Regional Situation Report

Capacity Building Training Workshop on E-Government in Pacific Small Island Developing States, November 5, 2015

Presentation Outline

- About the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat

- The role and significance of ICT

- ICT in the Pacific

- Challenges

- Addressing the challenges

- The Decision of Leaders

- Pacific Regional Policies

About the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)

- It was established in 1971;

- Inter-governmental Regional Organisation;

- 16 independent member countries: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu & Vanuatu;

- Head Quarter in Suva, Fiji;

- Over 100 staff;

- 3 programmes: Economic Governance, Political Governance & Security and Strategic Partnerships & Coordination.

- www.forumsec.org

The role of the Pacific Forum Secretariat in ICT

- There are aspects of ICT which require a regional approach to address them effectively (such as regulation and cyber crime legislation).

- Linkages with other infrastructure, such as energy, and the role of ICT in education.

- Framework for Pacific Regionalism and consideration by Leaders of regional priorities.

- Hence, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat plays a key role in coordination and prioritisation that guide regional agencies, donors and development partners.

ICT in the Pacific

- Most 14 Pacific countries have more than 10% teledensity;
- Less than 50 % of the countries have National ICT Policy;
- Only 6 of the 14 countries have an open telecommunication market;
- Only 4 of the 14 Forum Island Countries (FICs) have e-government plans;
- All 14 FICs Government Ministries have websites/portals;
- 8 of the 14 FICs have e-services established;
- Mobile teledensity in the open markets is about 50%;
- Mobile penetration remains low – around 37% (below global average of 55%).
- Broadband penetration for about 8 countries in the Pacific was less than 5% of the population.
- High dependency on Satellite for international and domestic connectivity;
- 7 FICs are connected to submarine fibre optic cables. A few countries have fibre Optic cable projects in progress.

Challenges in the Pacific

- Widely dispersed population & huge distance
- Small population
- Lack of economy of scale
- Poor quality and low levels of access to infrastructure including ICT and energy
- Lack of human capacity

These lead to:

- Digital Divide
- High costs of ICT for private sector and education.
- Low priority in plans or not well integrated.
- Lack of collaboration and cooperation at a regional level.

Importance of ICT

- The **Pacific Plan Review 2013** highlighted that the largest economic gains from regionalism may be found in the labor and telecommunications markets (pages 92-93).

- The Pacific Leaders in Japan "reiterated that quality infrastructure is indispensable for securing resilient, reliable and durable transport and communications links" (paragraph 40 of **PALM7 Declaration**).

- The lack of adequate ICT infrastructure networks was also highlighted in the **SAMOA Pathway** as one of the major limiting factors of economic growth and job creation in SIDS (paragraph 27). The Members of the General Assembly also called for support to "promote and enhance the use of ICT for, inter alia, education, the creation of employment, in particular youth employment, and economic sustainability purposes in SIDS" (paragraph 27g) and supported the establishment of "national and regional ICT platforms and information dissemination hubs in SIDS to facilitate information exchange and cooperation (paragraph 109h).

- Moreover, ICT connectivity, access to markets and finance were identified as the major constraints to enhance economic sustainability in the region at the **Private Sector Partnership Forum** held on the margins of the SIDS Conference.

The Role and Significance of ICT

- ICT can play a key role in Pacific economic development, achievement of MDGs, SDGs and poverty alleviation and improving inclusiveness in the Pacific.

- ICT development can provide new opportunities for education, health, food security, DRR and other infrastructure use.

- The significance of infrastructure (including ICT) in the region is supported by the Pacific Plan, Forum Compact and Waiheke Declaration.

Pacific Regional Policies

1999 – Communication Action Plan (CAP)

2002 – Pacific Islands ICT Policy and Plan (PIIPP)

2005 – Pacific Plan Digital Strategy (PPDS)

2006 – PPDS re-endorsed by ICT Ministers

2010 – Framework for Action on ICT for Developments in the Pacific

Recent consideration by Leaders

- **Proposals to SSCR**:
  - Submission from USP seeking to establishing an Regional ICT Advisory Council would be a first step towards bringing about transformative change in the region.
  - Submission from other stakeholders highlighting the importance of ICT.

- **FOC recommendation and lead agencies**:
  - Leaders endorse the establishment of a Regional ICT Advisory Council as a first step to realising greater benefits from ICT for the region.
  - Lead agency will be USP.

Vinaka!

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat