Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

The Westin Denarau Island Resort & Spa, Nadi, Fiji
14-15 December 2020

SESSION 5

Synthesis & Way forward
Opening Session:

- Opening prayer

- Address by the Under-Secretary-General of United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP
  - Various measures have been put in place to address the rising poverty and inequalities due to COVID-19. More innovative measures needed.
  - The outcomes of this forum will feed into the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2021.
Opening Session:

- Statement by the Secretary General of PIFS
  - The COVID-19 pandemic is causing unprecedented disruption in the Pacific and will likely undo the hard-won gains we have achieved.
  - The challenges we face today demand us to work together better and in a more efficient manner to deliver for our Pacific people, however coordination has always been a critical challenge.
Opening Session:

- Address by the UN Resident Coordinator (Fiji MCO)
  - Without injection of funds many countries risk back-sliding in their achievements of the SDGs.
  - The 2030 Agenda remains the preeminent global vision and aspirations of all countries for the future of development and accelerating the implementation of the Agenda is the best way of building back better.
Opening Session:

- Keynote address by Fiji AG.
  - COVID has cast a shadow on Pacific development and has decimated a number of industries, particularly the tourism industry.
  - Government revenue, stretched to its limits by the pandemic, will be unable to sustain a natural disaster like a cyclone.
  - The pandemic has made us realise coherent and comprehensive actions are needed - green solutions must be integral of the recovery efforts.
Session 1:

• PIFS/CROP

Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID 19 (PHP C) - 5 protocols developed

Regional Taskforce established to address social impact

COVID-19 Economic Recovery Taskforce - provide policy advice related to regional priorities, including health digital economy and connectivity, food security, agriculture, resilient and sustainable economies
Session 1:

UNDP - Rapid Policy Appraisal

- Method that comprises learning from the past; understanding the true nature of the crisis; determining future likely consequences; and navigating the evolving future.

- Some emerging innovations include strong community mobilization, accelerated digitalization, and agile responses by government and social institutions.
Session 1:

- Fiji
  - Unprecedented GDP contraction by 19% in 2020
  - Decline in sectoral output, increase in unemployment and people in poverty, weak investment and lower consumption.
  - Key policy response actions were a $1 billion fiscal stimulus through a special COVID-19 response budget and another $2 billion stimulus in the 2020-21 Budget
Session 1:

- Samoa
  - Economic slowdown from COVID-19 and measles outbreak alter socio-cultural adaptations
  - Development partners’ total grant expected to increase by 9% to counter unemployment, financial deficit, negative growth and reversal of progress on SDGs (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10)
  - Launched two stimulus packages and introduced unemployment subsidies for the first time
Session 1:

- Marshall Islands
  - The Pacific region took on more debt and collective resources should include debt swap, technology transfer, adaptable and flexible delivery of development partners’ assistance

- Solomon Islands
  - COVID-19 exacerbates pre-existing vulnerabilities in basic education, health and food security
  - Job losses resulting in malnutrition
Session 1:

- Tonga
  - Government initiatives and stimulus package prioritize seven areas - WASH, protection, emergency, food, coordination and logistics, economic and social cluster
  - Challenges include profit losses of businesses, job losses, loan defaults, disruption of trade and tourism supply chains,
Session 2:

- ESCAP – Economic recovery
  - Assessment of the impact and explored the opportunities available to PICs in response to the economic impacts of the pandemic.
  - The COVID-19 disruptions provide an opportunity to strengthen regional collaboration for higher incomes and revenue.
  - Government indebtedness is rising as there is more spending, less revenue and a lower level of output.
Session 2:

- **PIANGO**
  - Need to recognise the efforts of the NGO sector
  - NGOs can help governments reach communities

- **PIPSO**
  - Private sector needs to be part of the recovery discussions
  - Need for diversification and reduce dependence on one sector.
Session 3:

- ESCAP

  - COVID-19 crisis provides an indication of how climate or other crises could affect the region.
  - People need to be at the core of a green and resilient recovery with consideration of their material living standards, their access to health services, a clean and safe environment, accountability, inclusiveness, reduce poverty reduction and equality.
Session 3:

- Tuvalu
  - Need to coherently respond to the pandemic as a region.
  - Fisheries sector needs to include greater value adding and processing capacity
  - Greater emphasis on e-commerce required.
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Session 4:

UNDESA – High Level Political Forum (HLPF)

- Change the crisis into an opportunity.
- The SDGs are more urgent than ever.
- UN SG will be proposing a new social compact and a new global deal.
- The HLPF will discuss the issues on reviewing the progress of the SDGs and the impact of COVID-19.
Session 4:

ESCAP – Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

- Happening 23rd - 26th March 2021 as a hybrid meeting
- Regional preparatory meeting for the HLPF that will discuss Goals 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17.
- Expected results include policy recommendations for accelerating transformations and on strengthening follow up and review and mobilisation of stakeholders around the Decade of Action.
Session 4.1:

- ESCAP - Key findings of SDG Progress Report 2020
  - National Statistical Systems are over-whelmed.
  - PICs need to focus more on priorities
  - Need to improve data flows
  - Progress assessment against the 2030 agenda can be enhanced through use of proxy indicators
Session 4.1:

- PIFS/SPC – Key findings from the Pacific Sustainable Development Biennial Report
  - Theme “Ensuring Pacific People's well-being through the Blue Pacific identity, the proposed 2050 Strategy and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”
  - Key messages: Impact of COVID-19; tourism and remittances; gender gap; economic reform and labour policies; NCDs; persons with disabilities; data availability; VNR process.
Session 4.1:

- International Planned Parenthood Federation
  - Need for partnerships with governments
  - Need to take services to the communities
  - Need to ensure Pacific people are receiving the best health services possible.
Session 4.1:

- Fiji Disabled People's Federation
  - Engagement with organisations before policy change as these may affect people in ways not

- PCC
  - Work happening in the communities by NGOs needs to be captured
  - Interconnectedness of ecological, social and economic well-being
Session 4.1:

- FCOSS
  - Coordination of aid and planning which impacts the most vulnerable.
  - NGOs need to play a bigger role in the new normal.
  - Outlook for the future seems more positive as governments are reaching out for NGO contributions.
Session 4.1:

- Fiji

  - SDG progress – pre COVID Fiji was on the way to 11th year of economic growth with a focus on employment creation; improving education, health, electrification, water and sanitation services. Poverty was declining from 35% (2003) to 28% (2014)

  - Post COVID – 125,000 jobs lost; 19% economic contraction; closure of 500 SMEs; massive fiscal revenue contraction.
Session 4.1:

- Vanuatu
  - Recovery strategy refocussing the SDGs
  - Natural disasters are a recurring occurrence straining financial resources
Session 4.1:

- Solomon Islands
  - Best progress obtained in education, telecommunications, health, good governance and poverty alleviation.
  - NDS 2016-2035 integrated and localised the SDGs in the national context
  - Integrated Financing Framework for SDGs
  - Better coordination at the macro-level – enhanced coordination and avoids duplication
Session 4.2:

UNDESA – Benefits of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

- Strengthening national ownership including through capacity building and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach
- Linking the VNRs to reporting to other mechanisms and conventions
- Strengthening monitoring and oversight including through parliaments and supreme audit institutions, strengthening cooperation among all branches of government
- Explaining the impacts of strategies and polices on national level implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
Session 4.2:

UNDESA – Good practices and lessons from VNRs

- Shift from focus on economic dimension, to incorporate social and environmental issues

- Potential improvements include the strengthening national ownership including through capacity building and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, linking the VNRs to reporting on other mechanisms and conventions; strengthening monitoring and oversight and explaining the impacts of strategies and polices on national level implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- The VNRs ought not to be treated as an end in themselves, but instead as a lever for implementation.
Session 4.2:

Samoa

- Samoa submitted its second VNR report
- There is a shift from focus on economic dimension, to incorporate social and environmental issues
- National Development Strategy aligned to SDGs
- Challenges in execution of these plans
- Public sector needs to engage in an honest review of their systems in an effort to build back better
- Lack of capacity in accessing the more complex indicators.
Session 4.2:

Fiji

- Important work happening by different social sectors but in silos
- Need to improve national coordination mechanism to guide progress towards SDGs.
- No structured means of collecting, verifying and interpreting data sets that can be translated into meaningful policy actions and implementable projects.
- Fiji’s 2nd VNR due in 2022
Session 4.2:

Solomon Islands

- There are various challenges in areas of leadership, governance and institutional mechanisms; resource capacity to mobilize interventions; geographic isolation and expanse; integrated effective planning and in policy interventions and monitoring.
Session 4.2:

Tonga

- Challenges include lack of coordination within departments and ministries and amongst ministries/departments, and development partners; internal Ministry and Department planning arrangements on corporate planning/budgeting dependent on only few corporate staff; better costings for initiatives needed.
Session 4.3: ESCAP – Stakeholder Engagement

Founding principle - “All countries and all stakeholders” will act in a collaborative partnership to implement the 2030 agenda. Review processes will be open, inclusive and participatory.

Participation and consultation builds wider societal ownership of the 2030 Agenda, promote partnerships for implementing the Goals and raising public awareness, and allows public policy to be informed by needs of all affected groups.

Engagement include information sharing, consultation and collaboration.

The VNR and national planning processes can be used to institutionalize mechanisms to allow for ongoing engagement.
Session 4.3:

UNOSSC – South-South Cooperation

August 2020 survey that included nine countries from the Pacific found that all had received assistance from other countries in the Global South.

Seven out of the nine responding countries in the Pacific gave priority to green recovery that addresses the environment and climate impact simultaneously.

South-South and triangular cooperation can be fully leveraged as countries in the Pacific region gradually emerge from the crisis and enhance their resilience.
Common themes:

- Social aspects
  - In the spirit of leaving no-one behind our development efforts and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be inclusive of all people.
  - We must recognise the contribution of all sectors of society and engage with and support CSOs and the private sector.
  - Need for accurate and relevant data
Common themes:

Economic aspects

- Need to reduce dependence on a single sector (e.g. tourism)
- Need to build diversity into the economy
- Opportunity to build better for a more resilient greener economy
- Opportunity to test innovative approaches.
Common themes:

Collaboration

- Regional and multi-lateral cooperation to support the recovery.
- Opportunity for Governments, Development partners, private sector and CSOs to work together.
- If we work together the disruption brought about by COVID-19 should not hamper our efforts in achieving the SDGs.
- Development partners to avoid over-burdening countries and maintain a coordinated approach ensuring PICs can effectively manage the development interventions.
Some reflections:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the vulnerabilities of our PICs. Add to this the impact of natural disasters and climate change, our development efforts could be set back by many years, putting at risk our ability to achieve the 2030 targets of the SDGs.

- Despite the temptation to go back to normal, there's now a greater understanding that 'normal' was not working for everyone and people were falling through the cracks. The new normal must be one that benefits all people (especially those in most need) and the planet.
Way forward:

- Draft outcomes report submitted to ESCAP Pacific by Friday 18\(^{th}\) December
- Report circulated to participants on Monday 21\(^{st}\) December
- Comments back by 22 December 2020
- Final report circulated on 23 December 2020
- APFSD – 23-26 March 2021
THANK YOU