

INDICATOR GUIDELINES

FOR POLICY MONITORING IN THE PACIFIC



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

2050 STRATEGY	2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent
ABAS	Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States
CROP	Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
NDP	National development plan
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSO	National statistics office
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small island developing States
SPC	Pacific Community



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BASELINE

The numerical value signifying the starting point for an indicator included in a policy or plan, thus enabling the tracking of progress in implementing the policy or plan

NATIONAL CORE SET OF PRIORITY INDICATORS

A set of indicators a country may generate to monitor progress against each high priority reporting requirement at the global, regional and national level

METADATA

Documentation describing the purpose, exact definition and computation approach (including data sources, calculation method and responsibility) for producing a statistical indicator (see Section 3.2 for more details)

NATIONAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORK/NATIONAL INDICATOR SET

The set of indicators generated to monitor progress against any national policy or plan

NATIONAL INDICATOR LANDSCAPE

The set of indicator frameworks a country uses to contribute to its reporting requirements, the respective stakeholders who are responsible for undertaking this work, and the processes which will be adopted to meet each reporting requirement (see Section 1.2 for more details)

NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEM

A network of national statistical authorities that provide official statistical information for the country

POLICY OUTCOME

A broad description of what a country wishes to achieve with respect to key policy priority issues addressed by the national policy or plan

POLICY PRIORITY ISSUE

Any issue of importance to the country, addressed in a national plan for which the government wishes to monitor progress

PROCESS INDICATOR

Any indicator included in a national policy or plan to monitor the activities or actions adopted to achieve results of sustainable development (similar in nature to 'input indicator', 'operational indicator')

RESULT INDICATOR

Any indicator included in a national plan or global/regional initiative to monitor the end result of applying strategies to address sustainable development (similar in nature to 'output indicator', 'outcome indicator', 'impact indicator', 'development indicator')

STATISTICAL INDICATOR

A measure which provides meaningful evidence to monitor progress against key policy issues for which desired results are sought (see Section 1.2 for more details)

TARGET VALUE/BENCHMARK

Numeric milestone of desirable change in an underlying issue, used to measure progress made over time (see Section 7.1.2 for more details)



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

Indicators are key elements of information systems for open and inclusive societies. They represent important social phenomena and provide common references for social discourse. They can be used to inform private decision-making and enhance the participation of citizens in the public sphere. Evidence derived from indicators can empower people and institutions to audit public policies, make governance more transparent, and hold policy-makers accountable to society.¹ Given this broad range of uses, it is challenging to develop indicator guidelines serving all purposes and addressing the needs of all users. These guidelines, however, aim to **address the needs of government officials and their development partners in the Pacific for sound national indicator frameworks to monitor and evaluate public policies.**

This document has been drafted to provide a more complete picture of the indicator challenges faced in countries in the Pacific and to offer some guiding advice on how to tackle these challenges, including some general guidance on the formulation of indicators.

In particular these guidelines aim to:

- promote the importance of tackling indicator production in a more holistic way for reporting progress against global/regional/national/sub-national initiatives and plans;
- provide guidance on processes for producing indicator frameworks for national policies or plans, including what constitutes a good indicator, through a set of soundness criteria;
- improve the understanding of reporting requirements of priority global and regional initiatives, including how they can be addressed;
- provide background material for Pacific countries to review and develop their own national indicator strategy² (if they so wish), covering the following processes:
 - stocktaking of current practices;
 - assessment of what is working and where modifications could be made;
 - development of a new indicator landscape; and
 - potential adoption of a core set of priority indicators.

1 For more reading on the broader role of indicators, refer to '[Rethinking official statistics: a sociological perspective](#)', '[Guidelines on indicator methodology: A mission impossible?](#)', and '[Indicators: Tools for informing, monitoring or controlling?](#)'.

2 Further discussion of the national indicator strategy is provided in Section 8.

CHAPTER 1

1.2 Who should read this document

These guidelines should be used across the entire national statistical system, under the guidance of the national statistics office (NSO) and national planning department as leading agencies.

These guidelines will be of particular benefit to staff within government line ministries and non-governmental organisations engaging in national monitoring processes, to strengthen their understanding of sound indicators, and how to select those indicators most appropriate to monitor sustainable development in their areas of interest.

Development partners supporting countries across the Pacific in developing and monitoring national and sector plans as well as supporting their reporting processes against global and regional commitments will also benefit from the content.

These guidelines have been developed primarily for the Pacific region, given:

- the high reliance of national development plans and sector plans in the Pacific to guide national progress towards sustainable development; and
- the importance for Pacific Island countries to report progress against a number of key global and regional initiatives presented in Section 2.2.2, which must be well managed to minimise the burden on statistical systems.

In each country, modifications to current statistical practices in undertaking this work should be reflected in the national strategy for the development of statistics.

1.3 Background

Demands on small island developing States (SIDS) for the production of indicators to monitor and track progress continues to grow with an increasing number of national, regional and global frameworks, each with a range of reporting requirements. Countries in the Pacific are doing their best to monitor commitments and report progress, but it is challenging and costly. Using a carefully thought through approach, governments in the Pacific can simplify the reporting requirements to reduce the burden on national resources while continuing to report against each of their priority initiatives.

National reporting bodies in the region, including the national statistical systems, currently use different approaches to satisfy reporting requirements, and much can be learned from their experiences. These guidelines, which are flexible in nature, build on the current approaches and measures adopted by Pacific Island governments.

CHAPTER 1

These guidelines support the Strategic Framework for Pacific Statistics 2022–2030, developed under the leadership of the Pacific Community (SPC), in particular Key Focus Area 2: ‘All Pacific Island countries and territories are producing and disseminating (either in-house or through technical assistance) an agreed core set of high-quality economic, social, and environmental statistics in a timely and user-friendly manner in line with national priorities and are integrating Sustainable Development Goals and regional/global reporting requirements.’

These guidelines also aim to complement national strategies for the development of statistics in each of the Pacific Island countries, providing a specific tool to support Pacific policy-makers, planners and statisticians to best develop a core set of high-quality and timely statistics.

Throughout this document the terms ‘statistical indicator’ and ‘national indicator landscape’ are used extensively. Definitions for both are provided below.

What is a statistical indicator?

Varying definitions have been proposed for indicators depending on their use in different contexts. Given the scope of this guideline, and in the absence of standard definition for a statistical indicator, these guidelines take a practical approach and define a statistical indicator based on its expected role in policy monitoring.

A Statistical Indicator is a measure which provides meaningful evidence to help monitor progress against key policy issues for which desired results are sought.

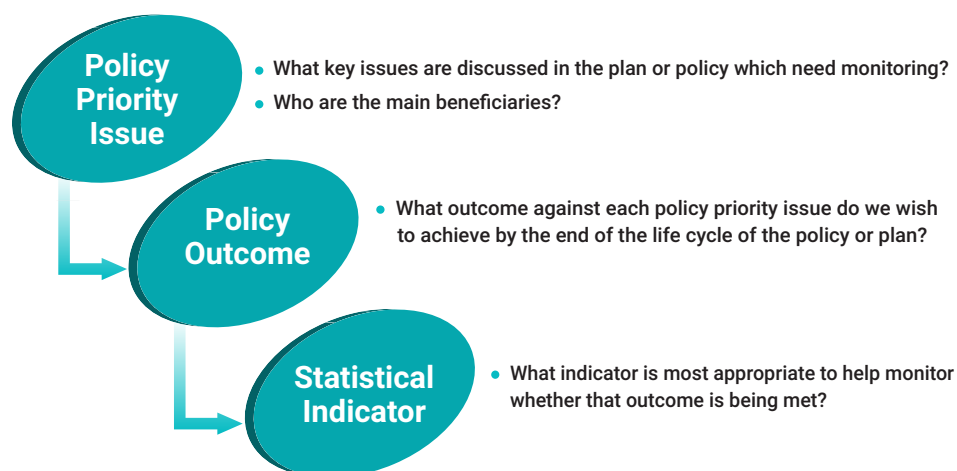
This definition provides key determining factors (highlighted in light blue) for the process of adopting and formulating indicators that are fit for purpose. Additionally, it establishes the foundation for developing a set of criteria to assess the soundness of a statistical indicator (see Section 3).

A stepwise approach for adopting the most appropriate statistical indicators for monitoring a specific policy outcome is provided in figure 1.

CHAPTER 1

FIGURE 1

Steps towards establishing statistical indicators for a national policy or plan

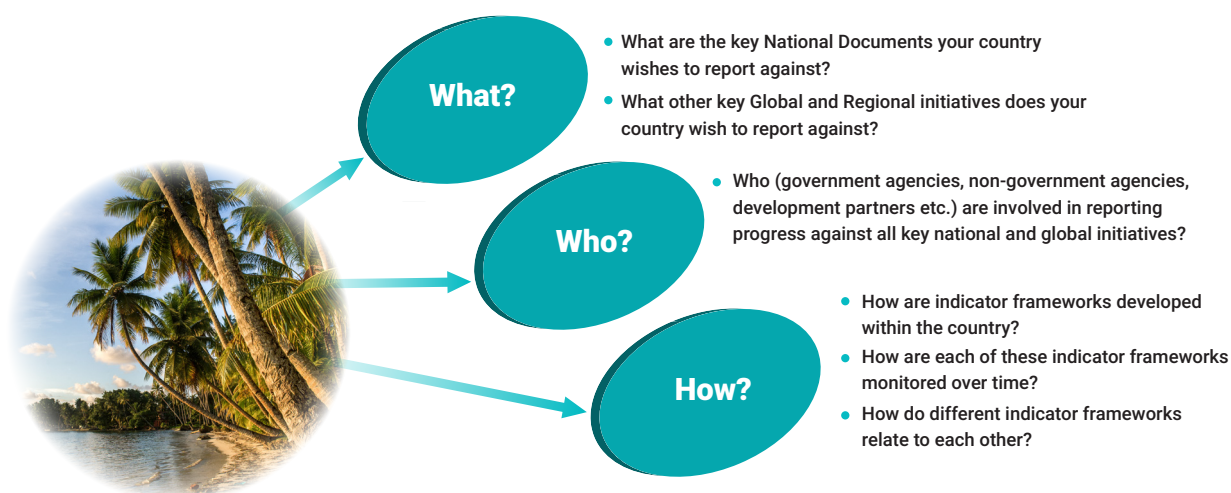


What is a national indicator landscape?

In these guidelines, a national indicator landscape refers to the set of indicator frameworks a country uses to contribute to its reporting requirements, the respective stakeholders who are responsible for undertaking this work, and the processes which will be adopted to meet each reporting requirement. Within each country, the unique characteristics of the national indicator landscape may be better understood by answering the questions contained in figure 2. Further discussion on the national indicator landscape is contained in Section 2.

FIGURE 2

Guiding questions to help understand a national indicator landscape



CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING NATIONAL REPORTING MECHANISMS

National reporting mechanisms consist of processes through which different indicator frameworks are used to meet the reporting requirements of national policy priorities. To understand national reporting mechanisms, this section provides a checklist for establishing a national indicator landscape, and delves more in to identifying reporting requirements (which focus on their national policy priorities) and those who should be involved in the reporting process.

2.1 National indicator landscapes

The national indicator landscape includes the set of indicator frameworks a country uses to respond to its reporting requirements, the respective stakeholders who are responsible for this work, and the processes which will be adopted to meet each reporting requirement. Box 1 provides a checklist for analysing and improving the soundness of a national indicator landscape.

BOX 1 CHECKLIST FOR ANALYSING THE NATIONAL INDICATOR LANDSCAPE

- ✓ Identify all key reporting requirements (begin with the national development plan or strategy)
- ✓ Identify all existing indicator frameworks developed or adopted by your country and carefully assess their interlinkages
- ✓ Assess nationally developed indicators to ensure they are sound and appropriately defined
- ✓ Engage all relevant stakeholders and ensure their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood
- ✓ Ensure alignment between reporting requirements is deliberate and carefully thought through

CHAPTER 2

2.2 Identify reporting requirements

2.2.1 National reporting

National reporting requirements should always be the primary priority in each country. If they have been designed well, national reporting mechanisms should also satisfy the relevant reporting requirements of global and regional initiatives.

The national development plan or strategy is the centrepiece of a country's national planning processes. In the Pacific region, national plans are known by different titles and span varied timeframes and may also vary in scope and structure, but the overall objectives remain similar. Some examples of national plans in the Pacific are given below.

- Vanuatu: National Sustainable Development Plan (2016–2030)
- Cook Islands: National Sustainable Development Agenda (2012–2121)
- Samoa: Pathway for the Development of Samoa (FY2021/22–FY2025/26)
- Tuvalu: National Strategy for Sustainable Development (2021–2030).
- A detailed list of all the latest national development plans is provided in Annex 1.

Ideally, each national plan should be accompanied by an indicator framework to monitor progress against key priority areas and sectors addressed in the plan. Monitoring occurs either annually or during the mid-term review of the plan.

National plans may be supported by a broad range of additional plans and strategies, and there may be varying levels of alignment across these plans. These additional plans may also have indicator frameworks and reporting requirements.

- Sector-based plans include action plans for individual line ministries. They are often shorter in duration, such as annual operational plans and five-year development plans.
- Geographic plans are tailored to different areas. For example:
 - in the Federated States of Micronesia, the National Strategic Development Plan 2004–2023 is supplemented by four State Plans (Yap, Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei); and
 - in Tonga, the National Strategic Development Framework 2015–2025 is supported by 23 district plans.
- Additional national policies cover emerging development issues or issues of particular national importance.
 - Tuvalu: National Climate Change Policy 2021–2030.

CHAPTER 2

2.2.2 *Global and regional reporting*

Global and regional frameworks present both opportunities and challenges for national reporting mechanisms. They increase the demand on national statistical systems but also provide many well-established and internationally comparable indicators, and governments in the Pacific may use them to address reporting needs of both the national level and the global and regional levels. By using indicators from global and regional frameworks, governments can align national policy priorities with international commitments and transboundary development issues.

Global reporting

Examples of key global reporting requirements of relevance to the Pacific are provided below. Global frameworks have varied reporting structures and a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators.

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 231 indicators, has set the tone for indicator reporting globally.³ The SDG indicators are supported by accessible metadata and capacity support (through both custodian agencies and statistics programmes at the global or regional level) for their production. All Pacific countries have considered the SDGs and made efforts to align their national plans with the SDGs or integrate the SDGs into their plans.
- As an outcome of the third international conference on SIDS, held in Apia from 1 to 4 September 2014, the Samoa Pathway (2015–2025) was adopted as the third programme of action for SIDS. Subsequently, a [Toolkit for Monitoring and Reporting](#) and an [indicator set](#) was not published until 2023, and thus uptake across SIDS regions was low. The fourth international conference on SIDS took place in May 2024 in Antigua and Barbuda. Building on the Samoa Pathway monitoring and evaluation framework, the fourth programme of action for SIDS monitoring and evaluation framework will be developed in 2024 and 2025. Guiding principles for it were established during a technical workshop held in Apia in March 2024.
- Additional global frameworks may or may not create reporting obligations for Pacific countries. Some examples include:
 - the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) 2015–2030 outlines seven targets and four priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks;

³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>.

CHAPTER 2

- the nine core International Human Rights instruments such as the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#);
- the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) and the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2018–2030); and
- the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) has 23 action-oriented global targets for urgent action over the decade to 2030, adopted at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity in 2022.

Regional reporting

Aligned to the SDGs, the key regional approach for the Pacific, the [2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent](#), was endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2022. It is supported by a [2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023–2030](#) with a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan and initial indicator set that will be refined in 2024 and again in 2030. This will replace the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development (2017) which has a subset of the SDGs selected for regional reporting.

A number of sector level strategies for the Pacific region set out action plans for the development and/or protection of different aspects of Pacific economies and societies (see key examples in Annex 2).

2.3 Who should be involved in indicator development/selection for reporting processes

The choice of who should be involved and how they are involved in national reporting mechanisms depends on the governance structure of each country, but it is desirable to follow some general rules. This section provides important points countries may consider in developing indicators for reporting against national development plans, sector plans and global and regional frameworks.

Indicators for reporting against the national development plan

- The **national planning department** is usually the lead agency for producing a national development plan, and it should have a leading role in the development of the indicator framework that will monitor the national plan.
- It is extremely important to engage **NSOs** in monitoring the national development plan, thus NSOs should play a key supporting role in the development of the indicator

CHAPTER 2

framework. NSOs may review the proposed indicators for soundness and may provide guidance/recommendations where needed. Because NSOs oversee data production for many of these indicators, they should sign off on the final indicator set.

- **Line ministries** need to participate in the development of indicators, as they are the subject matter experts of their sectors and have a clear picture of the policy priorities that need monitoring. They are also likely to be custodians of some of the data required for production of the indicators, and they can ensure that relevant indicators from the national development plan appear as headline indicators in their respective sector plans.
- Any other **data custodians** who produce data required for any indicators proposed in the plan as well as relevant **development partners** who can add great value to the process to encourage alignment with global and regional reporting where relevant and international concepts and definitions where appropriate, should participate in the development of indicators.

Indicators for reporting against sector plans

- The lead agency for producing sector plans is generally the **line ministry** which oversees that sector. The line ministry also has the lead role in producing the indicator framework to monitor the sector plan.
- The guidance of the **national planning department** is important to ensure consistency in the way sector plans are developed across the country and to ensure synergies and alignment with the national development plan.
- For the same reasons mentioned above, **NSOs, data custodians** and **development partners** must also be engaged in developing the indicator framework to monitor sector plans.

Indicators for reporting against global and regional frameworks

- The agency or entity tasked with leading the work on reporting against priority global and regional frameworks would generally take the lead on prioritizing indicators for each of these reporting requirements. Many different agencies or entities could take the lead. For example with SDGs, the indicator selection process could be led by an **SDG steering committee**, the **national planning department** or even **NSO**. Other key stakeholders that should be involved in the selection of indicators for reporting against global and regional initiatives include **line ministries** and **development partners**.



CHAPTER 3

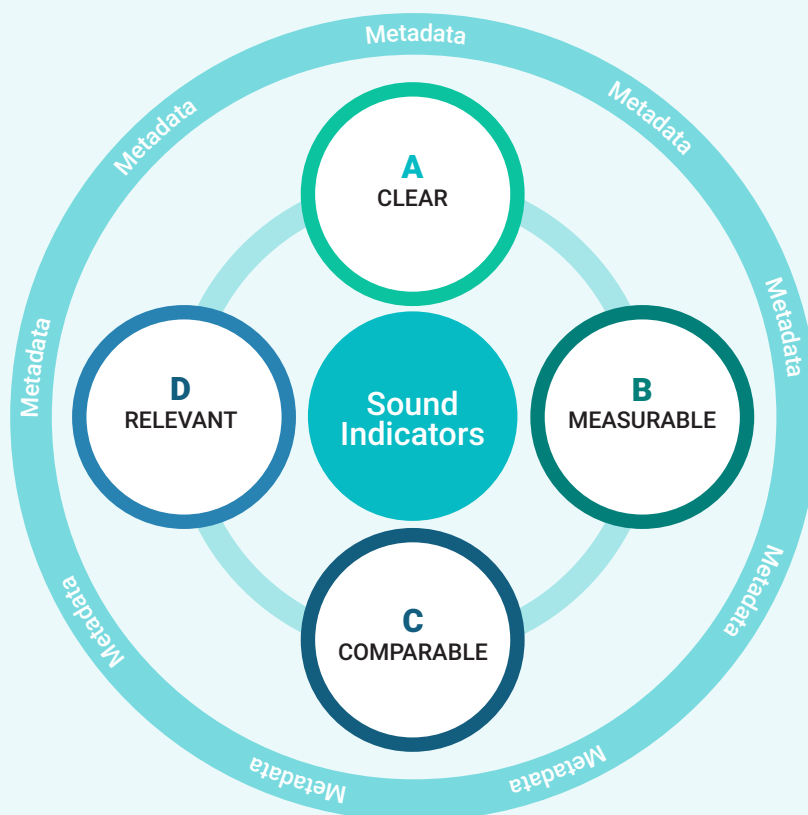
DESIGNING QUALITY STATISTICAL INDICATORS

This section provides an overview of criteria to assess the soundness (or quality) of a statistical indicator.⁴

As presented in figure 3, sound indicators must be clear, measurable, comparable and relevant. A sound indicator must be accompanied by detailed, well thought out metadata. The soundness of indicators may be assessed according to those characteristics. Details of each are provided below.

FIGURE 3

Characteristics of sound indicators



⁴ A lack of a standard assessment framework for indicators has led many users to apply other criteria developed for different purposes when assessing the soundness of indicators; such as the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) criteria which is developed to guide the formulation of policy targets, in which some aspects such as 'Achievable' and 'Time-bound' are clearly not applicable to indicators.

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3.1 Four dimensions of sound indicators3.1.1 *Clear*

This section presents characteristics of a clear indicator. These include the specificity of the description, inclusion of the measurement unit and population addressed, ease of communication and interpretation, desired direction and alignment with a metric.

A 1 SPECIFICITY OF DESCRIPTION**Question to ask**

Is the information in the indicator description **specific enough about what is being measured, including addressing just one variable/index?**

- Avoid vague terms which may have more than one interpretation, so everyone understands the indicator in the same way.
 - Avoid addressing more than one concept in the same indicator.

A 2 INCLUSION OF SPECIFIC MEASUREMENT UNITS AND POPULATION ADDRESSED WHEN RELEVANT**Question to ask**

Does the indicator include the specific measurement **units and **population** addressed?**

- The measurement units must be included when relevant. Measurement units include totals, percentages, ratios, averages, etc.
- The population addressed must be included when relevant. Populations include people, households, school students, businesses, etc.

A 3 COMMUNICATION AND INTERPRETATION**Question to ask**

Question to ask: Is the indicator **easy to **communicate** and **interpret** for your typical user?**

- The indicator should be simple enough for the producer of the indicator to communicate its meaning via how it was produced.
 - The typical user should be able to easily interpret the values being produced, and thus assess what it means

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A 4 DESIRED DIRECTION AND NUMERIC TARGET**Question to ask**

Is the desired direction clear, and is it possible to set a target?

- Sound indicators should generally be heading in a particular direction to demonstrate whether progress is being made (i.e. do we want the indicator value to increase or decrease?).
- If it is unclear what the direction should be, then the usefulness of the indicator is diminished, and target values cannot be set.
- Lack of clarity makes it harder to set a target which reduces the usefulness of the indicator for progress assessment.

Note: The desired direction may change according to national context.

A 5 ALIGNMENT WITH A METRIC**Question to ask**

Does the indicator describe the metric to be generated rather than the outcome to be achieved?

- A statistical indicator is computed to demonstrate progress towards an outcome.
- Avoid phrasing such as 'Reduce by 20% ...', 'Halve the level ...', etc., as these statements reflect outcomes/targets rather than indicators.

3.1.2 *Measurable*

This section presents characteristics of a measurable indicator. These include measurability at a point in time and measurability over time.

B 1 MEASURABLE AT A POINT IN TIME**Question to ask**

Can the indicator be measured, given the data sources that are available?

- If the indicator is too sensitive or complex in nature, then generating a value which is useful or meaningful will be difficult; in such cases, it may be preferable to adopt proxy indicators (which may be slightly less relevant to the topic).
- If there is no practical data source for the indicator, then it cannot be produced.

CHAPTER 3

B 2 MEASURABILITY OVER TIME**Question to ask**

Can the indicator be measured over time (i.e. is there a well-established data collection procedure in the country that guarantees the continuity of data availability and indicator production in the future)?

- Beyond the availability of data sources to generate indicators at a point in time, indicators should be produced over time to monitor progress.
 - Assess whether the data sources for the indicator (surveys, administrative data, etc.) will continue to be available to measure progress over time.

3.1.3 *Comparable*

This section presents characteristics of a comparable indicator. These include use of international frameworks and classifications, alignment with existing frameworks and the comparability of the measurement unit and population adopted:

C 1 INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND CLASSIFICATIONS**Question to ask**

Does the indicator contain internationally agreed measurement frameworks and classifications?

- Don't reinvent the wheel. When appropriate, adopt globally recognized concepts, standards and classifications, developed by experts, to enhance the quality of the indicator.

C 2 ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING FRAMEWORKS**Question to ask**

Is the proposed indicator consistent with existing global/regional/national indicator frameworks which report on the same issue?

- Adopting globally/regionally approved indicators, where relevant, promotes alignment and reduces reporting burden.

C 3 COMPARABILITY OF MEASUREMENT UNITS AND POPULATION ADDRESSED**Question to ask**

Does the choice of the measurement units and population addressed enable comparisons with other countries?

- The choice of measurement units and population addressed needs to be appropriate to enable comparisons.
- For Pacific SIDS with small populations, sometimes using different measurement units (total instead of rate per 100,000) is more suitable – adopting both can be a good compromise.

CHAPTER 3

3.1.4 *Relevant*

This section presents characteristics of a relevant indicator. These include proximity to the issue and the suitability of the indicator type.

D 1 PROXIMITY TO THE ISSUE**Question to ask**

Does the proposed indicator capture the essence of the issue it is monitoring?

- If the proposed indicator does not capture the main essence of the issue it is monitoring, then it will have limited value.
 - Deviations from the issue may need to occur based on data availability and what it is possible to monitor, but a suitable proximity to the issue should still be maintained.

D 2 SUITABILITY OF THE INDICATOR TYPE**Question to ask**

Is the indicator type (process or result indicator) suitable?

- For longer-term national and sector plans it is more appropriate to focus on results type indicators (outcomes).
 - For shorter-term annual plans, often at the ministry level, it is more appropriate to focus on process type indicators (inputs, outputs).

3.2 Importance of metadata

In the statistics world, 'metadata' is considered supplementary information that helps us better develop, understand and make use of statistics and statistical products. It can mean different things in different contexts. For example, metadata may accompany a Unit Record File (URF), which contains the microdata for a statistical survey. Metadata in this sense may include the full questionnaire, sample design details, collection methodology details, information on the structure of the URF and even details of limitations such as non-response levels.

In the context of these guidelines, however, which focus on statistical indicators, metadata refers to **documentation describing the purpose, exact definition and computation approach (including data sources, calculation method and responsibility) for producing a statistical indicator**. An example of metadata for a statistical indicator can be found in Annex 3.

Across the Pacific, metadata is often neglected in indicator frameworks of national development and sector plans. Yet, the absence of metadata will lead to problems in producing and using indicators, making monitoring the progress of national/sector plans far less effective.

CHAPTER 3

There are two main benefits of statistical indicator metadata.

- **Developing/deciding upon indicators**: Metadata ensures that each important aspect of the indicator has been properly addressed before it is adopted.
- **Interpreting and using indicators**: Metadata ensures that everyone has the same interpretation and understanding of the values associated with the indicator.

The SDG indicators are all accompanied by a detailed metadata⁵ and the SDG metadata can be used as a guide of what is covered. Even if this level of detail is not produced for a national or sector plan, it would still be useful to cover each of the key components in a more abbreviated format. To understand these benefits in more detail, it is useful to look at the common components of metadata, as shown in table 1.



⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/>

CHAPTER 3

TABLE 1 Common components of metadata

Outcome	Broad outcome the indicator reports against
Sub-outcome	Details of corresponding sub-outcome if relevant
Indicator name	Name or title of the indicator
Baseline/availability	This section features baseline data if already available (or timing of imminent baseline data availability)
Alignment with existing global or regional frameworks	This section provides details of how closely this indicator aligns with existing global or regional indicator frameworks such as the SDGs.
Lead agency	Agency accountable for its production
Other contributing agencies	All other agencies contributing to the indicator's production
Definition	This section provides a broader definition of the indicator, including what the indicator measures. In cases where a key concept specific to the indicator is being introduced, it should be explained briefly here.
Rationale	This section explains the purpose of using this indicator to measure the particular outcome/sub-outcome of the policy or plan.
Calculation method	This section explains the overall plan for measurement of the indicator. This may include the unit of measurement; numerator and denominator (if applicable), cumulative and non-cumulative nature of the indicator and the conditions for measurement.
Data sources	The potential primary or secondary source or sources for collecting data for the indicator at the country level is required in this section.
Frequency of data collection	This may include information on frequency of collecting data at the country level.
Disaggregation requirements	This section provides details of the level of disaggregation required for the indicator (such as sex, urban/rural, etc.)
Further information	This section provides citations and links to further information, such as background documents, research, global norms and standards related to the indicator.



CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING NATIONAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

This section provides guiding principles that should be followed when developing a national indicator framework. A national indicator framework refers to any indicator framework developed for monitoring national or sub-national policies or plans, including:

- national development plans
- sector development plans
- state development plans
- topic-specific policies, such as a climate change policy or youth policy.

Some of the guiding principles discussed below are covered to some degree in Section 3 on the production of quality indicators. They are included in this section as well because of their relevance to the discussion of developing national indicator frameworks.

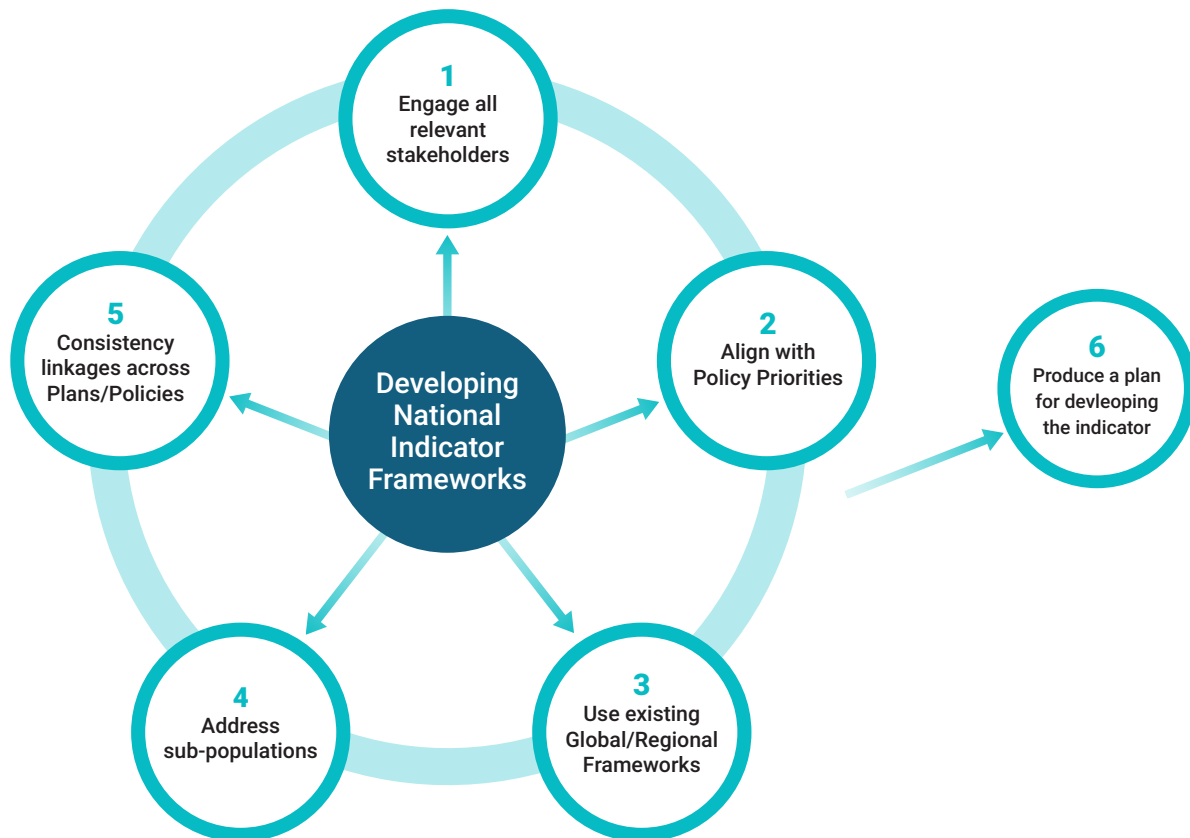
4.1 Key guiding principles overview

Figure 4 shows key guiding principles for developing a national indicator framework. To ensure the best final outcome, five broad areas have been identified, which should be addressed in a well-planned approach and that contribute to the plan for developing and endorsing the indicator framework. The following narrative provides more detail on each guiding principle.

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FIGURE 4

Guiding principles and inputs to develop and endorse a national indicator framework

4.1.1 *Engage all relevant stakeholders***Many hands make light work**

Indicator framework development is a multi-stakeholder exercise. This principle is vital for creating ownership around indicators, increasing alignment and harmony across different policy monitoring frameworks and reducing reporting duplication. Refer to Section 2.3 of these guidelines for more details on who should be involved in different aspects of this work.

4.1.2 *Align with policy priorities*

One of the most important aspects of any indicator framework for monitoring a nationally developed policy or plan is the alignment of selected indicators with the priority issues of the policy or plan document.

CHAPTER 4

The process is simplified if the document provides a series of priority issues mapped to outcomes, as this makes it easier to identify the most appropriate indicators. Thus, outcomes given in the policy or plan document are key to alignment between indicators and priority issues.



An example of the steps that can be taken to achieve alignment between indicators and priority issues are discussed in more detail in Section 4.2.

4.1.3 *Maximise the use of existing global, regional and national indicator frameworks*

Don't re-invent the wheel, just re-align it

There is a wealth of well-thought-out indicator frameworks that are globally and regionally recognized and approved and that are broadly focused on sustainable development (including the SDGs), as well as frameworks for specific thematic areas, which can and should be consulted when developing a national indicator framework. A list of many of these indicator frameworks is provided in Annex 2.

Existing national indicator frameworks generated for previous national policies and plans should also be reviewed for their relevance when developing any new or updated national indicator framework.

Maximise the use of existing frameworks at an initial stage of developing a national indicator framework. Indicators from existing frameworks may then be modified to be more appropriate to priority issues and new indicators can be created to close gaps for policy priorities.

4.1.4 *Address sub-populations*

Leave no one behind

The pledge to leave no one behind is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It represents the unequivocal commitment of all United Nations Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole.

In order to reveal these inequalities and vulnerabilities, it is crucial to produce disaggregated data. The eight primary levels of disaggregation recognized by the SDGs are income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, but other characteristics may also be considered.

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Before finalizing any indicator in a national indicator framework, carefully consider what level of disaggregation may be needed to reveal inequalities and vulnerabilities. If this level of disaggregation can be provided, then include it in the indicator requirements.

4.1.5 *Create consistency/linkages across policies and plans*

Consistency with global and regional initiatives

A key element of the 2030 Agenda is for countries to implement it through their national processes as appropriate. Countries are encouraged to consult the SDG indicator framework and adopt elements of it in their own national indicator frameworks, where suitable. If a country has maximised the use of existing global, regional and national indicator frameworks, the SDG indicators will be suitably incorporated into any national indicator framework, as will indicators of other key global or regional initiatives a country may wish to prioritize.

Consistency between national development plans and other key long-term development plans

The issues addressed for a specific sector in a national development plan should not differ significantly from issues addressed in the sector plan, especially if the time periods overlap. The indicators required to monitor these issues in both plans should be similar. Compared to national plans, sector plans often propose a more comprehensive set of indicators to monitor key issues in detail while the headline indicators (priority result indicators) should remain consistent across both plans.

This sounds simple enough, but it is not practiced to the extent it should be, leading to increased reporting burdens and apparent policy disconnections. Simple processes could be established in each country aimed at minimising reporting burdens and policy disconnection.

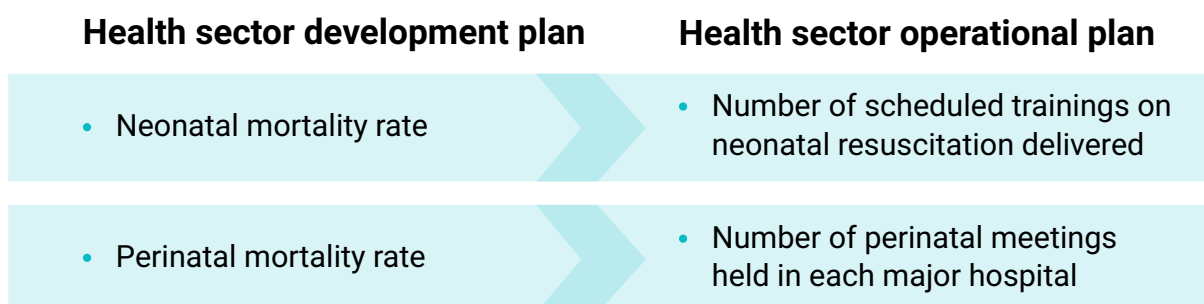
- Involve the same people from the line ministries in the processes of drafting national plans and sector plans.
- Task the national planning department and NSO to work together in ensuring that headline indicators for each sector in the national plan are extracted directly from sector plans.

Linkages between sector plans and short-term operational plans

Many line ministries within the Pacific have both sector development plans that may run 3–5 years as well as shorter-term sector operational plans that may be renewed annually. These types of plans have different objectives and should have different indicators. Development plans focus on result indicators, and operational plans focus on process indicators.

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There should be clear linkages between the indicators of both these sector plans, given that the strategies proposed in sector operational plans are designed to achieve the outcomes of the sector development plans. An illustration of this difference using the example of neonatal and perinatal health care is shown below.



4.2 Establishing a plan to develop and endorse the indicator framework

If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail

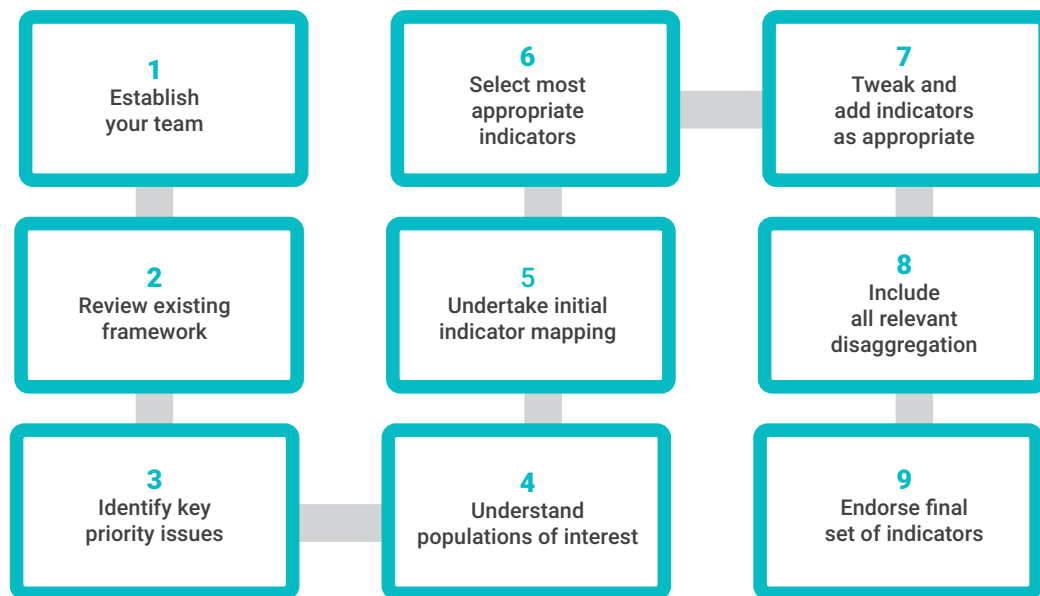
It is up to each country to develop the indicator framework for a national plan, and it is recommended to establish a plan to ensure that the most appropriate set of indicators is developed to monitor the national plan, in accordance with the five guiding principles presented in Section 4.1.

An example plan is provided in figure 5, following aspects of the EPiC⁶ tool created by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). EPiC facilitates policy-data dialogue, aiming to identify policy priorities as well as data needs. Policy-makers in Pacific countries are encouraged to follow a similar process when developing their indicator frameworks for national development policies and plans. Further details about each step are provided below.

6 www.unescap.org/our-work/statistics/EPiC.

CHAPTER 4

FIGURE 5
Example process for creating national indicator frameworks
for development policies and plans



1 Establish a team

Begin by identifying who will be involved in the process and what their roles will be. Identify at least the following: i) who will lead the process; ii) who else will be involved at the national level and in what capacity; iii) who will provide external support (e.g. development partners) if needed; and iv) who is authorized to sign off on the final set of indicators.

2 Review existing frameworks

To make best use of existing indicators, complete a desk review of global and regional indicator frameworks that may be relevant to the national policy or plan. This should include indicator frameworks developed for past national policies or plans.

3 Identify key priority issues

A crucial stage of the process is to identify the priority issues addressed in the policy or plan. The policy or plan document may include a log frame summary of the priority issues mapped to a series of outcomes. If not, the priority issues can be found in the narrative discussing the current situation for each of the broad themes addressed by the policy or plan. List out the priority issues to form the basis for the development of the indicator framework.

CHAPTER 4

4 Identify the reference population

To guide the selection of indicators and levels of disaggregation, it is good to first identify the population and sub-populations (vulnerable groups) for each priority issue. Examples of reference populations include total persons in the country, total households, school students, small business, etc. Examples of sub-populations (or levels of potential disaggregation) include persons with disabilities, urban/rural, sex, etc.

5 Undertake initial indicator mapping

Using the list of existing indicator frameworks identified in step 2, map existing indicators to the priority issues in the national policy or plan identified in step 3. Map all relevant indicators to each priority issue, noting that there may be overlap. This list can be trimmed later in the process when most applicable indicators are identified.

Note: If the policy or plan document has a series of outcomes mapped to priority issues, also use this information to map indicators of relevance.

6 Select most appropriate existing indicators

Based on the mapping exercise in step 5, select the most appropriate indicators for monitoring progress against each priority issue. It may be acceptable to have two or more indicators for one priority issue to capture different elements of the issue.

7 Add indicators as appropriate

In conjunction with step 6, review the selected indicators for national relevance. Consider the data sources and availability of data to generate the indicators. If no existing indicator is suitable for a particular priority issue, then a suitable new indicator should be proposed in the draft indicator framework (refer to Section 3.2 for characteristics of indicator soundness).

8 Include all relevant disaggregation

Once the set of indicators in the framework is considered final, the level of disaggregation of each indicator should be considered again. Building on step 4, additional levels of disaggregation may be appropriate.

9 Endorse final set of indicators

The last step is to request endorsement of the indicator framework by the authority identified in step 1. The authority may provide feedback requiring changes to some indicators, so this step could take more than one iteration to complete.



CHAPTER 5

ADDRESSING REPORTING NEEDS AGAINST GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

There are a large number of global and regional frameworks covering a wide range of thematic areas, and governments in the Pacific may wish to report their progress. The three frameworks of most significance to the Pacific are:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States: A Renewed Declaration for Resilient Prosperity (ABAS)
- 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

This section provides guidance for how Pacific countries could report against these key global and regional frameworks.

5.1 Reporting against the Sustainable Development Goals



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The SDG indicator framework was developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group with 17 goals and 169 targets. At the time of drafting these guidelines, the SDG framework included 231 unique indicators. The indicators undergo regular reviews of methodological developments and metadata, with comprehensive reviews every five years (2020, 2025).

The United Nations issued “Guidelines to Support Country Reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals”, which recognize that countries must consider their national circumstances and may have to adapt some of the globally agreed indicators and/or complement them with additional ones. This is relevant to the Pacific region where policy priorities are expected to differ at times from those covered by the global indicators and where the capacity to report against all global indicators is limited.

To assist the process of producing a national SDG indicator set, the following tips are provided for Pacific countries:

- Where possible, maintain the global SDG indicator and only remove an indicator if it has little national relevance.
- Focusing on the national development plan and sector plans, identify suitable national indicators which can support monitoring of the SDGs.
- Ensure any new indicators meet the soundness criteria discussed in Section 3.2.
- Include as much disaggregated data as possible.

Note: Target values should also be reviewed for national relevance (discussed in Section 7).

5.2 Reporting against the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States



At the time of writing these guidelines, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS) had only just been adopted (27–30 May 2024). The outcome document of the fourth international conference on SIDS provides details on the plans to establish an inter-agency task force to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, with clear targets and indicators, building on the monitoring and evaluation framework for the SAMOA Pathway, in line with targets and indicators from the SDGs.

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As with the SDGs, it is envisaged each country will adopt an approach to reporting against the ABAS that will reflect national circumstances. Thus, the guidelines for reporting against the SDGs are expected to apply to ABAS reporting as well. Governments in the Pacific should include as many of the ABAS indicators as they can in their national indicator framework, and they should tailor the ABAS indicator set as needed, based on national circumstances and priorities.

Note: This section of the guidelines will be updated once the ABAS monitoring and evaluation framework has been established.

5.3 Reporting against the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent is a living document developed through comprehensive consultations at national and regional level with member countries and territories, agencies of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), non-State actors and specialists from within and beyond the Pacific. It was endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2022 and is supported by an Implementation Plan which details collective actions and a monitoring and reporting framework.

The 2050 Strategy contains seven interconnected thematic areas, 13 goals and 58 outcomes. Progress against the goals and outcomes will be reported regularly to Leaders, commencing in 2024, drawing on available evidence.

The monitoring and reporting framework promotes, where possible, the use of relevant existing national indicators, monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms (such as the existing Pacific subset of 131 SDG indicators serving as a convenient bridge while new indicators are considered to address gaps). As with the SDGs, the 2050 Strategy advocates for data disaggregation at all levels for gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI).

Indicators will be refined over time through a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) working group comprised of CROP specialists and national planners and statisticians, allowing for national priorities to be elevated to the regional framework and vice versa.

Note: This section of the guidelines will be updated once the 2050 Strategy indicator framework has been established.





CHAPTER 6

MANAGING ALL NATIONALLY RELEVANT INDICATORS

Coordinated management of global, regional and national reporting is critical to ensure that data production is aligned with indicator needs. Managing all aspects of indicator production becomes quite complex if priority indicators are stored across multiple locations. When all indicators required for priority reporting are held in a central location it is easier to ensure key national surveys, such as population censuses and Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys, collect the right information for global, regional and national reporting requirements.

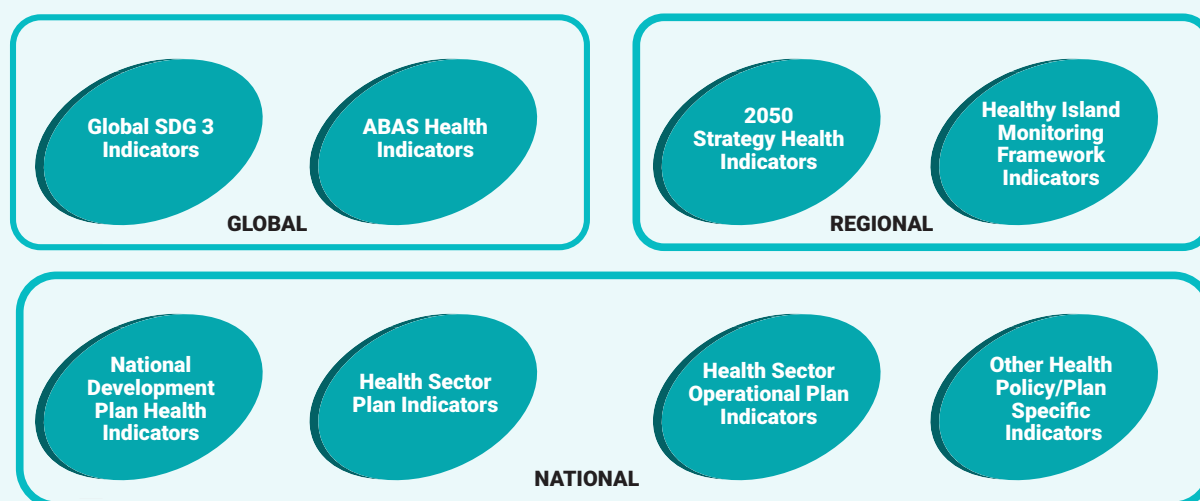
The focus of this section is on understanding the complexities at the sector level and capturing the benefits of defining a core set of priority indicators tailored to national circumstances and capacities.

6.1 Understanding the complexities at the sector level

Using the health sector as an example, figure 6 shows the range of requirements for indicator production and monitoring at the national level. Within each country, there are many indicator frameworks, each with reporting requirements and health-related indicators to report against.

FIGURE 6

Example of potential indicator frameworks related to health



CHAPTER 6

A lot of overlap is expected between global and regional reporting requirements, as well as the key result indicators in the national development plan. Result indicators in the health sector plan and other health policies or plans are also expected to overlap with each of these frameworks.

Overlap would not be expected with indicators of short-term operational plans at the sector or ministry level, where the focus is on process indicators.

6.2 Benefits of a core set of priority indicators

If countries choose to have a central repository for priority indicators, then the manner in which they do this can be tailored to national circumstances and capacities.

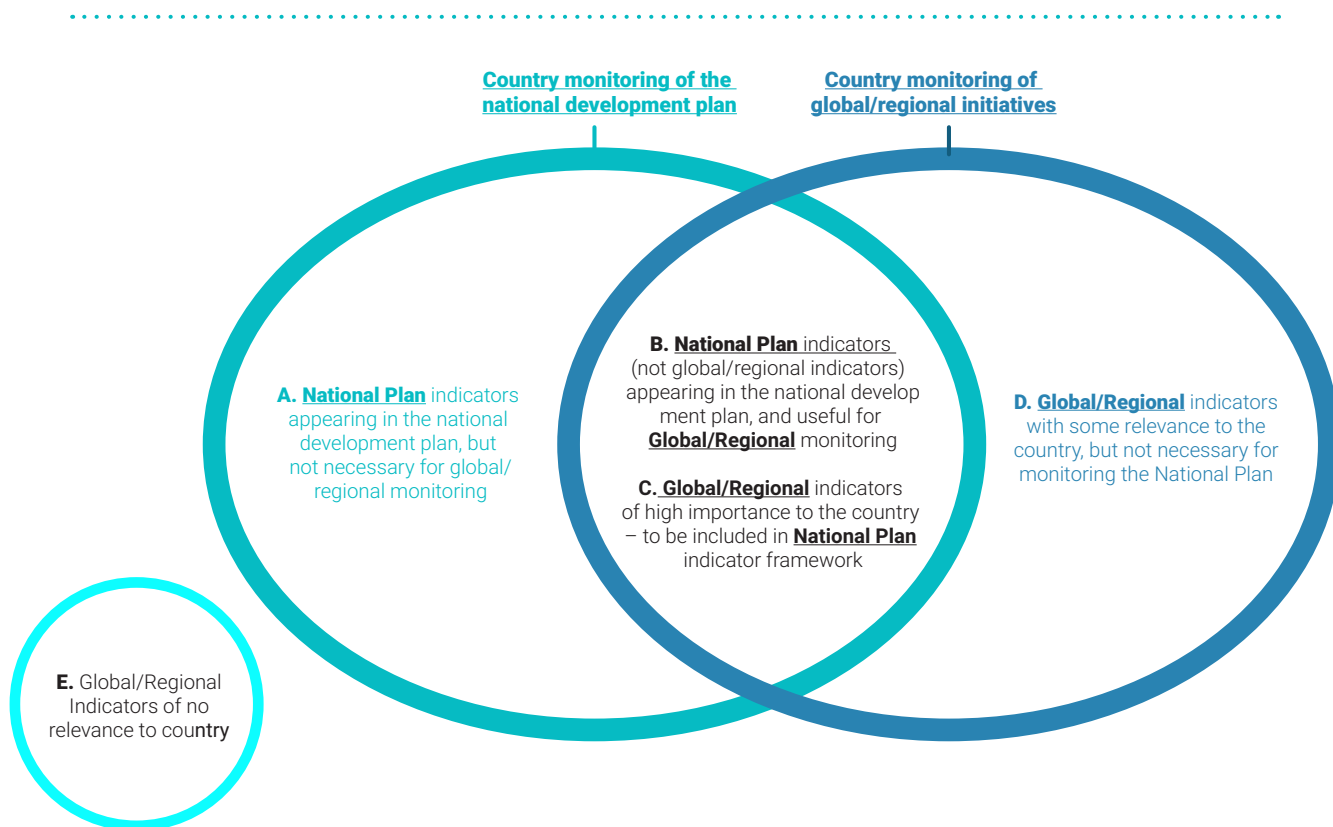
A central repository could manage the core set of indicators, which are the priority indicators required for global, regional and national reporting commitments. The core set should include all indicators needed to monitor the national development plan and potentially additional indicators required for monitoring the SDGs, ABAS and the 2050 Strategy.

Figure 7 shows an example of a core set of indicators, including indicators to monitor progress against the national development plan as well as additional indicators for global or regional monitoring priorities.

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FIGURE 7

Diagram of a core set of priority indicators



Other ways of viewing the core set of indicators are provided in Section 8.

If this approach is adopted, then line ministries would continue to manage additional indicators that are not part of the core set, including indicators required for monitoring short-term annual plans which focus on resource indicators.

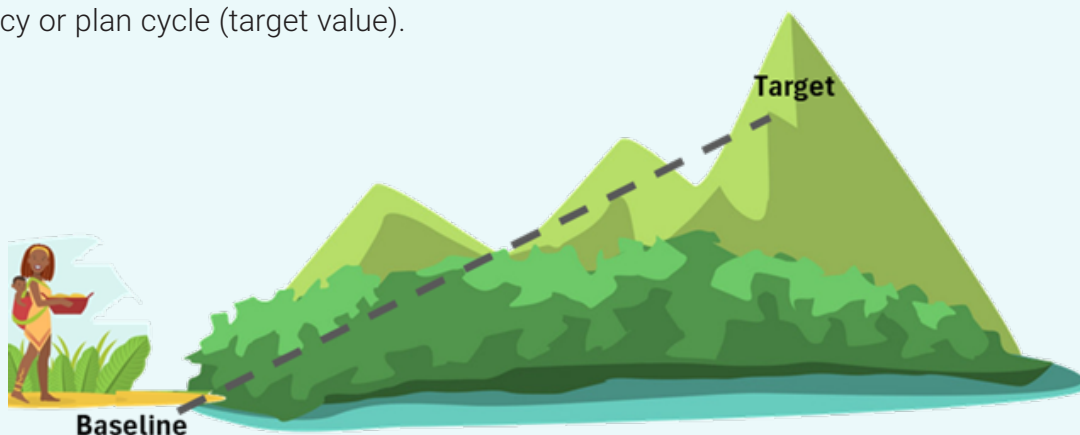


CHAPTER 7

MONITORING NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

7.1 Establishing baselines and target values (benchmarks)

Two important considerations when developing an indicator framework are the inclusions of both baselines and target values (sometimes referred to as benchmarks) for each indicator. They are equally important, as one identifies the status of the indicator when the policy or plan cycle begins (baseline) and the other identifies the desired outcome at the end of the policy or plan cycle (target value).



7.1.1 Producing baselines

The presence of a baseline figure in indicator frameworks enables progress to be tracked while implementing the policy or plan. Generating a baseline figure can help to ensure the methodology for producing the indicator (data sources required, computation method, etc.) has been well thought through, and help decide whether to include the indicator in the framework in its current format.

- If a baseline cannot be produced for a specific indicator, then it is worth questioning whether to include that indicator in the framework, if this situation is unlikely to change. As discussed in Section 3.1, an important indicator characteristic is measurability.
- When an indicator is proposed for a policy or plan, going through the process of its production for a baseline will clearly demonstrate who should be involved in its production, what data sources will be required, the computation method for its production and how frequently it can be produced. This process will reveal any other limitations in its production which may require adjustments to the indicator description.

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Unable to produce a baseline?

It is not always possible to generate a baseline figure for all proposed indicators for the first year of the policy or plan cycle. A common reason for this is that the indicator may be sourced from a survey that is conducted every five years and does not correspond to the beginning of the policy or plan cycle. Including a baseline value from an older survey is fine, but it is important to include the reference date for the baseline, as for all indicators.

The following is a simple guide to addressing indicators for which a baseline value cannot be produced at the beginning of the policy or plan cycle.

- If the value exists for a previous year, include this value as the baseline with the reference year.
- If the value does not exist as yet, but is likely to be available soon, use a footnote for the indicator and provide an explanation.
- If the value does not exist as yet and is unlikely to be available in the foreseeable future, either drop the indicator or change it to improve its measurability.

7.1.2 *Setting target values (benchmarks)*

Target values (or benchmarks) are numeric milestones set to monitor the progress made over time in achieving desirable change in underlying issues. When indicators are fully aligned with a policy outcome (or target, output, ...), target values represent the indicator value that shows desirable change in the outcome at a certain time in the future, given optimum use of existing resources that are available or expected to be available. Therefore, target values must be achievable but also ambitious, with a clear reference period in the future.

Achievability: A range of information can be consulted to determine achievability. The following questions may be helpful.

- What is the baseline value for the indicator at the start of the policy or plan cycle? Knowing the starting point helps to better understand what can be achieved.
- If historical information exists for the indicator, what is the recent trajectory? If significant progress is being made, is this likely to continue? It may also be useful to examine recent trajectories in countries with similar characteristics, regional/global trajectories of the indicator.
- What are the economic conditions, the implementation capacity to address the issue that the indicator is monitoring, and what resources are available from project or other sources to enable progress against this issue? Or what resources may become available in the future?

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- What is the relationship between resourcing and improvement on the issue that the indicator is monitoring? If project activities are likely to lead to significant improvements, a more ambitious target can be set.

We should always remember the aim is to set a suitably ambitious but realistic final target value to support progress on the issue that the indicator is monitoring.

Reference period: It can be difficult to assess if you are on track towards achieving an aim if no deadline is in place. For national development plans and sector plans, most target values are set at the end of the plan reference period, and in some cases, intermediate target values are proposed for progress monitoring during the plan cycle.

The Asia-Pacific SDG progress report⁷ provides an example of how data from other countries, combined with national historical data for an indicator can be used to set target values (the method is called champions area).

Tailoring target values for global and regional reporting

A key reporting priority for Pacific countries is on global and regional initiatives such as the SDGs. The monitoring frameworks of these initiatives often have target values set at the global and regional levels. Tailoring these values to national circumstances is important to make reporting against these initiatives more relevant. For instance, the global target value set for SDG indicator 3.1.1 (maternal mortality ratio) is 70 per 100,000 live births. A number of Pacific countries have already achieved this target, so setting a more ambitious target makes sense.

7.2 Reporting processes and challenges

7.2.1 Data flow challenges

Data flows in Pacific NSOs continue to rely on both paper and digital formats, presenting challenges for data consistency and accuracy moving through the different stages of processing.

There has been some move towards modern electronic data collection and dissemination following the Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) standard, but generally dissemination platforms host digitalised paper publications (for example, .pdf files of census and survey reports) and indicators manually extracted from paper publications.

7 <https://data.unescap.org/>

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While this meets some user needs and guarantees ongoing access to information, data flows that rely on manual steps have high reporting burdens and may be vulnerable to errors that reduce data consistency.

Data systems that are built on digitalised data and use common data structure definitions offer simplified and interoperable data flows from collection through analysis and (re) dissemination. Additionally, such systems have the potential to automate indicator exchange with regional and global agencies, thus reducing the reporting burden.

Data flows can be identified for each indicator or set of indicators. The analysis of the data flow should consider the elements listed below.

- Input requirements and dependencies for each step, and which format (for example, .csv, .pdf, .txt) is used for the data.
- Who is involved.
- What is the most efficient sequencing of roles and responsibilities that can minimise holdups.
- Frequency and timing (for example, this could be annually, ad hoc as the relevant household survey is completed, or on demand).
- Quality assurance, sign-off requirements and authorisations between steps in the data flow (for example, does NSO need endorsement from the data supplier or relevant minister before indicators are released and do outputs need to be embargoed prior to an official release date?).
- Mode and format for indicator release and notification strategy (this can include consideration of multi-lingual formats).
- Whether revisions are required (for example, provisional gross domestic product (GDP) per capita indicators may be published and revised when new population counts become available after a census).

It can be helpful to create a diagram of complex data flows to visualize all the elements and highlight sequencing and dependencies. This can support a consistent and coordinated approach to processing data and raise confidence in the indicators produced.

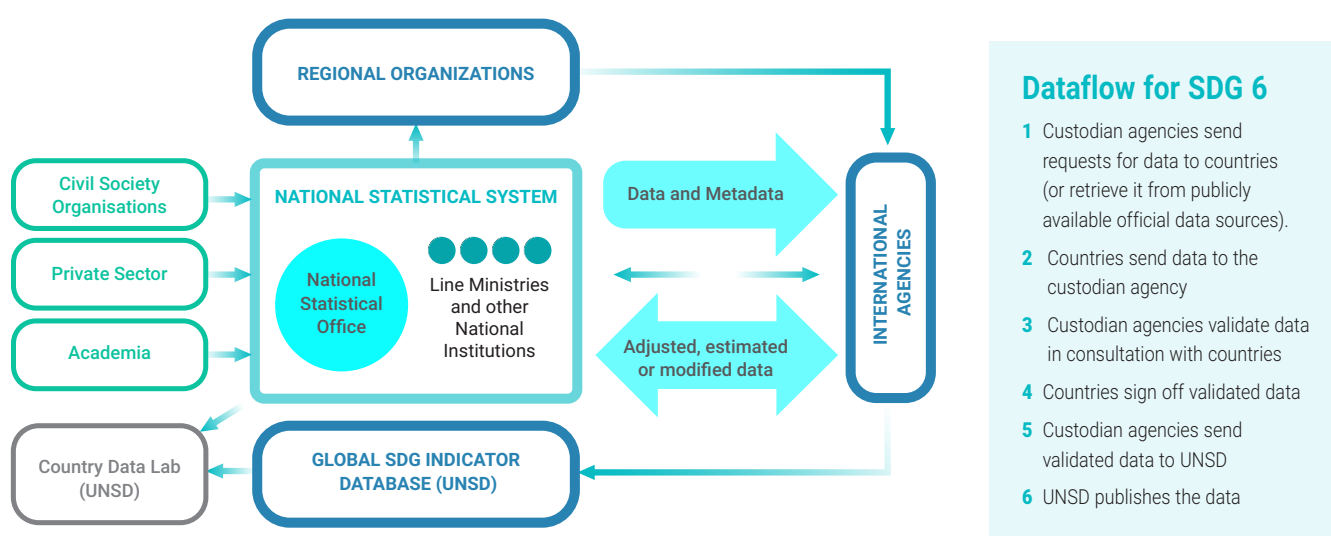
The SDGs provide many examples of data flows, including from the national level to the regional and global levels. A compendium of case studies was collated in 2017 by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs), covering the main types of data inputs

CHAPTER 7

– administrative data, household surveys and other data sources.⁸ One example from the Pacific was included, describing the data flow from Fiji to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for the creation of the Red List Index (SDG indicator 15.5.1). An example of data flows for SDG 6 is shown in figure 8.

FIGURE 8

SDG data flow highlighting the central role of the national statistical system



Source: www.unwater.org/news/roles-and-responsibilities-sdg-monitoring-and-reporting.

7.2.2 Reconciling data from global databases and national data

The SDG global database⁹ managed by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the official repository of SDG data at the international level. Understanding the data flow process can reveal how discrepancies may arise between global and national data, and this understanding is beneficial to those who use data from the global database.

While international agencies compile a minority of indicators based on public reports, Earth observations, or global monitoring mechanisms, most indicators are sourced from or directly compiled by national statistical systems and then reported to the relevant custodian agency (table 2).

⁸ https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-06/Data%20Flows%20Case%20Studies%20Compilation%2009-11-17_for%20web.pdf

⁹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

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TABLE 2 Example of indicators compiled by international agencies (global monitoring data)

	SDG indicator	Custodian agency
6.6.1	Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time UN Environment Programme (UNEP)	UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
10.6.1	Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
10.7.4	Proportion of the population who are refugees, by country of origin	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
15.5.1	Red List Index	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
16.10.1	Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
17.10.1	Worldwide weighted tariff-average	World Trade Organization (WTO)

To ensure international comparability and uphold data quality standards, custodian agencies may adjust, model, or estimate data based on the national data. This may lead to discrepancies between the two. Common scenarios are described below.

- Statistical modelling may be used to generate comparable country, regional and global estimates when different types of data sources are used across countries. For example, SDG indicator 3.1.1 (maternal mortality ratio) is based on data from civil registration, population-based surveys, surveillance systems, censuses and other specialized studies.
- Adjustments to the data may be needed to account for different standards or age ranges. For example, SDG indicator 2.2.2 (prevalence of malnutrition among children moderately or severely wasted) is adjusted to convert from rural to national and account for different growth standards or age ranges.

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- Estimations are made when the underlying source does not provide complete data for the indicator, therefore, data points are estimated based on a model. For example, SDG indicator 8.4.1/12.2.1 (material footprint) is based on data from national and international datasets in the domain of material flow accounts, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining and energy statistics.

When data points are produced, modelled, adjusted, or estimated by custodian agencies, the SDG monitoring framework requires that the data points are submitted to the national SDG focal points for validation. Therefore, these data may be used for national monitoring, especially when the coverage is higher than the nationally available data.

7.2.3 *Aligning data collection with indicator needs*

Understanding data needs for producing national priority indicators is important to designing national data collection and production. Similarly, understanding data collection and production is important to developing measurable indicators that suit the national priority issues. Every effort should be made to align data collection and production.

FIGURE 9

Relationship between data requirements and data collection



Aligning indicators with surveys

Every national statistical system across the Pacific, led by NSOs, is responsible for conducting a wide range of surveys. Some of the more common surveys include:

- censuses: population, agriculture
- sample surveys: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), Demographic Health Survey (DHS), Labour Force Survey (LFS).

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These surveys provide evidence and indicators for governments to make informed decisions for policy development. Therefore, if a country is planning to conduct a household census or survey it is vital that the right information is collected to enable indicator production (figure 9). To facilitate this in practice, one of two things should occur:

- (preferred option) the questions in the survey should be designed such that they produce the required indicators of relevance to the survey; or
- (alternative) if the desired information cannot be collected (too sensitive, too complex, etc.) then the indicators should be adjusted so they align with the information collectable from the survey.

The metadata discussed in Section 3.2 of these guidelines, should contain the data source for the production of each indicator, including which surveys produce each indicator in a policy or plan.

Aligning indicators with administrative data

Besides censuses and sample surveys, the second most common data source for generating indicators is administrative data. Governments (or other organizations) collect administrative data for non-statistical purposes, including such as registration, transactions and record keeping of various government and non-government entities. Some common examples of administrative data include:

- arrivals and departures
- vital (births/deaths) records
- taxation data
- education records
- pensions data.

While administrative records are primarily designed for non-statistical purposes, they still provide highly valuable information for producing many statistical indicators contained in national and sector policies and plans.

To facilitate the use of administrative data, in line with figure 9, one of two things needs to occur:

- (preferred option) where appropriate, the information collected from administrative data may be adapted to enable the direct production of indicators required for policy or plan monitoring; or
- (alternative) the indicator may be modified such that administrative data enables its production.

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The metadata should contain the data source to produce each indicator, and thus indicate which administrative data sources are required for the production of each indicator.

Note: Administrative data may not always be available, there may be numerous quality concerns, and it may not always be possible to alter them, so careful considerations need to be given to the limitations of this data source when relying on it for producing statistical indicators.

7.2.4 Understanding data gaps

The term 'data gaps' refers to unmet data needs. Thus, to understand or even measure the extent of data gaps, one must first understand the need for data.

Countries have many reporting requirements, each with differing reporting needs, and thus the data gaps will be unique to each country. It is therefore important that data gaps are measured against data needs (reporting requirements) in each country.

One area often neglected in addressing data gaps relates to disaggregation. Many indicators need to be generated for specific target groups to measure inequality between groups, thus it may be required to generate disaggregated data. Even when an indicator is produced for the population as a whole, important data gaps may remain if disaggregation requirements are not met.

Measuring data gaps for specific reporting requirements

National development plans and sector plans

For indicators selected in a monitoring and evaluation framework for a national development plan, all should be considered relevant and part of any data gap assessment. Therefore, if a national development plan requires 120 indicators and only 80 indicators have data, then it is fair to report the data gap as 40 (or 33%). The same can be said for any sector plan developed by a line ministry.

Reporting on data gaps where indicators have recommended disaggregated series is more complex, and the method of calculating the data gap is up to the person overseeing the monitoring process. An example of how it could be addressed is to consider all the levels of disaggregation required within the plan (e.g. sex, age group, urban/rural, disability status) and provide results for each level of disaggregation. For example, if 16 indicators require disaggregation by sex, of which 4 have sex-disaggregated data, then the data gap for that level of disaggregation (i.e. by sex) can be reported at 12 (or 75%), and so forth.

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Global or regional frameworks

For indicators from global or regional frameworks (such as SDGs) that the country has selected to monitor, noting that not all will be applicable to the country as discussed in Section 2.2.2, there is more than one way to interpret data gaps.

Development partners generally make a data gap assessment for each country using all indicators from these frameworks. For the SDGs, with a total of 231 unique indicators, if Country X has data for 123 indicators, the gap will be reported as:

$$\text{SDG data gap for Country X} = \frac{(231-123)}{231} \times 100 = 46.8\%$$

It is appropriate for a country to report their data gap situation against a global or regional initiative based on a set of indicators they have chosen as applicable to their national circumstances. This set could be a combination of applicable indicators from the global/regional set complemented by national indicators. Using the example above, if Country X has identified 187 indicators applicable for tracking progress against the SDGs, of which 123 have data, the gap can be reported as:

$$\text{SDG data gap for Country X} = \frac{(187-123)}{187} \times 100 = 34.2\%$$

Addressing disaggregation in data gap analysis for these frameworks can be done as described above for national and sector plans.

Note: Further care needs to be taken when interpreting data gap analysis, especially for global and regional initiatives such as the SDGs. Dashboards that showcase these indicator frameworks may show a certain percentage of indicators as having data, but this does not mean they are the only ones with data. Additional indicators may have data, but the data are not yet disseminated on the dashboard.

Measuring overall data gaps

In line with Section 6.2, countries may establish a central repository for a core set of national priority indicators for all key global, regional and national reporting. If a core set of indicators is adopted, then an overall data gap assessment could also assess data availability across all priority reporting needs.

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The assessment of data availability should consider four groups of indicators that make up the core set:

- A** national indicators in the national development plan which are not necessary for monitoring a global or regional priority;
- B** national indicators in the national development plan which are not global or regional indicators per se, but are useful for monitoring a global or regional priority;
- C** global or regional indicators of high importance to the country which are included in the national development plan monitoring framework; and
- D** global or regional indicators which not included in the national development plan but are relevant to the country.

The four groups of indicators may be represented as shown in figure 7 (page 34).

An overall assessment of national data gaps could then be considered as follows:

$$\text{Data gaps of core set indicators} = \frac{\sum \text{without data A+B+C+D}}{\sum \text{all A+B+C+D}} \times 100\%$$

Governments of Pacific countries may adopt variations of each of the approaches discussed in this section for measuring data gaps, with the emphasis on clarifying what is meant by a data gap in the national context. It is a good practice to avoid referring to data gaps unless the context is explained.

7.2.5 *Disseminating and using indicators*

Dissemination of official statistics is fundamental for increased transparency and, ultimately, for increased use of evidence in decision-making. Technology has made online dissemination easier and more effective than publishing printed statistical reports. Thus, websites such as data portals and dashboards have become increasingly popular.

Data portals are the central source of official statistics for each country. They must be well-designed to be accessible to and suitable for users. According to an assessment of data portals of 74 countries by PARIS21 and Open Data Watch in 2021, a third of the countries studied did not have a data portal owned by their NSO, and many of the existing portals could be improved in terms of their availability, accessibility, interoperability and language options, among other features. It is vital that a data portal is wholly owned by the country and is supported by a regular update schedule to keep it relevant.

CHAPTER 7

Dashboards compared to data portals provide a higher level of analysis of data, often showing various information and visualisations to support decision-making. It is not unusual for data portals to incorporate dashboards targeting thematic areas, such as the SDGs.





CHAPTER 8

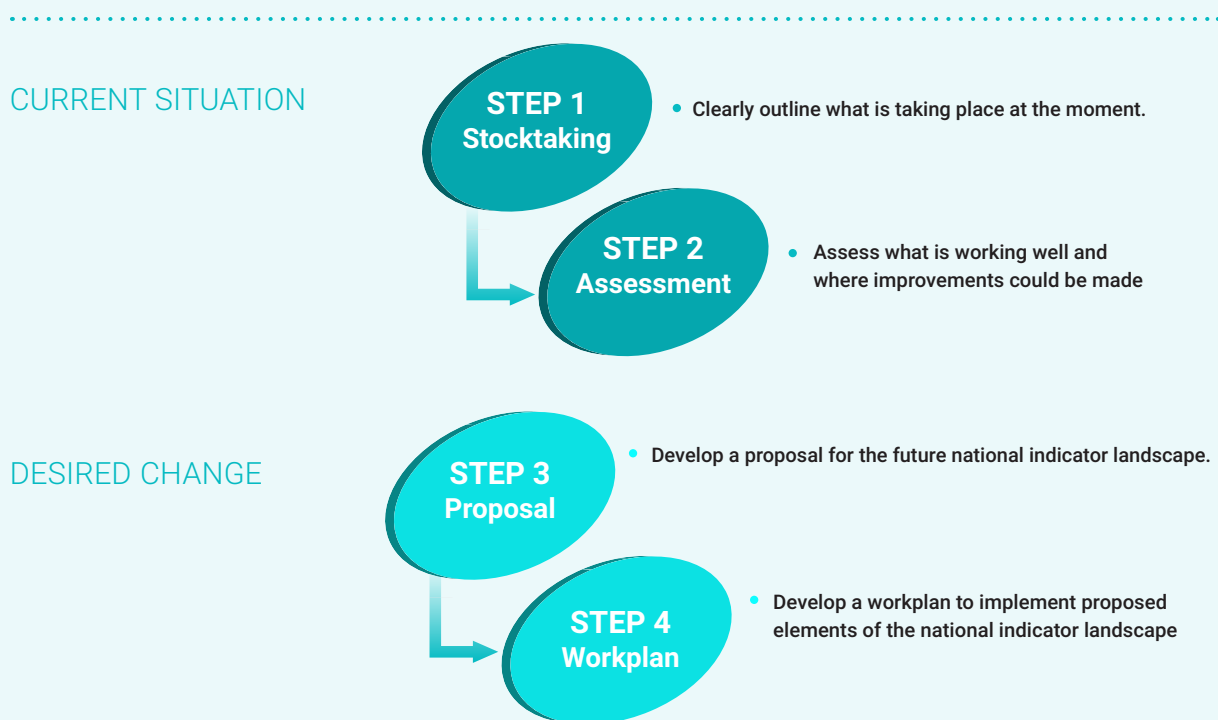
GUIDING STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A NATIONAL STATISTICAL STRATEGY

These guidelines provide Pacific countries with the option to develop their own national indicator strategy. How countries choose to do this will be up to them, but the process should involve understanding the situation now and developing a plan to make desired changes, as presented in the example in Figure 10.

Note: All key stakeholders need to be on board for this to work.

FIGURE 10

Example of a 4-Step process to develop a national indicator strategy



Details for the four key steps of developing a national indicator strategy are discussed in detail below.

Step 1 Take stock of current practices

Before proposing any alteration to the manner of indicator production, it is important to understand what is currently being done.

CHAPTER 8

Most countries will have many indicator frameworks which are being monitored, each serving different purposes and with different levels of importance. A stocktaking of these activities is a crucial first step to review the processes and explore ways the processes could be improved.

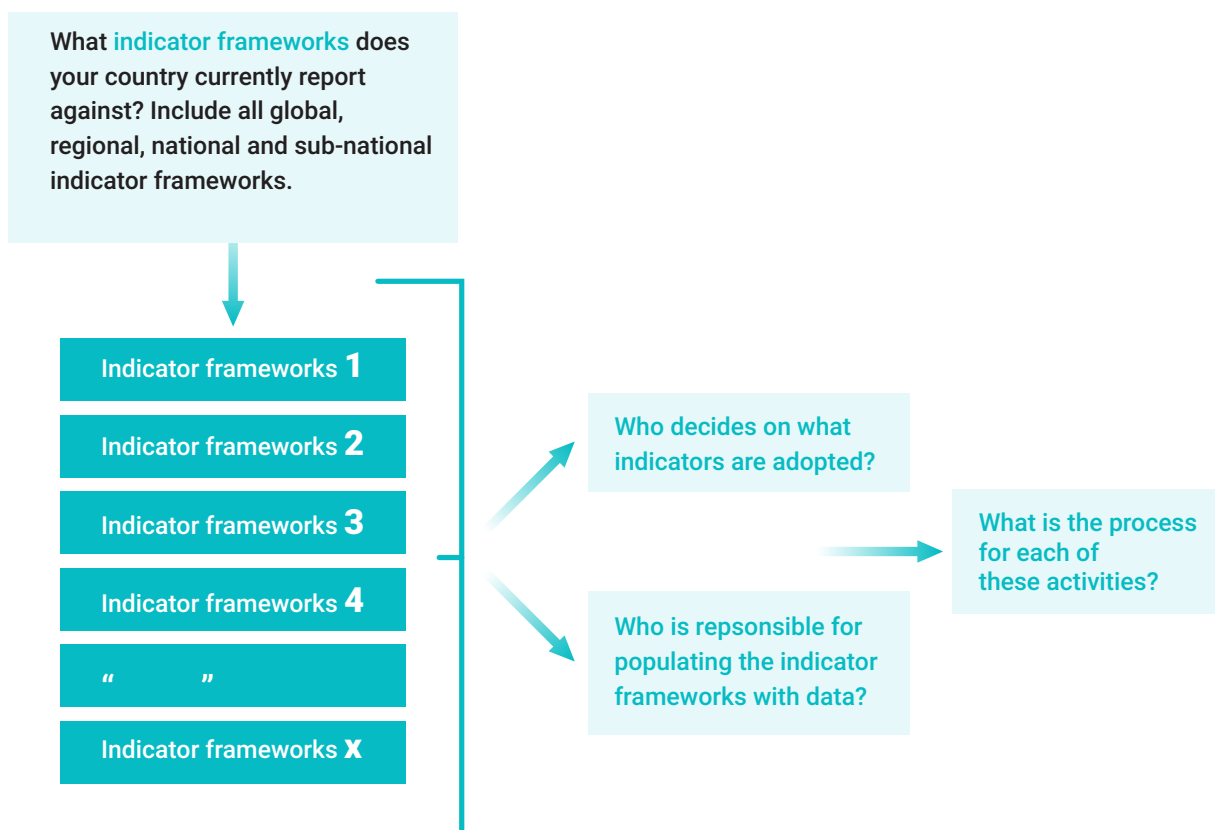
Stocktaking would typically address key elements of a country's national indicator landscape, including the questions listed below.

- What is being reported against?
- Who is involved in reporting progress?
- How is the process carried out?

An example of information that could be collected in a stocktaking exercise is provided in Annex 4.

This information could be complemented by details of priority global and regional initiatives (such as the SDGs) and processes in place to report against these initiatives. Figure 11 provides an example of a framework for stocktaking.

FIGURE 11
Stocktaking framework



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Other questions (national/sub-national)

- Total number of indicators:
 - results
 - process
- SDG indicators included:
 - adopted as is
 - adopted but modified

Other questions (global/regional)

- Total number of indicators:
 - adopted as is
 - adopted but modified
 - not adopted

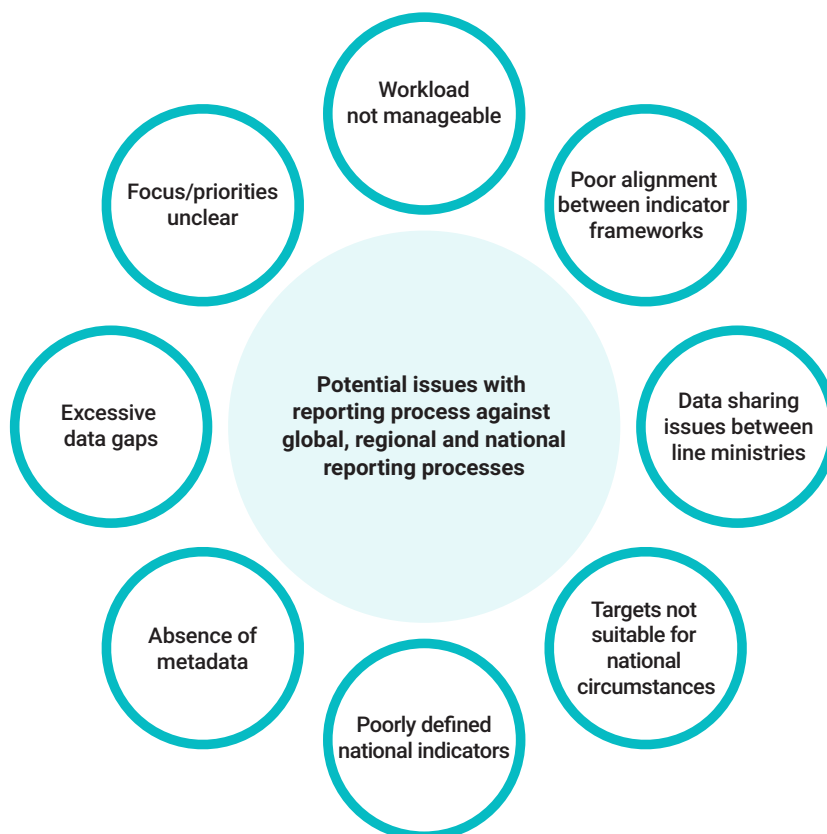
Step 2 Assessment of current practices

After taking stock of what is currently being done, the next step is to assess what is working well and where improvements could be made. The focus may be on areas that are problematic, thus encouraging improvements to those aspects of statistical work, but it is encouraged to also take note of what is working well and continue those practices moving forward.

There are many reasons why the process of reporting progress against a wide range of global, regional and national indicators may not be working efficiently. Key examples are shown in figure 12.

FIGURE 12

Potential issues with global, regional and national reporting processes



CHAPTER 8

Step 3 Propose alterations to the national indicator landscape

A functional national indicator landscape needs to be centred on national reporting priorities and managed within national resources and constraints.

The national development plan and corresponding indicator framework should ideally be the centrepiece of the national indicator landscape with other reporting requirements built around it. An illustration of this relationship is provided in figure 13.

Each country may determine what reporting initiatives to focus on and how to go about it. Asking a few key questions, such as those listed below, can assist in developing recommendations to improve the national indicator landscape.

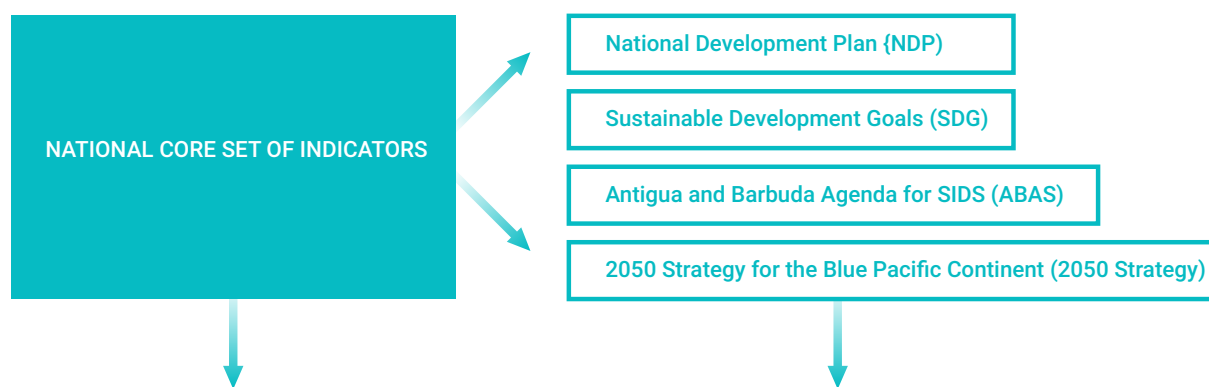
- What are the reporting priorities the country must address?
- What other reporting is desirable?
- How can each of these reporting processes be simplified?
- What aspects of the current process are not working and need to be modified?
- Is it desirable to establish a core set of priority indicators (see Section 6.2) for monitoring and reporting (see figure 13 for how it may look)?

Using the answers to these questions, alterations to the national indicator landscape may be proposed.

CHAPTER 8

FIGURE 13

Linkages between the core set of national priority indicators and global and regional frameworks



Indicator	NDP	SDG	ABAS	2050 Strategy
Indicator 1.1	YES			
Indicator 1.2	YES	YES	YES	
Indicator 1.3		YES	YES	YES
Indicator 1.4	YES			
Indicator 1.5		YES	YES	
Indicator 1.6			YES	YES
Indicator 2.1	YES	YES-Proxy		
Indicator 2.2	YES	YES		
Indicator 2.3				YES
Indicator 2.4	YES			
Indicator 2.5	YES	YES-Proxy	YES-Proxy	YES-Proxy
Indicator 3.1	YES		YES	
Indicator 3.2		YES		YES
Indicator 3.3	YES			
Indicator 3.4	YES	YES		
Indicator 3.5	YES	YES	YES	
Indicator 3.6			YES	
Indicator 3.7	YES	YES		YES

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Step 4 **Develop a plan to implement the new indicator landscape**

The last step is to document and develop a plan to implement the proposed changes from step 3. These plans will vary significantly depending on the country's current situation and priorities, but a few examples of likely activities are listed below.

- Conduct a comprehensive review of all nationally developed indicator frameworks using the criteria proposed in Section 3.1.
- Develop detailed metadata for all indicators contained in the national development plan and sector plans.
- Review the national statistics legislation (and update if necessary) to help facilitate data sharing processes.
- Develop a core set of indicators, built around the national development plan indicator framework to simplify reporting against priority global and regional initiatives.
- Establish good data flow practices between data producers and data users.

Note: Include this workplan as part of the national strategy for the development of statistics, if it exists.



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ANNEX 1

Latest national development plans and strategies (September 2024)

Region or Country	Name of plan	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	
Melanesia																								
Fiji	National Development Plan, 2025-2029 ^(a)																							
Vanuatu	Vanuatu: The People's Plan																							
Solomon Islands	National Development Strategy																							
PNG	Medium Term Development Plan IV																							
Polynesia																								
Samoa	Pathway for the Development of Samoa, 21/22–25/26																							
Tonga	Tonga Strategic Development Framework, 2015-2025																							
Tuvalu	National Strategy for Sustainable Development Plan, 2021-2030																							
Cooks	Te Kaveinga Iti – 5-year Score Card ^(b)																							
Niue	Niue National Strategic Plan, 2016-2026																							
Tokelau	Kaiga Tokelau Wellbeing National Strategic Plan, 2022-2026																							
Micronesia																								
Palau	Palau Development Plan, 2023 -2026																							
Micronesia (FS)	Strategic Development Plan, 2004-2023																							
Marshalls	National Strategic Plan, 2020-2030																							
Kiribati	Kiribati Development Plan																							
Nauru	National Sustainable Development Strategy, 2019-2030																							
(a)	Also have a Vision, 2050																							
(b)	Also have 25-year and 100-year Score Cards																							

ANNEXES

ANNEX 2

Key global and regional indicator frameworks

Links to some key frameworks that Pacific countries may be required to report against.

GLOBAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

Sustainable Development Goals

- Global Framework for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global-Indicator-Framework-after-2024-refinement-English.pdf>

Climate change and disaster risk

- Climate Change: Global set of indicators
https://unstats.un.org/unsd/envstats/climate%20change/Implementation_Guidelines.pdf
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
<https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

Green growth

- Green growth
https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/environment-at-a-glance-indicators_ac4b8b89-en/full-report.html

Health indicators

- Indicator framework to evaluate the public health effectiveness of digital proximity tracing solutions.
<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/341818/9789240028357-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- Monitoring Universal Health Coverage in the Western Pacific
www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/203926/uhc-western-pacific.pdf
- Global Health Observatory
<https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators>

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Gender

- Minimum set of Gender Indicators
https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/gender/MinSet_ListIndicator_2023.pdf
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
<https://www.spc.int/pacific-platform-for-action>

Culture

- Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators/>

REGIONAL INDICATOR FRAMEWORKS

Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management

- Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
https://gsd.spc.int/frdp/assets/FRDP_2016_Resilient_Dev_pacific.pdf

Gender

- Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED)
<https://forumsec.org/publications/revitalised-pacific-leaders-gender-equality-declaration>

Tourism

- Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework
<https://southpacificislands.travel/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Pacific-Sustainable-Tourism-Policy-Framework.pdf>

Education

- Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF)
<https://forumsec.org/publications/pacific-regional-education-framework-pacref-2018-2030-moving-towards-education-2030>

Health

- Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework
<https://phd.spc.int/sites/default/files/p-related-files/2022-09/2022%20PHoH%20Sep%20Agenda%203.1%20Healthy%20Islands%20Monitoring%20Framework%20Update%2005Sep2022.pdf>

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Culture

- Pacific Regional Culture Strategy
https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digitallibrary-docs/files/5a/5a82cbb51367b5c55e682d33c55d06ce.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=gN0Edx09hmsZDuosKrLYUo3R2ctcf%2FxsOxOqK2ftcoU%3D&se=2024-10-10T22%3A04%3A09Z&sp=r&rsc=public%2C%20max-age%3D864000%2C%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application%2Fpdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%2262383_Pacific_Regional_Culture_Strategy_2022_2032.pdf%22

Trade

- Pacific Regional E-commerce Strategy and Roadmap
<https://pacificecommerce.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Regional-Ecommerce-Strategy-Roadmap.pdf>
- Pacific Trade Facilitation Strategy and Roadmap
<https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/PTF002%20Strategy%20%26%20Implementation%20Roadmap%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>

Infrastructure

- Pacific Infrastructure Performance Indicators
www.theprif.org/sites/default/files/documents/PIPIs%20Final%20Report.pdf
- Framework for Action on Transport Services.
<https://pacificdata.org/data/dataset/oai-www-spc-int-d1d555f0-74f0-41bd-912d-596d220ad3fb>

Water and sanitation

- Improved and Safe Water and Sanitation at the Center of the Sustainable Development Agenda for Pacific Small Islands Developing States
www.sprep.org/attachments/sids/28_water__sanitation_sdwg_brief%2015mar13%201_final.pdf
- Pacific WASH Resilience Guidelines
www.unicef.org/pacificislands/media/736/file/WASH-Resilience-Guidelines.pdf

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Energy

- Framework for Energy Security and Resilience in the Pacific (FESRIP) 2021–2030
https://spccfpstore1.blob.core.windows.net/digitallibrary-docs/files/68/68343bd50e50a3b6d72b07f49e2720f2.pdf?sv=2015-12-11&sr=b&sig=oRrAzauTn267XLUQg7OrvaX2tUz6jqvf%2FzIUkz6RSuQ%3D&se=2025-03-25T12%3A10%3A27Z&sp=r&rsc=public%2C%20max-age%3D864000%2C%20max-stale%3D86400&rsct=application%2Fpdf&rscd=inline%3B%20filename%3D%2258587_2021_FESRIP_2021_2030_Volume_1_The_Framework.pdf%22
- Energy Indicators
https://sdd.spc.int/dataset/df_energy

Food and nutrition security

- Regional Framework for Accelerating Action on Food Security and Nutrition in Pacific SIDS
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17753PacificFramework.pdf>
- Accelerating Action on Food Security and Nutrition in Pacific Small Island Developing States
www.fao.org/3/MV748en/mv748en.pdf

Youth development

- Pacific Youth Development Framework 2014–2023
www.spc.int/sites/default/files/resources/2018-05/Pacific_Youth_Development_Framework.pdf

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ANNEX 3

Example of metadata

Indicator: % of population covered by Early Warning Information Systems (EWIS)

Definition: The proportion of the population with access to Early Warning Information Systems (EWIS) is the percentage of the total population of a reference spatial unit j , that has access to adequate EWIS, at time t .

The population with access to adequate EWIS is that which is provided with opportune alerts on natural hazards occurrence, evolution, preventive actions, evacuation information, etc., using any of the following means either in urban and rural areas:

- radio
- television
- Internet/social media
- local government
- church
- school/university/research centre
- communal miking/siren
- meteorological service
- phone (text or call)
- app.

Description: This indicator is relevant in the context of disaster preparedness. ESCAP (2018) defines preparedness 'as the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current disasters. Preparedness exists at multiple scales, e.g., household preparedness, preparedness of communities, preparedness of disaster response facilities, and preparedness of countries or regions within countries' (p. 96).¹⁰

¹⁰ ESCAP (2018). Disaster-Related Statistics Framework. Available at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/ESCAPCST_2018.CRP_2_Disaster-related_Statistics_Framework.pdf.

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As stated, one critical element of preparedness for many hazards is the coverage of the population by early warning systems. Early Warning Systems are ‘an integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness activities systems and processes that enable individuals, communities, governments, businesses, and others to take timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events.’¹¹

In the case of an impending disaster, the use of early warning systems is informed by statistics on the likelihood of the hazard and expected degree of impacts, according to the calculated exposure.

Increasing the availability of multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information is also one of the seven global targets set by The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030).

Unit of measure: %

Computation method

The indicator calculation formula is as follows:

$$\text{Population with access to EWIS} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \text{population with access to EWIS}_{ijt}}{\text{Total population}_{jt}} \times 100\%$$

Relevant scale for data collection: Household level

Source of information: Household survey

Data collection method: The household’s main respondent will be surveyed to collect data on household members’ access to EWIS. The SPC Climate Change and Natural Disasters Sourcebook questionnaire includes a question to count the number of households and people covered by EWIS.

Disaggregation: Province/Urban/Rural

11 UNDRR (2024). Available at: <https://www.preventionweb.net/knowledge-base/themes/understanding-and-managing-risk/early-warning>.

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Calendar

Data collection: Annual

Data release: Annual

Data providers: National Statistics Offices in the Pacific countries implementing the Natural Disasters and Climate Change Survey. Complementary, the National agencies responsible for Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies can support the production of this indicator.

Interpretation: Hazards' impacts are unequally distributed and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities. Early Warning Systems are essential to protecting these vulnerable communities and promoting resilience. A higher share of the population covered by multi-hazard early-warning systems can help minimize the harm to people, assets, and livelihoods by triggering early action. Ensuring that early warning systems protect every person in a country will increase society's resilience to natural hazards.

Complementary sources of helpful information to this indicator

- Indicators of the Global Set on "Public awareness of and education on climate change", specifically indicator 138. Proportion of population with access to climate information:

<https://ecosoc.un.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023/BG-3m-Globalsetandmetadata-E.pdf>.

Global target G: Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to the people by 2030: www.preventionweb.net/sendai-framework/sendai-framework-indicators

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ANNEX 4

Example template for stocktaking of national indicator frameworks

Plan Details			
Name of Plan	<input type="text"/>		
Ministry responsible for Plan	<input type="text"/>		
Time frame for Plan	<input type="text"/>		
Monitoring of the Plan - Indicator Framework			
	With data	Without data	Total
Total # of Indicators in the Plan	<input type="text"/> a1	<input type="text"/> a2	<input type="text"/> a
<i>Indicator Type</i>			
Total considered to be performance indicators	<input type="text"/> b1	<input type="text"/> b2	<input type="text"/> b
Total considered to be process indicators	<input type="text"/> c1	<input type="text"/> c2	<input type="text"/> c
<i>Alignment</i>			
Total number included in TSDF (Sector Plans only)	<input type="text"/> d1	<input type="text"/> d2	<input type="text"/> d
Total number aligned to SDGs			
Exact same	<input type="text"/> e1	<input type="text"/> e2	<input type="text"/> e
Similar, but not identical	<input type="text"/> f1	<input type="text"/> f2	<input type="text"/> f
Total number selected from another Global/Regional initiative	<input type="text"/> g1	<input type="text"/> g2	<input type="text"/> g
Roles & Responsibilities			
<i>Development of Indicator Framework</i>			
Who leads	<input type="text"/>		
Who else responsible	<input type="text"/>		
<i>Monitoring of Indicator Framework</i>			
Who leads	<input type="text"/>		
Who else responsible	<input type="text"/>		
Monitoring of the Plan - Frequency and Approach			
How frequently is the Plan progress reported on:	<input type="text"/>		
Mode of disseminating progress against Plan:	<input type="text"/>		
	(eg, website with Ministry, hard copy report, Ministerial briefing, etc)		



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