



# Inform BEATS

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**Inform: Helping to strengthen governance and decision making by improving environmental data management and use across the Pacific region.**

**Short, quick pops of information to help enhance your speeches, media interviews and soundbites, presentations and general message sharing when it comes work done by Pacific islands with support from the Inform Project on environmental data use in the Pacific.**

**The Inform Project is a four year activity from 2017–2021 and is funded by the Global Environment Facility, implemented by UN Environment and executed by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).**

**Countries driving change include: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.**

**SPREP supports strengthened governance and decisions making at the national level with better access and interpretation of environmental data. Environmental data is critical to assess impacts of country interventions, trends in resources over time and risks and challenges to mitigate and plan for.**



## Why is environmental data important?

- There is a need for historical and current evidence of the status and trends of various environmental resources and drivers of environmental change.
- Pacific islands have been facing challenges with information management, including the need for standard procedures, collecting and aggregating environmental data.
- There is a lack of timely available information by those who need it for national and international reporting and planning, and most importantly for sound and informed decision making.

## How we are strengthening data for decision making

- 14 Pacific islands have been equipped with National Data Portals for all their environment data and information, and supported with ongoing capacity building to populate and sustain them.
- The National Data Portals are helping Pacific islands with reliable access to their own national datasets for environmentally sound decision making.
- The information in each database also helps inform policy development, strengthen convention reporting, monitoring and evaluation and national planning.
- In Pacific island unity, the national online databases are linked to the Pacific Environment Portal for regional access and monitoring the state of the Pacific's overall environment.
- The Inform project is working to assist Pacific islands better fulfil their reporting obligations under numerous Multilateral Environment Agreements and contribute to reporting on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), S.A.M.O.A Pathway and the Noumea Convention to name a few.
- Environmental data from data portals is used to develop marine indicators for national state of environment reports. These indicators directly inform SDG14.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Each national data portal is part of the Pacific Data Ecosystem promoting open data platforms that combine resources from both the Pacific Environment Portal and the Pacific Data Hub – a collaboration between SPREP and the Pacific Community (SPC) for improved data access and use.
- There are over 5,000 existing datasets on the portals with more to be added in the long run.
- Each country also has its own Indicator Reporting Tool to streamline the use and re-use of datasets in the data portals.
- The SPREP Inform team provides all systems admin functions including backups, security patches and improvement. No in country hardware or IT services are required.

## Learning the language

- A **National Data Portal** is a national online repository, open source 'one-stop-shop' for all environmental data and information.
- The **difference between data and information** is that **data** is pure uninterpreted facts and statistics, whereas **information** is the arrangement of these facts and statistics into specific analysed content.
- A **dataset** is a collection of related sets of data and information made up of separate resources, for example a GIS file of national protected areas, an excel file of their status and a PDF report on Protected Areas based on the other two resources.
- The difference between a **dataset** and a **database** is that a **database** is a collection of information in a regular searchable structure whereas the **dataset** is a collection of resources on a specific topic.
- A **repository** in this instance is a place where things are or may be stored.
- **Open data** is the concept that data should be freely available to everyone to use.
- A **Pacific Data Ecosystem (PDE)** is a partnership between the regional data providers, SPC and SPREP, to support informed decision making and sustainable development in the Pacific. The PDE provides services to member countries and avoids duplication to ensure data is preserved, accessible and able to be reused.
- An **Indicator Reporting Tool** is an online tool that provides the ability to report on an indicator once and use that indicator status for many reporting requirements.

- The Indicator Reporting Tool maps environmental indicators to reporting requirements such as the State of Environment Reports, Multilateral Environment Agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity to help reduce the workload for technical staff.
- National data portals can host all types of data including Geographic Information System (GIS) files, PDF, Excel, Word, images and more.
- There are over 1500 resources for the marine environment from policies to datasets.
- Status of the marine environment is assessed in National State of environment reports with seven indicators including the status of Marine Protected Areas, coastal fisheries and live coral cover among others.



“Information is expensive, it needs resources to compile information, but more importantly is to ensure this information is big used. We acknowledge the substantive technical assistance and services including tools and capacity building developed and delivered by the Inform Project Team and SPREP. These have helped in building the foundation for better data management allowing for better use of the information.”

**ULU BISMARCK CRAWLEY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA**

“Information is power. The current situation in Marshall Islands, is that data management is something we all hope to achieve to effectively and efficiently make informed decision making. The Inform Portal is a useful tool to provide an avenue to achieve this.”

**MS HEMLINE YSAWA, REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS**

“Within the Conservation and Environment Protection Authority, data management has always been a challenge for us, especially the data we generate and those from external stakeholders to develop reports for obligations. . . .With the introduction of the data portal, it mitigated that problem and now we can grab data from external sources and upload it to the portal and a lot of that data is centralised now.”

**MR RICHARD BALONE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

“We see the reporting tool as something that will really help us. We have a number of reporting obligations at the national, regional and international levels. This reporting tool is good and something we can work with, and I believe time will only tell. We have done some work on centralizing our indicators within the environment sector and this tool will give us that good mix. We have a database where our indicators are centralized and now we have the reporting tool that will really help us and make it easier for us to report not only on the national level as well as integrating the same information and data to report to a number of reporting requirements with our partners and most importantly at the national level, to the government and cabinet. It is a great step forward for us and we acknowledge the support of Inform and SPREP in having this tool in place.”

**MS FRANCES BROWN, SAMOA**

“SPREP has done a lot of great work especially the management of the data in the region, particularly for the environment. The Pacific Community is building on that work to look at cross sectors in the region and more effectively manage data as an asset. It is really a powerful partnership and we are very excited about it. SPREP’s engagement with the countries and issues that are specific to the Pacific around data has been really valuable and we learn a lot from them.”

**MR ADAM MCWILLIAMS, PACIFIC COMMUNITY (SPC)**



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*A resilient Pacific environment, sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.*