

Pacific Regional Consultation on Internal Displacement

Pacific perspectives and practices on climate change and disaster displacement

Concept Paper

I. Introduction

Over 50,000 people are displaced in the Pacific region every year due to climate and disaster related events. IDMC's analysis¹ reveals that Pacific small island developing states (PSIDS) have high levels of displacement risk relative to population size given the range of hazards, exposure and differing levels of resilience. This means that individual inhabitants of Pacific SIDS are sometimes several times more likely to become displaced by disasters than people living in larger countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Altogether the Asia-Pacific region consistently records over 50 per cent of global disaster displacement. At the same time, slow-onset processes occurring over long periods of time, such as sea level rise, rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, coastal erosion interact with sudden-onset processes and weather events (such as king tides) also contribute to displacement risk. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that people will increasingly be compelled to leave their homes, blurring the distinction between predominantly voluntary and forced movements and in the context of some low-lying atoll Pacific nations, between internal and international displacement.

The UN Secretary General in October 2019 announced the establishment of a High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (the Panel). The Panel's work is intended to increase global attention to internal displacement, while also developing concrete recommendations for Member States, the UN system and other relevant stakeholders on how to better prevent, respond, and achieve solutions to internal displacement.

To inform the recommendations and overall work of the UN SG High Level Panel, the Pacific region through the Pacific Resilience Partnership's Technical Working Group (TWG) on Human Mobility in the context of increasing climate and disaster risk will be undertaking a regional consultation on the issue of internal displacement driven by climate change and disasters. This consultation will provide an opportunity for government officials, UN agencies, NGOs, CSOs, academia, the private sector and other development and humanitarian partners to present country-specific best practices, lessons learnt, and challenges related to internal displacement. The meeting will also serve as an opportunity to review and validate recommendations put forward in submissions to the HLP. An outcome document will be prepared at the end of the consultation containing a set of messages on internal displacement in the context of disasters and climate change based on the Pacific context which will be submitted as the consolidated input from the Pacific Technical Working Group on Human Mobility to the High Level Panel.

II. Background

Internal Displacement is the forced or obliged movement of persons or groups of persons to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in response to or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violation of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border². Internal displacement

¹ IDMC, 2015. *Disaster-related displacement risk: Measuring the risk and addressing its drivers*, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/20150312-global-disaster-related-displacement-risk-en.pdf>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/Standards.aspx>

has become one of the most pressing humanitarian and sustainable development challenges facing the world today³ and disasters continue to trigger majority of new displacements globally⁴. Internal displacement undermines the effort of affected countries to achieve their Sustainable Development Goals.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5 report reaffirms the vulnerability of Pacific SIDS to climate and disaster induced displacements, which is further supported in the 2019 World Risk Report that shows 6 Pacific SIDS are amongst the 20 most vulnerable nations to disaster risk worldwide. Extreme weather events are occurring with greater frequency and intensity such as cyclones, tsunamis, storm surges, and floods in addition to the risks of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions challenging disaster preparedness and contributing to significant damage. While this is especially true for high-intensity events that occur infrequently, low-intensity sudden-onset events that occur more often place an equal burden on response capacities.⁵

Post-disaster needs assessments, monitoring reports and academic literature documenting and evaluating displacement management identify several characteristics of displacement and displacement management in the Pacific region. Most displaced people tend to move to nearby towns and villages, residing with host communities. In the Pacific, where most countries comprise of several islands with small populations spread over a large area of land, delivery of emergency response and assistance can be impeded by the lack of developed transport and infrastructure facilities. Support to displaced populations is provided through the National Disaster Management Offices, network of local actors, NGOs and development partners, while traditional local governance structures, church and faith-based networks are active in disaster risk reduction and as first responders.

The Challenge

- 1) **Internal Displacement is not seen as a global priority.** While the Pacific Island region has made significant steps recognizing the issue of displacement in its regional policy frameworks such as the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) and the Boe Declaration Action Plan, it still has not been recognised as a global priority. Also, neither internal displacement nor IDPs are specifically mentioned in any of the 17 goals and 169 targets of the global Sustainable Development Goals monitoring framework, although it is mentioned in the declaration introducing the SDG goals.
- 2) **Data and evidence on internal displacement,** though generally improving through increased capacity development, recognition, application of technology, remain incomplete. There are also inconsistent standards and methods for collecting data, lack of coordination and insufficient funding for both data collection and analysis. PSIDS often face the challenge of understanding the drivers, patterns and impacts of internal displacement across different

³ The Nansen Initiative. Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change, December 2015

⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/mid-year-figures>

⁵ IOM, Background paper from the *Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Regional Policy Dialogue* (unpublished)

contexts, as well as future displacement risk.⁶ Consequently, it makes it difficult for States to prioritize the issue or deciding how to weigh trade-offs between different options.

- 3) **The lack of inclusion of internal displacement in national development planning.** Minimal opportunity to do integrated analysis that links the issue of internal displacement to social, economic, security concerns and long-term sustainable development plans. There is no mandatory reporting on IDPs in national plans, and no standardised indicators for reporting progress on internal displacement.
- 4) **Displacement risks disproportionately affects already marginalized groups and people with specific needs including women, youth, the elderly, minority groups and people with disabilities or serious health issues⁷.** Many IDPs who are displaced have critical assistance and protection needs, ranging from emergency shelter, health and psychosocial support, access to fresh water and sanitation, protection against violence (including gender-based violence), child protection and longer-term support to recover and realize durable solutions. The Pacific island countries already faced rates of violence against women that are double the global average; studies show that in the wake of disasters, women are at an even greater risk of sexual or physical assault. In times of disaster, women often struggle to provide food and income to support their families when markets, farms, and small holdings have been destroyed, which further impacts their needs.
- 5) **Complex land tenure systems in the Pacific may create obstacles for disaster risk reduction and displacement management.** Many countries in the Pacific have a high percentage of customary land tenure. Following disasters, displaced people frequently lose access to land and property rights due to poor security of tenure, absence of formal registration, competing land claims. Complex tenure systems can also lead to tensions and conflict between host and displaced communities, opportunistic land grabbing generating in many contexts premature returns to areas of origin thereby contributing to repeated displacement.
- 6) **Ensuring that measures managing displacement risk and responding to displacement adequately reflect indigenous systems, knowledge and culture.** Previous displacement experiences in the Pacific and proposed durable solutions (such as planned relocation) have raised the importance of maintaining culture and identity of both host and receiving communities and integrating indigenous knowledge into disaster risk reduction. However, methodology and resources to record, mainstream and promote indigenous knowledge remain lacking. While frequently raised as a potential non-economic 'loss' occurring in the context of climate displacement at the UNFCCC, adequately reflecting indigenous culture and systems in planned solutions remain a challenge in the Pacific region.
- 7) **National initiatives in preparing for and managing displacement are hindered by limited poor capacity and financing.** It is important that the development of government staff capacity takes place in the context of holistically developing government authorities responsible for preparing for, monitoring and managing displacement. Development actors play an important role in

⁶ See in particular IDMC Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2016 p. 33-42 (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/globalreport2016/>), GRID 2017 p.69-85 (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2017/>), GRID 2018 p.72-81 (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2018/>), and GRID 2019, p.52-75 (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>), and GRID 2020, Methodological Annex, pp.19-21 (<https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2020/downloads/2020-IDMC-GRID-methodology.pdf>).

⁷ UNDP. Marginalised Minorities in Development Programming. May 2010.

supporting governments achieve their aspirations, and these partnerships should therefore be strengthened to improve service delivery; particularly in respect to building management capacities and nurturing good governance.

Pacific policies and initiatives that address internal displacement

- The Pacific Forum Leaders endorsed the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP), stating that managing climate- and disaster-related risk must be undertaken in the context of economic development and the achievement of the SDGs. In the context of the FRDP, many states have recognised that managing internal displacement risk is a fundamental governance issue and one that needs to be addressed holistically and with solid evidence. It establishes a governance modality in the form of the Pacific Resilience Partnerships, which is a network of stakeholders contributing to the FRDP and its subsidiary Technical Working Group on Human Mobility to strengthened coordination across all levels of governance.
- In 2018, after thorough consultation process Leaders endorsed the **Boe Declaration**. In 2019 Members endorsed the Boe Declaration Action Plan that recognises climate change as the single greatest threat to livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific. Moving away from narrow or traditional notions of security to an expanded concept of security, the Boe Declaration Action Plan reaffirms the regions commitment to addressing emerging and contemporary security issues that affect Pacific Peoples. Under the six strategic focus areas climate change is elevated as a single standalone priority that seeks to promote the FRDP that supports national efforts to incorporate climate and disaster risk considerations into development plans and budgets. Additionally, the strategic focus area on Human Security and Humanitarian assistance recognises the heightened vulnerability of our region to impacts of climate change.
- At the national level, several Pacific Island countries have developed specific **policy documents** that seek to address internal displacement in the context of climate change in disasters. Specifically, Vanuatu was the first country in the world to launch its National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement. The policy is guided by the Vanuatu's People's Plan 2030 and proposes guidelines to address both short and long-term displacement needs. It contains guiding principles, defines strategic areas for intervention and identifies actions to be led by a range of different actors. The Government of Fiji has also developed Displacement Guidelines that seek to reduce displacement risk, manage displacement when it occurs, and identify durable solutions. In addition, several national disaster management plans (such as for the Solomon Islands) also refer to displacement management.
- Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have both **established national Camp Coordination and Camp Management-like clusters** including government agencies, international actors and NGOs, and Tonga aims to establish a similar cluster in 2021. The aim the clusters is to strengthen preparedness and technical capacity to support the provision of services and protection to IDPs residing in communal settings (e.g. evacuation centres) following disasters and to provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of displacement management.
- Following the establishment of a **Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) assessment system by the Vanuatu National Disaster Management Organization**, Solomon Islands, Tonga and the Republic of the Marshall Islands are planning to establish DTM assessment system. The assessment system enables governments to identify the locations and multi-sectoral needs of displaced populations.

III. Objective, outcomes and output

The Pacific regional consultation will provide participants with an opportunity to exchange ideas and practices on addressing internal displacement, which will further inform global policy and commitments on this topic.

The meeting will:

- 1) Identify Pacific best practices and lessons learned in managing internal displacement risk and addressing internal displacement
- 2) Discuss the assistance required by Pacific countries to address internal displacement
- 3) Propose ideas and recommendations to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

Following the consultation, a detailed outcome report will be produced by the TWG on Human Mobility, capturing the discussions and key recommendations from the Pacific region. This will serve as an input to the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. The TWG will also look to develop targeted tools and policy briefs based on the best practices identified in the consultations.

Participants include:

- Government officials, particularly from National Disaster Management Organizations (NDMOs) and climate change divisions of states in the Pacific region
- UN, NGOs, CSOs, academia, private sector and other development and humanitarian partners from the Pacific Resilience Partnership and Technical Working Groups
- A Member of the UN SG High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement and Panel Secretariat members

IV. Preparatory Work

In preparation for the Pacific regional consultation on internal displacement, the TWG has organized preparatory webinars to take stock of the current context. The stories shared during these webinars reflect individual and community perspectives, as well as a diversity of actors- government, civil society and private sector. They also highlight the specific characteristics, challenges and lessons emerging from internal displacement in the Pacific region.

Simultaneously, the TWG disseminated an online survey to Pacific Island governments (notably NDMOs), NGOs, community-based organizations and academia based in the region, and addressing the following questions:

1. What are the best practices (in the form of mechanisms, structures, policies etc.) in the Pacific region to avert, address and resolve internal displacement?
 1. How can we make internal displacement a priority within development, climate change and disaster risk reduction planning?
 2. How can the rights of displaced people, including marginalized groups, be supported (for example by laws or policies)?
 3. What would be the best way to fund durable solutions?
2. What support do governments in the region need to address internal displacement and what would this support look like?

1. How can prevention and response to internal displacement be positioned as a shared, whole-of-government responsibility rather than that of the NDMO alone? What policies or structures facilitate this?
2. Do actors feel they have the capacity to effectively prevent and respond to disaster-induced displacement? If not, what are the capacity needs (technical, resources, other)? What would be the best channel through which to receive the support?
3. What do global actors need to know and do about internal displacement in the Pacific region?

V. Format

The Pacific regional consultation will be held virtually, over 2 hours on 11th February 2021 via zoom.

Following opening remarks from the co-chairs and a member of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, the TWG will present the results of the survey to set the scene for the discussion. This will be followed by country statements identifying additional lessons learned and best practices that are reflective of the Pacific context. Finally, the co-chairs will close the session, synthesizing the Pacific inputs and recommendations to be summarized in the outcome report.

The meeting will be recorded and with the link available on the PRP website.

DRAFT Agenda

Thursday 11th February 2021, 18.00-20.00 Suva time (TBC)

Chair: TBC

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| 18.00-18.15 | Opening remarks by the Co-Chair |
| 18.15-18.25 | Opening remarks by the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement |
| 18.25-18.45 | Presentation on survey results on the Pacific Context of Displacement, lessons learned in preventing displacement and durable solutions (TWG on Human Mobility - TBC) |
| 18.45-19.45 | <i>Country statements</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are the best practices (in the form of mechanisms, structures etc.) in the Pacific region to avert, address and resolve internal displacement?2. What support do governments in the region need to address internal displacement and what would this support look like? |
| 19.45-20.00 | Closing remarks – Co-Chair
<i>Synthesizing Pacific perspectives and practices on disaster displacement</i> |