

Project Launch: Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific region

Suva, Fiji
26 March 2019

Summary Report



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) together with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Platform on Disaster Displacement, launched the programme, *Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific region* on 26 March 2019. The three-year programme is funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security and will start in the Pacific Island Countries of Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Outputs from the programme may be applicable for the broader Pacific region and to other island countries.

The following report provides a short summary of the participants, key objectives of the meeting and discussions during the programme launch.

Background and objectives

The Pacific region is extremely vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards which intersects with all domains of human security contributing to migration flows, displacement and relocation within and outside national borders. In order to protect and empower communities adversely affected by climate change and disasters in the Pacific region, a regional programme *Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific region* was recently launched by 6 partner agencies (IOM, UN ESCAP, ILO, OHCHR, PDD and PIFS) to address the challenges related to climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement, and planned relocation. The programme links to the Framework on Resilient Development in the Pacific, as well as the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, endorsed in 2018 by Pacific Island leaders. The programme has the following objectives:

Objective 1: Pacific communities and governments demonstrate strengthened capacity and coordination through a human security-based response to climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement, and planned relocation.

Objective 2: Migrants and communities in the Pacific Island Countries benefit from safe labour migration as a sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategy.

Objective 3: Contribute to the evidence-base on good practices in responding to climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement, and planned relocation with particular focus on the role of the human security framework.

The programme launch brought together over 50 representatives, including from the climate change divisions and national disaster management organizations of the Governments of Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu, target countries under the programme, as well as other Pacific Island governments of the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Solomon Islands and Tonga. In addition, the meeting benefited from the participation of diplomatic missions from the European Union, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Switzerland, United States; regional organizations such as the Asian Development Bank; civil society, UN agencies and donors. The meeting was an opportunity for participants to understand the background of the programme, its objectives, roles of implementing agencies and to express their commitment and share perspectives on enhancing protection and empowerment of migrants and communities affected by climate change and disasters.

Summary of discussions

Session 1: Welcome and Introduction

Moderator: Ms. Mahym Orazmuhamedova, Chief of Mission, IOM Fiji

- Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General, Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications
- Mr. Donglin Li, UN Resident Coordinator a.i.
- Mr. Pär Liljert, Chief of Mission for IOM Australia and Coordinator for the Pacific



In the opening remarks, speakers recalled the disproportionate exposure of the Pacific region to climate change and disasters and the tangible effect this has on people, driving migration, increasing the risk of displacement, and necessitating planned relocation. Examples of these mobility trends were shared, such as the case of Vunidogoloa, a relocated village in Fiji which illustrates how coastal communities may need to move to reduce exposure to climate change impacts. On the other hand, it was noted that people are also displaced by sudden-

onset disasters, while some migrate to earn an income as climate change places pressures on livelihoods. These movements raise several questions, including from the legal and development perspective, which requires a concerted effort from governments to identify solutions for affected people.

Speakers highlighted that the programme, *Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific region*, has three key objectives: first, to strengthen regional capacity and coordination to address climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement, and planned relocation; second, to promote safe labour migration as a sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategy and third, to contribute to the evidence-base on good practices. The programme, funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, applies a human security approach to address the associated challenges of climate change and migration by placing affected communities at the centre of the discussion. At the same time, the programme aims to support governments in their global and regional commitments including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Framework on Resilient Development in the Pacific, and the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, endorsed in 2018 by Pacific Island leaders.

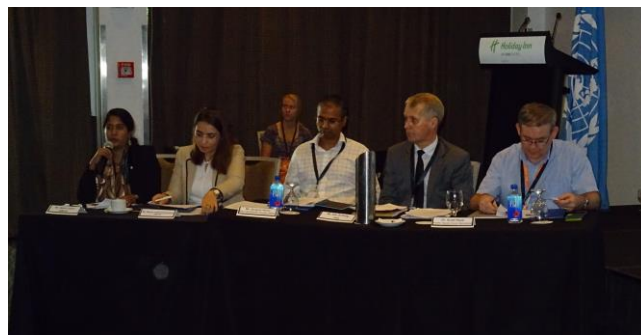
Finally, the opening remarks acknowledged the importance of several UN agencies coming together to implement the programme, as this enables sharing of expertise in line with the United Nations Pacific Strategy 2018-2022. It was also noted that results from the programme could be applicable not just for the countries covered, but for the broader Pacific region and other affected countries across the globe.

Session 2: Taking stock of the policy landscape and efforts to address climate and disaster-related migration, displacement and planned relocation

Moderator: Ms. Mahym Orazmuhamedova, Chief of Mission, IOM Fiji

- Ms. Sabira Coelho, Programme Manager, IOM Fiji
- Mr. Atle Solberg, Head of the Coordination Unit, Platform on Disaster Displacement
- Mr. Scott Hook, Economic Infrastructure Adviser, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- Mr. Sanjesh Naidu, UN ESCAP

This session traced the evolution of climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation in both regional and international policy discourse and reflected on how this was incorporated into the current programme. The presentations clarified the link between climate change and migration and emphasized that this nexus was increasingly acknowledged at the global level, including in the decisions under the UN



Framework Convention on Climate Change and in parallel, in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. As a part of these global policy decisions, member states are called upon to take action to reduce forced migration related to climate change and disasters, and to harness migration as a climate change and sustainable development strategy. The session also presented the Nansen Initiative, a state-led consultative process, which led to the adoption of the “Protection Agenda” for cross-border displacement in the context of

climate change and disasters, a non-binding document consisting of a toolbox of effective practices. The Nansen Initiative also involved a regional consultation held in the Cook Islands, which raised the profile of this issue for the Pacific region and helped entrench this topic in regional-level policy discussions. The Platform on Disaster Displacement was established as the follow-up to the Nansen Initiative and includes Fiji as a member of the Steering Group.

Presentations also covered regional frameworks endorsed by Pacific Island leaders, including the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) that reflect the migration and climate change nexus. The FRDP includes several voluntary actions at the national and regional level which refer to migration, displacement and planned relocation. This framework will be implemented through the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP), which brings together a range of stakeholders at the regional, national and local levels. Furthermore, the Boe Declaration on regional security links to the programme as it recognizes that climate change will be the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of people in the Pacific. To operationalize the Boe Declaration, an action plan and new regional security mechanism will be developed.

Finally, the session examined the results from the Pacific Climate Change and Migration project. The project, implemented from 2013-2017 by ESCAP, ILO and UNDP aimed to build knowledge and share information to enhance national capacities in countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts. This included research on migration flows, including projections on the impact of climate change on migration and labour mobility trends. The project collected evidence to show that people, especially those in atoll countries, already experience climate change impacts and that this drastically influences pressures to migrate, especially internally. The project concluded in a regional dialogue on climate related human mobility, which resulted in 4 major recommendations: 1) a human rights-based regional framework to address climate related migration, planned relocation and displacement; 2) building resilience through labour mobility; 3) migration and development nexus in the context of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development; and 4) discussing migrating in the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage. These recommendations are based on Pacific-level policy discussions and link directly to the current programme, which demonstrates strong continuity and political will to address this issue.

Discussion in the session focused on the data related to displacement in the Pacific. Data on disaster displacement is compiled in an annual global report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, although this data still represents 'estimates', implying that methodologies for data collection need to be harmonized and improved. It was also noted that addressing migration in the context of climate change is a complex issue and needs to bring together a range of ministries and actors at the national level to implement relevant actions. To successfully ensure inter-ministerial cooperation, relevant task forces need to be established, and 'champion' ministries that lead the work of the task force need to be identified.

Session 3: Overview of the Project

Moderator: Ms. Elena Gerasimova, Decent Work and International Labour Standard Specialist, ILO

- Ms. Sabira Coelho, Programme Manager, IOM Fiji
- Ms. Elena Gerasimova, ILO
- Mr. Robert Vaughan, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR



In this session, presentations provided an overview of the project, including the key objectives, coordination structure, background, human security and human rights approach and focus on labour migration activity areas.

The three-year programme will be implemented across five Pacific Island countries- Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu- by IOM, as the lead agency, ILO, ESCAP, PIFS and PDD. The programme is funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security, with co-funding from the implementing agencies. It will link to recommendations in global policy frameworks and build upon work previously carried out in the region, notably under the Pacific Climate Change and Migration project, with the perspective of linking to the implementation of the FRDP and Boe Declaration. Three main forms of human mobility in the context of climate change addressed by the programme are: migration which is predominantly voluntary, including labour migration; displacement, which is understood as forced migration; and planned relocation, covering the transplantation of communities and assets from one location to the other.

The programme objectives and outputs were also discussed in detail. The first objective focuses on developing a regional human security-based approach through development of a rights-based framework informed by national and regional consultations. This is based on a growing acknowledgement of the human rights implications of climate change and how this affects migration. Under the programme, the framework would be driven by government needs and would help ensure that protection gaps are filled, and that migrants and affected communities are placed at the centre of relevant policies and governance. The second objective aims to support safe labour migration as a climate change adaptation strategy amongst governments, employers, migrants through development of appropriate tools, sharing of information and resources and community-based interventions. This objective is based on the rationale that labour migration, particularly through seasonal and temporary worker schemes, can contribute to the development of affected areas, reduce population pressure on environments affected by climate change and help fill labour shortages in destination countries. This stems from some of the outputs of the PCCM project, which led to the establishment of national labour migration policies, strategies and action plans in Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru. The final objective focuses on collection of case studies and analysis to support a strong evidence base. Under this objective, research papers and advocacy briefs, including related to the ratification of key Conventions will be developed and disseminated amongst governments and other stakeholders. To implement the programme, a project steering committee and technical working group will be established that will meet frequently to provide input into the project.

Following the presentations, discussion centred on how the voice of communities and civil society would be integrated into the programme. It was noted that the civil society will be a critical player and would be relied upon to ensure the community voice in the development of the regional framework. All outputs, even the development of case studies, will include interviews and inputs from civil society actors. Another discussion point focused on the issues of protection of culture and identity in the context of labour migration. In response, the programme focuses on temporary and seasonal migration flows, which allows migrants to retain their links with their communities back home and preserve cultural ties. In this context, a question was also raised on how customary practices and customary law would fit in with the human rights approach.

Session 4: Country perspectives on 'Enhancing protection and empowerment of migrants and communities affected by climate change and disasters'

Moderator: Ms. Alisi Vosalevu, Pacific Regional Advisor, Platform on Disaster Displacement

This session provided an opportunity for Governments participating in the project to share their perspectives on climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation and their recommendations for the way forward.



The Government of Fiji presented its key policy frameworks related to this topic: Fiji's climate change policy, national adaptation plan framework and the national planned relocation guidelines (NPRG) that are aligned with global frameworks and international standards. It was noted that the NPRG was developed in response to a need for clear guidelines during relocation processes that were underway. These guidelines were based on inputs of a range of stakeholders included under the planned relocation taskforce. To operationalize the NPRG, the next steps will be to develop Standard Operating Procedures. Although there are provisions for planned relocation to take place, this should be an option of last resort,

only once all other options are exhausted. Furthermore, these need to be based on climate vulnerability hazard mappings. However, it was also noted that migration has been an adaptation strategy to climate change and that cultural and traditional knowledge needs to be leveraged when designing adaptation and disaster risk reduction programmes.

The Government of Kiribati also presented their climate change policies and strategies which focus on enhancing resilience of coastal areas to climate change and disasters. Kiribati welcomed the programme and recommended that it be tailored to the country needs and priorities. The programme will be important to support policies related to internal displacement and to inform the climate security strategies, as well as temporary and seasonal labour mobility, and finally, internal planned relocation safeguards and human security and human rights-based approaches. Mass relocation is not a priority area for Kiribati.

Similarly for the Government of the Marshall Islands, climate change projections do not depict a promising picture for the islands but people resist the idea of relocating due to fear of losing their cultural identity and because of the history of relocation from Bikini atoll. As a consequence, the focus in the Marshall Islands is on conservation of marine and coastal resources based on indigenous knowledge, increased resilience through education and awareness raising for preparedness, rather than relocation or migration.

The Government of Tuvalu also noted that cross-border relocation is not a current priority as reflected in the current climate change strategy and ongoing in-situ adaptation projects. However, through labour mobility, it is important to enable people to have the choice to move or to stay, although the predominant opinion is that Tuvaluans want to remain in their communities of origin.

Finally, the Government of Vanuatu also shared their experience of mobility in the context of climate change, which centred on relocation due to sea level rise and evacuation of communities in the context of volcanic

eruptions. A good practice from Vanuatu is the development of the National Climate Change and Displacement policy and that the National Disaster Management Office, the Department of Energy, Environment, Climate Change and Meteorology are all housed under the same Ministry which enables better coordination and cooperation. It was also mentioned that in Vanuatu, the “Second Home” programme allows people exposed to climate change and disasters to move to another island and set up their second homes. This also allows affected communities to return, and so is a transitional step in line with customary practice. For Vanuatu, the programme will be important in filling evidence gaps and providing information on good practices to respond to climate change and disaster related migration.

Other Pacific Island governments were also invited to share their perspectives which shed light on the climate change migration trends beyond the five selected countries, and insight into how the project could be relevant for a broader purpose. The Federated States of Micronesia noted that they are highly exposed to climate change, including slow-onset impacts of sea level rise and saltwater intrusion. At the same time, there is a high level of migration under the Compact of Free Association to the United States, and it is known that people do move due to increasing pressure of climate change. However, there are no policies focusing on displacement, but programmes focused on operational responses, and neither is there data collection on displacement or migration. The programme will also be relevant for the Federated States of Micronesia as it will help gather good practices and advice on how to address these issues.

Similarly for Nauru, there is a preference for migrating inland in the context of coastal erosion and other slow-onset processes, rather than moving to another country. To this end, development programmes centre on strengthening infrastructure, improving weather forecasting and early warning systems. Related to this, the Boe Declaration was focused on building a stronger Pacific and reaffirming commitment to support human security in the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction.

For the Solomon Islands as well, internal migration and displacement related to climate change are key issues, with customary land rights acting as a key determinant for settlement. As a result, drafting a relocation policy has been challenging in the Solomon Islands, given the customary land issues, and needs to involve the Ministry of Lands. In the absence of appropriate policies, displaced people tend to settle in informal urban settlements, which increase the risk of exposure to disasters. It was also mentioned that national level policies related to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation tend to be siloed, whereas increasing coherence was required, particularly at the local level. Related to this, strategies should be developed to roll-out the policies and be focused on specific types of events. It was also reiterated that the regional framework developed under the project needs to be context specific rather than a blanket framework but based on the gaps of each country.

In Tonga, migration is common and treated as a normal part of life and so the Government of Tonga recognizes the intrinsic link between migration and development. However, migration from outer islands to urban islands does pose a challenge, and particularly in the context of climate change as this leads to health, social and economic impacts. At present, climate related migration has been acknowledged only on an ad-hoc basis. There needs to be more documentation of practices and data to establish a clear action plan in this area. The importance of the Tongan Diaspora was also emphasized, and it was shared that many families had sent back remittances and goods as assistance following Cyclone Gita. Finally, in addition to Tonga’s climate change and disaster management policies, the government is drafting a national policy on migration and sustainable development which looks to integrate climate change and disaster risk reduction. This would support the government to strengthen capacity to manage migration, internal displacement and assist communities affected by climate change and disasters.

Conclusion

The launch of the programme, *Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific region* was an important opportunity to present the previous work undertaken in the area of climate change and migration and how this connects to the programme objectives to government partners and other stakeholders in the region. Through the session on country perspectives, participants shared their experiences in addressing the challenges related to climate change related migration, displacement and planned relocation and provided direction on the way forward for the programme, particularly in terms of the needs and priorities for governments in the region. The following are the main recommendations from the meeting:

- All partners must recognise the disproportionate exposure of the Pacific region to climate change and disasters and the tangible effect this has on people, driving migration, increasing the risk of displacement, and necessitating planned relocation
- It is important to ensure that multi- UN agencies approach and coordination with academic and civil society partners; it is critical to ensure that the voice of communities and civil society be integrated into the programme especially ensuring the community voice in the development of the regional framework
- It was noted that addressing migration in the context of climate change is a complex issue and needs to bring together a range of ministries and actors at the national level to implement relevant actions
- Customary practices and customary law should be accounted for and need to be reconciled with the human rights approach
- Migration must be recognised as an adaptation strategy to climate change and cultural and traditional knowledge needs to be leveraged when designing adaptation and disaster risk reduction programmes
- There needs to be support (both national and regional levels) for policies related to internal migration, particularly displacement, as well as cross-border temporary and seasonal labour mobility, and finally, internal planned relocation safeguards and rights-based approaches