



Overview of Fiji's Response to International Frameworks on Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change

FACTSHEET # 1

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Introduction

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report emphasizes that climate change is one of the greatest threats to human security because it undermines livelihoods, compromises cultures and individual identity, increases migration and displacement of people, and disrupts the ability of states to provide the conditions necessary for human security (Adger et.al 2014). The IPCC 1.5°C Special report emphasizes that the rate of global mean sea-level rise will likely increase from 0.52 – 0.98 meters between 2080 – 2100 (IPCC 2018). This increase in sea level will have significant implications for the Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) who are highly vulnerable to climate change. The report exemplifies that the pressure on human settlements in the Pacific Islands is likely to increase significantly in the coming years with the increase of global warming and environmental changes that pose risks to human health, livelihoods, food security and economic growth, and will likely result in the forced relocation and displacement of Pacific Islands people (IPCC 2018). This document provides an overview of how Fiji, a Pacific Island country, affected by climate change has responded nationally to international and regional frameworks and guidelines on adaptation and human mobility in the context of climate change.



International Context

A number of International frameworks have been ratified to regulate human mobility primarily for people who have fled their homes and countries as a result of conflict, persecution, war and other related causes and are seeking refugee status in other countries. The frameworks govern the regulatory of internal and cross-border migrations and support the recognition of human rights and the protection of refugees and stateless persons displaced by conflict and war to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration and the protection of their rights.

Similarly, policies that administer internally displaced people (IDPs) predominantly focus on disaster risk reduction and management measures, and the temporary relocation of communities. Many of these policies are guided by frameworks such as the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement that sets to address the needs and ensures the protection of internally displaced persons worldwide; Populations at Risk of Disaster - A Resettlement Guide by the World Bank; the Nansen Initiative Platform on Disaster Displacement, which supports the Nansen Initiative on human displacement by disasters and climate change across borders; and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) also played an instrumental role in endorsing binding agreements to combat climate change and support mitigation and adaptation actions. The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 targeted the reduction of global emission targets which was significant in the adaptation of developing countries to impacts of climate change. In 2010, reference to adaptation measures such as migration and planned relocation were first mentioned under the Cancun Agreement Framework. Later in 2013, the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage was established to address loss and damage related to climate change impacts including both extreme and slow onset events affecting human mobility and displacement, particularly in developing countries that are highly vulnerable to climate change (UNFCCC 2019). The WIM was supported by Paris Agreement which was endorsed in 2015 during the COP 23. The Paris Agreement was a significant step for the Pacific Islands that are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. The Agreement commits to combat climate change impacts, enhance adaptation actions through integrated and preventative approaches, particularly to address human mobility and displacement in the context of climate change, and mainstream migration as an adaptation strategy into existing policies and guidelines (UNFCCC 2019).

In 2015, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) produced a toolbox - Guidance on Protecting People from Disaster and Environmental Change through Planned Relocation. The toolbox underlines operational guidelines to assist States and Actors who may be in need of undertaking Planned Relocation related to climate change and disasters (UNHCR et.al 2015) and is useful in the development of relocation policies and guidelines in Small Island developing states like Fiji. In 2016, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was adopted to recognize and protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants regardless of their status. The Declaration was primarily intended for the development of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM). It is the first ever intergovernmental agreement prepared under the UN to cover all aspects of human mobility in a holistic and comprehensive manner at the local, national, regional, and international levels (GCM 2019).



Regional Context

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts due to their small landscapes and vast ocean territories, location in regions that are prone to natural hazards, high population densities, poor infrastructure, small economies, and great dependency on natural resources for their livelihoods and income (SPREP et.al 2015). The increase of land and ocean temperatures, severe droughts, increase intensity of tropical cyclones and precipitation; and rise of sea level, which has led to coastal erosion, contamination of freshwater lens, saltwater inundation of agricultural lands, will threaten food security and water resources, and force the relocation of many communities located in low-lying islands, along coastal plains, and river deltas in the Pacific.

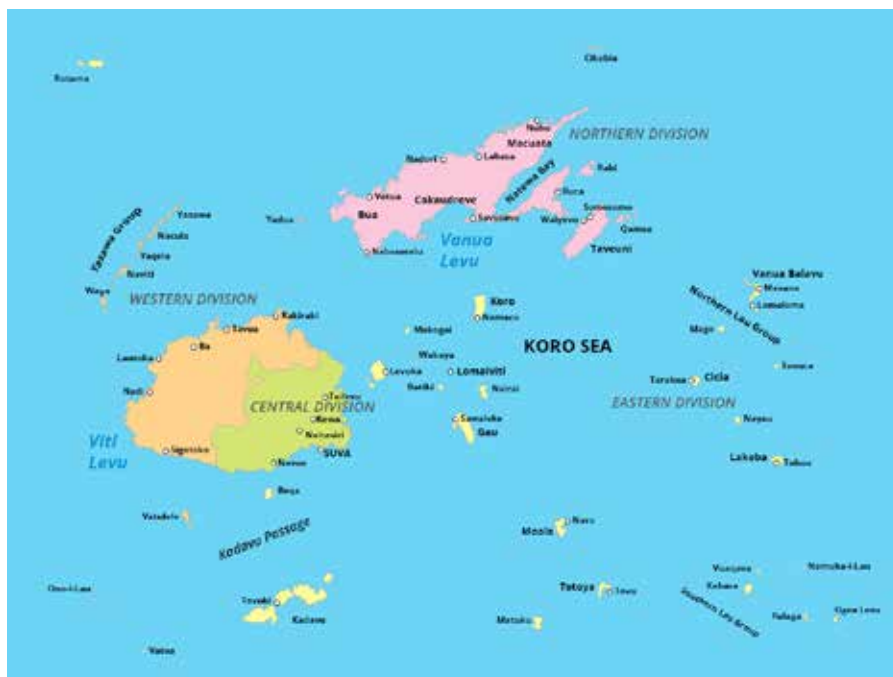
In 2008, the Niue Declaration on Climate Change was launched in recognition of the adverse impacts of climate change, especially sea level rise on the survival of Pacific Island communities. The call was re-emphasized in 2013 through the Majuro Declaration, which highlights the need to recognize the vulnerability of Pacific Islands to climate change and the potential impacts it has on the security and livelihoods of Pacific Islands people. In 2014, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway was adopted following the UN Conference on Small Islands Developing States in Samoa. The SAMOA Pathway was a reaffirmation of the partnership and commitment of every Head of States of Governments, representatives, and stakeholders towards the sustainable development of Small Islands Developing States (SIDS 2014). The Suva Declaration in 2015 further reiterates the SAMOA Pathway by reinforcing the irreversible loss and damage caused by climate change may likely exceed the adaptive capacity of Pacific Islands, especially with the lack of mitigation actions, which may eventuate the relocation and displacement of island populations. The Port Moresby Declaration was later endorsed in the same year to support the Suva Declaration through the establishment of a facility that would effectively support people who may be displaced by climate change.

In 2016, Pacific Islands' leaders endorsed the Framework for Resilient Development for national governments to integrate elements of human mobility where appropriate and to strengthen their capacity to protect individuals and communities that are vulnerable to climate change. The following year, during the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders meeting in Samoa, The Blue Pacific Narrative was launched for the joint protection of the Pacific Ocean by Forum member countries based on a clear

recognition of a shared ocean identity, ocean geography, and ocean resources. Although, the Narrative focuses explicitly on the Pacific Ocean, it embodies the collective ownership and stewardship of the Ocean by Pacific Islands (PIFS 2019). In 2018, the adoption of The Boe Declaration reiterates the threatening impacts of climate change on the livelihoods, security, and wellbeing of the Pacific Islands people.

While these Declarations allude to the critical concerns of climate change in the Pacific Islands, it is likely that with the escalating impacts of climate change and the subsequent lack of mitigation actions and adaptive capacity of Pacific Islands communities, many island populations may be forced to abandon their homes and migrate elsewhere for safety, better opportunities, and improved livelihoods. As such, relocation will be a required adaptation measure for vulnerable communities in the region, and although it can be complicated, lengthy, and costly, it must be properly planned to minimize potential challenges and ensure the continuity of the communities in the new destinations. Proper policies governing Planned relocation is required for Pacific Islands whose communities may be forced to relocate as a result of climate change and natural hazards. Fiji is the first Pacific Islands country to have developed its Planned Relocation Guideline to govern relocation processes in the country.





Fiji Islands

The Fiji Islands lies in the Southwest of the Pacific Ocean and comprises of two major islands – Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, and has a total land area of 18, 272 km². The islands of Fiji are of volcanic origin and are predominantly mountainous especially the two major islands with numerous small volcanic islands, low-lying atolls and elevated reefs. Fiji's climate is of an oceanic tropical climate associated with two main seasons, the dry season, which occurs from May to October, and the wet season from November to April. These season variations are highly influenced by the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ) and the El-Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO). Fiji is situated in the pathway of tropical cyclones so the islands are also highly prone to tropical cyclones and depression, flooding and landslides. The El-Nino events contribute to prolonged drought conditions in the islands especially during the dry season (SPREP et. al 2015).

Fiji is largely dependent on its natural resources mainly agriculture and tourism for its economy. However, as a small island nation, it is also highly vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards. The country is already experiencing prolonged droughts, frequent and increase precipitation and flooding in low-lying areas, loss of fertility in agricultural lands due to saltwater inundation, intensified tropical cyclones, and sea level rise and storm surges. National efforts in collaboration with international and regional organizations, and institutions and churches have been placed on capacity building in communities across Fiji to address climate change impacts and build community resilience (SPREP et. al 2015).



About 800 communities have been assessed to be highly vulnerable to climate change and disasters and are in need of immediate relocation. A few of these communities have already been relocated or are in the process of being relocated. In 2014, the village of Vunidogoloa was the first to be ever relocated 2 kilometers inland as a result of sea level rise and increase coastal inundation. The relocation was jointly facilitated and supported by the government and the community (McNamara and Jacot des Combe 2015). In 2017, the people of Tukuraki were finally relocated to a safer location after being affected by a series of disasters that occurred since 2012 (SPC and BSRP 2017). In 2018, several households in Narikoso village that were extremely vulnerable and affected by sea level were relocated to the new village site that has been cleared for the community. The relocation was facilitated with assistance and funding from external donors (SPC 2016). It is likely that with the increase impacts of climate change, more communities in Fiji will be relocated and therefore having a Planned Relocation Guidelines is essential to regulate and guide the mobility of people and communities in the future.



National Context

In 2017, Fiji's Presidency of the COP 23 was a significant milestone for the country. It led the government to foster open dialogues on action plans to enhance adaptive capacity and address climate change in the country. At the end of its Presidency during COP 24 in Katowice, Fiji launched its 'Planned Relocation Guideline, A Framework to undertake climate change related relocation'– the first to be ever developed in the Pacific Islands. The Guidelines serve to demonstrate the commitment of Fiji's government in meeting the requirements of international and regional frameworks on human mobility in the context of climate change, and to respond effectively to the relocation needs of its communities affected by climate change and disasters. The Planned Relocation Guidelines (PRGs) supports Fiji's commitment to recognize international framework and ensuring that the Guidelines are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and also to the provisions of Fiji's climate change policies, which capture elements of adaptation measures to climate change and disasters and includes migration and planned relocation (Government of Fiji 2018).



- **5-year and 20-year National Development Plan (NDP):** Fiji's NDP is the principle cross-government policy mechanism that sets out targets for national development. It ensures the integration of adaptation into town planning schemes and supports partnerships with communities, private sectors, and municipal councils to address climate change. It also takes into account potential planned relocation projects and the relocation of informal settlements to ensure the sustainability of cities and towns in Fiji (Government of Fiji 2017).
- **National Climate Change Policy (NCCP):** Fiji's NCCP is the underlying policy that incorporates the Fiji's national climate change responses and the Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement into Fiji's national planning and policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation targets, and supports the delivery of priorities set under the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (Government of Fiji 2018).
- **National Adaptation Plan (NAP):** Fiji's NAP supports the Cancun Agreement, which enhances the cohesiveness and actions on adaptation, and the need to incorporate human mobility issues into sub-national development planning and to design a comprehensive community relocation approach.



Relocation in this case must be voluntary with proper consultation and the consent and protection of the relocating community (Government of Fiji 2017).

- **Fiji National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (NDRRP):** Fiji's NDRRP under the disaster risk reduction recognizes the relocation of vulnerable communities as a structural measure, and security and protection mechanism. However, relocation from a vulnerable and hazardous area must be subject to proper risk assessment processes and it should be the very last resort after all adaptation options have been explored and exhausted (Government of Fiji 2018).
- **Fiji's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement (NDC):** Fiji's NDC was established under the Paris Agreement. Although, it does not directly capture elements of human mobility or relocation, it highlights the need for explicit partnerships and capacity building to support communities who are likely subject to be relocated as a long-term adaptation measure, and Planned Relocation as an ongoing adaptation initiative of the government (Government of Fiji 2015).



- **Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS):** Fiji's LEDS intends to ensure that the establishment of new settlements is established in a manner that is compliant with the objectives of Fiji's Nationally Determined Contribution and produces lower emissions. The policy does not specifically relate to human mobility or planned relocation, but in this context, anticipates to ensure that new established settlements either from planned relocation or other factors should be compliant with Fiji's NDC (Government of Fiji 2018).

The PRGs demonstrate the commitment of the government to effectively address climate change relocation in the country. The Guidelines were built on strategies that aim to reduce the vulnerability of people and build community resilience. It provides step-by-step procedures that can be used by all actors to guide Planned Relocation processes caused by climate change and disasters in Fiji. The procedures of the PRGs are coordinated based on three main pillars – **Decision** to undertake relocation, **Planning** for a sustainable relocation, and **Implementation** of a relocation plan that aligns with all human rights and protection, and complementary measures that include the sustainability of the plan, the physical process of the relocation, and the monitoring and evaluation of the relocation on a long-term basis.

The three pillars are supported by five main principles – **A Human-Centered Approach**, **A Livelihood-Based Approach**, **A Human Rights-Based Approach**, **A Preemptive Approach**, and **A Regional Approach** that ensure the values and rights of communities, households, and individuals affected by climate change and disasters are respected and protected in the process of Planned relocation. The PRGs also constitute three primary processes, the **PRE-Planned Relocation Process**, the **IN-Planned Relocation Process**, and the **POST-Planned Relocation Process**, which clearly guide actors and inform decisions related to Planned Relocation in Fiji. However, Planned Relocation is the last option for Fiji, and will only be considered after all adaptation alternatives have been explored and exhausted. In aid of the PRG, the government is also finalizing the Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), which condense the broader guidelines into practical steps that can be translated and reflected at the local and national levels to guide the implementation of planned relocation procedures for all actors in relation to any relevant context in Fiji (Lund 2019).



Fiji's commitment towards building adaptive capacity and enhancing community resilience through the planned relocation of its vulnerable communities is also demonstrated by the enactment of the Act 21 in June 2019. The Act 21 was enacted predominantly to establish an Adaptation Trust Fund for the Planned Relocation of communities in Fiji that are adversely affected by climate change, and has been named as the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund Act 2019. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to fund and support the planned relocation of communities in Fiji that are severely affected by climate change, and ensures that there is a clear funding system in place that can be used to assist communities in Fiji when relocation becomes necessary (Government of Fiji 2019). The review of Fiji's Displacement Guidelines is also underway following the consultation of the document, and will provide guidance on displacement caused by climate change and disasters in Fiji.





Future Steps

The launch of the PRGs has been very instrumental in Fiji's commitment towards enhancing climate change adaptation and resilience through planned relocation. It is the first Pacific Islands country to have taken the initiative to develop a Planned Relocation Guideline for vulnerable communities that have been identified for immediate relocation or those that may be subject to relocation in the future as a result of climate change and natural hazards. The PRGs is a foundational mechanism that supports effective actions on climate change adaptation in the context of human mobility in Fiji, and is also a comprehensive document that provides guidance to the government and its stakeholders for any relocation activities. The development of the Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) will provide more operative steps for actors who will use the Guidelines to assist them in any context of relocation in Fiji. However, there are future steps that can be taken into consideration to ensure the successful mainstreaming and implementation of the PRGs.

- The PRGs are broad and intended mainly for the government and its national stakeholders, it is relevant that the Guidelines must be simplified to the level of the community to enable their participation and ownership of the processes.
- A systemized diagram must be developed to clearly outline the different steps on how to go about the relocation processes (the PRE, IN, and POST) so that people at the community level are able to understand the procedures and action steps to take. The diagram should also include the actors that are responsible for facilitating the process.
- A clear coordination process for the government, actors and agencies is required to administer interventions and responses to communities' needs for relocation.
- The establishment of a Centralized Human Mobility or Planned Relocation Unit that provides responses to communities that are vulnerable or may be affected by climate change impacts and are in need of immediate relocation or evacuation in the case of natural hazards. The Unit is also required to administer all forms of relocation inquiries in the country and to facilitate responses to these vulnerable communities. There must be a clear Communication process to which communities, actors, and the government can communicate effectively to facilitate the relocation process.
- Clear guidelines for the mainstreaming of the processes of the planned relocation across the government departments, private sectors, and institutions is also vital.
- Case specific research that explores vulnerable communities who may be subject to future relocation needs to be conducted, especially in very remote locations in Fiji, so that they are given a timeline to consider the option of relocation and how they can contribute towards the process as a community. This will also allow ample time for the government and actors to plan and prepare, and also minimize the extent of vulnerability that communities may experience if the choice to relocate is left to the very last minute.
- The establishment of a database to be used as a repository for research and information concerning relocation related to climate change and disasters in Fiji is relevant. This is to manage research on relocation in the country and also to identify research opportunities and areas that require further attention. The repository is also important for research and informing of policies related to relocation and displacement in the country.

Terminology

Adaptation: the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.

Adaptive Capacity: the ability of systems, institutions, humans and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, to take advantage of opportunities, or to respond to consequences.

Climate Change: refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forcings such as modulations of the solar cycles, volcanic eruptions and persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

Disaster: severe alterations in the normal functioning of a community or a society due to hazardous physical events interacting with vulnerable social conditions, leading to widespread adverse human, material, economic or environmental effects that require immediate emergency response to satisfy critical human needs and that may require external support for recovery.

Displacement: refers to the sudden and rapid migration of individuals or households or communities due to rapid and slow onset of events and processes caused due to climate change, either occurring alone or in combination with other factors, where state is less able to provide humanitarian assistance and affected individuals or households or communities are not able to cope with the ongoing disaster event.

Evacuation: relates to relocation, especially in situations of urgency where risk is imminent and involves the rapid physical movements of people away from the immediate threat or impact of a hazard to a safer place. The purpose is to move people as rapidly as possible to a place of safety and shelter. It is commonly characterized by a short timeframe (from hours to weeks) within which emergency procedures need to be enacted to save lives and minimize exposure to harm. Evacuations may be mandatory, advisory or spontaneous. While evacuations should

be orderly, they may not be owing to the prevailing situation, although this does not imply that they cannot be planned.

Hazard: the potential occurrence of a natural or human-induced physical event or trend or physical impact that may cause loss of life, injury, or other health impacts, as well as damage and loss to property, infrastructure, livelihoods, service provision, ecosystems and environmental resources. In this report, the term hazard usually refers to climate-related physical events or trends or their physical impacts

Human Mobility: an umbrella term that refers to all aspects of movements of people. It is understood to encompass involuntary internal cross-border displacement of populations, voluntary internal and cross-border migration and planned and consented relocation.

Migration: the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification

Migrant: any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.

Mitigation: a human intervention to reduce emissions or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.

Relocation: the voluntary, planned, and coordinated movement of climate-displaced persons within States to suitable locations, away from risk-prone areas, where they can enjoy the full spectrum of rights including housing, land, and property rights and all other livelihood and related rights. It includes, displacement, evacuation, and planned relocation.

Planned Relocation: a solution-oriented measure, involving the State, in which a community is physically moved to another location and resettled permanently there. Planned relocation may play a role following evacuations in situations where the places of origin have become uninhabitable.

Sea Level Rise: displacement of fresh water or groundwater by the advance of saltwater due to its greater density. This usually occurs in coastal and estuaries areas due to reducing land-based influence (e.g. Either from reduced runoffs an associated groundwater recharge, or from excessive water withdrawals from aquifers) or increasing marine influence (e.g. relative sea level rise).

Vulnerability: the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and lack of capacity to cope and adapt.



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