

Technical Workshop

Pacific Island Economies: Aiming for Sustainable Economic Development in the Midst of Growing Uncertainties

The University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus

Video Conference Room 1, ICT Building

25–26 April 2023

BACKGROUND

Apart from the economic fault lines exposed due to recent exogenous coronavirus disease (COVID-19) impacts, Pacific Island Economies (PIEs) are regarded as amongst the 92 most vulnerable member states of the United Nations. The PIEs share many commonalities such as small size, remoteness and isolation from markets, high transportation costs, vulnerability to shocks and climate change and dependence on narrow range of exports. The vulnerability of the region arises from its unique geography and environment, the fragility of its economic structure, its distinctive demographics, and the interactions between these different factors. PIEs have also been identified as some of the most vulnerable worldwide to the effects of climate change and natural disasters.

There is an increased urgency for the region to scale up research and capacity for research in areas such as trade, infrastructure, tourism, digitalization, labor mobility, and regional cooperation.

Within this backdrop, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), under its ADB-Asian Think Tanks Network (ATTN) platform, and in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji, and the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) invited submissions of original research papers under the theme *Pacific Island Economies: Aiming for Sustainable Economic Development in Midst of Growing Uncertainties*.¹ Authors of selected papers will be invited to join two event activities: a) a technical workshop to discuss their paper proposals at the University of the South Pacific in April 2023 and b) to present at a conference at the University of the South Pacific in September 2023.

The aim of the project is to promote policy relevant empirical research, thereby supporting the small economies to achieve better social, economic, and environmental goals. Papers should, thus, focus on development issues, identify gaps based on reliable quantitative and/or qualitative data and suggest policy actions that promote sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience. All paper submissions must be original and not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Paper topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- I. Trade, investment, and logistics
- II. Digital transformation and connectivity
- III. Migration and remittances
- IV. Labor mobility and labor market development
- V. Economic diversification opportunities
- VI. Diseases and public health issues impacting Pacific economies

¹ The activity covers 14 ADB developing member countries comprising Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Tuesday, 25 April 2023

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. **Registration**

Opening Session

Moderator: Neelesh Gounder, Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head of School (Research) School of Accounting Finance and Economics, University of South Pacific

9:00 a.m. – 09:10 a.m. **Opening Remarks**
Aaron Batten, Regional Director, Pacific Subregional Office in Suva, Fiji (SPSO), Asian Development Bank (ADB)

9:10 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. **Keynote Message**
Kamal Gounder, Temporary Head of Strategic Planning Office, Strategic Planning National Development & Statistics, Ministry of Finance, Fiji

9:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. **Introduction to Workshop Theme**
Sanchita Basu-Das, Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department (ERCD), ADB

9:40 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. Picture-taking

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. *Coffee Break*

Session 1: Trade and Economic Growth

Moderator: Madhavi Pundit, Senior Economist, ERCD, ADB

10:00 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. **Presentation 1. “Papua New Guinea Global Trade Potential: Evidence from the Gravity Model Analysis” (20 minutes)**
Presenter: Lekima Nalaukai, Assistant Lecturer, University of the South Pacific
Discussant: Badri Narayanan, Research Fellow, University of Washington
Open-floor discussion

10:40 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. **Presentation 2. “The Nexus between Foreign Direct Investment, Trade Openness, and Economic Growth in Fiji” (20 minutes)**
Presenter: Anh Tru Nguyen, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Accounting and Business Management, Viet Nam National University of Agriculture
Discussant: James Webb, Public Management Economist, SPSO, ADB
Open-floor discussion

11:10 a.m. – 11:50 nn **Presentation 3. “Investigating Trade Costs and Trade Flows of Selected Melanesian Countries Using the Heterogeneous Trade Cost Effects Model” (20 minutes)**
Presenter: Amit Prakash, Lecturer in Economics, University of Fiji
Discussant: Jong Woo Kang, Principal Economist, ERCD, ADB
Open-floor discussion

11:50 nn – 1:30 p.m. *Lunch*

Session 2: Economic Resilience

Moderator: James Webb, Public Management Economist, SPSO, ADB

1:30 p.m. – 2:10 p.m. **Presentation 4. “Logging Off: Searching for new growth drivers for Solomon Islands” (20 minutes)**
Presenter: Prince Christian Cruz, ADB Consultant
Discussant: Neelesh Gounder, University of South Pacific
Open-floor discussion

2:10 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. **Presentation 5. “Barriers to Income Diversification: Study on COVID-19 redundant skilled workers – Evidence from Fiji” (20 minutes)**
Presenter: Seone Lolesio, Assistant Lecturer, University of the South Pacific
Discussant: Sanchita Basu-Das, ERCD, ADB
Open-floor discussion

2:50 p.m. – 3:10 p.m. *Coffee Break*

Session 3: FDI, Migration and Remittances <i>Moderator: Vu Thu Trang, Research Associate, ADB Institute</i>	
3:10 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.	Presentation 6. “Aiming for Sustainable Economic Development during Growing Uncertainties: The Federated States of Micronesia Case” <i>(20 minutes)</i> Presenter: Michael Levin , Consultant, PacificWeb LLC Discussant: Ashish Narain , Principal Economist, PARD, ADB Open-floor discussion
3:50 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	Presentation 7: “Migration, Foreign Direct Investment and Vulnerability: Panel-Based Evidence” <i>(20 minutes)</i> Presenter: Nitika Nand , Teaching Assistant, University of the South Pacific Discussant: Kijin Kim , Senior Economist, ERCD, ADB Open-floor discussion
4:30 p.m. – 4:35 p.m.	Reminders for next day
Wednesday, 26 April 2023	
9:00 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.	Recap of Day 1
Session 3: FDI, Migration and Remittances (continuation) <i>Moderator: Sanchita Basu-Das, ERCD, ADB</i>	
9:10 a.m – 9:50 a.m	Presentation 8: “Male Migration and Women Empowerment: The Case of Samoa” <i>(20 minutes)</i> Presenter: Vu Thu Trang , Research Associate, ADB Institute Discussant: Noel Del Castillo , ADB Consultant Open-floor discussion
9:50 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.	<i>Coffee Break</i>
Session 4: Planning Programs with Remote Sensing <i>Moderator: Neelesh Gounder, University of South Pacific</i>	
10:10 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.	Presentation 9. “Evaluation of Remotely Sensed Nighttime Light as Complementary Data Source for Socioeconomic Indicators in Pacific Island Economies” <i>(20 minutes)</i> Presenter: Homer Pagkalinawan , Associate Economics Officer, ERCD, ADB Discussant: Rup Singh , Senior Lecturer, University of the South Pacific Open-floor discussion
10:50 p.m. – 11:30 p.m.	Presentation 10. “Integrating Remote Sensing and Survey Data to Nowcast Disaster Impacts” <i>(20 minutes)</i> Presenter: Madhavi Pundit , Senior Economist, ERCD, ADB Discussant: Daniel Suryadarma , ADBI Open-floor discussion
11:30 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.	Closing Sanchita Basu-Das, ERCD, ADB
11:40 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	<i>Networking Lunch</i>