

# 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 QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

### SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAMME

The Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCMHS) programme seeks to protect and empower communities adversely affected by climate change and disasters in the Pacific region, focusing specifically on climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement and planned relocation.

The programme is led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) alongside the International Labour Organization (ILO), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

**Objective 1:** Support regional policy; the programme aims to conduct national and regional consultations in 12 countries in the Pacific region.

**Objective 2:** Strengthen the governance of labour migration; the programme will work with Governments of Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

**Objective 3:** Data and evidence to support policy and programme development.

### TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION FROM THE PACIFIC COMPLETE THE FIRST SERIES OF WEBINARS



Technical Advisory Group (TAG) member from the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)-Reverend James Bhagwan. Source: Pasikifa Rising.

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) recently completed a series of webinars from July to August 2020. The TAG comprises of experts from across the Pacific region in multiple sectors related to cross-cutting areas of climate migration, including governments, civil society organisations, academia, faith-based organisations, private sector, youth representatives and other stakeholders.

The webinars provided an opportunity for the TAG to link up from around the region and as far as Geneva to share their knowledge and stories on the current trends related to climate migration, displacement and planned relocation in the Pacific Region.

Coordinated by OHCHR, the TAG were provided with a virtual environment to have an in-depth dialogue on how climate migration is experienced and addressed within the Pacific at national, regional and global levels.



Technical Advisory Group Member, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Fiji to the United Nations in Geneva. Source: International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Ambassador Khan provided some judicious insight during the TAG webinars in that: “there is no legal framework for climate change and disaster migration”

and that whilst the Global Compact on Migration has a section on disaster displacement “there are too many gaps on legal protections, and the steps which enable those legal protections”.

In a reassuring note, her excellency further articulated that the “time is right for the Pacific to start to talk about those protections, although of course we hope very much they will be an option of last resort”. Her excellency further advised that “knee jerk reactions lead to a lack of consideration of human rights. If the science is telling us that we should integrate migration into our development paths then we need to decide together, as a Pacific family, how we agree to approach climate migration. The answer must be in a regional framework on planned, orderly, and dignified movement.”

### Key messages from the TAG

- The approach must be based on international human rights instruments that ensure the inclusion and protection of people on the move and host communities. It should be gender responsive and child-sensitive, non-discriminatory, participatory, enable empowerment, accountability, and must be based explicitly and specifically on IHRL and other relevant international law standards.
- The TAG agree that scientific findings on climate change and its impacts show that climate change and disasters interact with other social, economic and political drivers of mobility.
- Although international human rights law lays out clear obligations with respect to all migrants and all those affected by climate change, the current laws and policies, specifically those focused on climate mobility, demonstrate significant gaps.
- The conversation is a difficult one for the Pacific because of political sensitivities, but it needs to be held now so proper planning can take place to avoid ad hoc responses.
- With this in mind, potential solutions need to be discussed at all political levels and across sectors. There needs to be political will at the regional level to discuss and address climate mobility.
- The ability to preserve cultural practices and language is central to the Pacific ethos and has led to strong resistance to discussion about cross-border displacement of entire populations. Pacific cultures and traditions are deeply rooted in the land and sea,

so the idea of moving can bring with it fear of what/who do we become? These discussions must take place if a collective solution to climate mobility is to be agreed upon.

## REGIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND PLANNED RELOCATION NOW UNDERWAY



Left to right: Shane Antonio (OHCHR), Mr. Iosefa Maiava, Head UNESCAP Subregional Office for the Pacific, Sabira Coelho, PCCMHS Programme Manager (IOM), British High Commissioner, Mr. George Edgar OBE, Exsley Taloiburi (PIFS), Teea Tira (PIFS), Viliame Cativakalakeba (PIFS), Christopher Yee (IOM), Mavis Yuen (ILO).

### What it is?

- The Regional Policy Dialogue (RPD) brings together nominated senior officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Climate Change from 13 Pacific Island countries from September 2020 to December 2020.
- Following on from the Technical Advisory Group meetings, the policy dialogue aims to support a shared understanding of climate change and migration issues and identify policy and legal gaps that may be addressed through the establishment of a potential regional process.
- Coordinated by ESCAP, the RPD comprises of six fortnightly webinars from September to November. Following bilateral discussions with each of the participating countries, the first regional webinar provided an introduction to the objectives of the regional policy dialogue and a review of the background paper. Session two and three reviewed country perspectives on trends, challenges and national policies related to climate mobility. Session four reviewed existing regional and global migration policies, followed by a discussion on the legal and policy gaps in session five. The final session aims to support the framing of a regional approach to climate mobility.

## Objectives of regional policy dialogue

- a. Examine the challenges and opportunities to enhance protection of people migrating in relation to climate change.
- b. Discuss the relevant global (e.g. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, WIM), regional (e.g. Boe Declaration, Biketawa Declaration, Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific).
- c. Review the human security implications of climate change and migration.
- d. Examine different options that the region may take to ensure the protection of climate-related migrants.

## RPD process is

- State-led discussion to identify policy and legal gaps on climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement and planned relocation (human mobility) that may be addressed through the establishment of a regional approach.
- Bringing different strands of work together such as the Protection Agenda, 2030 agenda UNFCCC, Global Compact on Migration, human rights and regional commitments to human security and sustainable development.
- Informed by national, regional and global expertise.
- Building on national priorities, addressing common challenges and supporting regional solidarity.
- Recommendations on the scope of this process and next steps for consideration by ministers and leaders.

## REVIEW OF SEASONAL WORKER SCHEMES



Source: International Labour Organisation

- With a view to review seasonal worker schemes, ILO seeks to better understand some of the challenges

faced by seasonal workers participating in the agriculture, hospitality and horticulture sectors in Australia and New Zealand under the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme and Seasonal Workers Programme (SWP).

- Around 120 seasonal workers from Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu were interviewed by staff from ILO, IOM and OHCHR to examine various aspects of seasonal workers rights such as: rate of wage deductions, health and safety, housing conditions provided, pastoral care, remittances and the inclusion of women and marginalized groups.
- The review also looks at further reviewing the RSE and SWP structures to determine its compliance with selected international labour and human rights standards.
- Through the interviews, vital data was collected on the social impacts faced by seasonal workers and their families when overseas. Moreover, some further information was collected on how best the schemes ought to be improved to maximize savings and financial literacy.
- A report will be published by the first quarter of 2021.

## ASSESSMENT ON SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON LABOUR MOBILITY COMPLETE

- Using a human security approach, IOM conducted a rapid assessment to identify how COVID-19 has affected labour mobility and broader migration trends in the Pacific region since March 2020. Field data was carried out from May to June 2020.
- Whilst Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have only registered a small number of COVID-19 cases they still face the devastating impacts on key economic sectors such as tourism, trade and labour mobility as a consequence of travel restrictions, border closures and quarantine measures.
- This report examines the perspectives of government officials, migrants awaiting departure in countries of origin, migrants (temporary and seasonal workers) in destination countries, diaspora communities, and development partners. Countries covered under the assessment include Fiji, the Marshall Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, in addition to Australia,

New Zealand and the United States of America as countries of destination.

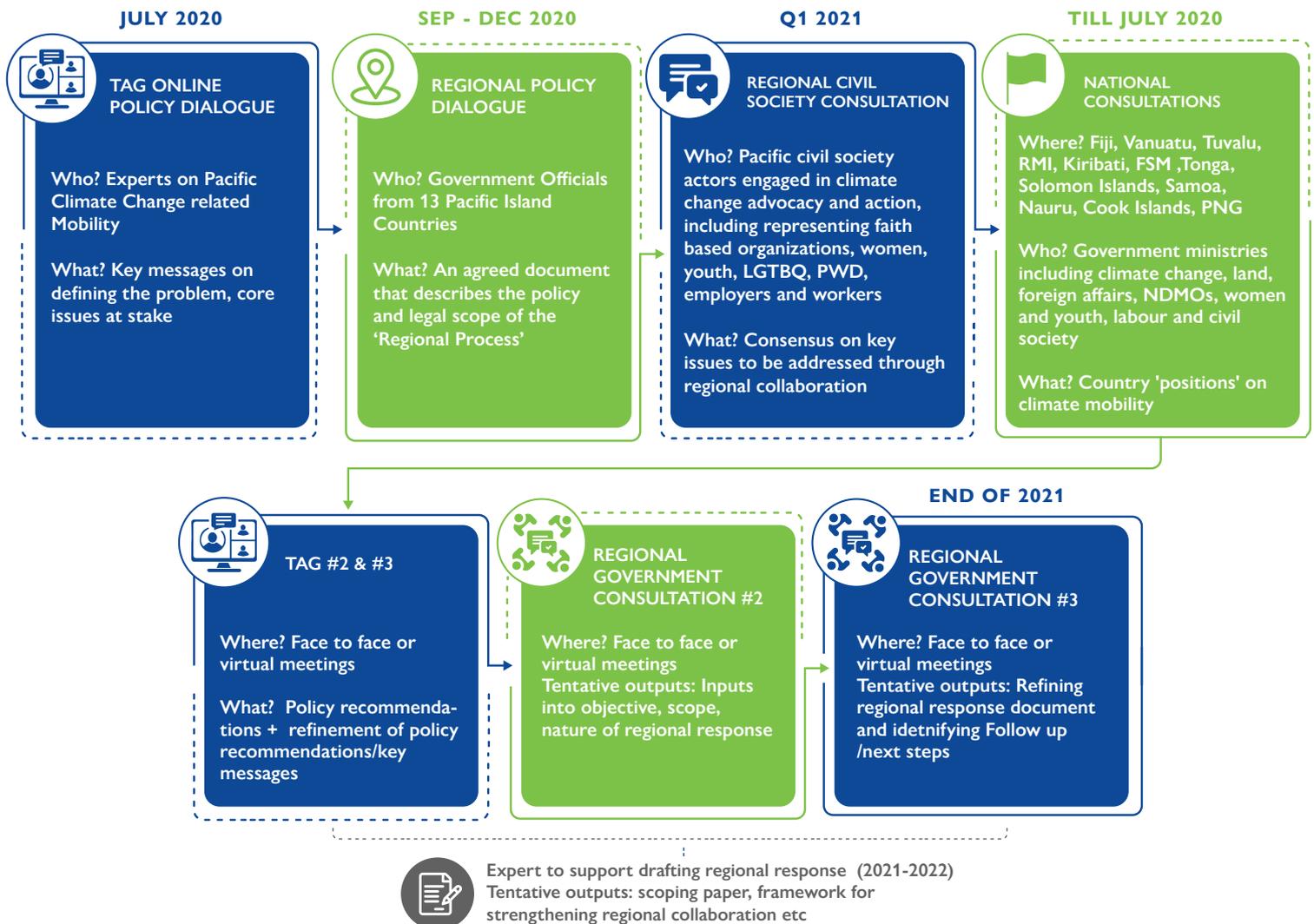
- While there have been some developments in various areas of labour mobility since the report was compiled as the status quo in the Pacific is always evolving. However, some of the pertinent issues that are still relevant are:-

- I. Pacific seasonal workers who were due to leave in early 2020 have been significantly impacted by the border closures and may remain without income.
- II. Pacific Seasonal and temporary workers in countries of destination, particularly those who have finished their contracts may not have access to income support schemes, full medical care and opportunities for repatriation.

- III. The Marshallese diaspora community in the United States have seen a high incidence of COVID-19 and may not have access to medical support.

- IV. Pacific households have recorded an overall drop to the number of remittances received at the time the report was compiled. There was an initial rise before the lock-down period in various sending countries but that rise would probably demonstrate a rush to send loved ones money at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pacific is heavily dependent on remittances as in 2019 alone Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and Tuvalu recorded receipt of over \$500 million USD. The Governments of Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga, along with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat have signed up to the “Call to remittances: How to keep them flowing”.

## PCCMHS PROGRAMME TIMELINE



### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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