In 2013 Niue published their first vital statistics report including an analysis of causes of death.

The report highlighted important issues which had been previously overlooked.

A key, and unexpected, finding of the report was that while non-communicable diseases are important in Niue - these are largely confined to older age groups.

The leading cause of premature deaths (below 60 years of age), was actually external causes – including road deaths and suicides.

Niue is a small island country of 1460 residents (2011 Census). Registration of births and deaths is conducted through the Civil Registry office, with support from the Ministry of Health and National Statistics Office. Registration is essentially 100% complete, although data is affected by off-island births and deaths from medical referrals. While births and deaths are analysed and published routinely (usually in association with the Census), there has previously been little analysis of causes of death.

The analysis was completed through a technical attachment from the National Statistics Office with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. This was supported by the national committee working closely together both before and after the attachment.

Despite a falling number of births in Niue (see figure), the total fertility rate has stayed stable – at 2.8 births per woman for 2007-2011.

Life expectancy for 2007 – 2011 is estimated at 70.1 (95% CI: 63.8 – 71.8) for males and 76.3 (72.9 – 79.7) for females.

While heart disease, respiratory diseases, cancer and diabetes topped the list of leading causes of death for 2007-2011 for all ages, external causes of death topped the list for ages 15-59 years for both men and women.

The work re-highlighted the need to ensure indicators for small populations like Niue are not based on single year figures but are aggregated over several years.

Next steps:
A second report is planned for 2015/2016 to provide updated information.

This training served as the basis for a CRVS data analysis and report writing workshop run through SPC and facilitated by BAG partners, attended by 6 countries in 2014. Plans are in the works for a second sub-regional 2015 workshop as funding allows.