

ADB-Asian Think Tank Development Forum 2023

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

Grand Pacific Hotel and Laucala Campus, USP in Suva, Fiji

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Grand Pacific Hotel and Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji
26 – 28 September 2023

BACKGROUND

Pacific Island Economies (PIEs) are regarded as amongst the 92 most vulnerable member states of the United Nations. The PIEs are a heterogeneous set of countries, but they share many common characteristics, such as small size, fragile economic structure with narrow export base and remoteness translating to high transportation costs. The vulnerability of the region arises from its unique geography and susceptibility to shocks and natural disaster emanating as a result of climate change (ADB, 2013). There is an increased urgency for the region to scale up knowledge and capacity building for research in areas of pressing policy matters, such as trade, infrastructure, tourism, digitalization, labor mobility, regional cooperation and others.

In this context, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), under its ADB-Asian Think Tanks Network (ATTN) platform, and in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) and the University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji, is convening a forum, called the ATTN Forum, bringing the community of researchers and policy makers together. The theme of the forum is “Pacific Island Economies: Aiming for Sustainable Economic Development in Midst of Growing Uncertainties”. The forum is an outcome of earlier activities, including a *call for paper* in January 2023, covering several topics of economic development, and a technical workshop held at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in April 2023.

This Forum will not only discuss the completed papers but will include topics on ADB economic outlook, new data sources and policy planning, and tourism and regional cooperation. In addition, a special capacity-building session will be hosted by ADBI and USP for selected participants. The Forum will bring together government officials from Fiji and other Pacific Island economies, think tanks in the Pacific, students, and academics.

The ATTN is a network of think tanks and research centers actively engaged in the study of sustainable economic growth and inclusive development in the Asia and Pacific region. The network led by ADB and in partnership with ADBI, undertakes collaborative policy-relevant research activity on a wide array of socio-economic themes while pursuing goals of (i) systematic knowledge-sharing among member think tanks; (ii) strengthening the think tanks’ operational capacity to generate robust research; and (iii) raising awareness of Asia and Pacific region in the global community.

**ADB-Asian Think Tank Development Forum
Pacific Island Economies: Aiming for Sustainable Economic Development
in the Midst of Growing Uncertainties**

AGENDA

Day 1, Grand Pacific Hotel
26 September 2023

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

Opening Session

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

9:00 a.m. – 09:15 a.m. **Welcome Remarks**
Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor and President, USP
Albert Park, Chief Economist and Director General, Economic Research and Development Impact Department (ERDI), Asian Development Bank (ADB)

9:15 a.m. – 9:25 a.m. **Introductory Remarks**
Tetsushi Sonobe, Dean, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI)

9:25 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. **Keynote Address**
Professor Biman Chand Prasad, Minister
Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Fiji

9: 40 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. *Photo session*

9: 50 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. *Coffee break*

Special Session: Economic Outlook

Moderator: **Albert Park**, ADB

10:00 a.m. – 11: 00 a.m. **Economic Outlook of Asia and the Pacific**
Albert Park, ADB
Panel Discussion
Aaron Batten, Regional Director, Pacific Subregional Office in Suva, Fiji, ADB
Shiri Gounder, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Fiji
Neelesh Gounder, Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head of School (Research and International), School of Economics, USP
Open discussion

11:00 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.	Introduction to the Forum Sanchita Basu Das , Economist, ADB
Session 1: New Data Sources for Improved Policy Planning <i>Moderator: Ashish Narain, Principal Economist, Public Sector Management and Governance Sector Office, ADB</i>	
11:10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Introductory Remarks Lesieli Tufui Faletau , Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Economic Fiscal Policy Division, Ministry of Finance, Kingdom of Tonga
11:30 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.	Presentation 1. “Evaluation of Remotely Sensed Nighttime Light as Complementary Data Source for Socioeconomic Indicators in Pacific Island Economies” Presenter: Homer Pagkalinawan , Associate Economics Officer, ADB
11:50 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Open discussion
12:00 p.m. – 12:20 p.m.	Presentation 2. “Integrating Remote Sensing and Survey Data to Nowcast Disaster Impacts” Presenter: Madhavi Pundit , Senior Economist, ADB
12:20 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Open discussion
12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	<i>Lunch Break</i>
2:00 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.	Presentation 3. “Impact of Climate Change on Economic Activities in Pacific Region: Sub-national Analysis using Night Light Data” Presenter: Trong-Anh Trinh , Monash University
2:20 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Open discussion
Session 2: Tourism and Regional Cooperation <i>Moderator: Sanchita Basu-Das, ADB</i>	
2:30 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.	Introductory Remarks Christopher Cocker , Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Tourism Organisation
2:50 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.	Presentation 4. “Modelling Tourism Arrivals in the Pacific” Presenters: Isoa Wainiqolo , Senior Economics Officer, ADB and Seron Shivanjali , International Monetary Fund (IMF)
3:10 p.m. – 3:20 p.m.	Open discussion
3:20 p.m. – 3:40 p.m.	Presentation 5. “Asia-Pacific Regional Cooperation and Integration Index Framework—Enhancing the Measures of RCI in the Pacific” Presenter: Rolando Avendano , Economist, ERCI, ADB
3:40 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	Open discussion
4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	Wrap-up and End of Day 1

4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Kava session
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Cocktails Reception (by invitation)
Day 2, Grand Pacific Hotel 27 September 2023	
Session 3: Trade and Economic Growth <i>Moderator: Neelesh Gounder, USP</i>	
9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.	Introductory Remarks Professor Wadan Narsey, Adjunct Professor, James Cook University
9:20 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.	Presentation 6. “Papua New Guinea Global Trade Potential: Evidence from the Gravity Model Analysis” Presenter: Lekima Nalaukai, Assistant Lecturer, USP
9:40 a.m. – 9:50 a.m.	Open discussion
9:50 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.	Presentation 7. “Investigating Trade Costs and Trade Flows of Selected Melanesian Countries Using the Heterogeneous Trade Cost Effects Model” Presenter: Amit Prakash, Lecturer in Economics, University of Fiji
10:10 a.m. – 10:20 a.m.	Open discussion
10:20 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.	Presentation 8. “The Nexus between Foreign Direct Investment, Trade Openness, and Economic Growth in Fiji” Presenter: Anh Tru Nguyen, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Accounting and Business Management, Viet Nam National University of Agriculture
10:40 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.	Open discussion
10:50 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	<i>Coffee Break</i>
Session 4: Economic Resilience <i>Moderator: Daniel Suryadarma, Economist, ADBI</i>	
11:00 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.	Introductory Remarks Selwyn Takana, Deputy Secretary Economics, Ministry of Finance and Treasury, Solomon Islands
11:20 a.m. – 11:40 a.m.	Presentation 9. “Logging Off: Searching for New Growth Drivers for Solomon Islands” Presenter: Prince Christian Cruz, ADB Consultant
11:40 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.	Open discussion
11:50 a.m. – 12:10 p.m.	Presentation 10. “Barriers to Micro Business Start-Ups: COVID and Post-COVID Evidence from Fiji” Presenter: Seone Lolesio, Assistant Lecturer, USP

12:10 p.m. – 12:20 p.m. Open discussion

12:20 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. *Lunch Break*

Session 5: FDI, Migration, and Remittances

Moderator: Madhavi Pundit, ADB

1:30 p.m. – 1:50 p.m. Introductory Remarks
Sunil Kumar, Policy Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister of Fiji

1:50 p.m. – 2:10 p.m. **Presentation 11. “Aiming for Sustainable Economic Development during Growing Uncertainties: The Federated States of Micronesia Case”**
Presenter: Michael Levin, Consultant, PacificWeb LLC

2:10 p.m. – 2:20 p.m. Open discussion

2:20 p.m. – 2:40 pm. **Presentation 12: “Migration, Foreign Direct Investment, and Vulnerability: Panel-Based Evidence”**
Presenter: Nitika Nand, Teaching Assistant, USP

2:40 p.m. – 2:50 p.m. Open discussion

2:50 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. *Coffee break*

3:00 p.m. – 3:20 p.m. **Presentation 13: “Male Migration and Women Empowerment: The Case of Samoa”**
Presenter: Vu Thu Trang, Research Associate, ADB Institute

3:20 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Open discussion

3:30 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. **Closing Remarks**
Ashish Narain, ADB
Neelesh Gounder, USP

3:30 p.m.- 3:40 p.m. Wrap up and reminder for next day
Sanchita Basu Das, ADB

6:00 p.m.- 7:30 p.m. Networking Dinner (by invitation)

Day 3, University of South Pacific
Post-Graduate Lecture Theater, SAFE
28 September 2023

Capacity Building Training: Public Policy Workshop for Policy Makers

Facilitator: **Prof. Kent Weaver**, Georgetown University/Brookings

The workshop will specifically focus on developing resilient policies that are tailored to address the unique challenges of the region, fostering collaboration among participants, and enhancing decision-making skills. All sessions will have a substantive focus on disaster resilience and preparedness while also providing a general analytical toolkit. Case materials (that include Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu and the 2023 Maui wildfires) will be distributed in advance to workshop participants to allow them to prepare for discussions. The workshop will be conducted in an interactive format.

9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Identifying problems and developing a theory of change

10:30 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. Coffee break

10:40 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Implementing public policy

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. *Lunch*

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Changing the behavior of individuals and businesses

3:30 p.m. – 3:40 p.m. Coffee break

3:40 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Assessing political feasibility and building coalitions of support among stakeholders

4:30 p.m. – 4:40 p.m. **Closing**
Daniel Suryadarma, ADBI
Neelesh Gounder, USP