



25-26 June 2019

The University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus Fiji

## INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE SKILLS FOR THE BLUE PACIFIC

### ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE

#### Background - Pacific Skills Partnership

The Pacific Skills Partnership (PSP) was launched by His Excellency, Baron Divavesi Waqa, President of the Republic of Nauru at the 49th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders 2018 meeting. It was established in recognition of the vital link between skills and sustainable development in the Pacific and the utility of a region-led vehicle for collaborating on skills-based, tangible outcomes for Pacific people and communities. The Partnership has brought together a multi-stakeholder cohort of partners, representing governments; civil society; the private sector; donor partners; and individuals; all committed to scaling up efforts and investment needed to secure skills for a sustainable and inclusive future. Three key deliverables were adopted under the Pacific Skills Partnership: a **Pacific Skills Summit**; a Pacific Skills Portal; and Next Generation Skills

#### Objectives – Pacific Skills Summit

As a regional platform for multi-stakeholder engagement, and in the spirit of the Blue Pacific, the Pacific Skills Summit will ensure its objectives and proposed outcomes align with, and support the objectives of regional sustainable development frameworks, in particular the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (FPR) and the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF).

The Pacific Skills Summit will:

- Identify and assess existing skills development and labour market contexts in the Pacific;
- Promote the importance of investing in skills development as a key contributor to addressing labour markets demands and needs;
- Advance future skills development and investment; and
- Advocate the strategic importance of skills development in realising regional and global sustainable development efforts



## Annotated Agenda

# TUESDAY 25 JUNE

### Summit Opening: Keynote Address

0900-1000

Building on the recognition that it is its people that are the Pacific's greatest resource; and the centrality of Pacific people's skills, knowledge, know-how, resilience and spirit of endeavor as key drivers of sustainable development, the keynote will set the scene in how best we mobilise and advance the skills base of the Pacific towards increased productivity and innovation; and towards greater investment in policy and action in skills development. And how we can generate new jobs and employment opportunities; so as to enable and engender greater mobility between economies; social and demographic strata; and traditional and non-traditional spaces of work, industry, community and education – recognising that it is the totality of all our efforts as the designers, builders and managers of our future, can we realise a more sustainable and equitable Blue Pacific.

### Plenary Session 1: The Changing Nature of Work

1030-1100

The nature of work is shifting rapidly. Global, regional and national labour markets are undergoing major transformations resulting from technological advancement, such as high speed mobile internet, artificial intelligence, big data and cloud technology, changing demographics as well as changing geography of production, distribution and value chains.

*The 2018 Pacific Sustainable Development Report (PSDR)*<sup>1</sup> highlights social development, equitable economic development and prosperity and planet sustainability as key pillars to shifting the well-being of people as the centre of sustainable development. Additionally, recognising that advancement in technology has influenced levels of innovation, created prosperity and continues to accelerate and impact our lives.

In its 2019 Changing Nature of Work report, the World Bank observes on balance, fears that robots will take away jobs from people appears to be unfounded; and that overall, technology brings opportunity, paving the way to create jobs, increase productivity and deliver public services. In its 2018 Future of Jobs report, the World Economic Forum also finds that if managed wisely, these transformations could lead to a new age of good work, good jobs and quality of life for all and that emerging jobs are in fact expected to offset declining jobs<sup>2</sup>. Technology is also changing the skills that employers seek; digital technology is changing how people work and the terms on which they work. Work is constantly reshaped by technological progress<sup>3</sup>.

Technological advances – artificial intelligence, automation and robotics – will create new jobs, but those who lose their jobs in this transition may be the least equipped to seize the new opportunities. Today's skills will not match the jobs of tomorrow and newly acquired skills may quickly become obsolete<sup>4</sup>.

While there are inherent opportunities for economic, social and environmental prosperity for the Pacific in this new world of work it will depend largely on the ability we have to transform our education and training systems as well as our labour market policies and integration. This Plenary will discuss the changing nature of work in the Pacific and the strategies we need to respond and adapt. It will be accompanied by a video created by USP's Oceania Centre on this shifting landscape. Panelists will discuss the following key questions:

<sup>1</sup>Prepared by the Pacific Islands Forum with the support of UN Agencies and the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP).

<sup>2</sup>The Future of Jobs Report 2018 – World Economic Forum

<sup>3</sup>World Development Report – The Changing Nature of Work 2019, World Bank

<sup>4</sup>Global Commission on the Future of Work 2019



**How is the Pacific's job landscape shifting as a result of global, regional and national trends?**

**How have investments and innovations influenced the changing nature of work in the region? What are key adaptation strategies for managing the transition to a new world of work?**



## Plenary Session 2: The State of Skills Development in the Pacific

1130-1230

Against this backdrop, the second plenary will focus on the current state of skills development in the Pacific Region. Most of the world's education systems are based on models put in place decades ago.

Developing skills for achieving sustainable livelihoods in the region remains a work in progress, demanding new skills sets and labour needs, particularly as new industries/innovation continue to emerge. Deliberating on the state of skills development in the Pacific poses key questions relating to, the impact of technological change on the demand for and supply of skills, and the extent to which stakeholders ranging from policy makers through to training providers and industry have been able to respond. Pacific Island Countries have over the years invested in national human resource development strategies; incentivised private sector development; established national qualifications regulatory bodies and mainstreamed technical and vocational education and training (TVET), as a way to address and better understand the transforming nature of the demand for and supply of skills, and the resulting skills shortages and mismatches in the Pacific.

Against this promising backdrop, youth unemployment remains particularly acute in Smaller Island States like Kiribati, Nauru, RMI and Tuvalu with youth unemployment sitting over 50%, exacerbated by low economic growth, high population growth and skills mismatches. Addressing gender gaps in the labour force, decent work deficits, labour market underutilisation amongst women, regional labour market challenges, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and productive employment for all, remain policy and political priorities within the region, despite gradual progress made in addressing these areas.

The World Bank and World Economic Forum acknowledges that the changing nature of work globally and regionally calls for a new focus of a more "human-centred agenda". The 2019 Global Commission on the Future of Work also states "We propose a human-centred agenda for the future of work that strengthens the social contract by placing people and the work they do at the centre of economic and social policy and business practice." The report further recommends the need to "Stepping up investments in the institutions, policies and strategies that will support people through future of work transitions<sup>5</sup>. This session will explore the current state of skills development in the Pacific and what strategies we need to improve it in the face of the changing nature of work. Panellists will explore the following questions?

<sup>5</sup>[www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/publications/WCMS\\_662539/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/future-of-work/publications/WCMS_662539/lang-en/index.htm)



**What is the current state of skills development in the Pacific?**

(skills shortages, skills mismatches)

**What information is available to capture investments in skills development and its impact on the Pacific and to guide future investments?**

**What regional/national policies are in place or needed to address skills imbalances in the Pacific?** (skills shortages & skills mismatches)



**Plenary Session 3: Skills Sharing and Development Across the Pacific Regional Labour Market**

**1515-1630**

In the coming decades the Pacific labour markets, including Australia and New Zealand will shift significantly. We will see substantial increases in the number of workers available within countries such as the fast growing populations of Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Demographic projections show a significant number of new people entering the labour force by 2030. Such increases are projected in several other Pacific Island Countries. This is accompanied by a decrease in the number of workers available within other developed countries in the coming decades. Migration pressures are also rising.

The 2017 ILO report *A Study on the Future of Work in the Pacific*, outlined that labour markets in the Pacific were characterised by informality, gender disparity and youth unemployment. The dominance of the informal and subsistence economy posed a challenge to sustainable development due to the vulnerability of informal and subsistence workers and the lack of formal social security systems for those engaged in these activities. Gender gaps are apparent in unemployment, labour force participation, wage levels and opportunities to work overseas. Youth unemployment is high and a growing number of youth are neither in work nor in training<sup>6</sup>. Despite the prospects of a “demographic dividend” through a very young and fast growing population, labour markets in the Pacific are simply not producing enough jobs to accommodate all the young men and women entering the workforce each year.

A study undertaken by the University of Otago in New Zealand indicate the effects of climate change, including floods and extreme temperatures, have become more important push factors in migration than economic inequality or conflict<sup>7</sup>. This presents an opportunity for Countries to work together to meet these labour market challenges. Moreover it brings both optimism and concern. Current labour mobility initiatives seek to address employment opportunities and economic development for the Pacific. The spin-off effects, redress issues of inequality affecting youth and women; enhance both “soft” and entrepreneurial skills; and encourage local community development. More can be done, to better articulate and realise the direct and indirect net

<sup>6</sup>A Study on the Future of Work in the Pacific; ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries, May 2017.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.scidev.net/global/climate-change/news/climate-now-biggest-driver-of-migration-study-finds.html>





benefits labour mobility brings to both the Pacific as sending countries; and to Australia and New Zealand as receiving countries. This panel will consider how the Pacific is working together to meet their collective labour market challenges<sup>8</sup>. They will explore the following questions:

**Why should the region work together to address its emerging labour market challenges?**

**How can the Pacific capitalise on the prospect of a demographic dividend, and what should be put in place to make it a reality?**

**What experiences and learnings to date, can the region build on to ensure a “net skills gain” under labour mobility opportunities?**



## **Parallel Session 1a: Addressing Skills Gaps and Standards in the Pacific**

**1330-1445**

A holistic approach to skills development begins with recognition that traditional and non-traditional skills applied within formal and non-formal spaces all contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. Despite efforts to progress, skills shortages remain and are most pronounced in technical and vocational skill areas. The quality of TVET in the region remains constrained by lack of investment, and lack of industry engagement in the planning and delivery of training. Studies in different countries have also exposed shortcomings in entrepreneurial and generic skills. A lack of generic workplace skills affects employability of workers and makes Pacific Islanders less competitive in the domestic and global labour markets. Additionally, there have been calls to incorporate disaster risk management into skills development especially in a region that is extremely vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards. Similarly, traditional skills like boat building and building of traditional structures have also been supported to promote holistic communal development. Significant investment and progress has been made by the Pacific and its development partners to strengthen national and regional qualifications and standards authorities’ to regularly assess and certify quality and fit for purpose qualifications and skills training. This plenary will explore what is being done and what can be done to reduce skills gaps and improve the standard of training across the region. Panelists will focus on the following questions:

<sup>8</sup>ibid



**What strategies should Pacific governments pursue to address growing skills instability, skills gaps and skills mismatch in Pacific countries?**

**What constraints do Pacific governments face in terms initiating trainings/ programmes to address these skills shortages?**

**What approaches are needed to engage private sector and industry to strengthen the quality of TVET skills training and qualification standards?**

**How do we incorporate skills development programmes into resilient infrastructure development?**

**What is the role of traditional knowledge and skills in the Pacific agenda?**



## **Parallel Session 1b: Gender Empowerment and Inclusiveness**

**1330-1445**

The equal contribution of women and men in economic and societal transformation is critical. More than ever, societies cannot afford to miss out on the skills, ideas and perspectives of half of humanity to realise the promise of a more prosperous and human-centric future.

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism calls for economic growth that is inclusive and equitable. However, data from the 2018 PSDR states that “Pacific men outnumber Pacific women 2 to 1 in formal employment and in Melanesia, 3 to 1”. Additionally, “1.5 million Pacific Islanders” live with some form of disability and are underrepresented in economic, social and public life.

An important starting point in overcoming discrimination is the right to access to, and equality of opportunities and treatment in respect of training, employment and occupation. In the context of skills for development in the Pacific, there is recognition within the private sector that investing in women and girls has a powerful effect on productivity, efficiency and economic growth. By eliminating barriers to women’s full participation in employment, labour productivity will increase through better use of available skills and talents<sup>9</sup>.

The 2019 Global Commission on the Future of Work recommends implementing a transformative and measurable agenda for gender equality. It further states that specific measures are also needed to address gender equality in the technology-enabled jobs of tomorrow.

<sup>9</sup>Pacific Women Annual Progress Report 2016-2017



Women's enrollment in the TVET sector remains low. There are multiple causes of low participation such as lack of access to technical schools, lower level of education in women, social norms and expectations of women performing only household work, domination of males in society, lack of access to information and high level of poverty, etc. However, there are many stories of Pacific women that need to be heard. Stories of women taking bold steps to overcome social, cultural and economic barriers to better equip themselves through quality skills training; and applying their skills to empower others, in particular other women from their positions of influence; to then be recognised as legitimate and productive contributors towards inclusive and equitable economic growth in the region.

This session captures some of these stories in a panel discussion of female trainers that will explore the following questions:

**What progress has been made in the Pacific, in achieving gender equality, economic empowerment and inclusivity in the workplace and in skills for development investments?**

**How do women overcome barriers in accessing skills development opportunities?**

**What challenges and opportunities do women face in working in non-traditional occupations in the region?**





## Annotated Agenda

# WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE

### Plenary Session 4: Pacific Next Generation Skills

0900-1000

Pacific Island Countries are at the forefront of the impacts of changing trends and opportunities in global development and technological advancement. There are shifts such as, globalisation and advances in technology as well as new economic and environmental insecurities resulting from climate change. As such, development solutions are also rapidly changing. The impact of these changes on the next generations employment and skills is a global debate and of pressing concern to Pacific policy makers.

Current international work under the concept of *Industry 4.0*, presents scenarios that could be used to brainstorm and deduce trends that could inform the Pacific's own articulation of linking next generation skills to jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities in the Pacific. To support investment in next generation skills, there should be a focus on identifying emerging industrial practices that will drive jobs and sustainable growth in Pacific economies over the next 15-20 years.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) refers to *Industry 4.0* as "set of highly disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, blockchain and 3D printing, that are transforming social, economic and political systems and putting huge pressure on leaders and policy-makers to respond". As the fourth industrial revolution unfolds, it offers the impetus for reform as well as new and unique tools that can scale and accelerate reform and spread new opportunities across the Pacific's blue continent. This panel will present on the Pacific's future and the next generation skills needed to see it reach its full potential. The will explore the following questions:

**What options (policy, technical, partnerships) should be actioned to best prepare today's learners with the skills to meet the Pacific's future challenges and opportunities?**

**What policy propositions are needed to equip the Pacific region to adapt to the demands of Industry 4.0? Where should the Pacific focus its attention to secure the most opportunities from global changes?**

**How can the Pacific use this moment of transformation as an impetus for tackling reforms on education, gender and work, to ensure the next generation can reach their full potential?**

**What are the potential careers of the future when we consider and prepare for the next generation?**





Pacific Island Countries have placed importance on innovation and technology as social and environmental pressures emerge in key sectors of the economy; tourism, fisheries, forestry and agriculture. Countries must target scientific and education capacities in climate change, resilient infrastructure, sustainability, food security, energy, ICT and transportation.

The recently endorsed Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF) prioritises in its *Policy Area 3: Student Outcomes and Wellbeing*, strategies proposed to building the capacity of learners in the areas of information and digital literacy as well as providing careers education and linkages to industry/work place readiness. The *2019 OECD Skills Outlook – Thriving in a Digital World* proposes that digitalisation presents immense potential to boost productivity and improve well-being. It can give more people more power over what they learn, where and when they work, and how they engage in society. However, it can also increase inequalities if some people or regions are left behind<sup>10</sup>.

There is no doubt of the prospects digital technology brings for the Pacific, with improvements in more reliable connectivity between rural and urban centres; between Pacific countries; and its impact on creating economic opportunities across Pacific communities. But are some being left behind? Do we have the right mix of skills in the Pacific to thrive and fully benefit and be aware of the pitfalls of the digital revolution? This panel will explore the following questions:

**How can the Pacific benefit from the adoption of technological advances?**

**What skilling and reskilling opportunities and costs will Pacific countries need to address and facilitate the transition by workers and communities potentially “left behind” as a result of a more digitised work environment?**



<sup>10</sup>OECD Skills Outlook 2019, OECD.



## Parallel Session 2a: Future Skills: Next Generation Entrepreneurship & Leadership 1030-1200

Proficiency in new technologies is only one part of the skills equation. 'Human' skills such as creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, complex problem solving, persuasion and negotiation will increase in value as well personal attributes such as attention to detail, resilience, flexibility and complex problem solving and emotional intelligence.

ILO's Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE), analysed in its 2015 baseline report the relative effectiveness of a large number of youth employment interventions implemented across the world since 1990, and found that entrepreneurship-promotion interventions show the largest positive effects on employment outcomes and earnings. Existing regional and national level investment in TVET, apprenticeship programs and human capital equip young people with the right technical skills to contribute to growth and productivity.

The other part is an enabling environment or entrepreneurial eco-system that will interface with young people at an early age to improve entrepreneurial thinking and at a later stage to potentially choose entrepreneurship as a career. However, impeding regulations, red-tape, high license cost are some of the real challenges that do not support a smooth transition to self-employment. However, young people also need the right entrepreneurship and leadership skills to establish and sustain new businesses, which may include mentoring, coaching and curriculum development that target strategic areas in business development and operations. This panel will explore the following questions:

**What more should governments, the private sector, and civil societies do to bring more investment and attention to youth entrepreneurship and leadership?**

**What can governments do to improve the entrepreneurial eco-system to incentivize youth start-up and expansion?**

**What can we learn from the entrepreneurship and leadership experiences of young people that can be applied to contextualise and improve ongoing and future skills for development support programmes?**

**How can the Pacific capitalise on its 'human' skills in the coming decades?**



The Blue Pacific comprises a range of diverse peoples, cultures as well as physical environments engaged in innovative and unique initiatives that show leadership toward strong regional ocean governance and the sustainable management and conservation of the ocean and its resources. The Blue Pacific is also deeply threatened and endangered by unsustainable human activities and behaviour. Climate change, overexploitation of natural resources, marine pollution from land and ocean based sources are putting our livelihoods on borrowed time. Pacific governments have taken measures to preserve biodiverse ecosystems, investing in renewable energy sources as well as the conservation of natural resources; aquatic and terrestrial.

As the region confronts these challenges and opportunities, there is real prospect for Blue Entrepreneurship to develop and evolve. Integrating cultural knowledge, advanced technology and work smart business techniques into value added industries such as fisheries renewable energy; and energy efficiency, are possibilities. It also requires necessary investment in skills development to open up new training, employment and business pathways for Pacific people and communities that ensures economic gains are sustainable and remain in the region.

This panel will explore skills needed for the Pacific to adapt to its environmental challenges, by exploring the following questions:

**What entrepreneurial initiatives are needed to meet the regions environmental challenges? What level and types of investment either financial, technical, and in training is needed to support such initiatives?**

**How can such ventures be facilitated/actioned through regional and/or national mechanisms?**

**What emerging and current resilience challenges faced by the Pacific can digital technology effectively address?**





## A Spotlight on Innovation

1300-1430

## Summit Closing: Closing Address

1630-1700

As the Blue Pacific we have reaffirmed and reinforced our collective place within the global economy and geopolitical spheres of influence. We have drawn on our custodianship of the largest ocean resource our world offers, and on our moral authority to inspire the hearts, minds and decisions of the global community towards more resilient and sustainable development - all of this, through robust policy environments; sustainable and targeted financing; and durable and mutually accountable partnerships. Nevertheless, more needs to be done, more needs to be invested in skills development and training to better equip ourselves and our young, to lay the right foundations for a more Pacific led and adaptable knowledge economy and community, to continue and sustain this momentum. In recognition that it is the totality of **all** our efforts for a more inclusive and equitable Blue Pacific, so must we give importance to the totality of **all** forms of work; to **all** levels of expertise; to **all** types of technology - past, present and future; and to **all** spaces of social, economic and political exchange. Because it is only through action mirroring thought, can we realise the full potential and full contribution of the Blue Pacific to a more sustainable and liveable global environment.

