

## Climate Change, Migration and Land in Oceania

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### Abstract

Over 90 per cent of land in Pacific Islands is held in a range of customary forms of communal ownership, belonging as much to past and future generations as it does to the present. In most cases it cannot be bought or sold although some countries have provisions for long-term leases. Land is a critical component of Pacific Island societies and in most places the people and their land are mutually constituted. One cannot be considered complete without the other. Climate change poses two broad problems in relation to this union. First, it may damage the land so that its ability to support its people is curtailed or even destroyed. This will not only have serious implications for the material security of the affected communities but may also affect their emotional and spiritual wellbeing. It is likely that many people will be induced or forced to leave their ancestral lands and find new homes. Second, relocation and resettlement of individual families, and in some cases whole communities, will require new land to be found, a task that will be made difficult because other communities are unable to sell or give their land away. Where there has been significant in-migration to areas in the region, tensions and conflict have often arisen, frequently with land as a significant underlying issue. Finding durable solutions for climate change migrants is likely to be a critical issue in the future.

### Introduction

Climate change is likely to affect Pacific island people in a variety of ways. The effects of climate change in Pacific communities are likely to be most severely felt through its direct and indirect impacts on the land. However, there has been relatively little research on the impacts of climate change upon land and particularly upon people's relationships with it. The paper is in four parts. The first part examines the meaning of land in a Pacific context to illustrate the deep connections that bond Pacific people and their land. The second part briefly outlines the likely (and in many cases already occurring) impacts of climate change

on the land with a focus on how climate change is likely to impinge upon the critical relationship between people and their land. The third part then turns to population mobility as a response to these impacts including migration and an extreme form of adaptation to climate change – community relocation and displacement from customary lands. Fourth, the paper considers the links between conflict and the effects of, and responses to, climate change and suggests possibilities for reducing the likelihood of violence as a result of climate change.

### **The importance of the land**

Throughout the Pacific region people have a special relationship with their customary lands, even when they live distant from them. This relationship is encapsulated in the Polynesian term *fanua*:

... in Cook Islands Maori, “*enua*” means “land, country, territory, afterbirth”: in Futuna (Wallace) “*fanua*” means “country, land, the people of a place”; in Tonga, “*fonua*” means “island, territory, estate, the people of the estate, placenta” and “*fonualoto*”, “grave”. We can see that in some Polynesian languages, proto-*fanua* is both the people and the territory that nourishes them, as a placenta nourishes a baby (Pond, 1997).

In Fiji the cognate term is *vanua*. Ravuvu (1983) describes *vanua* as incorporating not only the land on which people live and its physical and natural resources but also the social and cultural elements of the people who are part of it. Importantly *vanua* underpins iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) cultural identity.

The people of Nakorosule [a village in Fiji] cannot live without their physical embodiment in terms of their land, upon which survival of individuals and groups depends. ... Land in this sense is thus an extension of the self; and conversely the people are an extension of the land (Ravuvu, 1988: 7).

The *vanua* contains the actuality of one’s past and the potentiality of one’s future. It is an extension of the concept of the self. To most Fijians, the idea of parting with one’s *vanua* or land is tantamount to parting with one’s life” (Ravuvu, 1983:70)

Elsewhere in Melanesia, land is held in similar regard. Bonnemaïson (1984: 1) wrote in regard to Vanuatu that ‘[t]he clan is its land, just as the clan is its ancestors.’ Interestingly Bonnemaïson observed that the union of people and land did not proscribe mobility when he used the metaphor of the tree and the canoe to describe life on Tanna. The tree not only provided the roots which embedded the members of the kinship group in their land but also the timber from which the canoe was built to enable people to travel. However, the importance of the roots called travellers back home and much traditional (and more recent) migration was circular. Despite this mobility, land in most parts of the region could not be left fully unoccupied as this would break the critical connection with its co-constituted group.

In Solomon Islands, Andrew Te'e (2000: 2) of the Isatabu Freedom Movement (IFM) of Guadalcanal, described the land in kinship terms stretching across time as well as space:

Land is mummy. The dogs, pigs, birds and other living creatures are our brothers and sisters. The waters of the rivers, streams and creeks are the bloods of our ancestors. The murmuring of the water are the voices of our great, great grandparents. The trees are our uncles and nephews. We use them only when they are needed to be used. The wind and its sound is the voice of Irogali repeating the story of old: that land is sacred to the souls of Isatabu. Every part of the land and all the things on it are "sacred" to me.

This statement clearly outlines the concept of land as a living relational entity with strong spiritual elements which underpin an individual's and group's identity. Banaban understanding of land is equally relational, where land, place and people (past and present) are interwoven:

Te aba, kainga, and te rii in Gilbertese (the Kiribati language) refer, respectively, to the land and the people, home or hamlet, and bones. All have linguistic, human, and material forms that can be interchangeable, substituted, or used to indicate linked parts of a whole, which is the land and people together. "Te aba" thus means both the land and the people simultaneously; there is a critical ontological unity. When speaking of land, one does not say au aba, "my land," but abau, "me-land." Te aba is thus an integrated epistemological and ontological complex linking people in deep corporeal and psychic ways to each other, to their ancestors, to their history, and to their physical environment (Teaiwa, 2015: 7-8).

Clearly the term 'land' is inadequate as a descriptor of all of these things that fanua, its cognates, and other Melanesian and Micronesian terms encompass. They are very difficult to translate into any one English word, and accordingly poorly understood in a (post)colonial context. However, using only fanua, or vanua, for example, would exclude other forms derived from proto-fanua which all differ in some ways throughout the region and the other non-cognate terms that also exist especially in Melanesia and Micronesia. Despite its shortcomings, then, the term land is used in the remainder of this paper but its widespread and deep meaning throughout the Pacific Island region should not be forgotten.

Figure 1, while somewhat reductionist given the complexity of Pacific land<sup>1</sup>, seeks to illustrate the aspects of vanua identified by Ravuvu as three intersecting elements that provide physical, social and cultural security. At the centre is positioned ontological security (e.g. Giddens, 1991) which enables individuals to rely on things – people, objects, places, meanings – remaining, by and large, the same tomorrow as they were today and the day before.

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<sup>1</sup> From time to time the clumsier term 'Pacific land' is used to remind us that it is much more than cadastral coordinates or a collection of resources implied in the simple term 'land'.

It provides a 'secure base to which [people] can return' (Hiscock et al., 2001: 50) and protection from uncertainty. It relates to a feeling of continuity in one's life that is based on a sense of belonging and confidence in one's identity (Giddens, 1991)<sup>2</sup>. Figure 1 suggests that if any one of the three components of land is missing, then this ontological security cannot be achieved. Moreover, it also suggests that even as a result of loss of connection to land, if people can be provided with livelihoods, another site on which to build a home and work, and sustain social security (e.g. kinship networks) and even cultural continuity (e.g. language and other customs), ontological security will nevertheless be disrupted or lost. It is suggested that a disruption of ontological security is a form of loss and damage that is impossible to compensate.

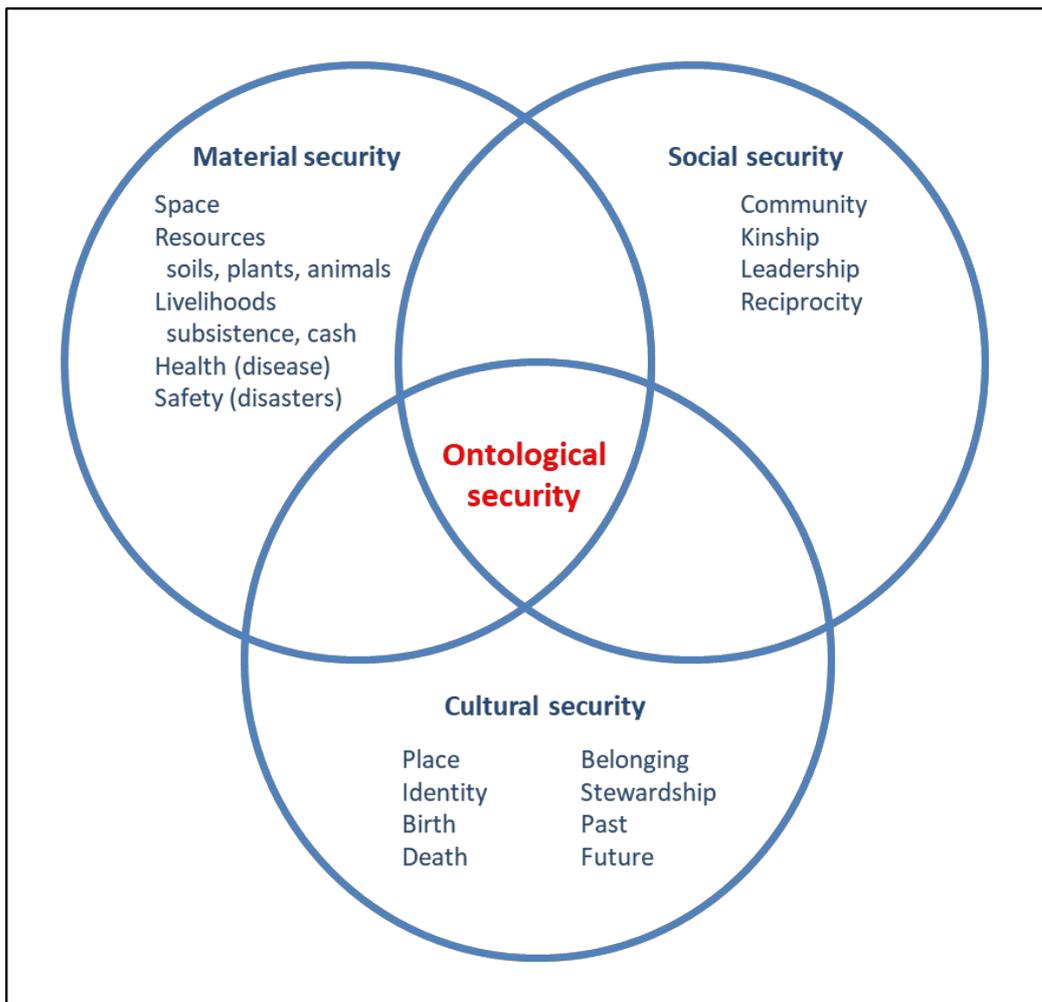


Figure 1. Conceptualising Pacific land as security.

While there can be little doubt that land is extremely important to Pacific people, it is important to acknowledge that systems of ownership and tenure vary considerably and do not fall into an 'indigenous essentialism' (Hviding, 1993) where land ownership is reified. Land

<sup>2</sup> Giddens's concept of ontological security refers to individualised security in the era of late modernity. Perhaps given the complexity of Pacific land, and the importance of the kinship group (linked to land) in people's identity, the term 'more than ontological security' may be more appropriate.

can be, and has been through time, exchanged in a variety of traditional arrangements. People have always been mobile. Indeed, in many parts of the Pacific most people lived away from the coast (at least during the Little Ice Age from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Century (Nunn, 2007)) and only moved to coastal settlements relatively recently as a result of missionisation and colonial control. People can also live and conduct their livelihoods on land that is not customarily theirs but usually such arrangements are based on usufruct rights (temporary rights to use the property of another) and are not permanent, although often there is confusion about such rights particularly where use of the land spans generations.

Accordingly, while we should not essentialise the mutually constitutive nature of the union between people and their land, to underestimate its importance, or worse, to completely neglect it, in relation to climate change impacts and development of responses to them would be highly problematic. The great majority of land in independent Pacific Island countries, over 90 per cent (AusAID, 2008), is inalienable and cannot be bought or sold<sup>3</sup> or otherwise permanently transferred (although some land is taken for public works such as airports and roads). It is generally considered to be held communally rather than by individuals, and to belong to past and future generations as well as those of the present. Rights to land are closely guarded and can be matters of tension even within (and between) otherwise cooperative communities. These issues are important when we consider how people induced or forced to resettle or relocate by climate change can find destinations that will allow durable systems of tenure. More difficult will be ways of enabling migrants to maintain their ontological security.

### Climate change and the land

How is climate change likely to impact upon the land of the Pacific Islands region? The physical impacts upon the land are relatively well understood. These include coastal erosion and inundation, increased incidence and/or frequency of extreme climatic events, changing disease vectors and other health issues, and possibly reduced agricultural and fisheries production. These impinge upon material security by damaging the spaces where people live, their resources and in turn their livelihoods. People are likely to face more difficult circumstances with reduced subsistence and cash incomes. Changing disease vectors, pressures on water quantity and quality, and increasing magnitude and/or frequency of extreme climatic and coastal events may reduce habitat security. What is less clear is how climate change will impact upon the non-material aspects of security.

These changes may in turn place pressures on social and cultural security. For example, reduced productivity may place pressure on systems of reciprocity as people are unable to fulfil their obligations. In turn this may place pressure on the solidity of kinship systems where reciprocity plays an integral role. If migration increases, community cohesion is also likely to be compromised. While kinship systems may be relatively resilient, it is difficult to see how they would be sustained if members were spread widely, especially if a core no longer remained on the ancestral land. Nevertheless, transnational kinship networks are

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<sup>3</sup> Banaba, which is discussed later in this paper, is an exception with individual forms of ownership (Teaiwa, 2015)

already emerging with nodes found not only in Pacific Island Countries, but in Pacific rim states with significant Pacific Island diasporas. In terms of cultural security, loss of physical place may severely challenge people's identity and belonging and remove critical links to their past and future. Overall it may be difficult for the traditional safety nets of Pacific communities to be sustained. Taken together, these impacts are likely to have very serious implications for the ontological security of members of Pacific Island communities.

But it is likely the biggest loss will be in relation to ontological security. Most serious will be the complete loss of customary land or significant parts of it. The embodied nature of Pacific land will be destroyed and if this happens, as Ravuvu (above) states, it would be equivalent to the loss of life. Kinship groups whose identity is embedded in the land would lose an important rationale for their existence and it is likely that there will be significant emotional and spiritual losses. Even if the land remains, but is uninhabitable, the continuity of the relationship will be broken, again with very serious psychological consequences. If climate change response strategies and projects continue to be dominated by international agencies informed by 'western' scientific, engineering and economic practices, it is likely that these important losses will be neglected.

### **Migration and land**

The links between climate change and migration are covered elsewhere in this policy brief series. However, it is important to briefly consider aspects of climate change mobility as they relate to the land issue. Two broad categories of climate change mobility can be identified as shown in Table 1 (Campbell, 2014). First, climate change induced migration is likely to be linked to environmental degradation at the place of origin such that not all inhabitants can be satisfactorily supported by the local resource base. Some are induced to migrate, thereby relieving population pressure on the dwindling local resources and at the same time augmenting the livelihoods of those who remain through remittances. Migrants such as these may return home (permanently or temporarily), if they wish, and maintain their links to their land (even after several generations away from it), providing the connection with the land is sustained by the people who remain. Such induced migration may already be occurring although it is difficult to distinguish it from other reasons for migration in the region. For many communities, satisfying contemporary needs and wants is difficult if they depend only on local land-based resources, hence the current high rates of urban and external migration. Climate change is likely to exacerbate this process. Climate change induced migrants who remain within their countries will need to find a place to live and conduct their livelihoods. Some may seek rural locations (perhaps through kinship including affinal connections) where they may obtain usufruct rights to use land. However, if the number of migrants increases, or they increase their demands on the land and/or seek to expand their usage, tensions can develop (Allen, 2012). It is likely, though, that most induced migrants are likely to find themselves in urban or peri-urban squatter settlements within their own countries where similar problems relating to land may emerge (much urban, and particularly peri-urban, land in the region is held under customary forms of ownership).

Table 1. Climate change migration and relocation options

Destination			CC Induced Migration	CC Forced Relocation
			Individual and family migration, much along existing patterns (internal urban migration and external migration)	Large proportion of community resettled but sustaining similar sets of social and cultural activities as in place of origin.
Internal	Proximate	Within customary lands	Few problems.	The least problematic option and historically relatively common
		Neighbouring lands (non-customary)	Land issues need to be resolved, possible usufruct rights, possible affinal kinship linkages for example	Land issues need to be resolved, success may depend on relationships with neighbouring communities
	Distant	Rural area elsewhere in country	Land issues need to be resolved, possible usufruct rights, possible affinal kinship linkages for example	Land issues need to be resolved. May be difficult in case of distant relocations
		Urban Areas	Squatter settlements, usufruct rights, unemployment and underemployment	Squatter settlements, usufruct rights, many settlements in PIC urban areas comprise people from similar places of origin.
External	Other PIC	Other PIC	Most likely urban, as above	Land issues need to be resolved. Possible cultural and language difficulties and adjustment to very different environments
	Beyond PICs	Pacific rim countries (NZ, Aust, USA?)	Most likely urban rental or temporary agricultural labour schemes	Difficult to envisage recreation of community social and other structures in non-PIC settings

Several Pacific Islands Countries (PICs) have migration access to Pacific rim countries, based mostly on current or previous colonial status. American territories such as Guam, CNMI and American Samoa have access to the United States as do Palau, FSM and the Marshall Islands under their compacts of free association with the USA. Niue and Cook Islands have similar relations with New Zealand, and Samoa has a special relationship as a former colony. Fiji and Tonga also have significant migration flows into New Zealand. French Territories have access to France. The former UK colonies of Solomon Islands, Vanuatu (as

Condominium of the New Hebrides with France), Tuvalu and Kiribati have much more limited opportunities for external migration as does Papua New Guinea (formerly an Australian colony). Indeed, it is the three Melanesian countries that are facing some of the most serious issues relating to internal migration and urbanisation, while the two atoll countries have some of the most serious scenarios for loss of land, livelihood and habitat security<sup>4</sup>. Kiribati in particular is heavily impacted by urban migration, with South Tarawa exhibiting amongst the highest population densities of any part of the Pacific region. Drought induced urban migration is also a concern in Papua New Guinea, where the densely populated Highlands region is subjected to periodic droughts associated with El Niño events that have occasioned massive relief efforts, partly to reduce the numbers heading to urban destinations (Campbell and Warrick, 2014). There is insufficient certainty but it is possible the El Niño Southern Oscillation phenomenon may be affected by climate change (Australian Bureau of Meteorology and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, 2014).

The second form of mobility, climate change forced relocation, will result in cases where the land is no longer able to support its people. This may be through the loss of material, social and cultural security (as shown in Figure 1). In these cases, there is likely to be little choice but for the whole community (or at the least, a very large portion of it) to find a place where these elements of security can be sustained. This is likely to be the most difficult of the mobility outcomes of climate change as it involves the loss of the land by the relocating community. While aspects of security can be recovered, the bases of ontological security are likely to be much more difficult to re-establish in the short term (which is considered to be several generations). In addition, relocation will involve other communities giving up parts of their own land, which will also impact upon their own sense of cultural identity and security. Where sufficient land cannot be found to support not just housing but also livelihoods, it is likely that communities will break up and individual families or groups will make independent migration decisions, with many finding themselves in urban locations, with no land to which to belong, or return.

### **Resettled migrants**

While much conflict in PICs, especially Melanesia, has been described as ethnic conflict, land has also often been seen as one, if not the, underlying cause of tensions leading to violence. Of course, the reasons for conflict are often complex, rooted in uneven development, internal migration, unequal levels of access to resources and the like. Migrants are often restricted in their access to land; for those 'settlers' who have access it is often unstable; and land has emerged as the basis for a politics of exclusion based on indigeneity (Allen, 2012; Droogan and Waldek, 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> Melanesian countries are Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. The atolls are Tuvalu and Kiribati.

Two case studies from Melanesia help inform us of issues that may arise when there is significant in-migration of 'outsiders'. In Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Solomon Islands, tensions have emerged between local people and migrants from elsewhere in the respective countries which have seen divisions emerge between landowners and settlers.

In the PNG case, migration was to oil palm land settlement schemes on land alienated from local owners by the PNG government (Koczberski and Curry, 2004). Tensions emerged and landowners demanded compensation; at times violence erupted between increasingly polarised landowners and settlers. However, Curry and Koczberski (2009) have reported that systems of tenure have emerged that enable 'outsiders' to continue to use land for long-term crops through indigenous (gift) exchange which sustains social relations between the parties involved, based on customary principles of land tenure in which the land is inalienable. The arrangements, however, do require reciprocal obligations to be met by the occupiers.

The indigenous morality of gift exchange means that the more frequent and intense previous gift giving has been, the stronger is the moral basis of an outsiders land claim and the more difficult it is for the customary landowners to reclaim it (Curry and Koczberski, 2009: 104).

Such measures are not necessarily permanent though. When parties to the arrangements die (either the owning clan leader or outsider) or oil palms need to be replanted (20-25 years) the social relations involved may be re-evaluated. This generational uncertainty may be resolved by establishing new sets of social relationships and so on, although as conditions change through time this may become difficult (Curry and Koczberski, 2009). It would seem that in the long-term, durable relationships may be difficult to achieve.

The Solomon Islands case relates to tensions that have arisen as large numbers have migrated in recent decades, particularly from Malaita to Guadalcanal (Allen, 2012; Droogan and Waldek, 2015). Here the conflict that emerged resulted in hundreds of deaths and thousands of people being displaced (Allen, 2006), requiring the intervention of a Pacific regional force to quell the disruption. One of the reasons for the migration from Malaita to Guadalcanal was the differences in development opportunities on the two islands. Initially relatively small numbers of migrants were able to obtain access to land from the customary owners but tensions resulted as the numbers of settlers increased (Allen, 2012). Part of the problem was that the settlers and landowners viewed land tenure differently. Moreover, Allen (2012: 169) observed 'salient generational factors' that led to breakdowns not only between landowners and settlers but also among the landowners themselves, such that original arrangements broke down. An underlying concern was the failure of subsequent settlers to pay sufficient respect to the customary owners.

In both cases the tension and conflict that occurred has been categorised as inter-ethnic violence, but the reasons are considerably more complex and include issues related to land ownership. Moreover, they indicate that tensions appear to emerge only when the numbers of settlers increase, and as generations pass, levels of respect between the parties seem to decline.

How do these cases inform us about climate change migration? First, they indicate that land is an important underlying issue, but it is important to note that it is one of several causative factors. Second, underpinning the migration in these countries was uneven development, with people from disadvantaged areas seeking better economic opportunities elsewhere. If the effects of climate change were to curtail development opportunities, similar migration patterns may arise elsewhere in the Pacific. Moreover, the case studies tend to suggest that the potential for conflict increases as the number of settlers grows, either in rural or urban areas. It is likely that climate change may well lead to increasing numbers of migrants throughout the region, and a possible increase in tensions between settlers and land owners. While there may be initial sympathy extended to people migrating from environments degraded by climate change, this may change through time. Mechanisms will need to be developed that ensure relations between landowning groups and settlers remain respectful.

### **Relocated communities**

While climate change induced internal migration may lead to increased levels of conflict in the region, the most difficult situations are likely to arise when whole communities are forced to leave their lands. First, as noted, this would break the continuity of the bond between people and their land, and in doing so, destroy their ontological security; the material, social and cultural aspects of security would also be compromised. Second, to overcome these losses, large tracts of land would need to be made available to enable the communities to have space on which to live. This would also require the connection between another group and part of its land to be broken.

There have been numerous relocations of villages in PICs over the ages, especially to locations within customary lands and, to a lesser degree, to nearby lands belonging to neighbouring kinship groups, often involving customary forms of exchange. Many such moves have taken place after devastating disasters such as tropical cyclones including storm surges or flash flooding (Campbell et al., 2007). Much less common has been the relocation of communities to distant locations either within countries or internationally. It is possible, particularly in the case of atoll communities, that long-distance relocation in very different environments may be required.

An informative case is that of the relocation of the people of Banaba (a raised atoll devastated by phosphate mining) located in what is now Kiribati, to Rabi, an island in north-eastern Fiji<sup>5</sup>. The relocation was encouraged (if not imposed) by the colonial government of the Gilbert and Ellice islands ostensibly to resettle Banabans affected by Japanese occupation in World War Two, and to transfer many Banabans to occupied islands elsewhere in Micronesia as labour; probably more likely, there was a desire by the British Phosphate commission to have unfettered access to further exploit the phosphate on the island. The relationship that the Banaban people have with their land is described as blood being mixed with the land and conversely the land is in the people's blood (Teaiwa, T, 1998; Silverman, 1971). Rabi is an island that is considerably larger in area (10 times the size) and more fertile than

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed and insightful book on the relocation of Banaban people to Rabi see Teaiwa (2015).

Banaba (especially after it was denuded by the phosphate mining). It is perhaps not surprising that after two years the transplanted people on Rabi voted to stay on their new island. But despite this there were misgivings over their separation from Banaba, heightened by injustices in the distribution of royalties from the phosphate, most of which went initially to the colony and later to the newly independent country of Kiribati. The Banabans want Banaba to be independent of Kiribati and have placed a caretaker population on Banaba to ensure their continued connection to the island. The situation for the Banabans remains ambiguous after almost three-quarters of a century of relocation. While on the one hand seeking to retain their bond with Banaba, their place in Fiji is also a source of concern. Fraenkel (2003) reported that the Banabans are among the most marginalised communities in Fiji. In addition, the original inhabitants of Banaba are seeking to redress their separation from their vanua (Campbell, 2010). As Teaiwa (2015: 19) observes, Banaba is paradoxically a contested homeland:

Many of the descendants of the iTaukei inhabitants of Rabi ... live on islands surrounding Rabi and have maintained strong ancestral links to their home island. This has made for some very awkward interactions between Banabans and Fijians, and Rabi is thus a still contested place with two displaced populations who call it home.

Adding further irony, some atoll-based i-Kiribati, concerned about how they might respond to climate change and sea-level rise, see Banaba (highest elevation 81m.) as a possible site for relocation should their low-lying islands become uninhabitable (Corcoran, 2016).

Other examples are the relocation of Carterets Islanders and the resettlement of 'Gilbertese' people. In the former case there have been attempts to find land on nearby Bougainville Island for the people of the Carteret islands which are being affected by both subsidence and rising sea-levels (Boege and Rakova, 2019). This is an example of internal relocation but beyond the relocating group's customary lands. Despite these efforts over several decades, there has been very limited success. While land for housing has been found, local land owners have been less able to make more land available for relocated people to carry out their livelihood activities. In the second case 'Gilbertese people' were resettled, under the same colonial regime that moved the Banabans, after perceptions that there was overpopulation on their atolls. Initially relocated in the Phoenix islands, the resettlement failed largely due to the arid conditions on these formerly uninhabited atolls. The group was then transferred to the Western Province of Solomon Islands but had limited access to resources and land. There was resentment from local leaders that the Gilbertese resettlement was in Western Province and not spread elsewhere in Solomon Islands (Fraenkel, 2003; Premdas et al., 1984). With limited access to land, Gilbertese settlements were located close to the ocean and Gilbertese people were over-represented in the fatalities from the 2007 tsunami and faced difficulties in recovering from the event (Donner, 2015).

Even relocation to neighbouring lands can be problematic. Cagilaba (2005) reports on a coastal community in Fiji that was relocated upslope after being affected by tropical cyclones in the 1970s. The new site was partly on land belonging to a neighbouring mataqali (clan) but the move was made possible by a traditional arrangement between the two communities. Three decades later, younger members of the mataqali that ceded the land

claimed the land back as the exchange was not recorded in the official land records. This was only a portion of the relocated land but was enough for grievances to arise. While traditional systems of land tenure are often described as flexible, codification and mapping of land ownership which started during the colonial era has fixed boundaries that in the past may have been considerably more elastic.

## Climate change mobility and land: Implications for peace

Climate change induced migration and forced relocation have considerable potential to increase the incidence of violent events in the Pacific Island region given the strong linkages between conflict and land, and the implications of climate change generated mobility and displacement for people's relationships with land. But violence and conflict need not be inevitable. As we have seen there were traditional ways in which land issues could be resolved, and with advanced notice of the likely effects of climate change, we can also plan for a future when mobility may be a significant response.

### A way forward

In an ideal world, forced community relocation would not be necessary but international negotiations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions have been painfully slow and inadequate. The impacts of climate change are likely to be particularly harsh on small islands (Nurse et al., 2014 (IPCC AR5)) and continued occupancy of some places may become unviable. Despite this, it needs to be stressed that community relocation, particularly beyond customary lands, as an adaptive response to climate change should be a last option and is likely to be fraught with difficulties. But, if there is no choice, such relocation will have to go ahead. Given the difficulties, such forced movement of entire communities will need to be very carefully planned. Thus paradoxically, while it should be a last option, planning for relocation should not be left to the last minute which would be likely to result in negative outcomes and could be referred to as maladaptation. Accordingly, a proactive, long-term planning approach is advocated. Reactive and inadequately planned relocations may result in problems that may fester for generations. The following is a very tentative outline of measures that may reduce the negative impacts of community relocation for both those who are forced to move and those on whose customary land they settle.

### General principles<sup>6</sup>:

1. Land at risk will initially need to be identified. Many PICs have already conducted vulnerability assessments and there is growing awareness of places that may become uninhabitable.

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<sup>6</sup> This list is drawn from a Submission to the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. See Campbell (2017).

2. People should be assisted, through support for adaptation, to stay on their customary lands as long as is possible. Costs of adaptation should not be used to avoid measures that otherwise would be effective.
3. The relocated community, once established, should be able to enjoy, in as far as it is possible, livelihood, land and habitat security as was the case in their customary homelands. This would include enough land (and fisheries) for establishing a settlement and meeting subsistence and commercial requirements.
4. Breaking the connection between a community and its land can be avoided if 'caretakers' could be supported to stay on otherwise uninhabitable land. This could be facilitated by provision of supplies such as food and water if livelihoods are fully compromised by climate change and the maintenance of existing, or establishment of new, transport connections.
5. Anticipatory planning incorporating a number of steps to keep to a minimum cultural, social, emotional, psychological disruption, and hence the potential for conflict.
  - a. Not only land at risk needs to be identified (see 1.), but also relocation sites. This is likely to be a fraught process as most communities will be unable to easily cede their land to others. In some settings, communities that have existing relationships with vulnerable communities may be able to begin discussions about making land available. In others, it may be possible to call for voluntary offers of land. Such an approach will be difficult but not impossible and already the Prime Minister of Fiji and the Pacific Council of Churches have acknowledged the sense of unity among the people of the region in supporting a Pacific regional 'resolution' to the issue of forced relocation.
  - b. Early planning and consultation between people from both origin and possible destination communities. This will need to be conducted in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner. It is important that parties understand that the planning is long-term and contingent on climate change effects worsening.
  - c. Discussions among governments, possible relocatees and people of the land, part of which may be used for relocation, covering such issues as compensation (market, non-market and traditional forms) and the requirements of the resettled communities.
  - d. Early interaction between representatives of the origin and destination communities including reciprocal visits to each other's land in order for both groups to understand the social, cultural and physical characteristics of each community.
  - e. Initial resettlement by an 'advance' party of relocatees to facilitate relocation when and if required.
  - f. Establishment of the site including building of homes, preparing gardens, establishing infrastructure. These activities should be conducted in ways that are appropriate to both the 'host' community and the relocatees (in as much as is possible).
  - g. Resettlement.

- h. Monitoring and evaluation involving communities from both origin and destination. Any problems should be identified and resolved as quickly as possible.

## Conclusions

This paper has sought to identify the strong linkages between people, land, climate change, migration and possibly conflict. Central to this interconnected system is Pacific land which to date has rarely been the subject of analysis in relation to the impacts of climate change and the development of appropriate adaptive (and indeed mitigation) responses. At the heart of this is the ontological security of individuals and groups that are strongly rooted in the land. Two major issues arise. First all attempts must be made to achieve in situ adaptation so that people's essential links to their land can be sustained. Second, where relocation is unavoidable all efforts must be made to reduce the disruption and psychological, spiritual and emotional losses that are likely to unfold. Unless further attention is paid to this issue, it is distinctly possible that some responses to climate change may cause tensions and contribute to violent outcomes.

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