current practice? Can good practice be identified? The research in mid-2015, covers twenty reports¹ published within the past five years and uses content analysis to investigate the level and nature of:

¹ Eleven global UN Reports: UNDP Annual Report 2013-2014; UN World Food Program in 2014 Facts and Figures; The Millennium Development Goals Report, UN 2014; WHO World Health Statistics 2014; WHO World Health Statistics 2015; UN Women Annual Report 2014 – 2015; Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 Transforming Economies Realising Rights, UN Women; United Nations Environment Program Annual Report 2014; UNICEF Annual Report 2013; The Power of 1.8 billion Adolescents, UNFPA State of World Population 2014; UNFPA Annual Report 2012.

- The representation of the Pacific in major multi-national development agency reports with respect to the region and the 22 Pacific Islands Countries (PICTs)² of the South Pacific.
- The availability of data to support the Pacific in the transition to the Sustainable Development Goals post 2015, with a focus on data on Pacific Islander women.

The research highlights two major gaps:

- There is a failure to adequately include and represent the Pacific region and Pacific Island countries in the global reports of multinational development agencies.
- Where they are included in global and in regional reports, there is a significant lack of available data on development indicators, particularly data on women.

Global reports typically have different purposes, including providing an account of operations, the identification of areas of current and future need and the analysis of the current state of affairs. With the Pacific as a region excluded from many global reports and the unavailability of regional and individual PICT data, the current status and urgency of Pacific Island development issues such as

Four global non-UN agency reports (working in agricultural sphere (1), in women's economic empowerment (1), in global peace (1), in health (1): CGIAR Annual Report 2013; Women's World Banking Annual Report 2012; Institute for Economics and Peace, Positive Peace Report 2015; Global Fund Results Factsheet 2015.

Five regional reports (three UN and two non-UN): Statistical Year Book for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP; Asia-Pacific Aspirations: Perspectives for a Post-2015 Development Agenda, Asia-Pacific Regional MDGs Report 2012-2013 ESCAP, ADB, UNDP; Asian Development Bank Annual Report 2014; 2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat; Population and Development Profiles: Pacific Island Countries, UNFPA 2014.

² PICTs refer to the 22 Pacific countries and territories of The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC): American Samoa (Territory of USA), Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia (Collectivity of France), Guam (Territory of USA), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru, New Caledonia (Collectivity of France), Niue, Northern Mariana Islands (Commonwealth of the USA), Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Pitcairn Islands (Territory of UK), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau (Territory of New Zealand), Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna (Collectivity of France).

climate change, gender equality and maternal child health is not being accurately, or adequately, portrayed. This has implications for the future planning, funding and support of these issues. Small population size and geographic isolation makes this difficult, but not insurmountable.

We are also faced with a multi-dimensional problem, the lack of data on the Pacific in general and the global lack of data on women. For women in the Pacific this is a two-edged sword. In the light of evidence of limited progress on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and gender equality across the region³, PICTs must be accurately represented in global reporting with the inclusion of data on Pacific women prioritised, reflecting the importance of gender statistics, as a foundation for informed policy making, ultimately to secure a better future for the region as a whole and, better lives for the region's women and girls.

Four major questions arise from this research:

1. Why is there no consistency in how the region is treated, with no common nomenclature for the region and no common understanding of the number of Pacific countries?
2. Why is there such a high level of missing data on progress and development indicators for the Pacific as a whole, for individual Pacific Island countries, and for Pacific Islander women?
3. Where data does exist, why is progress against the MDGs and other development indicators, in Pacific Island countries so deficient?
4. Who in the UN system is responsible for registering this significant and dire oversight and appropriately concluding that serious attention and support needs to be given to the Pacific?

As the cornerstone for the monitoring of, and planning for, the achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all 22 Pacific Island countries, these issues need to be addressed. The report's seven recommendations are proactive, actionable and responsive.

ONE - That UN and other multinational agencies working in development monitor and report on data from all Pacific Island countries and identify the region in all future reports as disaggregated from Asia, either as Oceania, or as the Pacific Islands.

TWO - That PICTs which are territories of other countries (i.e. France, USA, NZ, UK), have data systems that enable reporting for the PICT as a member of the Pacific region to enable a full and complete regional perspective.

THREE - That PICTs which are territories of other countries (i.e. France, USA, NZ, UK) should be monitored appropriately and included transparently in the data of their governing country and as part of Pacific reporting.

FOUR - That global UN agencies and other multilateral inter-governmental and NGO agencies use evidence regarding PICT progress on SDGs as the most important criteria for determining their level of involvement in the Pacific.

FIVE - That mechanisms involved with monitoring of the SDGs should ensure that the Pacific is referenced as a region; that no PICT is missing, and that increased in-country and regional support is given to National Statistical Agencies and regional bodies to assist with improving the adequacy and quality of data collection and data reporting.

SIX - That the official UN Statistics Office ensure that in the transition from the monitoring of the MDGs to the SDGs the current 20 Pacific Island countries are maintained; that a determination is made regarding responsibility for monitoring data on Wallis and Futuna and Pitcairn Islands; that protocols are set for the Pacific region's nomenclature to ensure it is disaggregated from other regions; that a process is developed to determine whether other Pacific island countries have been left off the list of Least Developed Countries.

SEVEN - That in conjunction with Pacific nations, the UN hosts a global conference in the Pacific in 2016 to coincide with World Population Day 2016 to advance action on these recommendations and that, following the 2015 World Statistics Day launch of the *World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics Report*, the next *World's Women: Trends & Statistics Report* is launched in the Pacific and that the report includes complete and comprehensive data on Pacific Island women.

the
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Join the #IncludePasifika Campaign.

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³ The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat Report, *2013 Pacific Regional MDGs Tracking Report*, reviewed in this research.