

Experience in the 2021 International Comparison Program Implementation



I. Administrative Set-Up

The ICP activities in Fiji were conducted by the Economic Statistics Division (ESD) of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (FBoS). The FBoS is under the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics. Members of the prices and national accounts unit of the ESD were delegated the roles of national and deputy national coordinators. The team comprised staff from different regions across Fiji.

Due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) lockdowns and challenges faced, Fiji began price collections in July 2021 and extended them to June 2022.

II. Use of Existing Infrastructure in Collecting International Comparison Program Data

The 2021 ICP activities were carried out using the existing infrastructure and human resources at the FBoS. Staff in the Central, Western, and Northern divisions were responsible for the household price collection. The ICP outlets were the same as the consumer price index (CPI) outlets, with additional outlets selected as some of the products' structured product descriptions (SPDs) were not available in the CPI outlets. Data were collected annually by visiting the relevant outlets for the machinery and equipment and construction survey. Housing rental data were collected from administrative sources (data available from real estate agents and government housing), while volume survey data were collected from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey. Government compensation data were gathered from annual general government accounts. Data were manually collected for both the CPI and the ICP. The ICP price collection was not integrated into the national statistics office's work program as a regular activity and was collected separately.

III. Survey Framework

The survey covered 10 urban areas in the Central, Western, and Northern divisions. All geographic coverage was urban, as rural residents typically shop in towns and cities. Major outlets were selected using a top-down approach, including all existing outlets from the CPI survey.

Price data for food products, fuel, and pharmaceuticals were collected monthly, while prices for other products were collected quarterly. The outlets were selected based on purposive sampling from the retail sales survey, which involved the following stages of selection: location, industrial and/or commodity classification, and volume of sales.

Based on the CPI framework, the following types of outlets were covered: large shops, medium and small shops, markets, specialized shops, private service providers, public or semi-public services, and other kinds of trade.

For the household consumption survey, 633 outlets from urban areas were selected for price collection. While the household consumption survey covered only urban areas, housing rental data was supplemented with the Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2019–2020 and a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2021 to cover all of Fiji. The price surveys for machinery and equipment and construction were conducted only in urban areas. Compensation data for government occupations and other related indicators were collected from administrative sources.



IV. Gross Domestic Product Expenditure Values

GDP expenditure values were estimated for most of the 155 basic headings according to the 2021 ICP classification. Household consumption expenditure was estimated using data from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey conducted in 2019–2020 and the 2013 supply and use table. Some basic headings—such as narcotics, prostitution, and passenger transport by railway—do not apply to Fiji. The GDP value for individual consumption expenditure by nonprofit institutions serving households was estimated separately. Statistical discrepancy is allocated to the weak components of households and gross fixed capital formation.

V. Data Validation and Quality Control

Before the price collection, the ICP staff ensured that product descriptions were strictly followed. Officers were trained in SPDs by visiting outlets and physically examining the products before price collection started. The national and deputy national coordinators led the price collection and supervised the resolution of price variation issues. Once the prices were collected, the officers validated the prices by comparing products from other divisions and outlets. Outliers, which could result from pricing different items or incorrect units or specifications, were immediately addressed. A data validation workshop was organized to enable price collectors to compare prices across divisions, identify outliers, and correct prices.

The team gained valuable experience from attending virtual data validation workshops organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The staff better understood price differences among the participating economies and within subregions of the economy. For instance, the prices of most products in island economies like Fiji tend to be relatively higher due to freight, insurance, and duties costs, owing to its location in the Pacific. The virtual data validation workshops thus provided a valuable platform for comparing prices across economies and determining whether the price differences are due to the actual price difference or caused by pricing a wrong item or incorrect units of measurement. The virtual workshops addressed issues such as price variation and clarification of SPDs. Additionally, staff learned methodologies for compiling PPPs and their importance to the economy.

VI. International Comparison Program Price Collection Tools

The price collection for household, machinery and equipment, construction, and government compensation was paper based. Data was entered into Microsoft Excel and then uploaded to the ICP Asia Pacific Software Suite (ICP APSS), which was used for processing and validation. The FBoS ICP team faced some difficulties in the initial stages of using the ICP APSS, but these were resolved with the support of the ADB ICP team.

VII. Challenges in the International Comparison Program Implementation

The 2021 ICP cycle was quite challenging due to COVID-19, which impacted data collection through face-to-face surveys. The initially planned start date for the ICP survey was January 2021. However, due to COVID-19, the FBoS began the survey in July 2021, extending it to June 2022. The delay in starting the survey required backcasting prices for January to June 2022. This required extensive work for the FBoS ICP team. The FBoS ICP core team members were new and had no previous experience in ICP price collection; however, with virtual workshops organized by ADB, the team was able to understand and collect the required data.

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The ICP product specifications differed from the CPI, so a separate price collection was required. The ICP survey was paper-based, requiring data entry in Microsoft Excel and then uploading to the ICP APSS. This required manual conversions before data entry into Microsoft Excel, as the ICP APSS did not allow the conversions. Price collectors encountered issues as some ICP items (food and pharmaceutical items) were not available or were out of stock at the outlets.

Items were also split to ensure that prices were comparable across economies. The pricing officers had to keep up with the splitting of items as ADB requested. The incompatibility of the computer systems with the software during the implementation also slowed down data entry. Significant time was spent on data validation and cleaning due to incorrect quantities, data entry errors, and incorrect file uploads from regional offices.

The detailed model specifications—particularly for construction and machinery and equipment items—were not available from the vendors. Consequently, the FBoS ICP team had to conduct online research using the model names and years. At times, obtaining prices from outlets proved challenging; to address this, price collectors posed as customers and devised a story to get prices.

Another challenge was the limited number of official vehicles due to the many surveys the FBoS regularly conducted. To tackle this issue, transport was booked in advance for the fieldwork. In addition, due to the high turnover of price collectors, other staff members had to step in to assist until replacements were appointed. Adverse weather conditions further hindered fieldwork activities.

VIII. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The ICP activities have significantly improved the staff's statistical capacity in price statistics. The team now thoroughly understands ICP price collection and its connection to PPP compilation and computation. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics plans to integrate ICP products into the CPI price collection to facilitate comparability and streamline future ICP data collections.

Prepared by the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (Radhika Kumar and Bimlesh Krishna); edited by the ADB ICP team and Melanie Kelleher.



Annex 2: List of Members of Core International Comparison Program Team (Fiji Bureau of Statistics)

Name	Title	Responsibility
Peni Waqawai	Principal Statistician	National Coordinator (Jul 2021 to mid-Aug 2021, 1.5 months)
Radhika Kumar	Principal Statistician	National Coordinator Household Price Survey Team Machinery and Equipment Team Construction Team Housing Rental and Volume Team
Bimlesh Krishna	Chief Statistician	Deputy National Coordinator Household Price Survey Team National Accounts Team Machinery and Equipment Team Construction Team Government Compensation Team Housing Rental and Volume Team
Sitiveni Sikivou	Senior Statistician	Household Price Survey Team Housing Rental and Volume Team
Filipe Delaitini	Statistical Officer	Household Price Survey Team
Komal Devi	Assistant Statistician	Household Price Survey Team
Nafiud Din	Assistant Statistician	Household Price Survey Team
Litia Kurisaqila	Assistant Statistician	Household Price Survey Team
Devika Naicker	Assistant Statistician	Household Price Survey Team
Yesnil Naiker	Assistant Statistician	Household Price Survey Team
Avineshwar Prasad	Senior Statistician	Household Price Survey Team



**Annex 2: List of Members of Core International Comparison Program Team
(Fiji Bureau of Statistics)**

Name	Title	Responsibility
Emi Ratu	Statistical Officer	Household Price Survey Team
Cynthia Singh	Assistant Statistician	Household Price Survey Team
Tomasi Suguvanua	Statistical Officer	Household Price Survey Team
Ilisapeci Vakaloloma	Statistical Officer	Household Price Survey Team
Artika Devi	Principal Statistician	National Accounts Team Government Compensation Team
Taloline Keleinvutoka	Senior Statistician	Machinery and Equipment Team Construction Team
Antonio Sokomuri	Assistant Statistician	Machinery and Equipment Team Construction Team
Shonika Kumar	Statistician	Government Compensation Team