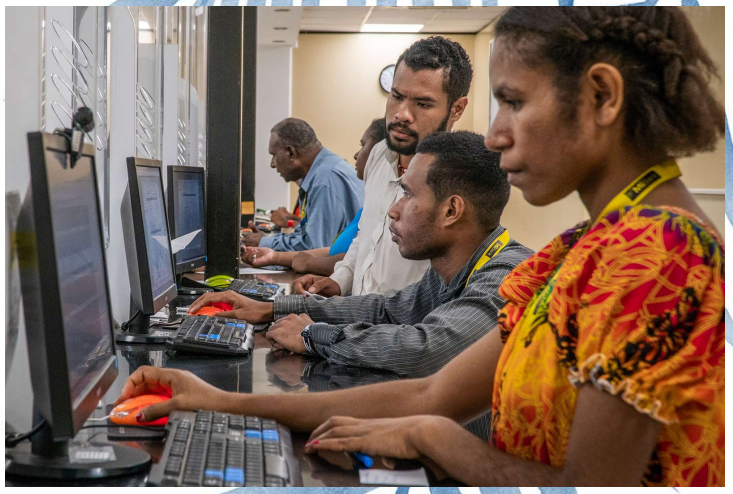
Improving connectivity post COVID-19 economy

Emma Veve
Deputy Director General
Pacific Department

Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility

Challenges in connectivity

- Only 50% world population has access to the internet
  - unconnected are from economically challenged/vulnerable communities
  - Older generation are behind in digital access
  - Pacific below global access levels
- COVID-19 transformed internet into an essential service
- Supply is not enough to meet the demand



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Supply constraints

- Lack of long term sector planning and investment
- Rural, semi-urban areas lack infrastructure
- Private sector driven services limited to profitable urban areas
- Unaffordable for vast majority of the population
  - above UN standard of 2% avg per capita income

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Role of Development Partners

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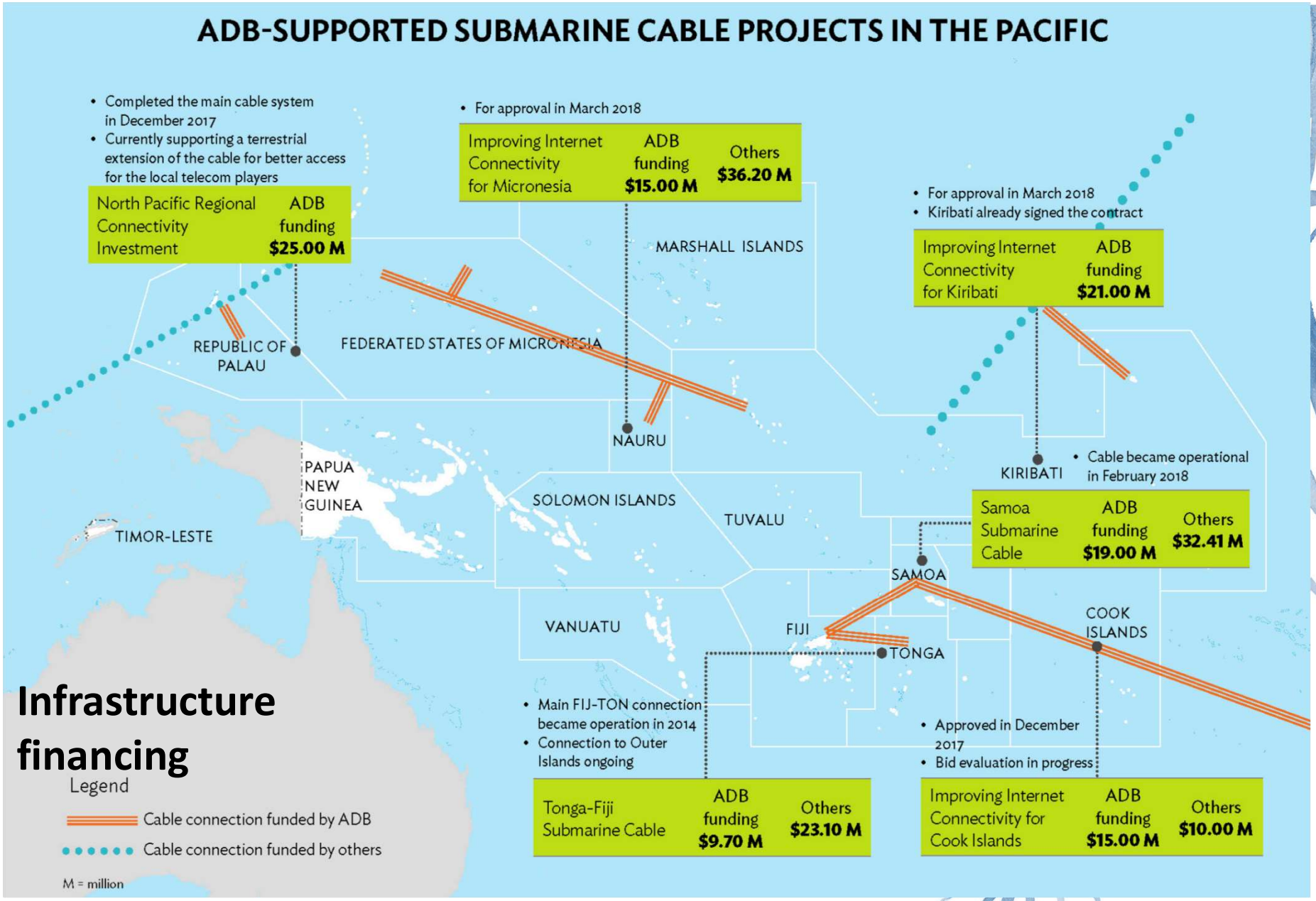
ADB-SUPPORTED SUBMARINE CABLE PROJECTS IN THE PACIFIC



Infrastructure financing

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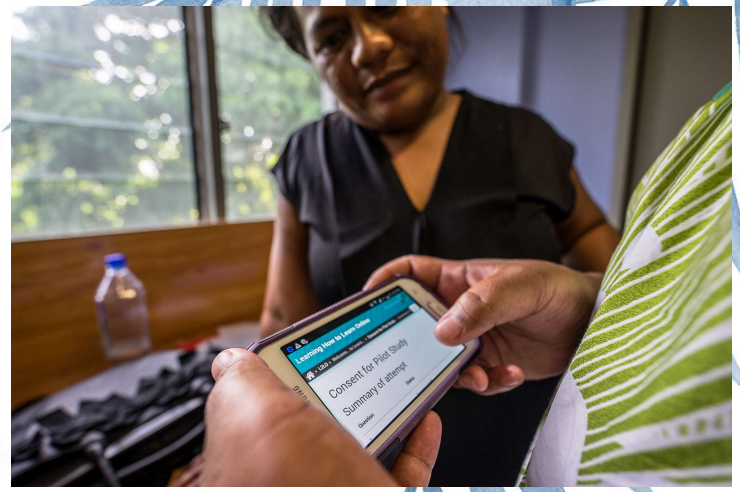
Role of development partners

- Coordinating cost-effective regional solutions
- Influencing the policy decisions for universal internet access and regulatory regime
- Support digitization



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Case 1: PNG health information

- 2015 ADB financed **public health digital surveillance system** in three provinces as pilot
- Tablets at health facilities and hospitals
  - collect data and generate health reports
  - allow information to be pushed out
- Data used by provincial and national health managers to identify outbreaks, routine reporting and distribute medical supplies
- System is now rolled out in over 840 health facilities across 17 provinces. *Five provinces remain*
- Challenge – maximize use of data collected

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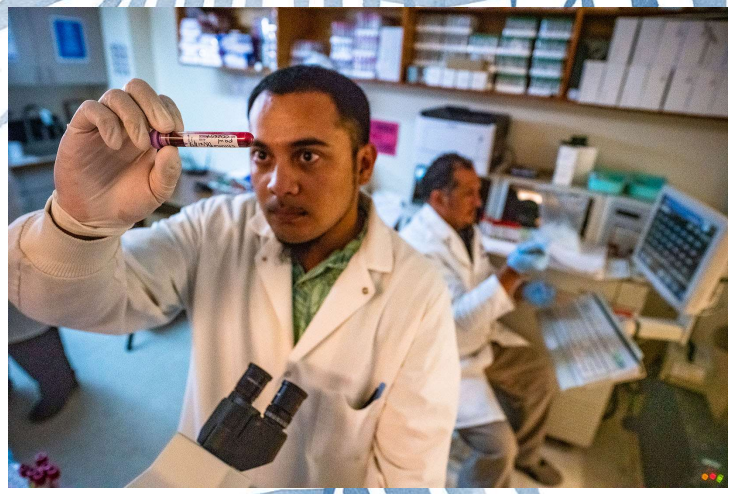
Case 2: Tonga – national health information system

- National health information system and the enabling environment
- Will connect all health facilities across Tonga and along transportability of patient information
- Automatic pushing of births and deaths data to CRVS
- Challenges: connectivity, basic digital literacy, lack of legislative framework, resistance to change



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Case 3: Regional education resources

- Expand access to content and delivery platforms for open, distance, and flexible learning.
- Leveraging economies of scale to create and share Pacific solutions to accelerate opportunities to improve quality of education
  - contextualized teaching and learning resources by adapting open education resources, and coordinating and sharing of e-resources between Pacific countries
  - ensure limited financial resources deployed efficiently and effectively
- ADB and New Zealand are collaborating to scale-up ODFL regionally
  - establishing regional repositories to identify, adapt, develop, and aggregate e-resources for primary and secondary education, particularly literacy and STEM
  - supporting girls to pursue interdisciplinary studies relevant to Pacific context
  - allow countries and schools to customize learning content to meet local demands
- **Strong partnerships.** Governments of Fiji and New Zealand; key regional institutions including USP's School of Education; Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development supported by COL.

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Moving forward

- Investing in digitization for Governance, Health, Education etc.
- Exploring new technologies (Starlink, Oneweb) to connect the unconnected
- Exploring emerging technologies to create economic opportunities
- Supporting policy reforms and regulation to ensure affordability
- Training and protecting internet users

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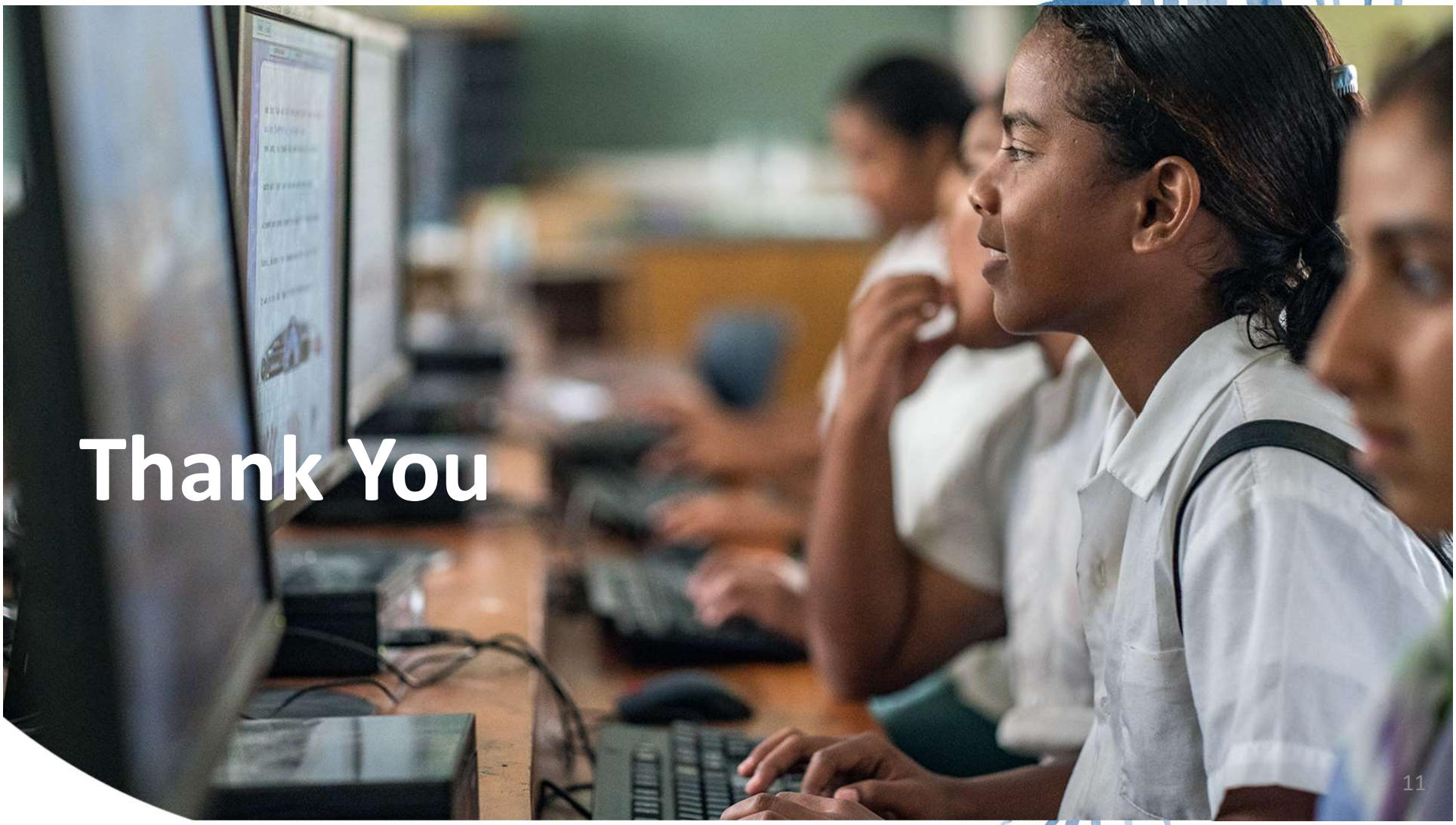

Thank You

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