# Indicators of the economic empowerment of women in the Cook Islands

# November-December 2013

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## Introduction

The purpose of this project is to develop an annual reporting framework that includes a set of key indicators to measure progress towards the economic empowerment of women in the Cook Islands. The work, funded by ADB during November-December 2013, was designed to assist the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MINTAFF).

Specifically, the task was to investigate, as a minimum, production of the following five indicators:

1. Basic needs poverty rate (sex disaggregated)
2. Female to male labour force participation ratio
3. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
4. Gender gap in pay across the Public sector
5. Land title registration (sex disaggregated)

While this report has focussed on indicators relating to economic empowerment, the findings can be extended to other areas such as education and health.

## General Situation

***Data demands***

In May 2011, the Cook Islands Government approved the “*Cook Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment and Strategic Plan of Action, 2011 – 2016*”. The goal of the national policy is to:

“*…advance gender equality and enhance women’s empowerment ensuring the active contribution and meaningful participation of both Cook Islands women and men in all spheres, and at all levels, of development and decision making*.”

The Cook Islands reports gender-related data to a number of international organisations, including SPC and UNESCAP. The country is in the process of preparing its second report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and expects to submit this by the end of 2014.

***Data sources and availability***

There are currently indicators produced for many areas of gender concern (e.g. education, health) but economic empowerment is an area where data availability is limited. There is a range of data collected that are relevant to this topic that could be better utilized for monitoring national goals. Below is a brief summary of the main data sources.

***Surveys and Censuses***

The CISO serves the country well with a range of statistical collections. The most important social collection is the population census, conducted every five years. This collects a wide range of information about men and women. Due to the lack of labour-related collections, the census is the only source of information for unemployment data and data on persons in the informal sector.

Because of the relatively small size of the population, it is costly for the country to conduct the full range of statistical surveys usually undertaken in countries with much larger population bases. The survey most relevant to women’s economic empowerment is the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) conducted for the first and most recent time in 2005/2006. This provides information on individual income as well as the expenditure patterns of households. This survey provides the basis to undertake poverty analysis.

***Administrative data***

Government agencies provide a range of services and, as a bi-product, record information about those services, which, in many cases, is sex-disaggregated. For example, the business register maintained by CISO is a potential source of information on the number of businesses operating by sex of the owner(s). In the past, this administrative data has been underutilised for measuring progress towards gender equality.

Other administrative data sets with the potential to be useful with respect to gender equality issues include:

* Public Service Commission records (information on public servants pay and characteristics by gender)
* Lands title register (mortgage information by gender)
* Companies register (ownership by gender)
* Cook Islands Superannuation Fund (wage & salary pay by gender, occupation & industry; foreign workers)
* Migration data base (foreign workers by gender)
* Taxation (persons submitting tax returns by gender)

An area where administrative data is of limited assistance is welfare payments. The two main payments are child support and age pensions and, for both, they are universal and not subject to any means testing. They are therefore of little use for indicator monitoring.

There are approximately 220 people (aged 13 -60) on disability pensions. This pension is paid to those with long-term disabilities who are unable to work, as well as to some people who have a short-term disability of six months or less (usually caused by an accident). These data are readily available from MINTAFF but are of limited use as gender-related economic empowerment indicators.

The destitution benefit is the one that is potentially the most relevant to women’s economic empowerment. It has strict eligibility requirements and there are usually less than 20 persons receiving this benefit at one time. Most beneficiaries are women who have been abandoned by their spouse after the spouse has left the country to seek work. At the time of writing there were 15 women and one man receiving the benefit.

***Indicator frameworks***

There is currently no explicit framework of indicators for monitoring gender equality in the Cook Islands. Gender-related indicator frameworks developed by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Secretariat for Pacific Community (SPC) and within the Cook Islands (preliminary development indicators framework) were examined for guidance on possible additional indicators (Appendix 3). Decisions on relevant gender indicators on women’s economic empowerment (and other areas of gender concern) should be based on the Cook Island Development Indicators. While this framework is still at the preliminary stage, it should be influenced by international indicator frameworks. This appears to be the case.

## Methodology

The work was undertaken in close consultation with staff from Ministry of Internal Affairs (MINTAFF) under the guidance and direction of the Secretary of MINTAFF and with the direct support of the Director of Gender and Development Division (GADD).

Information was gathered through a series of meetings with key stakeholders, data producers and users. Detailed discussions were held with the Statistician and her staff at the Cook Islands Statistical Office (CISO). In addition, discussions were held with the following organisations (meeting notes provided in Appendix 1):

* Public Service Commission
* MINTAFF (Labour, Welfare)
* Ministry of Justice
* MFEM Finance
* Disability council coordinator
* CI Superannuation
* Immigration
* Office of the Prime Minister, Policy and planning
* Financial Securities Commission
* Taxation

A summary of findings and recommendations were discussed at a round table workshop with key stakeholders (Statistics, Public Service Commission, Finance) on the last day of the mission. The purpose was to inform them of the main outcomes to date and to seek their feedback. An Aide Memoire (Appendix 2) was distributed to stakeholders to summarise the purpose and findings of the mission.

## Availability of the specified indicators

### Basic needs poverty rate (sex disaggregated)

**Method of calculation**

Measuring poverty is a specialist area. In 2008 for the first time, a report on “*The Estimation of Basic Needs Poverty Lines and the Incidence and Characteristics of Poverty in the Cook Islands*” was prepared by CISO with technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This report was based on results from the 2005/2006 HIES. The government of the day decided not to publish the report.

The report attempted to define what poverty and hardship meant in the Cook Island context in the following terms.

“*Poverty and hardship in the Cook Islands is clearly not associated with starvation and destitution; poverty in the Cook Islands is a relative concept, it is those households and people who cannot afford to have the basic necessities of life compared with their neighbours, such as: they cannot afford to buy good quality nutritious food; or perhaps they make bad ‘choices’ about their spending because they do not know any better or because of prevailing norms; or perhaps children go to school without proper uniforms or books; or houses are unfinished or un-repaired; or they may be without proper water supply or sanitation; or families cannot always afford to pay the bills when they fall due; or they are unable to meet family commitments. These families are constantly struggling to meet payments, and are frequently in debt – this is poverty and hardship in the Cook Islands.*”

As is the case in many countries, there is no official definition of poverty in the Cook Islands. One measure that is widely used globally is a basic needs poverty line. In the 2008 poverty study mentioned above, the basic needs poverty line for the Cook Islands was calculated “*estimating the cost of a minimally-nutritious, low-cost diet which delivers a minimum of 2,100 kilo calories (Kcal) per day plus adequate additional nutrition to provide a sound and balanced, but basic, diet. To this is added an amount for essential non-food expenditure (e.g. housing, transport, education, clothing, utilities) which is required to provide an overall basic-needs standard of living. Households which have per capita incomes or expenditure below the basic needs poverty line are then deemed to be living in poverty.* “

It was estimated from the 2005/2006 HIES that the basic needs poverty line was **$102.93 per capita** **adult** equivalent per week and that 28% of the population earn below that amount. The study did not calculate a separate figure for men and women.

**Recommendation**

It was hoped that administrative data would be available to provide some measure of possible changes in poverty since the 2008 study. Since 1985 the CISO has been publishing a minimum living level for an employee supporting a spouse and two children. Unfortunately, it was not possible to derive a suitable methodology to use data from this series to carry poverty estimates forward. The conclusion is that the only way reasonable poverty estimates can be calculated is if another HIES is conducted. The CISO would like to conduct such a survey (which would also be used to rebase the CPI) in the near future. Unfortunately, funding for the survey has yet to be secured.

It would also be necessary seek specialist assistance for poverty analysis and government support to release results from such analysis. Thus direct poverty estimates are only likely to be available on an irregular basis. This reflects the situation in most other countries.

### Female to male labour force participation ratio

Female labour force participation rate = ratio

Male labour force participation rate

**Method of calculation**

Firstly, the labour force participation rate is calculated by taking the total number of women (or men) 15 years and over in the work force[[1]](#footnote-1) divided by the total number of women (or men) residents aged 15 years and over. This number is usually multiplied by 100% to get the labour force participation rate (LFPR). The 2011 population census estimated the total LFPR to be 71% (women and men combined). This is quite high. The LFPR for males was 76.6% and for females 65.4%. Thus to calculate the ratio of women to men, 65.4 is divided by 76.6 which gives a ratio of **0.85.**

The population census is the primary data source for this indicator. As it is only conducted every five years, for more frequent measures it will be necessary to either estimate LFPR for men and women in inter-census years or to carry the census estimate forward. However, it is important to note that this indicator is unlikely to change much from year to year or even census to census.

Unless the government introduces an annual labour force survey (highly unlikely and probably not justified on cost grounds), then the only way to calculate this indicator on an annual basis would be to update the LFPR for men and women by moving the census data forward using administrative data. This is straightforward for the total number of women (and men) aged 15 years and over as CISO will be able to estimate the usual resident male and female population aged 15 years and over.

Calculating the numbers in the work force is much more difficult. It is necessary to have estimates of numbers of men and women who are in paid employment, self-employed, unpaid workers or the unemployed (and actively seeking work). While administrative data can provide estimates of numbers in paid employment and the self-employed, it does not capture data on unpaid workers and the unemployed. Therefore, it needs to be assumed that the relationship between men and women in these categories does not change significantly from year to year. If the statistics office is able to reintroduce an employment survey, then changes to numbers of people in paid employment can be estimated and the census numbers adjusted accordingly. Without such a survey it will be necessary to rely on the business register that is maintained by the statistics office or the CI Superannuation Commission to estimate changes in paid employment. The Public Service Commission will be able to provide data on the number of male and female staff within the public sector. Note that the Superannuation Commission data includes most public servants. Theoretically, taxation data should be useful, but because not everyone submits a tax return, then this data might not be a reliable source for annual employment changes

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that this indicator be calculated directly from the population census in years where the census is conducted. For intervening years it is recommended that numbers of men and women taken from both the business register and the superannuation commission be monitored to see if major changes are occurring. Unless major changes are noted it should be accurate to carry forward the indicator derived from the population census.

### Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

**Method of calculation**

A base rate for this indicator can be derived directly from the population census by taking the number of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and dividing this number by the number of men in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. Because, there are currently no agricultural producers in the data held by the Superannuation Commission, then this data base is probably the best source for calculating this indicator in non-census years.

Differences in the indicator calculated from the population census can be directly compared to that derived from the population census and that difference taken into account in moving the indicator forward. The population census provided an estimate of 48% for this indicator in 2011. This indicator is close to the ideal of 50%. For 2012, the Superannuation Commission produced a figure of 47% for wage earners (fund members). This excludes domestic workers (mainly female) as they do not have to pay superannuation and also a small number (estimated at less than 200) of public service employees who remained in the “old” NZ superannuation fund. The indicator can be refined by using domestic worker figures from immigration records and “old” NZ superannuation fund members from PSC records.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that this indicator be calculated directly from the population census in years where the census is conducted. For intervening years it is recommended that it be calculated from the Superannuation Commission data base (adjusted for persons NZ superannuation fund and domestic workers).

### Gender gap in pay across the public sector

This indicator is calculated by taking the total wages and salaries for men and women from the PSC and dividing by the number of men and women.

**Method of calculation**

Total wages earned by women in the public sector ($) =average female wage ($)

Number of women

Total wages earned by men in the public sector ($) = average male wage ($)

Number of men

Then, dividing the average female wage by the average male wage will give the ratio in pay across the public sector. A number less than one means there is a pay gap in favour of men, above one means the pay gap favours women and equal to one implies gender equality in public service pay.

Average female wage ($) = ratio of female to male wage in the public sector

Average male wage ($)

To calculate the gender pay gap, you take the difference between female and male average wage and divide this by the average male wage, giving an indication of the degree of difference between male and female earnings.

(Average male wage – Average female wage) = gender pay gap (%)

Average male wage ($)

For example, if the average male wage is $650 per month and the average female wage is $500 the result of the calculation is 23%, indicating that women earn 23% less than men, on average.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended this indicator be calculated annually directly from information in the PSC’s new payroll and human resource management system, which is targeted for introduction in January 2014.

### Land title registration (sex disaggregated)

The suggested indicator on land title registration has no meaning in the context of the way land is managed in the Cook Islands. The land registration system in the Cook Islands is complex. There is no freehold title and the ownership of the land is vested in particular families. Members of the family can register interest in the land and the family can decide to allot a family member a portion if they wish to say build a house (provided it’s larger than a quarter acre). Experience shows that both men and women freely register their interests. This system applies to all but three islands, where a traditional chiefly system still applies.

**Recommendation**

It would be impossible to interpret any indicator based on land title registration information. Also, it would be a significant manual exercise to extract information about registration of interest in land and this exercise would be of no real meaning. It is suggested that for international indicators this indicator be shown as not applicable for the Cook Islands and an explanation be provided.

## Other economic empowerment indicators

A comparison of women’s economic empowerment indicators suggested by UNSD in their minimum set of gender indicators (2013), SPC and the Cook Island Development Indicators (preliminary) was undertaken (see attachment 3 for complete list). From this list, the following additional indicators can be estimated from administrative or survey data and may be of value:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Framework** | **Data source(s)** | **Frequency of collection** |
| Percentage distribution of employed population by sector, each sex | UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Percentage of firms owned by women, by size | UN | Business register | ongoing |
| Average annual rate of growth of the labour force | SPC | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Percentage of work force (15-64) who are employees, by sex | SPC | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Length of parental leave | SPC | Legislation |  |
| Minimum wage, (hourly rate) | SPC | Legislation |  |

Another potentially important economic empowerment indicator for the Cook Islands relates to temporary foreign workers. Almost one third of the work force is workers on a temporary visa. This has a gender dimension as foreign women are often employed as nannies or in the tourism industry. An annual indicator that monitors changes in foreign workers by gender would be of interest in the context of the Cook Islands. This could be done through migration data, together will information from the superannuation fund.

## Summary of key findings and recommendations

### A central collection of administrative data

It is clear that the best source of “new data” is going to come from administrative sources. The small population base means that surveys are relatively expensive, often prohibitively so, and funding is always going to be a challenge. The information obtained for this report suggests there is significant administrative data being recorded that is underutilised for analysis and policymaking. In the area of gender and development, administrative data is virtually not used at all.

The present model of “discovering” administrative data is to separately visit potential sources and persuade them to provide access. This is not an efficient way to operate. It is suggested that a central collection of administrative data be established, with the logical custodian being CISO. It is important that maintaining and updating this collection is kept simple, so that it is not resource consuming. In the first instance, it is suggested that it consist of a number of simple tables (e.g. in Excel) that are collected on an annual basis (e.g. shortly after the end of the financial year). These tables should be in aggregate form, but should contain as much detail on individual characteristics as possible. Gender should be a mandatory variable and tables be maintained electronically, so that they can be provided to users in a digital form for analysis. A preliminary list of tables from administrative sources that are of relevance to current indicators of women’s economic empowerment or possible future indicators are shown in attachment 4.

There are three potential barriers to establishing a central administrative data collection:

1. **Cost -** As suggested above the cost should be kept to a minimum by keeping it as simple as possible. The creation of a 12 month “gender statistician” position should ensure the data sets are established with minimum disruption to other work.
2. **Data provision -** One of the encouraging aspects of this study was that agencies were willing to freely share their data. This may not always be the case. It is suggested that the statistics office develops a standard data sharing agreement that can be used when obtaining data from agencies (if required). A suggest template based on a model used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics will be provided.
3. **Data accuracy -** Interestingly, the issue of data accuracy was only raised by two agencies during the interviews (migration and taxation). There is no doubt that there will be data accuracy issues with the administrative data. In fact, this has been a major barrier to statisticians using administrative data elsewhere in the past. It is suggested that the best way of dealing with this issue is to have the providing agency provide explanatory notes with each table explaining what the data purports to represent. As the data is used, researchers will soon start to question the veracity of data and this question will have an impact on the tables themselves. [[2]](#footnote-2)

### Establish new data collections

Administrative data is not going to provide all the data that is needed to monitor national goals. Introducing two new collections that are relevant to gender analysis, as well as other areas, is worthy of further consideration:

1. Employer based survey
2. A survey based on census responses (e.g. a follow up survey of the “unemployed” to determine whether they fully meet ILO unemployment definitions)

There may be other collections introduced in response to future data needs (e.g. the Family Health and Safety Study recently conducted with the support of UNFPA). It is important that the Gender and Development Unit be consulted and involved in the preparation of such surveys to ensure the opportunity to collect needed gender data is not missed.

### Regular production of indicators on women’s economic empowerment

The indicators for female to male labour force ratio, share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and gender gap in pay across the public sector be calculated on an annual basis following the guidance outlined above. These calculations are best undertaken after the end of the financial year (end June) as this is when most administrative data is available or when data from the census or a relevant survey is released. They can however, be calculated at any time if this proves necessary.

Gender statistics tables should be updated and published on an annual basis as a joint product of MINTAFF and CISO.

### Staff training MINTAFF and others on understanding gender statistics

GADD staff and others in government have difficulty in analysing and interpreting data from a gender perspective. It is suggested that specialised training be provided and based on the population census which is the major data source for economic empowerment indicators. A three day course should be sufficient.

## Implementation

It is recommended that staff from MINTAFF and the CISO take the necessary action to recruit a Gender Statistician for a 12 month period. This person should commence work in early 2014 and the position be funded from AusAID program funds on gender capacity building. The person will be located in CISO but report jointly to the Statistician and the Director GADD. The Gender Statistician will focus on centralising the required administrative data sets and ensuring they are regularly updated and are of sufficient quality. It will also be necessary to develop detailed explanations on how each data set is calculated. This means that GADD will be able to focus on its core work and the statistics office will support with gender data and data required to calculate indicators about women’s empowerment.

The work of the Gender Statistician is recommended to be externally reviewed two to three months after commencement with the objective of assessing issues of implementation and ensuring that everything is on track with the expected objectives.

It is expected that after 12 months the Gender Statistician position will be no longer required, as the administrative data will be able to be routinely updated with fairly minimal effort by the CISO.

Shortly after the end of each financial year, the Director of GADD will be provided with gender-related tables and indicators by CISO. The minimum list of annual gender indicators on women’s economic empowerment are: Female to male labour force ratio, Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and Gender gap in pay across the public sector.

The CISO will also;

* 1. Coordinate and manage a specified annual set of tables (see appendix 4 for suggested initial list)
  2. Note and respond to recommendations about the Population Census and possible new statistical collections
  3. Produce future statistics that are sex-disaggregated wherever possible

## Overall conclusion

By utilizing administrative data the Cook Islands will be able to produce a significantly better range of indicators for women’s economic empowerment than has been the case in the past. The employment of a Gender Statistician is integral to the successful implementation of the recommendations contained within this report.

**Appendix 1**

**LIST OF PERSONS MET BY THE CONSULTANT**

**Ministry of Internal Affairs (MINTAFF)**

Bredina Drollett Secretary

Ruta Pokura Director GAD

Tupopongi Marsters Gender Programme & Research Officer

Patricia Demmke Director of Labour

Ngatuaine Maui Director of Welfare

**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) National Statistics office**

Taggy Tangimetua Government Statistician

Tanga Morris Senior Statistician

Morgan Hanks Statistician

**Office of the Public Service Commission**

Dorothy Pokura Human Resource

**Ministry of Justice**

Tingika Elikana Secretary

Tutai Matenga Director Company records

Ruta Areai Director land title registrations

**Disability Council (NGO)**

Pat Farr Coordinator

**Cook Islands National Superannuation Fund**

Anne Herman Fua Chief Executive

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration**

Vasie Poila Ast/CEO Immigration

**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM)**

James Webb Economic Adviser Budget and Economic Division

Philip Eyre Revenue Management Division (Taxation)

**Office of the Prime Minister**

Petero Okotai Director of Central Policy and Planning

Maria Tuoro Senior Policy & Planning Officer

**Financial Supervisory Commission**

Paul Heckles Commissioner

Bob Williams Manager FIU

**Minister, Health, INTAFF**

Hon. Nandi Glassie Minister of Internal Affairs

### MEETING NOTES:

### Meetings with MINTAFF staff with potential administrative data (12 & 13 November 2013)

**Meeting with Welfare (MINTAFF) –Ngatuaine Maui 13/11/2013**

MINTAFF administers payments for age pensions, child benefits, disability and destitute.

Age pensions and child benefits are universal (i.e. not means tested) for everyone who is eligible and are therefore of little use for indicator monitoring.

There are approximately 220 people (aged 13 -60) on disability pensions. The disability pension is paid to those with long term disabilities who are unable to work as well as some people who have a short term disability (usually caused by an accident). These numbers can easily be monitored but are probably of limited use as indicators.

The destitution benefit has strict eligibility requirements and there are usually less than 20 persons receiving this benefit at one time. Most are women who have been abandoned by their spouse after the spouse has left the country to seek work. At the time of interview there were 15 women and one man receiving the benefit. Although the numbers are small, they are probably worth monitoring as they provide a proxy indicator for poverty of a particularly vulnerable group. The data can be easily compiled on an annual basis.

**Meeting with Labour and Employment - Patricia Demmke 12/11/2013**Statistics are only obtained for foreign contract workers for whom it has been decided that contracts require checking. It is estimated that around 80% of contracts are checked and these mainly relate to lower paid workers.

Records have been kept in an excel spread sheet for about six months and this will continue on an ongoing basis. Sex is recorded (although is sometimes derived from the name), and so it would be possible to extract some data from this system. Income details are recorded where available, but these relate to differing weekly hours.

Labour statistics of foreign contract workers are probably of little use for ongoing indicators, unless there is specific interest in developing an indicator for these workers in their own right. If this is to be pursued, it would be worthwhile benchmarking against the population census to try and estimate the level of under coverage. Migration statistics may also provide some insights.

### Meetings with statistics office 13/14 November 2013

**Meeting with Morgan Hanks (13 November)**

Morgan is ex Stats NZ and is working on a two year contract with the Cook Islands Statistics office as a statistican.

She is preparing a number of strategic documents including a Cook Islands National Statistics Stocktake 2013. This document which should be available shortly includes all data sets and publications held within government & should be useful for developing potential indicators. She is also undertaking data audit profiles and producing sector reports. These could also be of interest and should be available by the end of the year.

Also, Petero from Office of Prime Minister is preparing a number of Development indicators for central policy and planning purposes.

Morgan indicated the superannuation fund has a good data base which should be useful for wage earner information. Also taxation office should have records for persons earning $10,000+. Both Taxation and Justice have business registers (only for businesses with turnover of $30,000+) but there is no coordinated business register.

There are currently no employer based surveys and there is no specific organisation that monitors employment.

The last HIES was conducted in 2005/06 and the statistics office would like to conduct another one next financial year and is currently seeking funding.

The statistics office currently does not have any data sharing agreements in place, but is interested in wording for such an agreement.

The statistics office produces quarterly population estimates & publishes population profiles.

Morgan provided sex disagrregated employment data from the PSC, which should be useful for public sector indicators. Also, the PSC is about to implement a new HR system which should enable aggregated salary details to be derived.

The stats office processes arrival/departure cards for migration. Data from the Agricultural census (conducted as part of the population census) is about to be analysed. Morgan had attempted to obtain mortgage information from the banks but had not been successful.

In terms of NGO’s Morgan mentioned Te Viaerua and the Disability council as potential data sources.

Morgan indicated that within Government people are willing to share data, with Police being the most reluctant (this won’t impact on this project).

**Meeting with Taggy Tangimetua- Government Statistician (14 November 2013)**

A poverty analysis based on the 2005/06 HIES has been conducted for the Cook Islands by SPC (Kim Robertson). The Stats office will provide a copy.

The NSDS data audit has identified a gap in employment and labour data. The Stats office used to conduct an Annual Business Survey, but this was stopped some time ago for financial reasons. For $30,000NZ/annum the stats office could reintroduce this survey and is keen to do so. This survey would be of particular value for calculating female to male labour force rates and the share of women in wage employment and in the non-agricultural sector. Perhaps ADB or someone else could fund the survey for one or two years with a review of its usefulness after this.

MINTAFF checks contracts of foreign workers, but believes they only see around 80% of contracts. This issue needs pursuing with Immigration to see about obtaining complete coverage. This could provide an interesting gender indicator.

In terms of women’s access to finance, the Financial Securities Commission (FSC) collects data from the lending institutions. We need to pursue this subject with the FSC to determine whether gender disaggregated data is available.

The stats office maintains a fairly comprehensive business register which includes information from the companies register, tax office and is updated from the population census. It is classified by gender and industry and also includes data about shareholders. Nothing is published from the register, but it has the potential to provide gender indicators on company involvement that could be updated annually.

The Stats office has informal data sharing agreements with a number of agencies but no formal agreements. I undertook to try and obtain a copy of wording for agreements from Australian Bureau of statistics.

The Stats office calculates on an annual basis the minimum wage required for an employee supporting a spouse and two children. This is important as it could be used to move the basic needs poverty rate forward on an annual basis.

The last Household Income and Expenditure Survey was conducted in 2005/06. The office hopes to conduct another in 2014/15 with improved methodology. This is important for conducting poverty rates. A poverty analysis was undertaken from the last HIES, but never published due to political sensitivity. A copy of this analysis will be provided and can be used as a benchmark for a poverty indicator. Any poverty indicator produced will require careful explanation because of the sensitivity of the subject. Poverty is often equated with hunger and hunger is not an issue in the Cook Islands. Nutrition may be.

The quality of the census data was discussed, particularly in relation to income data. The census office makes particular efforts to ensure the data is accurate, including cross checking with administrative data where available.

### Meeting with Public Service Commission Dorothy Pokura 14 November 2013

The PSC is able to provide gender based statistics on number of employees at different levels. They are developing a new payroll and HR system which is targeted for introduction in January 2014. Once introduced, it will be easy for the gender pay gap indicator across the public sector to be produced on an annual basis

### Meeting with Ministry of justice Tingika Elikana 15 November

Mr Elikana is the secretary of Ministry of Justice and has a particular interest in human rights issues for women. He was keen to assist in whatever way he could.

The land registration system in the Cook Islands is complex. There is no freehold title and the ownership of the land is vested in particular families. Members of the family can register interest in the land and the family can decide to allot a family member a portion if they wish to say build a house (provided it’s larger than a quarter acre). There is no discrimination between men and women in terms of registering interest. This system applies to all but 3 islands where a traditional chiefly system still applies. It would be difficult to interpret any indicator based on land title registration and it would be a large manual exercise to extract information about registration of interest in land.

This does not mean that the land titles register is not useful in terms of indicators for women’s economic empowerment. Details of any mortgages on the land (both residential and commercial) are held with the title. These include the names of the mortgagees and it can be determined whether mortgages are in the names of women, men or joint. It may also be possible to get value. Staff are extracting data so we can assess its usefulness.

The Ministry also maintains the company register and produces a monthly report on ownership by gender. This could be useful in terms of measuring women’s involvement in company decision making. A copy of the report for the last financial year will be provided so that we can assess its usefulness

**MEETING WITH JAMES WEBB MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT 19/11/2013**

James is an economic advisor in the budget and economic division.

He confirmed that analysis is hampered by lack of labour data. Heavy reliance is placed on the population census and he was concerned that unemployment might be overstated because of the restricted manner in which unemployment data is obtained in the census. (His feeling is that the true unemployment rate is more likely to be around 6%).Job vacancies are the biggest issue for businesses and there are labour shortages across the range of jobs, both skilled and unskilled. James confirmed that aggregate taxation statistics are available from the taxation office for men and women even though these are not published.

As far as the public sector was concerned, James mentioned that women dominated the larger ministries and were also very active in the boards of private companies.

**MEETING WITH DISABILITY COUNCIL COORDINATOR –PAT 20/11/2013**

This was my first NGO meeting. The disability council produces and coordinates statistics and is going to provide a copy of their 6 monthly report. A number of issues related to disability were discussed and although not directly related to women’s economic empowerment, the discussions demonstrated that NGO’s are likely to be an important source of information.

**MEETING WITH CI SUPERANNUATION –ANNE HERMAN FUA 20/11/2013**

The superannuation fund has data on almost everybody working as part of the formal work force in the CI. The only formal workforce people excluded are the small number of public service employees (estimated to be less than 200) who elected to remain with the old government superannuation scheme which is NZ administered.

Gender information is collected and wages can be derived from the level of superannuation paid.

There are no growers in the fund because they are part of the informal sector. This means that share of women’s wage employment in the non-agricultural sector can be directly established from the superannuation fund and this can be done on an annual basis.

Information is also coded on occupation and industry, so data can be obtained on this basis.

In addition, data on foreign workers (excluding domestic workers) has been obtained for the last two years.

Anne is going to extract information from the system and forward it to us in the next couple of days.

**MEETING WITH MFIA IMMIGRATION –VASIE PIOLA (Acting Chief Executive) 20/11/2013**

Immigration has an in house data base which contains immigration information but is not completely up to date and is in need of revision.

There are around 2000 contract workers in both the government and the private sector. Immigration does not publish any information from their data base as they are concerned about community sensitivity. They are prepared to share immigration data within government, provided nothing is released without prior approval from the immigration department.

While employers of contract labour are advised to check that the contracts comply with the Employment Relations Act (ERA) by referring the contracts to MINTAFF, this is not compulsory and a number of employers rely on legal advice regarding ERA compliance. Sometimes contract workers are “fast tracked” into the country where the need is urgent (i.e. the requirement to advertise for 12 consecutive days is waived). All foreign contract workers do obtain immigration approval prior to entering the country and this is monitored at the border.

This means that provided the data base is up to date, immigration can provide ongoing data about contract workers. The Prime Minister has been asking questions about numbers of contract workers and they will share this information with us once available.

Immigration is reviewing its policies as well as research into a wider population policy. If an employer based survey was reintroduced, this could be of significant interest.

**MEETING WITH OPM POLICY & PLANNING –MARIA AND PETERO 20/11/2013**

We had already been provided with a copy of the draft CI development indicators from Morgan Hanks (Statistics office), so the meeting was a reaffirmation that we were in possession of all the required indicators regarding women’s economic empowerment. This was affirmed.

**MEETING WITH FIU AND FSC –PAUL HECKLES AND BOB WILLIAMS 20/11/2013**

FSC and FIU are the financial regulator and the financial “policeperson”. They regulate the 4 banks, 2 insurance bodies and 6 trust companies that operate in the CI. They undertake compliance checking and ensure that the banks and other bodies can undertake their business without risk to the CI. They are not concerned with the clients of the financial institutions and therefore are not able to provide any information that will assist in indicator preparation.

**MEETING WITH TAX OFFICE - PHILIP EYRE 25/11/2013**

The tax office is able to provide gender information for individuals who submit tax returns. Unfortunately, this is not completed on all returns.

There are 19633 people on the taxation data base which is managed by a NZ contractor. 9790 are males and 7435 are females which mean gender is not recorded for around 2400 people.

Under the law everyone who earns income is required to submit a tax return but not everyone does, there is no incentive if tax is not payable and a refund is not expected.

In 2012 there were approximately 3,100 returns by individuals of which around 5% had taxable income over $60,00 and around 20% had income of less than $10,000.

Philip estimates that around 95% of the tax returns come from Rarotonga with the remainder from the outer islands.

Because not all persons submit tax returns, comparing percentages between males and females needs to be done with care.

**Meeting with Minister Health and INTAFF – Hon Nandi Glassie**

The findings and follow up actions as outlined in the Aide Memoire (appendix 2) were discussed with the Minister. He was broadly supportive of the findings and was very aware and supportive of gender issues.

**Appendix 2**sig54nr

**ADB Regional Technical Assistance (TA) 7656:**

**Promoting Evidence-Based Policy Making for Gender Equity in the Pacific**

**Gender Analyst/Statistical specialist**

**Cook Islands (41191-012)**

**To support the**

**Ministry of Internal Affairs (MINTAFF)**

**(11-29 November 2013)**

**AIDE MEMOIRE**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Introduction**

An ADB Consultant (Mr Peter Gardner) visited the Cook Islands on 11-29 November 2013 to provide advice and assistance to MINTAFF on an annual reporting framework to measure women’s economic empowerment in the Cook Islands.

Minimum indicators were expected to be:

* Basic needs poverty rate
* Female to male labour force rate
* Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
* Gender gap in pay across the public sector
* Land title registration

The consultant worked under the general direction of the Secretary of MINTAFF and with the day to day support of the Director of Gender and Development Division and her staff.

As part of the review, existing data collection systems (both survey and administrative) were examined to assess the appropriateness of available information for gender related indicators. The consultant met with a range of agencies to explore data holdings. A list of persons met by the consultant is in Annex 1. This Aide Memoire records the main findings and conclusions of the consultant. The findings will be presented in the form of a written report to the Secretary of MINTAFF and the Director of Gender and Development Division, MINTAFF.

1. **Mission Findings**

4. The framework of gender indicators about women’s economic empowerment (and other gender concerns) should be based on the Cook Island Development Indicators, currently being prepared by the Office of Prime Minister. Gender statistics frameworks that include indicators relating to women’s economic empowerment have also been developed by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Secretariat for Pacific Community (SPC). The Office of Prime Minister is taking such international frameworks into account, which is important to minimize subsequent reporting burden.

5. The requested indicators on (a) female to male labour force rate, (b) share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and (c) gender gap in pay across the public sector can be calculated regularly from existing data sources. Indicators on basic needs poverty rate is hampered by a lack of poverty analysis and limited frequency of household income and expenditure surveys. The indicator on land registration, by sex, is not relevant to the Cook Islands context given the way that land ownership operates in the country.

6. Some additional indicators are recommended based on international and regional frameworks. Also, improvements can be made in the frequency data on women’s economic empowerment is produced. It is clear that the best source of this “new data” is going to come from administrative records. The small population base means that surveys are relatively expensive, often prohibitively so, and funding is always going to be a challenge. The information obtained suggests there is significant administrative data being recorded that is underutilized for analysis and policymaking.

7. The present model of “discovering” administrative data is to separately visit potential sources and persuade them to provide access. This is not an efficient way to operate. It is suggested that a central collection of administrative data be established, with the logical custodian being CISO. It is important that maintaining and updating this collection is kept simple and efficient. In the first instance, it is suggested that it consist of a number of simple tables (e.g. in Excel) that are collected on an annual basis shortly after the end of the financial year.

8. There is a demand for better labour related data across government. Given the majority of the population works in the formal sector, there are two new collections that are worthy of further consideration:

1. Annual employer based survey (which would collect job vacancy information by sector amongst other labour related data)
2. Unemployment survey based on census responses (e.g. a follow up survey of the “unemployed” to determine whether they fully meet ILO unemployment definitions).

These would provide richer data on the labour force and enable better analysis of the situation of women and other vulnerable groups. It is anticipated that the frequent availability of employment data from an annual employer based survey would be a valuable addition to the current collection of official statistics.

9. An issue of particular concern in the Cook Islands relates to foreign contract workers. This issue has a gender dimension. It is suggested that any debate about the balance between demands for labour by employers and job preferences for Cook Islanders will be better informed if information and trends on foreign contract workers is available. Complete information can be obtained from Immigration administrative data, although the National Cook Islands Superannuation Fund can also provide information for foreign workers (excluding domestic workers).

10. Staff in the various government agencies often lack the skills to interpret data. This probably partially explains the underutilization of administrative data in the past. A training course on interpreting gender data and based on Cook Island population census would benefit a number of staff.

**C. Follow-Up Actions**

(i) Shortly after the end of each financial year, the Director of Gender and Development Division will calculate annual gender indicators for Female to male labor force rate, Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector and

Gender gap in pay across the public sector, based on the data collated for this purpose by Cook Islands Statistics Office.

(ii) The Cook Islands Statistics Office will;

1. Coordinate and manage a specified annual set of tables as outlined in the detailed report
2. Note and respond to recommendations about the Population Census and possible new statistical collections
3. Produce future statistics on a gender basis wherever possible
4. Implement data sharing agreements with other agencies wherever necessary

(iii) MINTAFF and ADB to review progress on the report’s recommendations in 2014

(iv) Conduct a training course on interpreting population census data from a gender perspective

**D. Conclusion**

13. By better utilizing administrative data the Cook Islands will be able to produce a significantly better range of indicators for women’s economic empowerment than has been the case in the past. It is worth noting that poverty indicators will only be produced after a Household Income and Expenditure Survey has been conducted.

### 27 November 2013

### Cook Islands

**Peter Gardner**

Gender Analyst/Statistical Specialist

Asian Development Bank

**Appendix 3**

# Cook Islands gender statistics indicators – economic empowerment

There are three frameworks that establish sets of indicators relevant to monitoring gender-related concerns in the Cook Islands:

1. (CI) - Cook Islands Development Indicators (2013; currently under development)
2. (SPC) - SPC Gender Indicator Framework (2011)
3. (UN) - United Nations minimum set of gender indicators (2013)

## Common indicators

The table below provides a summary of those indicators relating to economic empowerment, which are common to all three frameworks and are currently available.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Data source(s)** | **Frequency of collection** |
| Labour force participation rate for 15+, by sex | Census or  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011); Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Average wage ratio of women’s to men’s (CI)/ Gender Gap in Wages (UN) | Census  HIES,  Business/tax administrative records | Every 5 years (last in 2011); Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |

The remaining indicators relevant to economic empowerment are summarized in the two tables below based on (a) whether they can be calculated from existing sources; or (b) the data is not available from existing collections.

### (a) Indicators that would be available from existing data sources

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Framework** | **Data source(s)** | **Frequency of collection** |
| Proportion of employed who are own-account workers, by sex | SPC, UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Proportion of employed who are working as contributing family workers, by sex | SPC, UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Proportion of employed who are employer, by sex | SPC, UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Youth unemployment by sex | SPC, UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Proportion of employed working part-time, by sex | SPC, UN | Census  HIES  Administrative data (tax records) | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Labour force participation rates for 15-24 | UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Percentage distribution of employed population by sector, each sex | UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Informal employment as a percentage of total non-agricultural employment, by sex | UN | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Percentage of firms owned by women, by size | UN | Business register |  |
| Employment rate of persons aged 25-49 with a child under age 3 living in a household and with no children living in the household, by sex | UN | Census | Every 5 years (last in 2011) |
| Proportion of individuals using the Internet, by sex | UN | Census | Every 5 years (last in 2011) |
| Proportion of individuals using mobile/ cellular telephones, by sex | UN | Census | Every 5 years (last in 2011) |
| Proportion of households with access to mass media (radio, TV, Internet), by sex of household head | UN | Census | Every 5 years (last in 2011) |
| Ratio of female to male labor force participation | CI, SPC | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector | CI, SPC | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Average annual rate of growth of the labour force | SPC | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Percentage of work force (15-64) who are employees, by sex | SPC | Census  HIES | Every 5 years (last in 2011);  Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Unemployment rate | SPC | Census | Every 5 years (last in 2011) |
| Percent difference in poverty levels between biparental households with and without female contribution to family income | SPC | HIES | Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Proportion of population under poverty line | SPC | HIES | Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Share of poorest quintile in national consumption | SPC | HIES | Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Gini Index of Income Inequality | SPC | HIES | Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Basic Needs Poverty Rate | CI | HIES | Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Poverty Gap Ratio | CI | HIES | Irregular (last in 2005/2006) |
| Length of parental leave | SPC | Legislation |  |
| Minimum wage, (hourly rate) | SPC | Legislation |  |
| National Retirement Scheme (ratio of women to men) | CI | Administrative records | Ongoing |

### (b) Indicators that cannot be calculated

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Framework** | **Required data source(s)** |
| Average number of hours spent on unpaid domestic work by sex | SPC, UN | Time use survey |
| Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden), by sex[[3]](#footnote-3) | SPC, UN | Time use survey |
| Proportion of children under age 3 in formal care | UN | Administrative records |
| Proportion of population with access to credit, by sex | UN | Banking survey |
| Proportion of adult population owning land, by sex | UN | Not relevant to Cook Islands context due to land ownership system |

**Appendix 4**

Initial list of gender tables to be compiled from Administrative data (to be expanded as data provided)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table number** | **table** | **source** | **Comments** |
| 1 | Number of firms owned by women/men, by size of firm by industry | Business register, statistics office | Company register Ministry of justice may also assist |
| 2 | Number of board member by gender and size of firm | Company register |  |
| 3 | Number of superannuation members by gender by superannuation contributions | CI superannuation fund | The contributions will need to be split into 3%, 4% and 5% to derive actual income. Effectively only non-agricultural sector |
| 4 | Number of superannuation members by gender by occupation by industry | CI superannuation fund | Only available for 2 years |
| 5 | Number of foreign worker superannuation members by gender by superannuation contributions | CI superannuation fund | Only available for 2 years. Excludes domestic workers |
| 6 | Number of foreign workers by gender by length of work permit | Migration data base |  |
| 7 | Number of foreign workers by gender by occupation | Migration data base |  |
| 8 | Number of individual taxpayers by gender by taxable income | Taxation office | Excludes those who do not submit a taxation form |
| 9 | Number of people on destitution benefit by gender | MINTAFF | Usually less than 20 people |
| 10 | Number of public sector employees by gender by public service level | PSC data base |  |
| 11 | Number of public sector employees by gender by wage level | PSC data base | Wages only available in early 2014 |
| 12 | Number of public sector employees on old NZ superannuation scheme by gender by wages | PSC data base | To be used to adjust data from CI superannuation fund |
| 13 | Mortgage holders by gender (including joint category) by value of mortgage | Land title register |  |

Note: 1. This list of tables does not include tables from censuses and surveys conducted by the statistics office.

1. The work force is calculated by adding the numbers: paid employment + self-employed + unpaid workers + unemployed and actively seeking work. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As an aside, checking data accuracy applies to surveys and censuses as well. A major source of gender information will continue to be the population census. The Cook Islands census uses best practice in its questionnaires and fieldwork, but does not incorporate a post enumeration survey. This could be well worthwhile considering for the next census. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The SPC Framework calls for ‘Average time spent on productive (paid) work (by type)’ which is an input indicator to calculate the total time on paid and unpaid work. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)