



2018/19 Pacific Perspectives

Expert Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Background

ESCAP's *Pacific Perspectives* publication undertakes policy research on topical, relevant sustainable development issues for the Pacific island region. It is an opportunity to spotlight topics that may either be overlooked within the broader regional sustainable development discourse, or require deeper analysis.

In the context of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals' commitment to "leave no-one behind", the 2018-2019 *Pacific Perspectives* – jointly published by ESCAP and UNDP - will research the policy landscape and identify opportunities for working with the Pacific's informal systems in the pursuit of sustainable development. It will unpack the constraints faced by Pacific island governments to work with multiple, non-state systems and will explore the potential for enhanced policy hybridity that translates into more effective development programming for Pacific island contexts. Further background is provided at Annex A.

Purpose

The purpose of the Expert Reference Group is to contribute to the development of the 2018/19 *Pacific Perspectives* publication, including through peer reviewing the draft publication and providing case study examples where relevant.

Timeframe and Meetings

The Expert Reference Group will provide guidance on key milestones of the publication over a 6-week period from 18 October to 30 November 2018. It is anticipated that the group will meet at least twice during this period, including via virtual/teleconferencing platforms, at a mutually suitable time determined by ESCAP and UNDP. ESCAP's Pacific Office has a modest budget available to enable non-Suva based ERG members' participation for one Suva-based meeting, planned tentatively for 12 November 2018 (a draft program will be shared closer to the date).

Documentation

The following documents will be provided for ERG input:

1. Draft/Annotated Outline of *Pacific Perspectives 2018/19* – Virtual
2. Complete draft *Pacific Perspectives 2018/19* publication – In-person



ANNEX A - Additional Information/Policy context/issues

The commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the S.A.M.O.A Pathway to “leave no-one behind” and ensure inclusiveness recognizes the importance of working beyond the state in order to achieve peaceful and lasting development outcomes. In the Pacific island region, it is recognized that many of the challenges pertaining to poverty and inequality relate in part to the limited reach of government services, as well as limited resourcing for development activities. Achieving sustainable development can therefore not only be a responsibility of governments alone, but involve the engagement of non-state actors, including the private sector and civil society as well as non-state socio-economic systems.

The predominant development discourse under the 2030 Agenda, and in the Pacific, has focused on the centrality of state systems in driving national development agendas. Development interventions have typically been designed to extend the reach of the state and its services, in order to foster more equal access for all citizens, and to promote employment opportunities through economic growth. However, despite several decades of institutional-strengthening and economic development programmes across Pacific island countries, together with high levels of aid, there continues to be significant development challenges¹. This so-called ‘**Pacific paradox**²’ has highlighted the potential policy deficit and the underlying structural issues that need to be addressed in servicing the chosen development pathway.

There is wide recognition that non-state systems are significant for a large proportion of populations in PICs, particularly given the limited reach of government services and because of the continuing importance of cultural and social norms which focus attention of the role of community and extended family systems. These systems – including but not limited to informal economy, informal/traditional social protection, informal/traditional justice, and informal settlements – interact with each other and with state-regulated mechanisms to shape the way that people earn livelihoods, utilize resources, navigate risks, and manage social relationships and responsibilities. These interactions are dynamic and can be conceived as operating along a policy continuum with informality and formality at either end and with recognized entry points into the state-regulated mechanisms (e.g. land legislation in Samoa and Vanuatu). The links between vulnerable populations and the informality-formality continuum are varied and still debated in the Pacific³ with suggestions that development pathways are neither linear nor one-directional. The concept of **policy hybridity as a development framework** has the potential to offers useful insights for achieving an appropriate mix of state and non-state systems that can progress country efforts in sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the need to make development work for the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged to “leave no one behind”. In the Pacific, much policy attention has focused on increasing the capacity of formal systems to extend their reach to vulnerable

¹ See: PIFS. 2015. *Pacific MDGs Tracking Report*. Suva, Fiji.

² A term coined by the World Bank in the early 2000s.

³ See: UNDP et al. 2014. *The State of Human Development in the Pacific*. Suva, Fiji.



populations. Recognition of the role of informal systems is, however, central to ensuring people and their communities remain in control of their own development. Therefore, it is worth asking whether it makes sense to also invest in “other” non-state systems that are already serving these vulnerable groups, and how to facilitate policy bridges between formal state and informal non-state systems so that we can accelerate progress toward achieving the SDGs? The potential for **flexibility** of policy interventions to leverage non-state socio-economic systems in delivering sustainable development is considerable. For example, policy innovation in relation to Solomon Islands’ oil palm industry has fostered a **hybrid socio-economy** that is effective in bridging non-state/traditional systems and state-regulated agricultural industry⁴.

While there is ample literature and policy evidence of the contribution of the private sector and civil society to development, information regarding the role of non-state systems in addressing development needs in the Pacific is less coherent (although available in different sectors at varying levels). There is an opportunity to consolidate Pacific knowledge and practice in working with non-state systems to support and accelerate implementation of Agenda 2030 in the region. Such analysis would also support Pacific interventions at the 2019 High-Level Political Forum where the theme is “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

⁴ See: Allen, Matt. N.d. “Informal formalisation in a hybrid property space: the case of smallholder oil palm production in Solomon Islands.” ANU Canberra.