



# Helping Pacific Islands to Manage Impacts of Climate Change on Migration

## A Technical Cooperation Project funded by the European Commission

### Background to the Project

*‘Climate change has arrived. It is the greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and well-being of the peoples of the Pacific and one of the greatest challenges for the entire world’.*

Marjuro Declaration for Climate Leadership, September 2013

As sea levels rise, ocean acidification increases, tropical storms and cyclones become more intense, and freshwater lenses are affected by salt-water intrusion, people whose homes and livelihoods are significantly affected or destroyed may be forced to relocate or may voluntarily choose to migrate in search of better livelihood opportunities.

An enhanced understanding of the nexus between climate change and migration is essential for timely and effective policy formulation by governments, particularly to address the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups.

Ensuring that migration is planned and managed will enable Pacific Island governments to take precautions to minimize risks including the risks of displacement due to natural disasters. However, it will also ensure greater capacity to address other issues relevant to migration including the effects of a ‘brain drain’, internal migration to urban slums (which are often in environmentally vulnerable areas), conflicts over land rights, and other risks. It will also lead to more stable livelihoods and greater remittances.

Rather than solely being contextualized as a last resort, migration can be viewed as an adaption strategy, which allows households to diversify their incomes and thus improve resilience to the impacts of climate change; and also a way to reduce strain on resources, thus enabling members of the community to remain on their land.

**There is an important need to develop, based on an improved knowledge base, holistic and coordinated strategies, at a national and regional level, that create a framework for managing climate change induced migration.**



### Objectives of the Project

The overall objective of the proposed project is to develop the capacity of Pacific Island countries to address the impacts of climate change on migration through well-managed, rights-based migration schemes and policy frameworks, supported by comprehensive research and knowledge building. The action will assist both at a regional level, as well as providing more intensive assistance to the countries in the region most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

#### **The key goals are:**



1. To build a **knowledge base** on migration flows, policies and practices in the region, and the projected impacts of climate change on migration, including labour migration;



2. To **enhance national capacities** to address the impacts of climate change on migration in the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; and



3. To **improve regional knowledge sharing and cooperation** on the issue of climate change-induced migration and labour migration





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## Activities and Goals

### **The causality of migration is complex, but greater knowledge will lead to better policy planning**

By improving the knowledge base on climate change, and strengthening local data gathering, and the development of labour migration data collection methodologies, Pacific Islands governments will be in a better position to understand and track the needs of different groups in the population, including youth, women and the poor, as well as other groups which are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

### **Countries particularly vulnerable to climate change need assistance to be better prepared**

The project will help countries which are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change - Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru – to improve capacity to understand the needs of local communities, including in outer islands. This will serve as an important mechanism for ensuring that local communities' views, needs and priorities on climate change migration are filtered through to governments. Use of technology will assist in forecasting migration flows and countries will be supported to take concrete action based on findings.

### **Policy planning on migration isn't just for national governments, but can be an important part of regional development planning**

Improved regional mobility facilitated at both national and regional levels through various migration schemes will give those wishing to migrate the option to do so. Improved regional mobility has the potential to not only benefit the migrants themselves and their families (through remittances) but also people in countries that receive migrants from Pacific Island countries and the communities they come from.

#### **Key outcomes will include:**

- *Compendium of research on climate change and migration specific to the region;*
- *Innovative modelling to help countries to forecast scenarios of migration flows in target countries;*
- *Technical support and assistance for implementing strategies;*
- *Regional dialogue to promote planning for impacts of climate change on migration.*



## Implementing Agencies

### **United Nations Economic Social Council for Asia Pacific (ESCAP) – Lead Agency**

UNESCAP is the regional arm of the United Nations, providing an intergovernmental forum for discussing regional issues. Operating in the Pacific region since 1984, ESCAP has extensive experience in promoting cooperation and sharing of knowledge and good practices in the Pacific, which is crucial for dealing with an emerging and urgent issue such as climate change induced migration.

### **International Labour Organization (ILO)**

The ILO, as the UN specialized agency on labour issues, has been dealing with labour migration since its foundation in 1919. Through the development of numerous conventions enshrining rights for migrant workers, the ILO continues to set the normative agenda for migrant protection and the ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries (operating since 1975) has important expertise in promoting bilateral and regional mobility schemes to help enable those workers that want to migrate, to do so.

### **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**

The UNDP is the UN's global development organization, advocating change and connecting the Pacific to knowledge, experience and resources to help people. The organization has expertise in dealing with issues of climate change at a grassroots level, as well as experience of facilitating consultations with local stakeholders more broadly.



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