

Pacific Regional Consultation on Internal Displacement***Pacific perspectives and practices on climate change and disaster displacement***

Thursday 11th February 2021, 18.00-20.00 Suva time/7am-9am Geneva

Virtual consultation

Executive Summary

The Pacific Regional Consultation on Internal Displacement: Pacific perspectives and practices on climate change and disaster displacement was held virtually on Thursday 11th February, 2021. The meeting was chaired by HE Albon Ishoda, Ambassador of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to Fiji. A video message by Hon. Prime Minister of Fiji, H.E Mr. Voreqe Bainimarama set the tone for the meeting followed by opening remarks by Mr. Nasser Judeh, a member of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (the Panel). Mr. Judeh on behalf of the Panel welcomed the opportunity to hear from Pacific countries particularly looking at displacement linked to climate change and disasters. Dr. Tausi Taupo, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Communications from the Government of Tuvalu who is the current Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum delivered the keynote statement on behalf of the region.

To set the scene, a joint presentation on the Pacific context of displacement was done by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Fiji, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) on behalf of the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) Technical Working Group on Human Mobility. The presentation highlighted displacement trends in the Pacific, the impacts of displacement and on displaced people, existing regional policies, processes and programmes relevant to this issue, national responses, principles of effective practices in the Pacific and additional support required.

Fourteen (14) Pacific Island Countries were in attendance. Ten (10) Pacific Island Countries including Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu delivered country statements highlighting best practices including mechanisms, in the Pacific region to avert, address and resolve internal displacement and the support they feel governments in the region need to address internal displacement and what this support could look like.

Mr George Okoth-Obbo, ASG and Head of the Secretariat of the UNSG HLP on Internal Displacement and Professor Walter Kaelin, Expert Advisory Group Member of the UNSG HLP on Internal Displacement provided feedback on next steps forward.

Key Messages

Some of the key messages that came out of the webinars, survey and consultation included:

- Being very clear on what internal displacement means in the Pacific with climate change posing an existential threat to most of the low-lying Pacific islands and the very real possibility that displacement will not just be internal but external across borders as entire nations disappear under rising sea levels;
- Recognizing the uniqueness of Pacific islands, and within this the specific contexts of different countries, including atoll nations that have limited capacity to adapt to climate change;
- Further recognizing that displacement or relocation even over short distances may have significant consequences based on the attachment to land and the ocean;
- Political will in the Pacific is strong and several Pacific best practices exist in the form of dedicated displacement and relocation policies and standard operating procedures; establishment of displacement management clusters during emergencies to provide services; existence of dedicated funding mechanisms; disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation programming that helps avert, address and minimize displacement

- Except for Fiji and Vanuatu, most Pacific countries do not have stand-alone policies on internal displacement and address the issue through existing frameworks and legislations including disaster management, climate change and national security policies and/or plans;
- At the same time recognizing the need to better integrate the nexus between climate change and human mobility across policy domains and support proper regional and national legal and policy arrangements for people displaced by climate change and disasters;
- Emphasizing that any dialogue on internal displacement needs to cover different levels of governance, involving extensive consultations at the national and community levels;
- The need for timely and relevant data, contextualized approaches and definitions for data collection to inform policy interventions and practices, including projections for long term planning;
- Ensuring the required level of resourcing is made available through enhanced multilateral funds, climate finance and bilateral donors;
- Recognizing the need for physical, emotional and psychological support to assist in the movement of communities or individuals and the need for informed local actors and increased training to provide this support;
- Expanding the prevailing narrative that displacement is a humanitarian issue to include that it is a threat to livelihoods, well-being and national and regional security, and managing internal displacement cannot be divorced from the broader challenge of sustainable development;
- Acknowledging that internally displaced people (IDP) are citizens of their countries with Government having the primary responsibility to address this issue including the need to be supported;
- Recognize and acknowledge the traditional and cultural knowledge and skills that are an integral part of any community in any displacement and/or relocation policies/plans to ensure displaced peoples and communities continue to thrive and are not lost in the relocation process;
- Enhancing regional collaboration to address common national challenges that can be effectively addressed by a coordinated and harmonized approach;
- Learning from experience including from the Republic of Marshall Islands Bikini Atoll relocation, the relocation of the Gilbertese to Solomon Islands and recent examples, such as Vunidogoloa in Fiji; and
- Counter-balancing narratives promoting planned relocation as durable solutions with strong advocacy on increasing ambition to reduce emissions and scaling up in-situ adaptation, including in global forum including the UN General Assembly, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, etc.

Conclusion

The Chair summed up the proceedings on behalf of the Technical Working Group on Human Mobility and the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, with words of appreciation to all speakers and countries for their interventions as well as the large number of participants who joined. While the Pacific region is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of disasters and climate change, which has contributed to increased rates and risk of internal displacement, the region has also demonstrated resilience. Considerable lessons have been learned, which have been translated into policies and practices but also acknowledging that gaps remain that need to continue to be addressed through collective action at the national and regional levels. Further work will continue including ongoing dialogue between the HLP Secretariat and some of the Pacific Island Countries to explore in more detail what has been shared so that it can be articulated to the fullest and clearest detail.

Background

The consultation was a collaboration between the Pacific Resilience Partnership's Technical Working Group (TWG) on Human Mobility in the context of increasing climate and disaster risk, co-chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and GIZ and the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement Secretariat¹ as well as the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) and the Pacific Community (SPC).

The Pacific regional consultation brought together Pacific Governments to exchange ideas, best practices and lessons learnt in managing internal displacement risk and addressing internal displacement, with the aim of further informing global policy and commitments on this topic as well as identify the assistance required by Pacific countries.

In addition to Pacific Governments, the consultation also extended invitations to Permanent Missions based in Geneva, representatives of the Asia-Pacific Disaster Displacement Working Group, UN agencies, Development Partners, CROP agencies, International Organizations, Civil Society and Academia to participate as observers.

In the lead up to the consultation, the PRP TWG-Human Mobility organized two (2) webinar series² and conducted an online survey with the outcomes from these undertakings used to inform the Pacific Regional Consultation. The webinar series and online survey captured feedback from stakeholders around the region including Civil Society Organizations, Academia, Development Partners and Government.

Participation and Outreach

Thirty-two (32) representatives of the fourteen (14) Pacific Island Countries were in attendance. Nineteen (19) representatives of the PRP TWG-Human Mobility, HLP Panel Members and HLP-ID Secretariat supported the consultation. Two hundred and eighty three registrations to attend the consultation were received with over one hundred and sixty (160) actually tuning in to the virtual consultation.

Those who delivered statements and made presentations in order of speaking roles:

- Opening remarks by Mr. Nasser Judeh, Member of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.
- Keynote statement by Dr. Taupo Tauisi, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Communications from the Government of Tuvalu and representing Tuvalu as the current Pacific Island Forum chair.
- Presentation: Internal Displacement in the Pacific: evidence, policy and programmes (TWG on Human Mobility) – Mr. Exsley Taloiburi, Resilience Team Leader, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS); Nacanieli Bolo, Project Manager, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) and Sabira Coelho, programme manager, International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Nauru Country Statement – Mr. Reagan Moses, Secretary Ministry of Climate Change and Resilience.

¹ The High-Level Panel, was established by the UN Secretary-General in September 2019 to identify concrete recommendations for member states, the UN, and other actors on how to better prevent, respond, and achieve solutions to internal displacement, including in the context of disasters and climate change.

² Recordings and summary of the webinar series can be accessed on: <http://www.resilientpacific.org/media-and-events/>

- Samoa Country Statement – Ms Peseta Noumea Simi, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Cook Islands Country Statement – Ms Valery Wichman, Director, Central Policy and Planning Office, Office of the Prime Minister;
- Fiji Country Statement – Mr. Shivanal Kumar, Adaptation Officer, Climate Change and Internal Coordination Division, Ministry of Economy.
- Kiribati Country Statement – Ms Takena Redfern, National Disaster Risk Management Officer, Disaster Management Unit, Office of The Beretitenti (President).
- New Zealand Country Statement – Mr. Roger Dungan, Climate Change (Social and Security), Pacific and Development Group, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Republic of the Marshall Islands Country Statement – Mr. Timmy Langrine, Director, NDMO, Office of the Chief Secretary.
- Solomon Islands Country Statement – Mr. Loti Yates, Director, NDMO.
- Tuvalu Country Statement – Ms Pepetua Latasi, Director, Department of Climate Change.
- Vanuatu Country Statement – Mr. Malcolm Dalesa, Consultant, Department of Climate Change
- Next steps – HLP-ID Secretariat, Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, ASG and Head of the Secretariat of the UNSG HLP on Internal Displacement.
- Next steps – Professor Walter Kaelin, HLP-ID, Expert Advisory Group Member of the UNSG HLP on Internal Displacement

In terms of media monitoring, outreach through the PRP, IOM and HLP-ID Secretariat social media platforms was significant with over 4,000 post reach through the pre-event social media posts. Over 300 views of the pre-event promotional video of Ambassador Ishoda and over 600 views of the video recording of the actual consultation. Social media outreach was also done during and post-event with wider audience reach.

Note that the video message by the Prime Minister of Fiji, keynote statement by Dr. Tauisi Taupo, presentation by the TWG-Human Mobility, country statements from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa and Vanuatu plus the full recording of the consultation can be accessed on: <http://www.resilientpacific.org/pacific-regional-consultation-on-internal-displacement/>