**Session 6 New data Sources: Opportunity and Challenges**

**Session Paper**

The business register can be based on data collected by the statistical office, and/or administrative data sourced from other organisations. These sources should be assessed in accordance with the organisation’s usual standards for data quality, and should address the following attributes:

* relevance (scope, reference period, level of detail, classification standards);
* timeliness (frequency, timing relative to processing and outputs);
* accuracy (quality standards employed by the source organisation);
* coherence (comparison across data items, comparison across time periods);
* interpretability (availability of assistance and explanatory information); and
* accessibility (ongoing availability).

**What are the main challenges in using alternative data sources in official statistics?**

In Fiji administrative data are collected for a specific administrative purpose, and the corresponding needs and priorities are likely to be different from those of the statistical system. Thus, administrative units may not overlap with statistical units, and their characteristics may be differently defined. For example, the tax authorities may permit a single enterprise to have multiple value added tax (VAT) accounts. Turnover collected for VAT purposes may not include turnover related to the sales of VAT exempt goods and services, whereas the statistical system wants total turnover. Similarly, the classification systems used within administrative sources may be different to those used by these statistics office. Even if the classification systems are the same, they may be applied differently, depending on the primary purpose of the administrative source. For instance, the new data sources like Energy Fiji Ltd (EFL) they have list of commercial business for new electricity application or list of business for electricity supply where the bills are paid monthly. This EFL list provide details of commercial business if a business closed, dormant or new business started we can use EFL list to verify the information and update the business records.

Using administrative data to populate and update the business register allows to access more detailed data, reduce the cost of collecting and the burden on respondents. When multiple administrative sources are used together, there will be situations where the information is not consistent across sources. In these cases, the structural details should be confirmed with the business before being inserted in the business register. Use of administrative data in place of survey data eliminates sampling error, removes or significantly reduces non-response and provides more accurate and detailed estimates for various sub-populations, e.g., small geographic areas.

**How best can these sources complement the use of existing data and enrich SBRs?**

**Coverage** is of great significance, including all economically active units. Thus, the main advantage of using an administrative source is the level of coverage it provides, which is either complete, or, if not complete, at least well defined, so that it can be assessed against the target population.

**Costs** the administrative data with the survey data is comparatively lower cost. Surveys are expensive, particularly if they are conducted as censuses or involve the use of personal interviews. Administrative data are often available free of charge. Even if there is a charge, it is often cheaper to use administrative data than collect the same information by survey. Fewer staff are usually needed to process the data and there is no need for non-response follow-up. The size and scope of an SBR makes it very difficult and expensive to populate and maintain solely by statistical data.

**Response burden** using data from administrative sources involves no additional response burden. While businesses usually understand the reasons for supplying data for registration and taxation purposes, even if they do not like doing so, they may see statistical data requests as an extra, less necessary, burden. If they have already provided details to other government departments, they may become annoyed at receiving requests for similar information from statistics office. An associated advantage is that the use of administrative data may, in some cases, allow statistics to be produced more frequently, with no extra cost to businesses.

**Content and timeliness** the use of administrative sources may increase the quality of the SBR by providing access to more up to-date information on key characteristics, such as: Name and address, births and deaths of units, and the dates of these registration, Economic activity code, location, size, in terms of number of employees and/or turnover. As well as improving the timeliness of SBR data in the context of their use for survey frames, administrative data can improve the timeliness of statistics that are derived from the SBR. This is because surveys take time to plan, to design, to pilot questionnaires, to analyse the population and optimise the sample, to collect and process the data, etc. Access to a suitable administrative source via the SBR may provide a quicker and more efficient solution.

**What are the requirements for the alternative data sources to be fully incorporated in SBR production process?**

In Fiji the alternative data source is through data collection by the statistical office through the annual and quarterly surveys feedbacks. Where the questionnaire is sent to the businesses and follow up are done to get the response rate of the business. And through the survey officers the BR unit is updated in terms of the operating status of business, dormant, ceased or change of ownership/economic activity, etc. Last year due to pandemic it was really hard to get the updated list of business operating in Fiji due to most of the business license was free. Therefore, the business register unit proposed a development plan to update the business listings through door-to-door business exercise. Due to lack of budget, we just considered the main city/towns. The fieldwork was conducted online using the survey 123. Where the all details of the business were asked and the GPS points was captured using google map. This data enables the Business survey team easily to locate the business in particular area while conducting business survey. And this enables us to update the business register database and also the GPS points for the business.