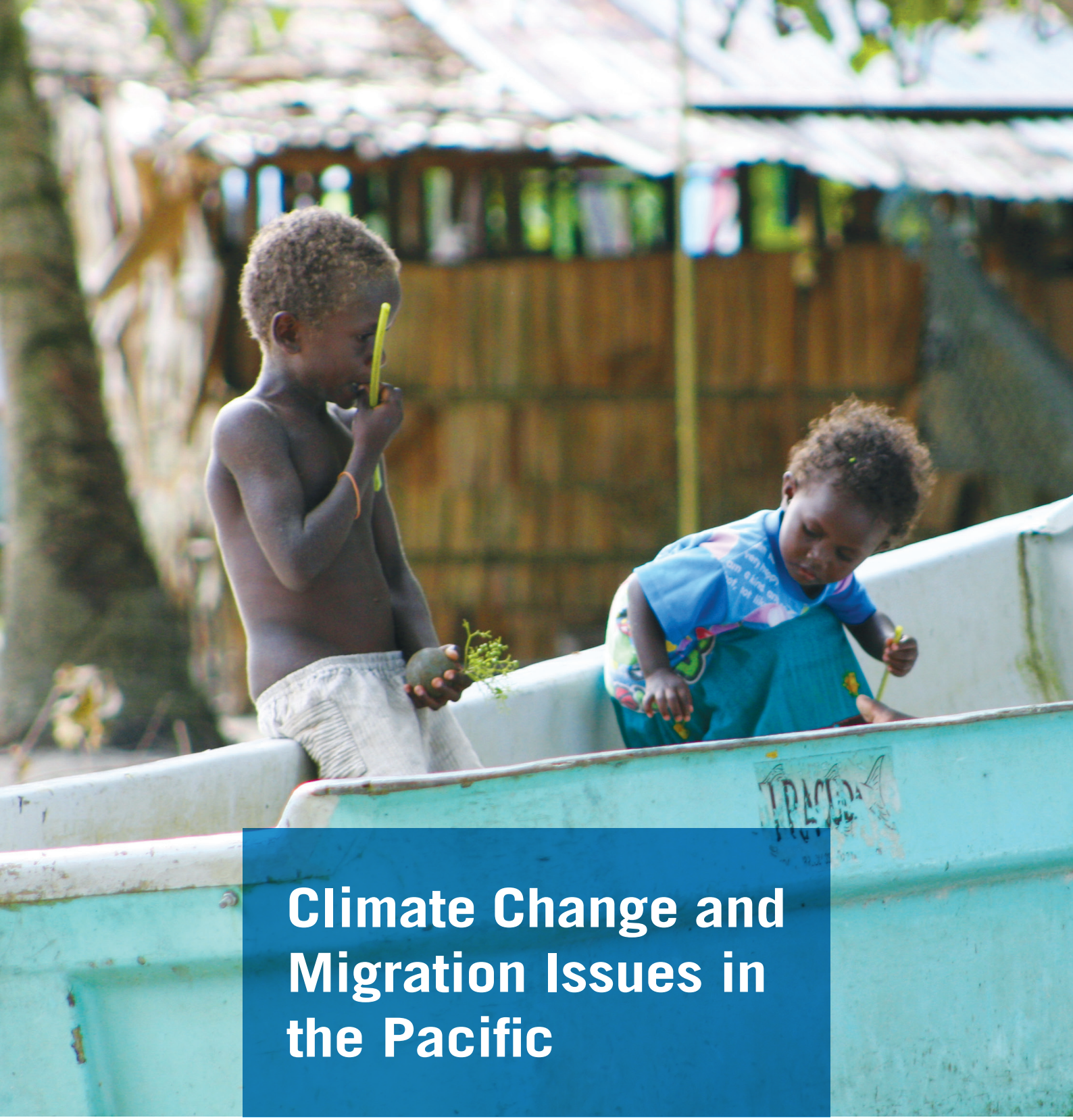

Climate Change and Migration Issues in the Pacific

UNITED NATIONS ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

EUROPEAN UNION

International Labour Organization

UNDP
Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

This report has been produced as part of the Pacific Climate Change and Migration (PCCM) Project entitled, 'Enhancing the Capacity of Pacific Island Countries to Manage the Impacts of Climate Change on Migration'. The PCCM Project is a three year project (2013-2016) funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The vision of the project is to:

- To increase protection of individuals and communities that are vulnerable to climate change displacement and migration through targeted national and regional policies; and
- To increase labour mobility opportunities for Pacific Islanders, through well-managed labour migration schemes.

The Project covers the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. In the 'target countries' of Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru the Project will have national actions aimed at institutional strengthening through developing migration indicators and sharing of information on labour migration; gathering data on community attitudes to climate change induced migration; assisting with the development of climate change responses and national action strategies to mitigate the risk of displacement; and enhancing national capacity to effectively participate in regional, bilateral and global schemes on labour migration.

ESCAP

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional development arm of the United Nations and serves to foster cooperation between its 53 members and 9 associate members. ESCAP provides the strategic link between global and country-level programmes and issues. It supports Governments of the region in consolidating regional positions and advocates regional approaches to meeting the region's unique socio-economic challenges in a globalizing world. The ESCAP headquarters is located in Bangkok, Thailand.

The ESCAP Pacific Office (EPO) strengthens the United Nations' regional presence, development programmes and interventions in the Pacific. EPO provides focused and in-depth technical assistance to address key development challenges, including capacitybuilding activities; and serves as a catalyst to further the analytical and normative work of ESCAP in the Pacific.

ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the United Nations agency devoted to promoting rights at work, encouraging decent employment opportunities for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity, and enhancing social protection. It is unique in that it brings together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programmes and strengthen their dialogue. The ILO develops international labour standards and works with members States to ensure they are respected in practice as well as principle.

The ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries based in Fiji, provides technical assistance to nine Pacific member States, as well as to non-member States in the region as required, on a wide range of areas including: labour migration; the elimination of child labour; promotion of gender equality; labour law reform; protecting seafarers; labour market statistics; occupational safety and health; HIV/AIDs in the workplace; youth employment; and entrepreneurship development.

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FOREWORD

The outcome document of the Rio+20 conference, The Future We Want, emphasized the need for inclusive sustainable development and reinforced the need for strengthening capacities and resilience of small island developing states (SIDS) so they are able to adopt a more sustainable development path and better cope with the risks of global climate change and other vulnerabilities.

Building on this recognition, the draft outcome document of the Third International Conference of SIDS - the SIDS Accelerated Modalities Of Action (the S.A.M.O.A Pathway) - further elaborates that "We [the SIDS] recognise that sea-level rise and other adverse impacts of climate change continue to pose a significant risk to small island developing States and their efforts to achieve sustainable development, and for many, represent the gravest of threats to their survival and viability, including for some through the loss of territory".

ESCAP is committed to the sustainable development of the Pacific SIDS through the improvement of regional knowledge, the building of awareness about key issues and working with our member States to address critical threats to sustainable development. This Pacific Climate Change and Migration Report presents a baseline analysis addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing the subregion: the potential impacts of global climate change on Pacific migration and the potential for mitigation as a climate change adaptation strategy.

The impacts of climate change will not be consistent across the Pacific. Different countries, islands and communities will experience varying impacts of climate change with differing levels of severity. It is expected that vulnerable populations, including women, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities will be the most vulnerable to these impacts. Climate change is likely to induce migration in certain geographic "hot-spots", including urban areas; atolls; drought prone locations; as well as in coastal, delta and river areas.

This report was produced as part of the joint ESCAP/ILO/UNDP Pacific Climate Change and Migration Project, entitled "Enhancing the capacity of Pacific Island Countries to address the impacts of climate change on migration", funded by the European Union. The objectives of the Project are to develop better understanding of the causes and consequences of climate change and its impact on migration, improve regional knowledge, initiate national actions in target countries and to develop a regional approach related to the nexus between climate change and migration in the Pacific.

The publication will provide useful reference material for participants in the Third International Conference of Small Island Developing States, and for the policy-makers of the Pacific and beyond. The report will also contribute to raising international awareness about issues related to climate change and migration in the Pacific. It does not attempt to address all the issues surrounding the theoretical aspects of climate change as a driver of migration, nor to prescribe policy solutions, but it will help to stimulate national, regional and international deliberation about climate change and its impacts on migration.

Shamshad Akhtar
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and
Executive Secretary, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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ACRONYMS

ABM	Australian Bureau of Meteorology
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development (was the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid program until 31 October 2013)
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
EACH-FOR	Environmental Change and Forced Migration Scenarios
ENSO	El Niño Southern Oscillation
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Climate change has significant implications for Pacific island populations, many of whom reside in coastal areas and rely on natural resources for their livelihoods and well-being. Climate change impacts may affect internal or even international migration flows as some island environments become less able to support the communities that depend on them.

The linkages between climate change and migration are only beginning to gain recognition. There have been a few studies on climate change and migration conducted in the Pacific; however, the methodology used across studies has not been consistent and the studies have also not been linked with policy interventions. This report provides a synthesis of the current information available on climate change and migration in the Pacific. It also identifies information gaps in the existing knowledge base.

Environmental change can contribute to individual's decision to migrate. Although economic and social reasons may be the primary reasons for migration, environmental change can also contribute to the decision to migrate. Climate change can cause a reduction in land, livelihood or habitat security for some Pacific communities. For example, low-lying coastal areas and river deltas may become unsuitable for physical settlement, or they remain habitable but income and food security options become marginal; or reduced precipitation or increased disease vectors could cause the deterioration of habitability. The impacts of climate change can be the tipping point which results in an individual or family deciding to migrate.

In the longer term, the planned relocation of some communities may be required, particularly in areas where population density and growth rates are high. In the shorter term, the voluntary migration of individuals and households could aid in relieving environmental pressure when coupled with improved in situ adaptation strategies, population management and climate-resilient development.

There are five 'hotspots' in the Pacific that are likely to become source areas for climate change-related migrants: (a) urban areas; (b) urban atolls; (c) non-urban atolls; (d) coastal, delta and riverine communities; and (e) communities prone to drought. As cited by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), global estimates for the number of migrants moving due to climate change range between 25 million and 1 billion people by 2050, with 200 million people the most commonly cited figure. Inherent uncertainties mean that only rough estimates can be given for the number of people likely to be involved in migration related to climate change. However, the impacts of climate change on migration will be more acute in particular habitats.

A review of the existing literature identifies five localities that are potential 'hotspots' requiring increased research into climate change impacts, in situ adaptation responses, demographic processes and community security. These include: (a) urban areas; (b) urban atolls; (c) non-urban atolls; (d) coastal, delta and riverine communities; and (e) communities prone to drought. Unmanaged rural to urban migration and population growth strains the capacity of urban areas to cope with the impacts of climate change; as urban populations continue to grow there is likely to be an increased demand from urban populations for international migration. Both urban and non-urban atolls are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts and the impact of development pressure on the environment. It is difficult to separate many of the impacts of climate change from the impacts of development on the environment of atolls, both result in salt water intrusion, a decline in Ocean health and coastal erosion. Coastal areas have high vulnerability to the projected climate change related increased severity of coastal hazards and the degradation of ocean-based livelihoods. River deltas are highly vulnerable to flooding which is likely to increase due to climate change. Additionally, there are many drought prone areas in the Pacific where increased drought may result in increased migration demand (this includes the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, as well as atolls and coastal areas).

Climate change is likely to increase the demand for both internal and international migration opportunities. Migration is likely to follow current patterns in the immediate term. The voluntary movement of individuals and families is likely to be towards labour market opportunities, including rural to urban migration. In larger Pacific island countries, climate change may predominately impact internal migration and urbanization; however, in small countries, territories and atolls, the subsequent exacerbation of urban areas may increase interest in international migration. Some Pacific island countries have access agreements with Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, which already host large diasporas. However, many of those countries that may have the greatest potential migration pressures, including Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru, have the fewest international destination options.

Voluntary migration of individuals and communities can be adaptive if it is well managed. Internal migration or international labour migration can enhance the adaptive capacity of the migrant-sending community through the generation of remittances, reduced population pressure on homeland environments, and in the case of circular migration, the transfer of knowledge and skills. Labour migration can also fill human resource gaps in the receiving community. However, unplanned migration can result in unemployed migrants, negative remittances and social problems.

There are many economic, social, cultural and psychological costs associated with climate change-related migration. Historical examples of the costs of environmental migration point to the loss of tradition, language, identity, livelihoods and community cohesion. Additionally, the viability of homeland communities may be compromised if too many people move. The costs of both displacement and voluntary climate change-induced migration are likely to increase with greater distances from traditional homelands. Social, cultural and psychological costs may be experienced even in cases of internal migration.

The planned resettlement of entire communities, either within a country or internationally, may be required in some instances; however, the cultural and social impacts of community relocation may be severe. Climate change-forced displacement is highly disruptive to livelihoods, culture and society unless proper, well-planned interventions support people in their effort to adapt to the challenges. Although migration is a normal part of life for many Pacific communities, accepting migration as an adaptive response to climate change is often associated with a threat to sovereignty and cultural identity.

There are significant information gaps in understanding the impacts of climate change on migration in the Pacific. Particular research needs include: the integration of climate change and migration policy; costs of climate change-related migration on sending and receiving communities; gendered implications of voluntary and forced climate change-related migration; and the role of remittances in adaptive capacity.

CHAPTER I
CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PACIFIC