

# ENHANCING PROTECTION AND EMPOWERMENT OF MIGRANTS AND COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS IN THE PACIFIC REGION



## PACIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE MIGRATION AND HUMAN SECURITY (PCCMHS) PROGRAMME

# REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION ON CLIMATE MOBILITY

## SUMMARY REPORT

23 & 22 June 2021

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises discussions held during the Regional Civil Society Consultation on Climate Mobility, organized virtually under the *Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCM-HS)*<sup>1</sup> programme on 22 and 23 June 2021.

Over 40 virtual participants included representatives from regional civil society organisations, NGO's, community leaders, faith-based groups, women's advocacy organisations, LGBTIQ community, youth groups and members of the diaspora community from over 6 Pacific Island Countries joined the consultation.

The key objective of the regional civil society consultation was to continue discussions on issues around climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation with a view to inform regional level action. The report presents some key issues and perspectives of civil society organizations in the Pacific on climate related mobility in the Pacific, and next steps for further development of a regional framework. Key messages emerging from the consultation are as follows:

- Regional solidarity on climate related mobility is required to ensure that no community is left behind.

A regional framework should address the issues of climate related mobility in the Pacific region by creating safe migration pathways for communities that have no choice but to move, upholding the human rights of migrant communities in the Pacific and recognising the need to preserve and respect cultural and identity. Such a framework should also respect community choices, including those who choose not to relocate. It should serve as a contingency plan for displacement across borders, in the event that all other options and avenues are exhausted.

- Traditional practices, language, ancestral land and cultural identity are the invaluable 'non-economic losses' that may be experienced in the context of climate change related mobility. Legal and policy frameworks should seek to preserve and protect these fundamental assets of all Pacific Island Countries. Traditional additional practices should be promoted, and social and environmental impact assessments conducted prior to relocation.
- National and regional laws and policies that are developed to address climate mobility should be

<sup>1</sup> The programme is implemented by the International Organization for Migration, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), International Labour Organization (ILO) the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) along with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD).

- reflective of the voices of all Pacific Island Countries and grounded in traditional protocol. They should be harmonized and aligned with international human rights law and other relevant conventions.
- Approaches to address climate mobility should also incorporate anticipatory risk information, build on lessons learned and adopt an inclusive peace-development and humanitarian nexus approach to meet the multiple challenges faced by the region. This would mean alignment with existing regional policies (for e.g. the Boe Declaration) and progress existing commitments (for e.g. on gender equality). At the same time, it would mean integration into development and public financial management planning.
  - Inclusivity is paramount when developing any policy framework or programme that addresses climate related mobility. Appropriate methodologies for engaging and capturing the needs, notions and voices of all communities, including women's, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ) and People with Disabilities (PwD) groups should be considered. The creation of safe spaces are vital to safeguard the rights of those most at risk of the impacts of climate change. Such dialogue should occur continuously prior, during and after relocation; should allow communities to strategize and discuss local priorities which are then connected to national government and regional inter-governmental processes; should enable informed decisions and establish a sense of ownership. Host communities should also be part of the decision-making process and well informed at all stages. Developing traditional and cultural relationships would prove beneficial towards integration and sustainability of relocation processes. In addition, language that is adopted to address climate related mobility must be simple, easy to understand, community friendly and translatable for the purpose of informing communities.
  - Youth involvement should be considered as a long-term investment towards the future. This will enhance the Pacific youth's capacity who one day will become technical experts that can best represent the various interests and priorities of their communities and the region.
  - Civil society organizations play a critical role in ensuring that governments remain accountable on regional commitments, and in ensuring that information is free flowing between affected communities and policymakers. In the face of limited human and financial resources, existing civil society structures (working groups, umbrella organizations) are in place and should be used to advance action on climate related mobility. Further, financial resources and technical assistance for civil society (such as tools to increase understanding of the complex and far reaching impacts of climate mobility) should accompany any climate related mobility policy.
  - Land tenure legislations and systems may need to be reviewed, both nationally and regionally, to find solutions for communities displaced and needing to relocate across traditional land boundaries due to climate change. Inclusive processes, involving traditional leaders and host communities will ensure the viability and sustainability of such arrangements.
  - A well-managed, rights-based labour migration framework can be used to boost climate resilience of the community through the generation of remittances, transfer of knowledge and skills and the rise in entrepreneurship. Communities who need to move in the future because of disasters and climate change should be well equipped through training, upskilling and education to enter the market workforce at a reasonable level.
  - Greater planning, review of migration policies and programming in countries of origin and destination is needed to ensure that Pacific migrants are prepared for their journeys abroad, but also that they receive appropriate social support and access to basic services. This will contribute to improved outcomes for migrants, their families, countries of origin and destination.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Civil Society Consultation was organized virtually under the *Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCM-HS)*<sup>2</sup> programme on 22 and 23 June 2021. A total of four sessions was organized across two days. Virtual participants included representatives from regional civil society organisations, NGO's, community leaders, faith-based groups, women's

<sup>2</sup> The 3-year programme is implemented by the International Organization for Migration, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) along with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD). This Regional Civil Society Consultation was led by IOM.

advocacy organisations, LGBTIQ community, youth groups and members of the diaspora community from over 6 Pacific Island Countries.

The key objective of the regional civil society consultation was to continue discussions on issues around climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation with a view to inform regional level action. Drawing from PCCM-HS terminology to facilitate discussions, “climate mobility” was used as an umbrella term referring to different types of movements observed in the context of climate change. This refers to:

- Migration undertaken voluntarily, for example rural to urban movement or cross-border labour migration undertaken as a form of adaptation;
- Displacement, which is a forced movement that can be internal or cross-border; and
- Planned relocation of households or communities, which implies a permanent transplanting of communities and their assets in another location.

In addition, the meeting aimed to ensure that civil society perspectives inform the development of a regional state-led response as well as fostered a shared understanding and common approach to climate mobility in the Pacific region.

Through a mix of panel presentations and group discussions, day one laid out experiences of communities impacted by climate related mobility. Session one highlighted the need to protect the social and cultural fabric of relocated communities along with the need to protect ancestral land, language and rights for families who need to relocate in the future. Session two discussed the legal and policy gaps that currently exist in the climate mobility landscape before exploring human rights based solutions. Day two focused on creating a space for civil society members to develop key advice and messages for government officials and policymakers. This included answering questions related to the role of CSO’s in advocating to address climate mobility and opportunities to amplify these issues.

## 2. SESSION ONE:

### *Understanding Current Trends of Climate Mobility In The Pacific*

Presenters:

- Pefi Kingi, PacificWin Pacific
- Laitia Tamata, Marshall Islands Council of Non-Government Organizations (MICNGOs)
- Frances Namoumou, Pacific Conference of Churches
- Rae Bainteiti, Pacific Youth Council

*Moderator: Christopher Yee, IOM*

Pefi Kingi of PacificWin highlighted the need to protect ancestral lands, culture and language for communities being displaced in the context of climate change. The presentation emphasized the need to develop relevant regional frameworks that create safe pathways for migrants, uphold principles of human rights and preserve cultural identity for migrant communities. Overall, communities on the front lines of climate change face insurmountable loss and damage. This is particularly critical for communities who need to relocate away from the exposure to climate change impacts. As such, capturing non-economic loss (where a monetary value cannot be ascribed) of Pacific Islanders in the context of climate mobility is essential.

Laitia Tamata of MICNGO’s shared perspectives on climate mobility from the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and spoke of current migration trends that arise out of the Compact of Free Association with the United States of America. The presentation underlined the movement of the youth population that were migrating from outer atolls to the capital, Majuro with the hopes of finding employment opportunities, income, education and a prosperous future. In doing so, the presentation touched on the cascading impacts and social issues that arise from internal migration such as the high consumption of alcohol and increase in unemployment amongst youth. To address these issues, Marshallese migrants who wish to depart RMI for life in the United States should be trained, upskilled and educated to ensure that they have the ability to move beyond low skilled employment. Moreover, it recognised the need to protect communities from outer atolls who have moved and will continue to migrate because of the radioactive waste that remains on Runit Island’s dome in Enewetak Atoll. In concluding, MICNGO’s suggested that more planning and programming is needed to better prepare Marshallese communities for viable and

sustainable employment opportunities in the United States to ensure positive outcomes for migration. This would be critical if it was to be considered as a strategy to adapt to climate change.

Frances Namoumou of PCC shared experiences from the relocation of the village of Vunidogoloa in Vanua Levu, Fiji and stressed the need to tread carefully towards sensitive and complex issues that arise in the context of climate mobility. The presentation called for the creation of safe spaces within communities at all stages of relocation to ensure that the perspectives of different ages, different genders and marginalised groups are captured. A proper space for dialogue prior to, during and after relocation is an important mechanism to address concerns, emotions and fears from various groups. Creating these spaces will allow communities to make informed decisions and establish a sense of ownership towards the need to relocate. At the same time, social and environmental impact risk assessments should be conducted before any relocation occurs to provide relocating communities with a better understanding on the alternative livelihoods that would be accessible from their new locations. Specifically, the presentation touched upon maritime communities moving inland and needing to adapt to an agriculture-based form of sustainable livelihood and diet.

In concluding, PCC called for respecting community choices, including those who choose not to relocate and instead should be supported in exploring traditional adaptation practices. In particular, Fiji with its traditional land ownership also needs to explore the available options for communities seeking to relocate across traditional boundaries and the need to identify native reserve land for relocated communities could be a solution going forward. Some important questions raised during the presentation:

- What are the new risks that emerge due to relocation?
- How do we address these risks prior to relocation?
- How do we keep communities informed and involved throughout the relocation process?
- How do we translate to communities that we've exhausted all means of adaptation prior to relocation?
- What happens to the old village site?

Rae Bainteiti from the Pacific Youth Council (PYC) presented on his community work to support Kiribati nationals during their initial arrival in New Zealand and noted the challenges that migrants face with accessing basic facilities such as health and education. During the presentation, PYC underlined the fact that the existing social systems are not always well adapted for migrants and that more can be done to support Pacific Islanders who are trying to gain access to fundamental services in countries of destination. The presentation underlined the need to re-examine existing legislation and policy and the need to develop robust laws that will ensure protection of migrants in the event of cross border displacement as the current system fails to do so. In concluding, the presentation highlighted that it is essential that youth are essential actors in the development of any framework and policy that seeks to safeguard communities from climate related mobility, as they will be the ones championing these issues in the future.

### 3. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION 1:

*How is climate mobility impacting our Pacific Community?*

*Moderators: Pefi Kingi (PacificWin) and Sabira Coelho (IOM)*

The interactive discussion provided an opportunity to hear from all participants on their experiences and perspectives of climate mobility. The session aimed to understand how this affects the Pacific way of life, the support being provided and support required, where communities relocated are going, how this is perceived as an issue and how to best protect culture and heritage.

Participants noted that climate related mobility has far reaching impacts on the future livelihoods of Pacific Islands and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities for PSIDS. If left unaddressed, this could potentially create ethnic conflict and increased tensions related to land ownership, including potential 'militarization'. An extremely important issue in the context of mobility is the loss of culture identity, language and traditional knowledge. Legal frameworks should therefore seek to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of communities who are moving because of climate change and disasters. More importantly, participants also emphasised the need to work with relocating and host communities. All affected should be part of the decision-making process and well informed at all stages. Participants also discussed the need to learn from



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previous cases of migration, relocation and displacement within the region to ensure that communities who need to move in the future are better protected and receive basic rights in their county of destination. Particular focus was placed on intersectionality and safeguarding the rights of women, children, PwD and the LGBTIQ community to ensure that vulnerable groups are involved in the decision-making process and have safe spaces to voice concerns and fears.

While regional and national legal frameworks may be helpful to promote action, it was noted that they should be grounded in the voices of the communities and based on international human rights law. In conjunction with developing a regional framework, participants noted that land in the Pacific is customarily owned and that land tenure systems may need to be reviewed, both nationally and regionally and explore solutions that would enable safer pathways and solutions for migrating communities. Lastly, participants underscored the importance of ensuring that regional level policy was aligned to national level action plans as a means of ensuring alignment and implementation of frameworks that enable protection of those most vulnerable. Lastly, discussions also touched on the need for cultural and spiritual hospitality within the Pacific and further highlighted the need to ensure that traditional protocol and understandings towards hospitality is properly accounted for in any regional policy.

## 4. SESSION TWO:

*What are the key legal and policy gaps related to climate change and migration in the region?*

Presenters:

- **Dr Tammy Tabe**, Lecturer at the University of South Pacific (USP)
- **Meiapo Faasau**, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (IFRC)
- **Bruce Burson**, Manager Refugee and Protection, New Zealand Immigration and Protection Tribunal and legal policy consultant on Human Mobility

*Moderator: Christopher Yee (IOM)*

Through presentations and discussions, the session reviewed the key legal and policy gaps in the climate related mobility landscape before exploring human rights-based solutions.

Dr Tammy Tabe of USP commenced session two by underscoring the fact that not all climate change impacts are the same for all Pacific Island communities and that each community may deal with climate change differently. The way each community responds is different, the way each community adapts will be different. Strong emphasis was also on aligning international and regional frameworks to national level policies to support communities in need when it comes to climate related mobility. In addition, Dr Tabe underscored the need for terminology and definitions reflected in policy to be “reflective of the voices of all Pacific Island Countries”. Concluding remarks were made towards the overall methodology of policy development and raised the significance of ensuring that policies made at a national

level are implanted at the community level to close any gaps that currently exists. Some important questions raised during the presentation:

- What kind of methodology do you employ with communities, government and CSO's on addressing the impacts of climate mobility?

Bruce Burson discussed the different types of mobility in the Pacific and how each type would require a different legal response. Currently, there is law developing around the fact that in some circumstances refugee and protection law can apply to the context to displacement and cross border movements due to climate change and disasters. In addition, the presentation underlined the importance of domestic law aligning with international human rights instruments to ensure that it is effective. Domestic law could also draw from mechanisms at an international level such as the guiding principles on internal displacement, acknowledging that majority of displacement in the Pacific is internal. As such, these guiding principles that enshrine international human rights norms can be contextualised to suit the predicament of the Pacific. Vanuatu's Displacement Policy is a good example of the fusion between law and policy beginning to close some of the gaps that exist in the legal and policy landscape. Mr. Burson also noted that migration policy needs to be complemented by appropriate social support policy to ensure that migrants do not fall through the social safety nets in the country of destination.

Meiapo Faasau of IFRC wrapped up session two by emphasizing the need to explore traditional pathways to formalising land leases for communities who move due to disasters and climate change. Mr. Faasau also said that current land tenure system in the Pacific is a legacy of colonial systems and as such, there is a need to refurbish current laws as they do not account for current circumstances faced by Pacific Islanders and do not incorporate any traditional processes of the Pacific. Within this, we must ensure that land ownership is inclusive to vulnerable and marginalised groups. It is important that different legislations are harmonised to protect and support communities displaced due to climate change. Mr. Faasau also pointed out that provisions should be made that allow for the gathering of information to ensure anticipatory risk information informs responses. Most disaster law legislation calls for data collection only post-disaster. Moreover, there needs to be appropriate risk governance structure of frameworks that connects with communities to ensure that information is free flowing between displaced communities and policymakers.

## 5. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION 2:

### *Key areas of priority for Civil Society Organizations in addressing climate mobility?*

*Moderators: Angelica Neville (ILO) and Sabira Coelho (IOM)*

In interactive discussion two, participants reviewed existing laws and policies related to climate mobility and their existing challenges and gaps. Participants also spoke towards the legal and traditional options for support that were available for relocated communities before examining the best practices that could be replicated or scaled up.

At the outset, participants identified a suite of laws and policies covering a range of sectoral areas such as migration, disasters, climate change and land that govern aspects of climate related mobility at the community level. In mapping these legal and policy responses, participants repeatedly emphasised the need to ensure that national policies and legislation are aligned with international human rights law and other relevant international conventions, including those that uphold the rights of migrant communities. Participants also noted the importance of engaging in international law commissions to shape legal responses including towards the issues imposed by sea level rise. It was also noted that policy and law should be inclusive of women, LGBTIQ, PwD and marginalised groups to ensure that policy is based on collective inputs and protects the best interests of vulnerable groups, including those impacted by climate related mobility and relocation processes. Moreover, participants also raised the need to engage with civil society representatives for the development of any regional legal framework and further highlighted the need to more financial commitment to support the implementation of law and policies at both the national and regional level.

Participants also spoke of the need to develop traditional and cultural relationships at a community level between the relocated community and the host community as this would prove beneficial towards integration and sustainability of the relocation process. This was seen as a core reason why migration between Tuvalu and Niue had been successful. This also demonstrates the need for regional policy to take into account the traditional mechanisms of cultural hospitality.

Participants also engaged in discussions towards reviewing the land tenure systems to enable the provision of spare or vacant land to those who have been impacted from climate related mobility. This suggestion may also be

applicable in the case of relocation across countries, and particularly for countries that have limited internal options for relocation.

## 6. SESSION THREE:

### *Regional mechanisms in addressing climate mobility*

Presenters:

- [Teea Tira](#), Project Coordinator (PACRES), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS)
- [Sabira Coelho](#), Programme Manager (IOM)

Teea Tira of PIFS provided perspectives on the regional architecture surrounding the issue of climate mobility. The Framework for Pacific Regionalism underpins regional action and recognises the advances of shared purpose, cooperation and coordination. This is further manifested in the 2050 strategy for the Pacific continent that is currently being drafted and has a long-term vision and collective commitment to secure the future of the blue Pacific.

In the context of climate mobility, the regional frameworks that guide regional collaboration and guidance include the Framework for Resilient Development (FRDP) in the Pacific and the Boe Declaration along with its action plan. The FRDPP reiterates the need to ensure action on climate change and disaster risk reduction, as well as to protect individuals and communities most vulnerable to climate change through targeted national and regional policy. The Boe Declaration embodies the regions concept of security, including prioritising human security and acknowledging humanitarian assistance. FRDP's implementation is complemented by the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) mechanisms which brings together stakeholders in a structured manner for more coordinated action around identified priority areas including migration. The PRP reflects the high-level recognition that in the Pacific, climate change and disaster risk cannot be addressed in isolation of development aspirations.

The PRP includes several technical working groups on relevant subject areas. IOM is currently the chair of the Technical Working Group on Human Mobility under the PRP umbrella with a membership includes UN agencies, regional institutions, civil society, government and members of academia. The TWG on human mobility

creates a space for the coordination of activities and programmes in the field of disaster displacement and climate mobility.

Following the presentation on the regional policies, IOM provided participants with an overview of the regional consultative process underway as part of the PCCM-HS programme. A regional policy dialogue was held virtually with senior government officials from 13 Pacific Island Countries from September-December 2020. The dialogue resulted there was a consensus amongst Pacific Island Country representatives that climate change is a compounding issue that effects human security and influences human mobility trends. Moreover, there was also a recognition towards the identification of opportunities to address the policy and legal gaps to enable protection of Pacific communities most prone to the impacts of the climate change. Further information is contained in the summary report.<sup>3</sup>

At a conclusion of the Regional Policy Dialogue in 2020, a joint-working group to support the development of a regional framework on climate mobility was established under the umbrella of the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) technical working group on human mobility. Inputs from this regional consultation will also serve to inform the outputs of the joint-working group.

## 7. SESSION THREE:

### *Key advice and messages for Pacific Senior Officials and Policymakers on climate related mobility*

Presenters:

- [Andie Fong Toy](#), Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)
- [Sharon Bhagwan Rolls](#), Global Platform for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
- [Solomon Yeo](#) and [Atina Schutz](#), Pacific Islands Student Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC)

*Moderator: Teea Tira, PIFS*

Session three of the consultation provided an opportunity for civil society participants to develop and discuss key advice and messages for government officials and policymakers who work in the climate related mobility space. Presenters had taken the opportunity to highlight areas that need to be covered in any regional

<sup>3</sup> The Regional Policy Dialogue summary report can be accessed here: [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/2021-03/PCCM-HS\\_Regional\\_Policy\\_Dialogue\\_Report.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/2021-03/PCCM-HS_Regional_Policy_Dialogue_Report.pdf)



based approach that is taken to safeguard the protect the rights of Pacific Islanders impacted by climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation.

Andie Fong Toy kick started session three by underlining the strong support in the region for labour mobility. With the increasing size in the youth population, labour mobility can be viewed as an avenue to addressing employment in the youth sector. This provides decent work for young Pacific Islanders and also creates an opportunity to develop skills and access to a reliable source of income. The support for labour mobility is reflected in the inclusion of labour mobility in regional and sub-regional trade agreements such as PICTA and the Melanesian Spearhead Skills Movement Scheme. Countries had requested for a binding agreement during the PACER Plus negotiations. On a similar note, the Micronesian Islands Forum, Polynesian leaders' group and the PIFS smaller Island states have all identified labour mobility as a priority areas for collaboration. The Pacific has suffered unprecedented economic setbacks due to the impacts of COVID-19. Remittances sent by migrant workers and the diaspora community has proved to be a lifeline for those in the Pacific who cannot find work during this period. In concluding, a well-managed, rights-based labour migration framework can be used to boost climate resilience of the community through the generation of remittances, transfer of knowledge and skills and the rise in entrepreneurship. Communities who need to move in the future because of disasters and climate change should be well equipped to enter the market workforce at a reasonable level (semi-skilled/high).

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls presented the work led by GPPAC Pacific with specific reference to the 'on the mat'

sessions which provide women in local communities with an opportunity to strategize and discuss local priorities which are then connected to national government and regional inter-governmental processes. In partnership with IOM, GPPAC will be facilitating sessions that will enable diverse women leaders to meet together and engage with community leaders, youth and church leaders to:

- Share their experiences on the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, their coping and adapting measures, capacities and observe non-economic losses and damage;
- Use a human security mapping approach to agree to a set of collective recommendations for regional and national policy development and planning related to climate mobility.

The presentation also stressed that the approach of "On the Mat" reflects our Pacific approach to progressing the commitments to gender equality and women's rights in line with the adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and successive resolutions as well as the Pacific Regional Action Plan on WPS (2012-2015); Boe Declaration and recommendations to progress an inclusive peace-development and humanitarian nexus approach to meet the many challenges we face as Pacific people.

Solomon Yeo and Atina Schutz of PISFCC concluded the session by re-emphasizing the need for stronger action in addressing issues arising from climate change in the Pacific region. The presentation highlighted that although climate mobility is only one of the many issues the Pacific region will be forced to reckon with, it must remain a strong priority reinforced by a systematic and well-coordinated effort. PISFCC also stressed that

youth must not be overlooked and should be key actors to the responses and preparedness to climate related mobility in the Pacific. The youth comprises the majority of the Pacific population and have great potential for added value to the collective efforts to the response and prepare for climate mobility. A fair and democratic process is required to ensure that youth are heavily involved in decision-making and policy development related to climate related mobility. Youth involvement should be considered as a long-term investment towards fostering the growth of Pacific youth's capacity who one day will become region-grown experts and drivers in climate mobility that can best represent the various interests and priorities of their communities and the region.

## 8. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION THREE:

### *Raising issues relating to climate mobility to policy makers*

*Moderators: Pefi Kingi (PacificWin) and Shane Antonio (OHCHR)*

This interactive discussion sought to understand key messages from civil society representatives for policymakers.

Firstly, participants spoke of the need to involve and drive participation amongst CSO's during the formulation of any regional policy that strives to address the human security concerns of climate related mobility. A strong emphasis was made on utilizing existing CSO structures towards the implementation of regional obligations and in addition, utilizing CSO structures to better inform communities of the various aspects and impacts of climate related mobility.

In addition, participants re-affirmed the need of a regional framework that looks to address climate related mobility in the Pacific and supported its development. In particular, it was noted that financial resources and technical assistance should accompany the establishment of climate mobility policy. These resources could be utilized to support CSO's in engaging with the most affected communities. Further, participants spoke of the need for regional policy to be complemented with tools for implementation which can be used collectively throughout the Pacific.

Moreover, points were raised towards labour mobility policy contributing towards the creation of migration pathways that offer long term opportunities for Pacific Islanders and the need to ensure that labour schemes are inclusive and consider marginalised groups.

In concluding remarks, all participants agree that the issue of climate related mobility is a regional issue for the Pacific and that regional solidarity is required to ensure that no community is left behind.

## 9. PANEL DISCUSSIONS:

### *Opportunities for greater civil society engagement and action on climate mobility*

Panelists:

- Reverend James Bhagwan, Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)
- Josaia Jirauni, Pacific Islands Association for Non-Governmental Organizations (PIANGO)
- Vani Catanasiga, Fiji Council of Social Services (FCOSS)
- Isikeli Vulavou, Rainbow Pride Fiji
- Maina Talia, Tuvalu Association for Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO)

*Moderator: Peter Emberson (ESCAP)*

The panel discussions identified opportunities for greater civil society engagement, advocacy and action to address climate related mobility.

Josaia Osborne of PIANGO commenced with the sharing of stories from elders from his village about a voluntary relocation that occurred in the late 1950's due to a sudden onset event brought about by storm surges. Using existing platforms to raise advocacy related to climate mobility and undertake a form shared peer engagement is needed to progress this matter at a national and regional level. PIANGO with its organisational reach and structure has the ability to convene similar discussions and continue dialogue that seeks to further discuss issues raised by communities relating to climate mobility. In concluding, strong emphasis was made towards ensuring that policies incorporate the perspectives of communities and that the voices of those impacted by climate mobility is not lost during stages of policy development. Moreover, there is a need to adopt simplified standard operating procedures so that information flowing to the communities is targeted, simple and easy to understand.

Vani Catanasiga of FCOSS stressed the need for humanitarian intervention and humanitarian assistance for communities that are having to relocate due to climate change. The presentation also raised the need for tools during the transitional phases of relocation to support with informing communities who are impacted by climate related mobility. In addition, points were raised toward the need for more engagement in national public financial management systems and the need to incorporate climate mobility into these existing systems. At any one time, CSO's around the Pacific must deal with a wide spectrum of issues. As such, it would be ideal to receive technical support and training towards responding to climate related mobility to gain a better understanding towards the cross-cutting nature of this issue. A lot of the conversations that occur on climate change are siloed and need to be incorporated into national discourse and planning. The presentation also reflected the need for additional financial resources to raise awareness and further advocacy on the issue of climate mobility, this includes conversations between migrant and host communities.

Maina Talia of TANGO presented the outcomes of the national consultation on climate induced migration displacement which was facilitated by TANGO in 2017 with the support of PIANGO, Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) and Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding. Mr. Talia also noted the sensitivities of discussing the issue of climate mobility in the Pacific because of the strong links people have towards the land and ocean. Land is a form of cultural identity, and it is a form of heritage that is passed on from one generation to the next. The presentation raised the deep fear in that the loss of ancestral lands would force Tuvaluans into extinction and this is why there is an urgent need to establish a legal process to uphold human rights, creates safe pathways and protect the lives of those migrating because of climate change. Options towards migration is deemed to be the last resort in Tuvalu, only to be considered after all options and avenues available have been exhausted. However, TANGO advocates towards the need to develop a plan B to ensure the safety and security of all. Its best to explore options now to ensure there are proper plans in place when the worst comes to worst.

Isikeli Vulavou of Rainbow Pride Fiji re-emphasised points relating to inclusivity in policy development to address climate mobility. Many of those who are part of the LGBTIQ community live on the front lines of

climate change and unfortunately many young members do not have the resources to flee verbal, emotional and physical violence. Despite this heightened vulnerability of LGBTIQ communities to disasters, they are excluded from policy development processes. Due to this, LGBTIQ groups have taken the initiative to commence the discussions themselves to gain a build evidence-based data that is needed and advocated for the need to have safe spaces during times of emergency. As such, policy needs to be inclusive, collective and support the rights of all in the community.

Reverend James of PCC recalled the list of declarations and joint commitments made at a regional level towards addressing climate mobility, notably the Moana declaration. More importantly, the presentation touched upon the importance of “*reading the waves beyond the reef*” – listening to the discernment and understand the willingness to have the uncomfortable conversation about relocation. PCC noted that governments may be reluctant to discuss cross-border mobility or relocation as funds are tied into climate resilience and adaptation. In addition, the issue of loss and damage for displaced communities is somewhat loaded with legal obligations and responsibilities. In the development of any policy and framework that is targeted towards climate mobility, it is crucial that the process is inclusive, participatory, includes planning, is resourceful and accounts for an approach that properly captures lives of Pacific Islanders. In concluding, PCC called for proper communication with communities most at risk to the impacts of climate change, in a language that is easy to understand, easily translatable and culturally friendly. In addition, some questions that must be addressed is:

- what is the impact of climate mobility on community cohesiveness?
- what is the impact on economic empowerment?
- what type of training will take place for communities who are about to leave and those who about to receive?
- How do you prepare people before they leave?

As a whole, all panellists recognise that migration is the last option to be considered after all avenues of adaptation have been exhausted and that CSO's play a crucial role in working closely with communities at all stages to address concerns, emotions and fears regarding that may arise as a result of climate related mobility.

In concluding the panel members recognise the need to develop a common understanding towards how the Pacific is being impacted by climate related mobility. Further, panel members noted the importance of a collaborative approach towards increasing advocacy and identifying spaces where the message regarding climate related mobility could be raised.

## 10. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

In concluding, the PCCMHS secretariat will work towards ensuring that the contributions provided by civil society are captured and go towards the development of a regional based approach that will be developed under objective 1 of the programme and contributes towards cultivating a shared understanding and common approach to climate related mobility.

The PCCMHS secretariat will strive to work closely with civil society in an endeavour to ensure that perspectives from CSO's are captured and ingrained into the development of a regional based framework that seeks to safeguard the rights and livelihoods of communities.

IOM is leading national consultations in 13 Pacific Island Countries to capture national perspectives and positions on climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation. The objective of this Pacific-wide national consultation process is to cultivate a shared understanding and common approach to climate mobility at the national level among different government agencies, particularly in contexts where the mandate for addressing climate mobility remains fragmented. These national consultations will also incorporate civil society and community perspectives.

Key messages emerging from the consultation are as follows:

- Regional solidarity on climate related mobility is required to ensure that no community is left behind. A regional framework should address the issues of climate related mobility in the Pacific region by creating safe migration pathways for communities that have no choice but to move, upholding the human rights of migrant communities in the Pacific and recognising the need to preserve and respect cultural and identity. Such a framework should also respect community choices, including those who choose not to relocate. It should serve as a contingency plan for displacement across borders,

in the event that all other options and avenues are exhausted.

- Traditional practices, language, ancestral land and cultural identity are the invaluable 'non-economic losses' that may be experienced in the context of climate change related mobility. Legal and policy frameworks should seek to preserve and protect these fundamental assets of all Pacific Island Countries. Traditional additional practices should be promoted, and social and environmental impact assessments conducted prior to relocation.
- National and regional laws and policies that are developed to address climate mobility should be reflective of the voices of all Pacific Island Countries and grounded in traditional protocol. They should be harmonized and aligned with international human rights law and other relevant conventions.
- Approaches to address climate mobility should also incorporate anticipatory risk information, build on lessons learned and adopt an inclusive peace-development and humanitarian nexus approach to meet the multiple challenges faced by the region. This would mean alignment with existing regional policies (for e.g. the Boe Declaration) and progress existing commitments (for e.g. on gender equality). At the same time, it would mean integration into development and public financial management planning.
- Inclusivity is paramount when developing any policy framework or programme that addresses climate related mobility. Appropriate methodologies for engaging and capturing the needs, notions and voices of all communities, including women's, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and questioning (LGBTIQ) and People with Disabilities (PwD) groups should be considered. The creation of safe spaces are vital to safeguard the rights of those most at risk of the impacts of climate change. Such dialogue should occur continuously prior, during and after relocation; should allow communities to strategize and discuss local priorities which are then connected to national government and regional inter-governmental processes; should enable informed decisions and establish a sense of ownership. Host communities should also be part of the decision-making process and well informed at all stages. Developing traditional and cultural relationships would prove beneficial towards integration and sustainability of relocation processes. In addition, language that is adopted to



address climate related mobility must be simple, easy to understand, community friendly and translatable for the purpose of informing communities.

- Youth involvement should be considered as a long-term investment towards the future. This will enhance the Pacific youth’s capacity who one day will become technical experts that can best represent the various interests and priorities of their communities and the region.
- Civil society organizations play a critical role in ensuring that governments remain accountable on regional commitments, and in ensuring that information is free flowing between affected communities and policymakers. In the face of limited human and financial resources, existing civil society structures (working groups, umbrella organizations) are in place and should be used to advance action on climate related mobility. Further, financial resources and technical assistance for civil society (such as tools to increase understanding of the complex and far reaching impacts of climate mobility) should accompany any climate related mobility policy.
- Land tenure legislations and systems may need to be reviewed, both nationally and regionally, to find

solutions for communities displaced and needing to relocate across traditional land boundaries due to climate change. Inclusive processes, involving traditional leaders and host communities will ensure the viability and sustainability of such arrangements.

- A well-managed, rights-based labour migration framework can be used to boost climate resilience of the community through the generation of remittances, transfer of knowledge and skills and the rise in entrepreneurship. Communities who need to move in the future because of disasters and climate change should be well equipped through training, upskilling and education to enter the market workforce at a reasonable level.
- Greater planning, review of migration policies and programming in countries of origin and destination is needed to ensure that Pacific migrants are prepared for their journeys abroad, but also that they receive appropriate social support and access to basic services. This will contribute to improved outcomes for migrants, their families, countries of origin and destination.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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