

Understanding Human (Im)mobility in the Context of Climate Change

Navigating Climate Mobility and Immobility in the Pacific

Perspectives from Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand

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“Climate Mobility” as an Umbrella Concept



Migration

Voluntary movement, often for economic or educational opportunities, intensified by climate.



Displacement

Involuntary, sudden-onset movement triggered by extreme weather events or disasters.



Planned Relocation

Strategic, state-supported movement of entire communities from highly vulnerable areas.



Immobility

Choosing to stay or being forced to stay due to lack of resources, cultural ties, or choice.

Climate mobility recognizes that these movements are multifaceted and dynamic.

International Trends & Legal Status

The Shifting Legal Horizon

- **Ioane Teitiota Case:** NZ rejected Kiribati's refugee claim (2013), highlighting protection gaps.
- **ICJ Advisory Opinion (2025):** Led by Vanuatu; aiming to confirm principle of *non-refoulement* for climate migrants.
- **Responsibility:** Demand for developed countries for further climate actions and commitment.



Research Insights: The Fiji Context

Moving from vulnerable coastlines to safer inland locations

Lessons from planned relocation

Research conducted with University of Fiji

Vunidologoa Village Relocation Process

Relocation Success Factors



Economic Stability: Restoring livelihoods and market access is critical.



Cultural Retention: Rebuilding spiritual and communal hubs like the Church.



Follow-up: Continuous support post-movement to prevent conflict.

Relocation is a long-term process, not a one-time event.






Research Insights: AUS & NZ Context

How do the developed countries within the regions address
the mobility issues of the Pacific neighbours?

Australia: Security and the Falepili Union



A Strategic Approach to Mobility

-  **Security Framework:** Viewing pathway as a strategic tool to strengthen regional stability and partnership.
-  **Falepili Union:** Tuvalu-AU treaty allowing 280 Tuvaluans annually to live/work in AU, started in 2025.
-  **Challenge:** Ensuring decent work conditions for Pacific laborers already in Australia.

New Zealand: Historical Ties & Focus to Adaptation



Samoaan Quota & Pacific Access Category

Existing Schemes (from 1990s)
could function as
climate mobility pathway.



Community Hubs

Existing Pacific communities in
NZ act as safety nets for
new arrivals.



Adaptation & Resilience

Strategic shift towards funding
adaptation in origin countries to
enable 'staying'.

Recent NZ policy emphasizes Adaptation and Resilience first, supplemented by historical labor migration quotas.

The Narrative Shift: Agents of Change



Youth-Led Advocacy

The Pacific youth are no longer "climate victims" but "Agents of Change." From the Vanuatu-led ICJ initiative to leadership at LCOY in AUS/NZ, they are redefining mobility with agency.

Moving away from "Victim Narratives" toward "Mobility with Dignity" and "Staying with Dignity."

Strategic Policy Recommendations



Regional Security

Japan to coordinate with AU/NZ/ASEAN for policy coherence and aid effectiveness.



Anticipatory

Focus on long-term human security vs. short-term disaster relief.



Human Centered

Ensure dignity, cultural respect, land-people relationships and identity retention.