



# Integrating Climate Mobility into Development Planning in the Pacific Islands

## Research Brief



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THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE ALLIANCE PLUS NETWORK



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# Acronyms

CROC	Climate Relocation of Communities (Fiji)
FMA	Free Movement Agreement
FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MSG	Melanesian Spearhead Group
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PCCM	Pacific Climate Change Migration
PICTA	Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PRG	Planned Relocation Guidelines (Fiji)
RMI	Republic of the Marshall Islands
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure (Fiji)
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# 1. INTRODUCTION



This Research Brief analyses the extent to which climate mobility has been integrated into development planning and sectoral policies in Pacific island countries and provides recommendations for regional and national actions based on best practices.

Many countries have recognised the need to integrate climate change risks and mainstream climate change adaptation into development planning and have taken action (see also UNDP-UNEP 2011). The Pacific region is particularly vulnerable to climate change risks and many Pacific island countries are also characterised by high rates of mobility. Climate mobility can be considered an adaptation to climate change, as those facing increasingly dire situations, and who have the means, are likely to move. Nevertheless, climate mobility has not received sufficient attention from policymakers and planners in the Pacific region.

The research brief adopts the categorisation of “climate mobility” based on the 2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (UNFCCC, 2010; IOM, 2019; IOM, 2020):

- Voluntary migration, such as movement in search of employment or better access to services, internally or across borders;
- Displacement, or forced movement, where people are compelled to move, either within a country or across borders; and
- Planned relocation is a planned process carried out under the authority of the State that takes place within national borders, and is undertaken to protect people from the effects of climate change. All types of mobility take place on a spectrum between forced and voluntary, with different types often enmeshed. The nature of the hazards and vulnerabilities facing a population are among numerous factors that affect mobility. Some sudden-onset disasters such as cyclones and tsunamis lead to the immediate destruction of homes and productive assets and an increased likelihood of displacement. Economic and social factors like resource availability, social networks, and gender, determine whether mobility occurs. The most vulnerable groups in affected areas are often unable to move, becoming so-called trapped populations. The damage from sudden-onset disasters is often temporary, allowing displaced people to return once recovery processes are in place.

To mitigate the risks of displacement or to find durable solutions to existing displacements, some governments are considering the planned relocation of vulnerable households or communities to alternative places of permanent residence. Planned relocations of communities residing in areas deemed unsafe for habitation can be a necessary and effective means of adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and increased resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change.

Finally, some people proactively adapt to climate change by moving away, especially when slow-onset hazards like sea level rise gradually erode their livelihoods. In such cases, circular or temporary migration may be undertaken in advance of permanent migration. The decision to move may appear volitional, but the interactions among climate variables and other key drivers, including insufficient employment opportunities, weak governance, and population growth, make it difficult to establish the exact thresholds beyond which mobility decisions become ‘forced’ (IOM 2020).

The different types of climate mobility are closely linked, and one may precipitate another. Along the continuum from voluntary to forced, mobility can be internal or international ranging from local movement away from sites of risk to international migration and of varying degrees of permanence; it can also be recurrent. People do not always migrate because of climate change per se, but in response to the effects of climate change on their livelihoods and well-being. As the frequency of extreme weather events and climate-related disasters increases and living conditions in certain areas gradually deteriorate, more migration flows will be directly triggered by climate change. Ordinarily, people with greater resources move away from dangerous situations and locations, while the more vulnerable are left behind. Such patterns, however, are impacted by gender norms, insecure tenure arrangements, changing economic conditions, social networks, political forces, attachments to place, and other factors (Farbotko 2021).

As climate change is one of the most critical drivers of migration, it is difficult to quantify the number of “climate migrants”. Each different form of climate mobility will warrant germane policy responses. For example, effective support for those displaced by extreme events will differ materially from support provided for the staggered migration of individuals or families due to slow-onset environmental pressures. Importantly, building climate mobility into policies and development planning will shore up the resilience of communities at risk. Concomitantly, it is important to provide people who are compelled to move with incentives in low-risk, high-opportunity locations, be they domestic or international.

This research brief is based on a literature review. It commences with an overview of climate mobility in the Pacific region and proceeds with a summary of the principal global and regional frameworks on climate mobility. Next, it analyses the status of integrating climate mobility into development planning and sectoral policies including climate change policies, disaster risk management policies, displacement and relocation policies, and migration policies in the Pacific region. Some best practices from the Pacific region are highlighted. Except for Fiji, which serves as a model of best practices for other Pacific island countries, laws and acts supporting the implementation of policies and national plans are not included in the analysis. In addition, a summary is provided of selected best practices in the management of climate-related mobility from Bangladesh, a country at great risk from climate change, and the Caribbean which, like the Pacific, is a region comprising Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Finally, recommendations are made that may support informed decisions, planning and policies to lessen the adverse impacts of climate mobility and harness the potential of climate mobility as an adaptive measure.



## 2. OVERVIEW OF CLIMATE MOBILITY IN THE PACIFIC



The trend of global displacement related to climate impacts has accelerated and has been associated with increased cross-border movements. As Vince (2022) argues, the debate about migration has centred around what ought to be allowed, rather than planning for what will occur. Much political discourse continues to treat international migration as a problem rather than a solution. While countries are obligated to offer asylum to refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the legal definition of the refugee does not include persons forced to leave their homes due to the climate crisis. An important development in this respect was the landmark decision taken by the UN Human Rights Committee in 2020, according to which refugees fleeing the disastrous impacts of climate change cannot be sent back to their countries of origin. The decision was made following a complaint lodged in 2015 by Ioane Teitota from Kiribati, who was deported from New Zealand after his asylum application was denied. While the NZ Immigration and Protection Tribunal accepted that climate change and disasters were a context in which protection obligations might be owed, either as a refugee or under international human rights law, including relating to the right to life, it held that this appellant could not establish his claim on the facts as they existed at the time. The UN Human Rights Committee agreed. This decision set a global precedent and is a significant step toward protecting the rights of climate migrants by determining that countries cannot deport people who have sought asylum due to climate-related threats (United Nations 2021). Although the rulings of the committee are not internationally binding, Teitota's complaint has changed the international debate on climate mobility. It calls attention to the possibility that border policies may have more lethal consequences than climate change per se and demonstrates the need to facilitate cross-border movements in response to climate change challenges. It remains to be seen how this ruling will be incorporated into national legislation concerning the granting of protection visas.



While the population in the Pacific islands region is small compared to other regions of the world, the Pacific is particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts that drive mobility, albeit not uniformly so. According to UNESCAP (2014), climate change is likely to increase the demand for internal and international migration opportunities in the Pacific. Current migration patterns move toward labour market opportunities both internally (leading to increased urbanisation) and internationally towards the Pacific Rim.

While economic and social reasons may be the primary reasons for migration, environmental change is imbricated in the matter. Having already reduced land, livelihood, food security and habitat security for some Pacific communities, climate change could be the tipping point in the decision to migrate.

The dearth of domestic employment opportunities in many island countries is another important driver for migration. Over the past decade, labour migration of Pacific islanders has generally increased, with patterns varying among countries and sub-regions. So far, most labour migration flows are directed from the island countries towards the developed countries of the Rim. Countries in the South Pacific participate in seasonal and temporary labour schemes with Australia and New Zealand, while the North Pacific countries are oriented towards the United States, to which they have free access under the Compact of Free Association.

The Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and the atoll countries of Kiribati and Tuvalu, have had relatively few migration outlets (ILO 2019). The impact of climate change on labour mobility is expected to increase. Climate mobility also encompasses displacement, either within a country or across borders, and planned relocations that are carried out under the authority of the State to protect people from the effects of climate change. Relocations are already implemented in Fiji. All forms of climate mobility are expected to increase in the Pacific, along with the associated challenges of integrating migrants into destination labour markets and economies. While there are no reliable projections as to the number of climate migrants in the Pacific, the incidence of climate-related disasters resulting in displacement will certainly rise.<sup>1</sup> Most Pacific island countries are exposed to a variety of climate extremes, including tropical cyclones and droughts (UNESCAP 2014). The physical conditions of island countries are highly variable, and the projected impacts of climate change differ significantly among and within them. Populations living on atolls will be most adversely affected by climate change. There are three atoll countries – Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu – and in addition, there are populated atolls in the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga. The total atoll population in the Pacific is expected to reach 350,000 by 2050. They will be at risk of sea level rise and displacement (UNESCAP 2014; IOM 2020). Findings from the Pacific Climate Change Migration (PCCM) project show that over 70% of households in Kiribati and Tuvalu, and around 35% in Nauru, would consider migration in the event of intensified sea level rise or drought. It is likely, however, that not many people would move across borders, as limited finances and access to international migration opportunities would be critical impediments (IOM 2020). The overall increase in climate mobility in the Pacific is therefore expected to lead to an increase in intra-Pacific movements, though no estimates for these flows are available.

<sup>1</sup> In its World Migration Report, the IOM (2022b) argues that while future projections of the number of climate migrants can bring attention to the potential scale of future issues and instill a sense of urgency in policymakers, it is important to be careful when presenting projections, because simplistic analyses of big numbers can trigger a fearmongering narrative that could negatively influence public perceptions and policymaking choices.

### 3. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON CLIMATE MOBILITY

Given the climate vulnerabilities shared by many Pacific island countries, several have taken proactive leadership roles in integrating climate mobility into global and regional frameworks and dialogues. A brief, chronological summary of the main global frameworks pertinent to climate mobility is offered here. This is followed by a discussion of the specific challenges surrounding the integration of climate migrants into labour markets and a summary of the Pacific regional frameworks.



#### 3.1 Global frameworks

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were adopted by the Commission on Human Rights in 1998 and remain the most widely recognised standard to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement. The 30 Principles outline the rights of internally displaced persons and the responsibilities of national governments to protect and assist them, regardless of the cause of their displacement. Although not a binding legal instrument, the Principles are recognised as the normative departure point for dealing with internal displacement. The 2010 Cancun Adaptation Framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was the first major climate policy document to include migration issues and recognise migration as a form of adaptation (UNFCCC 2010).

The Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, launched in 2012, is a state-led consultative process for building consensus on a protection agenda that addresses the needs of people forced to flee across international borders by disasters and the effects of climate change. It recognises that under existing international law there is no assurance that countries will admit these people and provide them with assistance. In 2016, the Platform on Disaster Displacement was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit, continuing the work of the Nansen Initiative by bringing together states committed to supporting the implementation of the Protection Agenda.

Focussing on disaster displacement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in 2015. It outlines targets and priorities for action to prevent and reduce disaster risks through governance, investment in disaster reduction for resilience, and disaster preparedness. Under the investment in disaster reduction for resilience priority, the importance of adopting policies and programmes that address disaster-induced human mobility by strengthening the resilience of affected people and host communities is emphasised.

The 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees were adopted by the majority of UN Member States including all Pacific island countries and formally endorsed by the UN General Assembly. They call for a deeper understanding of climate change as a driver of migration. The GCM recognises that climate change may lead to migration and reaffirms states' commitment to addressing the challenges of climate migration. The Global Compact on Refugees provides a framework for improving the worldwide response to the needs of refugees, including those displaced by sudden-onset disasters and environmental degradation.

### 3.2 Labour market integration of climate migrants

An issue of particular concern for climate migrants is their integration into the labour market. Refugees' right to work is stipulated by the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which together create a set of mutual rights and obligations between host states and refugees. Most people compelled to move due to the impacts of climate change will not, for this reason alone, fall within the definition of a refugee under the 1951 Refugee Convention. Importantly, the term "climate refugee" is rejected by many Pacific islanders and Pacific island governments who find it incompatible with their ethos of human dignity and agency (see e.g., McNamara and Gibson 2009). Bearing in mind that climate migrants are not considered refugees in the conventional sense and although the term climate refugee is avoided in this Research Brief, the very fact that their movement often has a forced component (albeit often to a lesser extent than in the case of people forced to flee war or conflict) makes the issue of their labour market integration similar to that of refugees fleeing conflicts and wars. It is based on this notion that some of the ILO's guidance on refugees is transferable to climate migrants.

The ILO has the mandate to protect the rights and interests of all workers, including those employed in countries other than their own or forcibly displaced from their homes. In recent years the ILO has increasingly developed guidance in facilitating access to labour markets for refugees and forcibly displaced persons (ILO 2020). When employed outside their countries, refugees and displaced persons are considered migrant workers and are covered by ILO's migrant worker Conventions.<sup>2</sup>

There is increasing acknowledgement that access to decent work is an essential component of sustainable response strategies that both enable refugees to participate in and contribute to the economies of host countries and ensure that national workers and others are not disadvantaged. In practice, an array of factors influences refugees' capacity to access the labour market, and many are concentrated in low-skilled, informal employment or under-regulated sectors where they are susceptible to decent work deficits, discrimination and exploitation. In 2016, the ILO adopted The guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market, a set of non-binding principles rooted in international labour standards and universal human rights instruments, and inspired by good practices. They highlight the importance of labour market access and labour rights in the context of forced migration.

<sup>2</sup> The Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) together with the Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949 (No. 86); and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143) together with the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1975 (No. 151) are directly relevant to migrant workers. Both conventions include the fundamental principle that migrant workers enjoy equality of treatment with all other workers including in respect of all matters regulated by law or regulations, employment and occupation, social security, taxation, trade union and others.



In addition, a new landmark standard, the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205) was adopted in 2017. R205 applies to all workers, job seekers and employers in all sectors of the economy directly or indirectly affected by crises. R205 emphasises the need to ensure respect for all human rights and the rule of law, including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards. Although R205 was largely developed for refugees and those displaced by human-made and natural disasters, its implications are also valid for climate migrants.

In 2020, the ILO published a Compendium on Employment and decent work in refugee and other forced displacement contexts in line with the structure of the ILO's 2016 Guiding Principles (ILO 2020). The compendium argues that employment and decent work should be part of a comprehensive response for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons and host communities.

In 2022, the ILO's constituents from the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific adopted The Singapore Statement which calls for recognition of the impact of climate change and for countries to develop national plans that take into account policies regarding the labour market, labour mobility, and social protection. It also reaffirms the commitment to the priorities established in the 2016 Bali Declaration which called for enhancing labour migration policies based on international standards.

In conclusion, the 2016 ILO Guiding Principles, R205 and the Global Compact for Refugees have lent global momentum to addressing issues of refugee access to labour markets through a rights-based approach. As argued above, this is also applicable to the situation of climate migrants along with the GCM which emphasises the importance of decent work for all migrants, in particular noting the need to “harmonize and develop approaches



and mechanisms at the subregional and regional levels to address the vulnerabilities of persons affected by sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters, by ... promoting sustainable outcomes that increase resilience and self-reliance. “

### 3.3 Regional frameworks

Given the Pacific region's vulnerability to climate change, it is not surprising that some of the world's first substantive regional and national policy frameworks for directly addressing climate mobility are being developed here. The region's climate mobility policies are not only shaped by climate change vulnerabilities but also by small populations, ocean rather than land borders between states, relatively peaceful relations within and among states, and the existence of regular migration channels to Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Farbotko 2021).

The 2016 Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) was adopted by the region as voluntary guidelines. It calls for Pacific island countries to integrate human mobility aspects into national policies and actions to protect individuals and communities vulnerable to climate change and disaster-related displacement and migration, including through relocation and labour migration policies. The Boe Declaration on Regional Security (2018) recognises climate change as the “single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific”.

The Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA Pathway) is a political declaration adopted at the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in Samoa in 2014. It is a 10-year programme of action that aims to address the unique and particular vulnerabilities of SIDS in cognisance of the probability of climate change and natural disasters causing displacement and migration.

The draft Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility (PIFS 2022) is intended to assist in planning for and managing the movement of people within and beyond the Pacific. It identifies strategies for building the adaptive capacity of Pacific communities to remain in their homes for as long as possible; to create safe and dignified pathways for movement where desired, and to provide protection and durable solutions if displacement does occur. The draft Framework seeks to ensure that no one is prevented from moving as a result of legal or policy failures and recognises and addresses the needs of those who face individual or systemic barriers to movement. It recognises that climate change intersects with other drivers of human mobility and exacerbates other vulnerabilities. It stresses that national governments have the primary responsibility to protect and assist people within their territories and acknowledges that in cases of cross-border displacement immigration laws and policies will determine whether people can seek protection elsewhere.

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at their meeting in 2022, is a regional strategy to protect and secure the Pacific and its people, representing the ongoing commitment of the region to work together as one. The Strategy recognises that climate change and natural disasters may cause displacement and migration and includes pertinent actions.

In sum, there are several regional frameworks governing climate migration in the Pacific. The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific and the SAMOA Pathway in particular offer a comprehensive approach to strengthening climate resilience and disaster risk management, including displacement.



## 4. THE INTEGRATION OF CLIMATE MOBILITY INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND SECTORAL POLICIES IN THE PACIFIC



Chapter 4 presents an overview of the integration of climate mobility into planning documents and relevant sectoral policies on climate change, disaster risk management, climate mobility, migration and labour mobility in 14 Pacific island countries.<sup>3</sup> All documents included in the analysis are listed in the country tables. Only those documents that refer to climate mobility are briefly summarised.

<sup>3</sup> Laws and acts are not included in this analysis. Moreover, all Pacific island countries have identified Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) as part of their responsibilities under the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC. These are excluded from the analysis of this Research Brief.



# COOK ISLANDS



	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
Te Kaveinga Nui -National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020	No
Sectoral policies and plans on climate change and disaster risk management	
Cook Islands Second Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2016-2020	Supports the development of policies to address climate and disaster-related displacement and migration
Cook Islands Climate Change Policy 2018-2028	No
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/a
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

The Te Kaveinga Nui - National Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020 mentions migration only in reference to large outmigration flows and the depopulation of some islands. No link is made to climate change.

The Cook Islands Second Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2016-2020 refers to the relocation of people in response to extreme weather events and proposes actions to protect and preserve Cook Islands' sovereignty, identity and traditions. Said actions include research on the impacts of sea level rise on the most vulnerable communities and the development of policies to address climate and disaster-related displacement and migration. No evidence was found that such policies are being developed.



# FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
2004–2023 Strategic Development Plan	No
Sectoral policies and plans on climate change and disaster risk management	
FSM Nation Wide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy 2013	Acknowledges the role of migration as an adaptation strategy in response to a changing environment. Aims to prevent environmental migration by means of adaptation strategies and to address human mobility associated with climate change through durable solutions. Aims to ensure that environmental migration is managed to the extent possible in a humane and orderly manner, including the protection of displaced populations.
Chuuk / Kosrae / Pohnpei / Yap Joint State Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change	Objectives include considering settlement options for relocation of low-lying/outer island communities and the preparation of plans.
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/A
Targeted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/A

The 2004–2023 Strategic Development Plan does not mention any type of climate mobility but refers to emigration from FSM to the United States and Guam.

The FSM Nation Wide Integrated Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Policy 2013 aims to achieve economic growth and self-reliance within a sustainable development framework that seeks to maximise opportunities presented by climate change and minimise the risks associated with both slow and rapid-onset natural hazards as well as human-induced ones. The Policy's guiding principle is the recognition of island communities' rights to their ancestral lands while acknowledging the role of migration as an adaptation strategy in response to a changing environment. The Policy aims to reduce environmental migration by promoting adaptation strategies and seeking durable solutions, while ensuring that insofar as it occurs, human mobility associated with natural disasters and climate change is managed in the most humane and orderly manner possible. All four FSM states have adopted a Joint State Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change, the objective of which is to provide settlement options by developing strategies for the relocation of low-lying communities and preparing plans to facilitate their implementation.

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
<a href="#">5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan 2017</a>	Refers to the relocation of vulnerable communities
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
<a href="#">National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2018</a>	Aims to strengthen the capacity of sub-national development planning processes to integrate mobility issues to protect those vulnerable to climate change and disaster displacement
<a href="#">National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2018-2030</a>	No
<a href="#">National Climate Change Policy 2018-2030</a>	Establishes human mobility as a priority security issue Supports planned relocation through relevant resourcing and national policies and strategies as a form of adaptation Supports cross-border migration issues and policy development Establishes regional responses and safety nets to manage cross-border migration and displacement issues
<a href="#">National Climate Finance Strategy 2022-2029</a>	Develops and implements a strategy for fulfilling Fiji's Climate Change Act; provide a comprehensive national blueprint that details the priority policies, interventions, targets, and projects across 12 sectors Integrates and prioritizes actions for climate-related development targets set out in the National Development Plan and strategic plans of the relevant line ministries; which include the adaptation priorities set out in the National Adaptation Plan and Climate Vulnerability Assessment
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/a
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
<a href="#">Planned Relocation Guidelines 2018</a>	Includes as a goal the establishment of overarching principles to guide key actors in the relocation process Provides a step-by-step framework of procedures to guide the planning of the relocation process
<a href="#">Displacement Guidelines 2019</a>	Includes the goal of establishing overarching principles to guide key actors in the displacement process Provides guidance for the Fiji Government and other stakeholders toward reducing vulnerabilities associated with displacement
<a href="#">Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation in the Republic of Fiji 2023</a>	Serves to support the successful operationalisation of the Planned Relocation Guidelines (PRG). The SOP provides structure and details processes to ensure adherence to the principles for planned relocation as defined in the PRG, and to the provisions under the national Climate Change Act relating to the relocation of at-risk communities.



Fiji's 5-Year and 20-Year National Development Plan of 2017 refers to disaster-risk management, noting that the government has identified vulnerable communities that are at risk from climate-related events including communities in urgent need of relocation. Currently, there are 42 at-risk communities of which 17 are considered a priority. Under the Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation, the is being assessed and expected to grow based on current projections.

Fiji's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2018 is a high-level strategy to spearhead ongoing efforts to comprehensively address climate change. It encompasses 160 priority adaptation measures, one of which is strengthening the capacity of sub-national development planning processes to integrate human mobility issues. The objective is to protect individuals and communities vulnerable to climate change and disaster displacement through targeted action, including relocation. In the NAP, this measure is explicitly linked to the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.

The National Climate Change Policy 2018-2020 incorporates the objective of reducing climate-change-related impacts on human well-being and national sovereignty, with human mobility established as a priority issue in this regard. In Fiji, planned relocations are a last resort, after all other adaption measures have been exhausted. Under the National Climate Change Policy, planned relocation is regarded as a form of adaptation which is supported through relevant resourcing and national policies and strategies. Cross-border migration policy development is supported, the role of climate change in human displacement is articulated, and international responsibilities are defined. Another associated strategy is the establishment of regional responses and safety-nets to manage cross-border migration and displacement. Regional cooperation helps to ensure that national and regional responses conform with international best practice. Immigration policy and labour mobility initiatives serve as tools to support economic and adaptation-related priorities in mounting responses to climate-related mobility issues. The Policy also aims to implement climate change adaptation solutions that are inclusive, equitable, and locally driven, with reference to Fiji's National Planned Relocation Guidelines.

Fiji was one of the first states globally to develop guidelines for improved planning and preparation for future relocations, and the first country to develop Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocations . Its experience in relocating communities has informed the development of the Planned Relocation Guidelines (2018) and the Displacement Guidelines (2019). Both are aligned with the provisions of Fiji's 5-Year & 20-Year National Development Plans, Fiji's National Adaptation Plan, the National Climate Change Policy, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy, and other relevant national, regional and international frameworks. The main goal of these documents is to establish overarching principles to guide key actors in relocation and displacement management. Fiji has drawn on existing international frameworks to develop these principles and is committed to observing all international norms and standards. Both sets of guidelines were designed as living documents that are to be periodically updated to ensure validity, transparency, and accuracy over time.

Under the Planned Relocation Guidelines, the Government intends to initiate planned relocation actions only when all other adaptation options, as provided by the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), are exhausted, and only with the full, free, and informed consent and cooperation of the at-risk communities to be relocated. The Guidelines provide a step-by-step framework of procedures that guide the planned relocation process in Fiji and are intended to constitute an efficiency-based reference for all actors in that process.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The village of Nagasauva in Vanua Levu was the first village in Fiji to undergo partial relocation. The village of Vunidogoloa in Vanua Levu was the first community to be fully relocated by the State —moving two kilometres inland after years of inundation, coastal flooding and storm surges (Government of Fiji 2018). The relocation was a painful experience for villagers who left their ancestral lands, despite moving to land within the community's customary boundaries (Charan, Kaur, and Singh 2017). Nabavatu village in Vanua Levu has been earmarked for relocation and will be the first to be relocated since the operationalization of the SOP in 2023.

The guidelines identify three stages of the planned relocation process, the PRE - Planned Relocation Process, the IN - Planned Relocation Process, and the POST - Planned Relocation Process stage. Guidelines are presented for the government and other actors in each of the three stages. As planned relocation due to climate change is a state-led process, the Fiji Government will ensure that the values and principles elaborated in the document are fully applied in the Standard Operating Procedures that represent the modus operandi of this document.<sup>5</sup>

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Planned Relocation serve to support the successful operationalisation of the Planned Relocation Guidelines. The SOP provides structure and details processes to ensure adherence to the PRG. The arrangements in place to support planned relocation in Fiji responds to the contextual differences between communities and groups in Fiji.

The Displacement Guidelines view environmental change (including environmental degradation, climate change, and disasters), human rights, and mobility as intrinsically linked. The Guidelines aim to reduce the vulnerabilities associated with displacement and contemplate durable solutions to prevent and minimise the drivers of displacement in affected communities in Fiji. They provide complementary support to the existing national policies addressing the movement of people caused by climate change and disasters, by ensuring an integrated approach and comprehensive implementation of preventive and assistive measures performed during both slow-onset and rapid-onset events. They acknowledge the importance of regionalism, citing the SAMOA Pathway, and the FRDP, as these may soon contribute to addressing cross-border displacement related to climate change and disasters in the Pacific. They provide guidance for the Fiji Government and all other stakeholders in Fiji to address and reduce vulnerabilities associated with the three stages of displacement: the PRE-Displacement Process, IN- Displacement Process, and POST- Displacement Process.

<sup>5</sup> Fiji is the only country that has Standard Operating Procedures for relocation. They have recently been released but are not yet publicly available.



# KIRIBATI

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
Kiribati Development Plan 2020-2023	Refers to labour mobility
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
Kiribati National Adaptation Program of Action 2007	Mentions cases of villages forced to partially relocate
National Framework for Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation 2013	Refers to overseas employment and permanent migration as climate change adaptation
Kiribati Climate Change Policy 2018	Refers to the possibility of unavoidable migration from Kiribati
Kiribati Joint Implementation Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2019-2028	No
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
National Labour Migration Policy 2015	Recognises the important role of labour migration in adaptations to climate change
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	

The Kiribati Development Plan 2020-2023 includes six Key Priority Areas including “Protecting our Environment and Strengthening Resilience”. While climate mobility is not mentioned, labour mobility is referred to as a strategy for maximising employment opportunities locally and abroad.

The Republic of Kiribati National Adaptation Program of Action 2007 mentions cases where parts of villages have relocated at the initiative of affected residents. The National Framework for Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation 2013 refers to the facilitation of overseas employment and permanent migration to ensure that the population of Kiribati remains at a level that facilitates the country’s climate change adaptation effort. It asks how resilience can be reinforced through preparing for displacement and what the options for a “disappearing” state like Kiribati are, such as acquiring new territory from another state, merging into a host state, or permitting the legal continuation of a state that no longer controls physical territory. The Kiribati Climate Change Policy 2018 mentions climate mobility, stating that Kiribati must develop measures that will enhance action and support local endeavours to address loss and damage. The projected rise in sea level in combination with Kiribati’s small land mass and environmental degradation may result in unavoidable migration from Kiribati, threatening its future existence as a nation.

The National Labour Migration Policy 2015 recognises the important role of labour migration in addressing the lack of employment opportunities, promoting economic and social development, alleviating poverty, and adapting to climate change. In the Policy, the Government recognises that labour migration will become an increasingly important strategy for permanent migration and population control in response to the threat to people’s livelihoods posed by climate change. The Policy’s vision is the permanent relocation of some of its citizens as part of the Government’s long-term climate change adaptation strategy. Under the Policy, the Government is committed to mainstreaming labour migration issues in national development and climate change adaptation plans and programmes, to link labour migration directly with climate change adaptation.





	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
National Sustainable Development Strategy 2019-2030	Includes as a priority the resettlement of communities on higher ground following rehabilitation of degraded land
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
Nauru Framework for Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction 2015	No
Strategic Roadmap for Emergency Management 2021-2023	No
Climate Change Policy Draft 2022	Reiterates as a priority pre-emptive planning for the relocation of homes and infrastructure away from the vulnerable coastal areas
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/a
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

Under its National Sustainable Development Strategy 2019-2030, one of Nauru's priorities is to resettle entire communities and households on higher ground; this would involve the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded land. Nauru's draft Climate Change Policy of 2022 reiterates the priority of pre-emptively planning for the relocation of homes and critical infrastructure away from vulnerable coastal areas.



# MARSHALL ISLANDS

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
National Strategic Plan 2020–2030	Acknowledges that tipping points for tolerability of habitation might be created and that the relocation of all citizens might be inevitable
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2008-2018	No
Republic of the Marshall Islands National Climate Change Policy Framework 2011	Mentions the unavoidable out-migration of some Marshallese as a result of sea level rise
Republic of the Marshall Islands Joint National Action Plan for Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Risk Management 2014 – 2018	No
Republic of the Marshall Islands National Environment Management Strategy 2017–2022	No
Republic of the Marshall Islands Adaptation Communication. 2020	Makes it a government priority to ensure that citizens can fulfil their right to remain in their home islands and to choose whether and when to migrate
Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy. 2018	Highlights the government's commitment to the two principles of simultaneously doing its best to assure the right of citizens to remain in the islands and ensuring continued opportunities for migration
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/a
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2020–2030 is designed as a framework for coordinating the government's long-term development goals at the national level. The NSP acknowledges that sea level rise combined with more frequent and severe periodic wave surges are likely to create tipping points for tolerability of habitation. As a low-lying PIC, the RMI faces the stark decision of whether to relocate all 55,000 citizens or to find other feasible options. Understanding these risks atoll by atoll will be necessary in considering adaptation measures.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands National Climate Change Policy Framework 2011 acknowledges in the preamble that sea level rise could result in the unavoidable out-migration of some Marshallese but makes no other mention of climate mobility. According to the Tile Til Eo 2050 Climate Strategy of 2018, relocation should be considered a last-resort option, despite the high likelihood of some Marshallese choosing to migrate. Moreover, the RMI may not be able to viably accommodate a population of 60,000, the number projected by 2030. Therefore, the Government is committed to simultaneously assuring the right of citizens to remain in the islands, to the best of its ability, and ensuring continued opportunities for migration for those who choose to relocate. RMI's adaptation is built upon prior experience of the forced relocation of many RMI citizens as a result of U.S. nuclear tests, and the fact that approximately one-third of its population has already relocated to the U.S. under the Compact of Free Association. The Republic of the Marshall Islands Adaptation Communication 2020 sets out the national circumstances and the particular vulnerabilities facing the country. It mentions different relocation pathways as adaptation measures; the first move of affected communities would be inland, followed by a move to a higher islet in the same atoll, then to another island/atoll, and finally overseas. It is the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI's) priority to mitigate climate change, and adapt to its impact, while sustaining its liveable territory. In that sense, preserving the right of the Marshallese to choose whether and when to migrate is paramount.



## NIUE

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
<a href="#">National Strategic Plan 2016 to 2026</a>	No
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
<a href="#">Joint National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change of 2012</a>	No
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/a
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

Climate mobility is not mentioned in Niue's National Strategic Plan 2016 to 2026 nor any relevant sectoral policies.



## PALAU

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
<a href="#">Palau 2020 National Master Development Plan</a>	No
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
<a href="#">Palau Climate Change Policy and Action Plan 2015</a>	Calls for the establishment of a relocation/displacement or emergency support program for vulnerable members of society
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	N/a
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

Palau developed the Palau Climate Change Policy and Action Plan in 2015. It calls for the establishment of a relocation/displacement or emergency support program for vulnerable members of society. No evidence was found that such a program has been developed.



# PAPUA NEW GUINEA



	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
Papua New Guinea Vision 2050	No
Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030	Mentions resettlement of coastal communities
Papua New Guinea Medium Term Development Plan III 2018-2022	Refers to the negative environmental impact of climate-induced migration
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
Papua New Guinea National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017-2030	Mentions disaster-induced mobility/displacement
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
Papua New Guinea National Labour Mobility Policy of 2021	No
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

Papua New Guinea has an elaborate planning framework that includes planning documents for different timeframes. In the long-term Papua New Guinea Vision 2050, climate change features prominently but climate mobility is not mentioned. The Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030 mentions that rising sea levels will force many coastal communities to relocate and that the resettlement of climate refugees will be costly and increase the risk of conflicts.<sup>6</sup> The Medium Term Development Plan III 2018-2022 includes the goal of adapting to the domestic impacts of climate change including coastal flooding and sea-level rise and climate-induced migration.

To ensure PNG can successfully address immediate and longer-term disaster risk management challenges faced by communities and the country as a whole, the Papua New Guinea National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2017-2030 mentions disaster-induced mobility/displacement and the need for policies aimed at strengthening the resilience of affected people and host communities.

<sup>6</sup> In Papua New Guinea, an "Atolls Resettlement Scheme" from the low-lying Carteret Islands has been in place since 1984, with resettlement on previously alienated government land in Kuvesia. A recent plan targetted the resettlement of about 1,500 residents by 2020 (World Bank, 2021)



# SAMOA

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
Pathway for the Development of Samoa 2021/22 – 2025/26	Includes the aim of increasing labour mobility
Samoa 2040	Includes the aim of increasing labour mobility
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
Samoa Strategic Programme for Climate Resilience 2011	No
Samoa National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2017-2021	No
Samoa National Disaster Management Plan 2017 – 2020	Discusses resettlement following natural disasters
Samoa Climate Change Policy 2020	No
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
Samoa Labour Migration Policy 2015	No
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

While the Pathway for the Development of Samoa 2021/22 – 2025/26 mentions increasing labour mobility and building climate resilience as key priorities, the two are not linked. Similarly, labour mobility features prominently in Samoa's long-term planning document Samoa 2040 launched in 2021 but climate mobility is not mentioned.

The Samoa National Disaster Management Plan 2017 – 2020 aims to address all known hazards to which Samoa is vulnerable and to improve the coordination of operational and management procedures. It discusses the resettlement of internally displaced persons in the wake of natural disasters.

# SOLOMON ISLANDS



	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
<a href="#">Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016 to 2035</a>	Includes the aim of increasing labour mobility
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
<a href="#">Solomon Islands National Adaptation Programme of Actions 2008</a>	Sees relocation of communities in low-lying and artificially built-up islands as an adaptation measure
<a href="#">Solomon Islands National Disaster Management Plan 2018</a>	No
<a href="#">Solomon Islands National Climate Change Policy 2012 – 2017</a>	Identifies relocation of communities as a last resort Includes strategy for developing relocation guidelines
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
No	N/a
Targeted policies on climate mobility	
No	N/a

The Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2016 to 2035 of 2016, includes the aim of increasing labour mobility and employment opportunities outside the Solomon Islands.

The Solomon Islands National Adaptation Programme of Actions of 2008 highlights the need to identify and support vulnerable communities in adapting to climate change. The NAPA process has identified the low-lying and artificially built-up islands as being the most vulnerable to climate change and sea-level rise. For most of these communities relocation is a potential adaptation measure. And NAPA recognises the securing of land as a critical issue when considering relocation and resettlement schemes throughout the country. The country's National Climate Change Policy 2012 – 2017 identifies relocation of communities as a last resort. It includes the strategy of developing relocation guidelines and assessment tools, building capacity and implementing the relocation of communities as an adaptation action where and when necessary. There is no evidence that relocation guidelines have been developed.

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
<a href="#">Tongan Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025</a>	Discusses the positive and negative consequences of emigration
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
<a href="#">Joint National Action Plan 2 on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2018-2028</a>	No
<a href="#">Tonga Climate Change Policy 2016</a>	No
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
<a href="#">Tonga Labour Mobility Policy 2019/20 – 2023/24</a>	No
Targeted policies on climate mobility	
-	N/a

While the Tongan Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025 discusses the positive and negative consequences of emigration, it does not mention climate mobility.







	Integration of climate mobility
<b>Planning documents</b>	
<a href="#">Te Kete Tuvalu National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2021-2030</a>	Mentions labour mobility as an adaptation
<b>Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management</b>	
<a href="#">Te Kaniva Tuvalu Climate Change Policy 2012</a>	Notes the lack of an international policy for forced migration and the cost of any relocation
<a href="#">Tuvalu National Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2012-2016</a>	Identifies several actions relevant to migration, to increase Tuvalu's resilience
<b>Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility</b>	
<a href="#">Tuvalu National Labour Migration Policy</a>	Emphasises the importance of labour migration as an option as climate change impacts worsen States a preference for adapt-in-place measures
<b>Targeted policies on climate mobility</b>	
-	N/a

The Te Kete Tuvalu National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 mentions labour mobility to increase the islands' adaptive capacity.

One aim of the Te Kaniva Tuvalu Climate Change Policy 2012 is to guarantee the security of Tuvaluans from the impacts of climate change. Another is to maintain national sovereignty in the absence of an international policy for forced migration due to climate change and the significant cost of relocations. The Tuvalu National Strategic Action Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2012-2016 is the implementation plan for Te Kaniva. It identifies several actions on migration including recommending revisions to the Pacific Access Category visa in New Zealand, exploring and securing access to other migration schemes, establishing training programmes to allow for employment in neighbouring countries, and raising awareness about the requirements of the PAC and other migration schemes. Moreover, a climate change migration/resettlement plan is to be developed for each of Tuvalu's islands taking into consideration the maintenance of Tuvalu's identity and the integrity of its traditions and customs. The Plan aims to increase Tuvalu's resilience and preparedness for any migration or displacement due to climate change and to ensure that Tuvaluans have a secure place to live.

Tuvalu's National Labour Migration Policy emphasises the importance of labour migration as an option for Tuvaluans as climate change impacts worsen. Acknowledging that it is not a comprehensive document on climate migration, the Policy ties together plans for educating the population about opportunities existing overseas while emphasising the role of a growing diaspora in integrating future migrants into different countries. Although acknowledging that international migration may be unavoidable, the policy states a preference for adapt-in-place measures, asserting Tuvaluans' rights "to pursue any and all means to ensure their nation survives and the legacy remains, with future generations living productive lives on these islands".



# VANUATU

	Integration of climate mobility
Planning documents	
Vanuatu 2030 - The People's Plan	No
Sectoral policies, strategies, plans and guidelines on climate change and disaster risk management	
Vanuatu National Adaptation Programme of Action of 2007	Refers to relocation
Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016–2030	Includes actions to address mobility needs in the face of climate change and disasters
Sectoral policies on migration and labour mobility	
-	
Targetted policies on climate mobility	
Vanuatu National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement 2018	A holistic policy that addresses displacement and disaster in an integrated manner and within the broader context of mobility

Vanuatu's 2007 National Adaptation Programme of Action refers to the relocation of settlement as an adaption and mentions Vanuatu's first-ever relocation, that of the Lateu settlement to Lirak in Torba province. The Vanuatu Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2016–2030 incorporates many aspects of the Sendai Framework along with specific actions to address mobility needs in the face of climate change and disasters. A proposed action to improve disaster recovery arrangements and capacity is the development of a national policy on resettlement and internal displacement.

Vanuatu was one of the first countries to develop a policy on internal displacement caused by disasters and climate change; this includes actions on return and reintegration, local integration and planned relocation, and integration of mobility into development planning. The 2018 National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement addresses displacement and disaster in an integrated manner, within the broader context of mobility. Mobility is conceptualised on a continuum, with slow-onset, economic migration and sudden onset disasters seen as drivers of displacement. The Policy urges the Ministry of Climate Change Adaptation, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards, Energy, Environment and Disaster Management, along with other government and non-governmental partners, to use it to mainstream displacement and migration considerations into their policies and their operational plans to support durable solutions for communities affected by displacement. The Policy, recognising the primary responsibility of the government to assist people affected by displacement, aims to enable Ministries to work together to protect people at each stage of the displacement cycle and to achieve durable solutions for all. The Policy also seeks to explore options that will facilitate safe, well-managed international labour migration as a livelihood and adaptation option that will help some families diversify their incomes through international remittances.

## 5. OVERVIEW OF SOME BEST PRACTICES PACIFIC

There are several best practices in place, both in the Pacific and elsewhere, that can inform the processes of other countries in the region. Within the region, Fiji's relocation and displacement guidelines, Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund, and legislative framework are the best example. Vanuatu's displacement policy and Kiribati's and Tuvalu's approach to viewing labour migration as a form of climate adaptation can also serve as a model. Fiji's Planned Relocation Guidelines (2018), Displacement Guidelines (2019) and Standard Operating Procedures (2023) that operationalise the PRG can offer guidance to other PICs. The Fiji Climate Change Act 2021 establishes a comprehensive response to climate change and the legal mandate for planned relocation processes. Part 12 (Sections 75 to 78) of the Act covers climate displacement and planned relocation. The Climate Change Act also establishes the Fiji Taskforce on Relocation and Displacement of Communities Vulnerable to the Impacts of Climate Change. The Taskforce oversees and advises the Minister responsible for Climate Change on all activities relating to relocation and displacement and is an important coordinating body for the engagement of government agencies and other partners. The Act is considered one of the world's most comprehensive pieces of climate legislation. In the SOP, the principles of a human-centred approach, human rights approach, participatory and inclusive processes, pre-emptive actions, livelihood-based approach, gender equality, disability, and social inclusion, protection of the rights of children, and free, prior and informed consent are mainstreamed.

According to Moore (2022), while the ideas in Fiji's guidelines are not unique, the way existing laws, norms, standards and principles are woven together and applied is innovative.

Moore argues that three key factors have featured prominently in the relocations implemented in Fiji to date. The first is that the durability of solutions is contingent on a suitable relocation site, the criteria for which are addressed in the SOP. This depends on various factors, including whether traditional owners can maintain connections to their ancestral lands by moving short distances (see also Fornale and Kagan, 2017); whether communities can stay together in new locations; whether residents can afford to move; and whether host communities are willing to accept climate migrants.<sup>7</sup> In the Narikoso relocation, for example, the community had to be separated, reducing the likelihood of the solution being truly durable.<sup>8</sup>

The second point is the importance of active participation. In this regard, the SOP establish the principle of free, prior and informed consent for the consensus-based decision-making process. It is widely acknowledged that for relocations to have the best chance of success, people need to have control over the decision-making processes that affect them. Fiji's completed relocations have reported varying levels of engagement and satisfaction with the outcomes. While the Vunidogoloa relocation process was originally promoted as participatory, community members subsequently raised concerns that decisions were often made without consulting them.<sup>9</sup> A recurring

<sup>7</sup> These is currently work undergoing to analyse the culture-gender-relocation nexus in Fiji. The findings and recommendations from the study will serve to strengthen the implementation of social and cultural components of the SOP. In July 2023, the losses faced by local communities as a result of climate change will be documented through photography and videos of cultural losses as a result of relocation. The videos and photos will be curated and archived (with the iTaukei Culture Institute and/or Fiji Museum) as a way of preserving this information before it is lost due to climate change impacts. There are also plans to showcase this work in an international exhibition in Venice next year, to draw attention to the cultural losses faced by communities in Fiji, as a result of climate change, and to amplify our communities' voices on the international stage.

<sup>8</sup> By 2020, three of the 42 Fijian villages earmarked for potential relocation had been relocated. One of these was Narikoso on Ono Island in Kadavu province but it is unclear whether all residents of Narikoso village have been relocated. See also: <https://www.fijivillage.com/news/7-families-vulnerable-to-sea-level-rise-in-Narikoso-village-in-Kadavu-relocated-45f8rx/>

<sup>9</sup> Vunidogoloa is located on Fiji's largest island, Vanua Levu. See also: <https://www.kth.se/blogs/hist/2020/01/vunidogoloa-what-can-we-learn-from-climate-change-relocation/>



issue within these processes is the exclusion of women from discussions. Consent and active participation need to fully reflect the community in question, including vulnerable, marginalised and other overlooked voices.

The third challenge is that relocations are expensive. Fiji established the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund under the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund Act 2019 as part of the national effort to support vulnerable communities, settlements and groups who are adversely impacted by climate change and seek assistance from the Government to assess relocation options. The Trust Fund is a dedicated source of financing for addressing the complex operations involved with the planned relocation of at-risk communities.<sup>10</sup>

Fiji's CROC Trust Fund is the world's first national Trust Fund to be linked to a government-legislated, community-driven process for the planned relocation of communities, settlements, and groups as a means of proactive retreat from the impacts of climate change when 'in-situ' adaptation efforts fail. The Trust Fund provides a platform for Fiji to receive and manage funds for the implementation of planned relocation and will derive financial resources from a variety of sources.<sup>11</sup> Whether this model can fund the large volume of planned relocations remains to be seen.

The Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund Financial Management Policy Guideline was approved by the Cabinet in March 2023 and details how the funds are governed and managed to ensure transparency, accountability and the application of social and environmental safeguards. It serves to ensure that the Trust Fund is maintained and accessed in a way that is consistent with the demand and needs of the PRG, the SOP, and the standard requirements set out by the Financial Management Act.

In each case of relocation, the tension between the State's obligation to protect and prevent citizens from coming to harm, and the people's right to choose when and how they leave their homes must be navigated. The state respects the choice of the community should it wish to remain the site but fulfils its duty to provide adaptation interventions to increase resilience. Forced evacuations and arbitrary displacement are generally prohibited under international law. However, states' existing human rights obligations to protect the right to life may oblige them to relocate affected persons when conditions are untenable or unsafe. UNHCR recommends that planned relocation be considered as a last resort and that relevant human rights principles be taken into account: free, prior, and informed consent of affected communities; effective and meaningful participation; appropriate and fair compensation; the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to an effective remedy (UNHCR 2015). While Fiji's Planned Relocation Guidelines follow these ambitious standards, their practical implementation is challenging. However, if they are not met, people will likely not find durable solutions and possibly face recurrent forms of displacement.

Kiribati and Tuvalu have national labour migration policies that link labour migration with climate adaptation efforts. Labour migration allows families to diversify their income sources which is important in light of livelihoods being threatened by climate change. Moreover, it builds skills, experience, and connections, facilitating future migration that might be induced by climate change. A growing diaspora in Pacific Rim countries and neighbouring PICs can also facilitate future resettlement. The national labour migration policies include several actions that prepare people better for international labour migration and expand their opportunities to participate. While Kiribati's past approach emphasised "migration with dignity", to manage population movement on its terms, the focus has shifted to in-situ adaptation so that i-Kiribati can remain in the islands. Similarly, Tuvalu's policy states a preference for in-situ adaptation.

<sup>10</sup> In May 2023, the Fiji Government published two Information Briefs on the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund. Information Brief 1 is an introduction to the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund for communities and the public. Information Brief 2 provides information for donors and potential contributors to the Trust Fund.

<sup>11</sup> The CROC Trust Fund receives 3% of the total collection of the Environmental and Climate Action Levy (ECAL) per month. The ECAL is no longer active and thus, there is a need to actively request for funding from bilateral and other multilateral sources to provide sustainable financing for relocation.



Vanuatu's 2018 National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement policy is the first of its kind in the Pacific region. Vanuatu is among a few countries with a dedicated climate ministry and one of the world's most progressive national policies on climate-related displacement. Vanuatu's model practices may be linked to its high vulnerability to various forms of natural disasters, which make internal mobility a very common and deliberate adjustment strategy in response to many factors, including non-climatic events such as volcanic eruptions. The policy deals with those displaced by natural disasters and climate change on a continuum of forced to voluntary migration and addresses displacement and disaster in an integrated manner and within the broader context of mobility. The policy aims to protect people throughout the displacement cycle and to achieve durable solutions, recognising the primary responsibility of the government. The policy also calls for exploring options to facilitate safe, well-managed international labour migration as an adaptation option.

## Caribbean

Like the Pacific, the Caribbean is a high-risk region in terms of climate-induced migration and displacement. The Caribbean has a regional framework for addressing climate-induced migration that is based on Free Movement Agreements (FMAs). FMAs are provisions within regional or subregional economic integration schemes that liberalise migration restrictions between participating member states. In the case of the Caribbean, these schemes are the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (Francis, 2019).

During the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season, CARICOM and OECS FMAs i) provided disaster-displaced persons with right of entry into other countries, e.g., Trinidad and Tobago sheltering displaced Dominicans under the CARICOM free movement area, ii) supported the waiver of travel document requirements in the event of document loss or damage, including immigration officials admitting Dominicans without passports, iii) granted indefinite stays to some displaced persons, and iv) eased access to foreign labour markets through a mutual recognition of skills scheme and/or a waiver of work permit requirements.

## Bangladesh

Bangladesh shares several climate vulnerabilities with the PICs, especially those related to sea level rise and extreme weather events. The number of people impacted by climate change in Bangladesh is much larger, however. In 2020, for instance, disasters triggered large-scale displacements of more than 4 million people (IOM, 2022a). Bangladesh has made some progress toward integrating climate mobility into development planning and sectoral policies, in particular by developing a comprehensive framework governing migration.

The Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021 – 2041, also referred to as Vision 2041, regards climate change as a driver of migration. The plan, recognising migration as a potential adaptation option for people living in the most vulnerable areas, includes policy responses for dealing with both internal and international migration. The aims of Vision 2041 include providing the poor with access to the international migrant labour market and increasing the protection of migrant workers.

As early as 2008, the Government formulated the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, revising it in 2009. The Plan, which identified displacement as an adverse effect of climate change, is the first national strategy that aims to develop rights-based solutions for the millions of current and future climate-displaced persons across Bangladesh. The National Strategy on the Management of Disaster and Climate Induced Internal Displacement of 2015 aims to address the gap in the strategic policy framework for dealing with the issue of disaster and climate-induced internal displacement (World Bank, 2018). The Strategy included actions to be implemented during the pre-displacement, displacement and post-displacement phases. In 2021, the GoB published the updated National Strategy on Internal Displacement Management to set out a comprehensive and realistic rights-based framework that respects, protects, and ensures the rights of disaster and climate-induced internally displaced persons in different stages of displacement and during the search for durable solutions.<sup>12</sup>

Bangladesh has a ministry dedicated to the welfare of international migrants. Over the past decade, the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Employment has taken the lead in paying increasing attention to the welfare of migrant workers and the effective use of remittance inflows. Important steps were the enactment of the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013, followed by the adoption of some important legal and policy instruments including the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016, Labour Migration Management Rules 2017, Policy Guidelines for Mandatory Insurance for Migrant Workers 2019, and CIP Guidelines for Recruitment Agencies 2019. The main objective of the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Policy 2016 is to ensure freely chosen employment abroad through safe and dignified migration. Although the Policy does not mention climate change or climate change-induced migration or displacement, one of the Policy's objectives is the integration of labour migration into the national development and planning framework, by establishing greater policy coherence between migration and other sectoral policies. Finally, the Government of Bangladesh drafted a National Reintegration Policy for Migrants that is expected to be adopted soon. It includes a comprehensive set of measures to assist returnees to reintegrate into life in Bangladesh, economically, socially and psychosocially.

The comprehensive framework governing all stages of labour migration in Bangladesh can serve as a model for the Pacific region where the considerable increase in labour migration flows is likely to continue with the expansion of the seasonal and temporary migration schemes in Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, the mutual imbrication of climate mobility and labour migration in the Pacific region is expected to intensify (IOM and ILO, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> In 2022, the GoB is in the process of updating its National Adaptation Plan (NAP), as agreed under the Paris Agreement and it remains to be seen if climate displacement will be included there.



## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for consideration of PIC governments pertain to both regional and national actions and are based on best practices from within the region and other parts of the world.

### Regional recommendations

#### **Recommendation 1: Adoption of a Free Movement Agreement in the Pacific region**

The application of FMAs in post-disaster contexts would be feasible in the Pacific, where regional and subregional economic integration schemes are already in place – PACER Plus, PICTA and MSG FTA – but currently do not include FMAs. FMAs can facilitate migration prompted by both slow- and sudden-onset disasters and provide climate migrants with access to rights of entry, work, and resettlement. The labour market integration of climate migrants should be governed by ILO's 2020 Compendium which, among other things, stresses the importance of recognising qualifications and prior learning, providing skills training that is linked to the needs of the labour market and strengthening tripartism and social dialogue. In the absence of an international legal framework for addressing climate-induced migration, the Caribbean example shows that FMAs can offer protection at the regional level and present an interim solution to the climate migration protection gap, at least until international law guarantees that protection. It is recommended that Pacific Island Countries adopt an FMA in the Pacific region, either with or without Australia and New Zealand. The Regional Labour Mobility Strategy that is currently developed by the PIFS could refer to climate mobility and include a recommendation for the development of an FMA.

### National level recommendations

#### Integration into planning documents

#### **Recommendation 2: Embedding climate mobility into development planning following best practices**

It is recommended that climate mobility issues be integrated into development planning. Some PICs have already integrated some aspects of climate mobility into development planning. Others do not refer to any form of climate mobility. At the same time, most PICs explore adapt-in-place options by building resilience. A major aim is to respect people's right to agency by keeping them informed and allowing them to participate in decision-making.

Planning documents that integrate climate mobility must be formulated in line with international frameworks related to climate mobility, including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Cancun Adaptation Framework, the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

#### **Recommendation 3: Embedding climate mobility into development cooperation interventions**

After the integration of climate mobility into development planning, climate mobility should also be integrated into the design and implementation of development cooperation interventions that have an environment and climate change focus. IOM's Toolkit on Integrating Migration into Environment and Climate Change Interventions provides relevant concise, operational, and user-friendly information and tools (IOM, 2022c). PIC governments could start advocating for the integration of climate mobility into donor-funded interventions with their development partners.

## Integration into sectoral policies

### **Recommendation 4: Integration of climate mobility into sectoral policies**

In most PICs, some aspects of climate mobility are already integrated into climate change and environmental policies and adaptation plans, for instance, reference to the need to relocate vulnerable communities or acknowledging the role of migration as an adaptation strategy (see Chapter 4 above for details). It is recommended that all types of climate mobility – planned relocations, displacements and labour mobility – be integrated holistically into relevant sectoral policies. It is important to recognise that the major international and regional climate change, development and migration frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015- 2030, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the ILO's Just Transition Guidelines (2015) are interlinked. They must be considered holistically and should be implemented simultaneously. This can best be achieved through the integration of climate mobility into relevant sectoral policies.

### **Recommendation 5: Implementing sectoral policies that integrate climate mobility**

Collaboration and coordination among different government ministries is crucial for the successful implementation of policies and adaptation plans that integrate climate mobility. Relevant institutions and agencies must be fortified and budgeting and financing mechanisms must be adjusted to provide adequate funding.

## Integration into National Labour Migration Policies

### **Recommendation 6: Adopting National Labour Migration Policies that integrate climate mobility**

Several PICs have adopted National Labour Migration Policies but not all of these refer to climate mobility or climate change as a driver of migration. Given the importance of labour mobility in the Pacific region, it is recommended that all PICs adopt National Labour Migration Policies and that these address climate mobility. Labour migration can be an important adaptive response for people facing slow-onset environmental change. When adhering to international labour standards, labour migration can support countries impacted by climate change, extreme weather events and environmental degradation. It can boost resilience and reduce poverty in source communities through the generation of remittances, the transfer of knowledge and skills, the development of networks, and the reduction of population pressure.

National Labour Migration Policies are aimed at improving access to existing and new destinations and facilitating safe labour migration that conforms with international labour standards and decent work principles. Such policies should be guided by the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006) that comprises non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration and aims to assist governments, social partners, and stakeholders in their efforts to regulate labour migration and protect migrant workers, as well as ILO's General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs to ensure fair recruitment processes and zero recruitment costs borne by the workers.

National Labour Migration Policies should be compatible with the PICs' comprehensive framework of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction policies, national adaptation plans, disaster management strategies, and other relevant plans and policies. They should include climate change-induced migration, ensure the protection of migrant workers, and ensure that gender and disability issues and the specific needs of vulnerable groups are adequately taken into account. Moreover, the implications of all policy responses for immobile people have to be considered.

## **Recommendation 7: Formulating internal migration strategies**

Where the limits of local adaptation are anticipated, well-planned migration to more viable areas within the same country can be a successful strategy, pre-empting planned relocation and displacement. Strategies supporting internal migration have to consider urbanization and resilience issues: internal climate migrants must be protected and the migration process has to be safe for all migrants including women and children. In receiving areas, migrants require access to decent employment opportunities in accordance with the ILO's international labour standards. Bangladesh has adopted a comprehensive policy framework governing internal migration and the protection of migrants that could serve as a model for the PICs.

## **Formulation of Planned Relocation and Displacement Guidelines or Policies**

### **Recommendation 8: Formulating Displacement Policies**

The safe, orderly and dignified movement of displaced people is essential. During displacement, women and children are particularly vulnerable and protective systems are needed. In their new location, displaced people need to have access to decent work, social protection, and basic services especially if rehabilitation is protracted and they are unable to return to their home areas for a considerable time.

The majority of climate-displaced people in the PICs are, and will be, displaced internally rather than across international borders. Thus, the primary responsibility for protecting the rights of climate-displaced people falls on the respective government. All climate-displaced people are entitled to the full range of human rights protections under the international instruments that the respective country is a party to as well as the protections in domestic law. Although not a binding legal instrument, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement have gained considerable authority and are recognised as the normative departure point for dealing with internal displacement. National displacement policies should ensure the protection of vulnerable groups and should be formulated following ILO Recommendation 205, which provides guidance for dealing with crises through employment.

Fiji's Displacement Guidelines that provide guidance to the Fiji Government and other stakeholders for all stages of the displacement process, and Vanuatu's Displacement Policy that addresses displacement and disaster in an integrated manner and within the broader context of mobility could serve as a model for PICs to formulate displacement guidelines or policies.

### **Recommendation 8: Formulating Planned Relocation Guidelines**

The PICs could consider developing Planned Relocation Guidelines, emulating Fiji's Guidelines which provide a step-by-step framework of procedures that guide the planned relocation process in Fiji and ensure an integrated approach and comprehensive implementation of preventive and assistive measures performed during both slow-onset and rapid-onset events and are intended to constitute an efficiency-based reference for all actors involved in the process.

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