FOSTERING PEACEFUL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC UNDER THE 2030 AGENDA

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The Pacific is often characterized as a subregion of relative peace because the absence of inter-State conflicts, but episodes of violence, political unrest and instability have hampered development in these island States; a "business as usual" approach to development does not guarantee that the Pacific will remain peaceful in the future. The link between peace and development is a central tenet of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, presenting an opportunity to expand on traditional concepts of development and security.

In the context of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and safeguarding development gains in the Pacific, to foster peaceful sustainable development in the subregion, development approaches need to be revisited, in particular cases in which pervasive exclusion and inequality are linked to potential drivers of conflict. In the present paper, four areas are highlighted: resource scarcity; migration and displacement; urbanization; and exclusion and inequality. Climate change is a threat multiplier that is exacerbating these development challenges. In this paper, it is proposed that for Pacific island countries, policy emphasis on strengthening institutions – both formal and informal – combined with conflict-sensitive programming will go a long way towards mitigating drivers of the factors pushing conflict and realizing the intent of Sustainable Development Goal 16 as "the peace goal". Acknowledging the limited reach of Pacific island State institutions, many such solutions need to be implemented through informal structures. At a subregional level, revisiting the Pacific Human Security Framework 2012-2015 in the context of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 16 may also offer new ways to guide and monitor peaceful development.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2015, in the Report of the High Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, it was acknowledged that the United Nations needed to do more to address the root causes of conflict, in partnership with others, through inclusive and equitable development (High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, 2015). In so doing, there was recognition that better appreciation of political economy dynamics, together with social and institutional arrangements, is critical for building bridges between development and peace. The inextricable link between peace and development is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.[1] Sustainable Development Goal 16 specifically seeks to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (A/RES/70/1). Its existence highlights the importance of including peace in any measure of sustainable development. Importantly, the focus of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development and conflict prevention extends beyond the absence of conflict or violence, taking instead a holistic consideration of the social, economic, and environmental factors that underpin peaceful and prosperous societies and the governance that either paves the way for peace and development or triggers conflict. This creates a policy window for fostering what has been termed "positive peace" (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016).

Peace is essential for fostering and safeguarding sustainable development. The cost of pervasive conflict – violent or otherwise – is detrimental to achieving sustainable development. Similarly, development can at times promote conflict. The foundations for sustaining peace — institutions and social cohesion – are fundamental to countries' resilience to conflict and development "shocks". Socioeconomic inequality and exclusion dilute social cohesion and create further vulnerabilities in cases in which governance institutions are weak. Conflict-sensitive development approaches are essential for countries to realize the ambitions of all the Sustainable Development Goals, not just Goal 16, and "'leave no-one behind". These approaches must be context-driven, inclusive and holistic in pursuing socioeconomic development and environmental sustainability.

[1] The preamble to the 2030 Agenda includes the determination "to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence", noting that " "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (A/Res/ 70/1).

Although the Pacific is characterized as a subregion of relative peace, its hard-won development gains remain vulnerable to the "slow violence"[2] associated with exclusion and inequality – which may be gradual, often invisible, yet pervasive – from which societal tension and conflict can grow. There is no guarantee that the Pacific will remain peaceful under "business as usual" approach to development policy and practice. The present paper presents the case as to why policy developers, planners, and development partners focusing on the Pacific subregion must embed conflict analysis in development planning and expand the direction of policy to the structural issues of inequality and exclusion, which underlie sustained and peaceful development.

For this paper, more than 100 academic and policy papers, reports, and media articles were reviewed to assess common themes centred around peace and development in the contemporary Pacific. It provides an overview of the multiple dimensions of peace in the Pacific, and four areas requiring policy attention are highlighted: resource governance; migration and displacement; urbanization; and exclusion and inequality. The paper follows with sections on the role of climate change in exacerbating these development challenges, and the urgency for policy emphasis on strengthening Pacific institutions – both formal and informal – to realize the intention of Sustainable Development Goal 16 as "the peace goal". It concludes with policy recommendations for Pacific island countries.

II. THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF PEACE IN DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC

Peace is multidimensional. In a subregion as diverse as the Pacific, comprising 19 developing island countries and territories,[3] these dimensions are periodically captured by global indices, such as the Fragile States Index, the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (specifically the political stability and absence of

[2] The concept of "slow violence" is often used to describe environmental threats that take place gradually, and often invisibly, and which challenge development gains, for example climate change. It can also be applied to political and structural contexts where masculinized politics and gender inequalities can compound insecurity.

[3] The Pacific region includes the 12 Pacific island countries with a presence in the United Nations that are full members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): Fiji; Kiribati;, Marshall Islands; Micronesia (Federated States of); Nauru; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Solomon Islands; Tonga; Tuvalu; and Vanuatu; and the following countries and territories that are associate members of ESCAP: American Samoa; Cook Islands; French Polynesia; Guam; New Caledonia; Niue; and the Northern Mariana Islands.

violence indicator) and the Global Peace Index[4] (table 1). The human development index perhaps provides the most comprehensive data set for the Pacific subregion, inclusive of human rights considerations. Even though it does not capture the broader structural and institutional policy environment relating to inequalities and exclusion, it is a useful proxy that highlights areas needing attention. In 2016, for example, the index ranked Palau 60th, while Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands ranked 154th and 156th out of 188 countries, respectively, because of poor scores for human security and inequality.

Table 1. Multiple measures of peace but inconsistent Pacific coverage

Global indices	Pacific coverage
Corruption Perceptions Index	Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu
Fragile States Index	Fiji, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Solomon Islands
Global Peace Index	Papua New Guinea
World Bank Governance Indicators	All
Human Development Index	All (excludingCook Islands, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue and Tuvalu)
Women, Peace and Security Index	Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

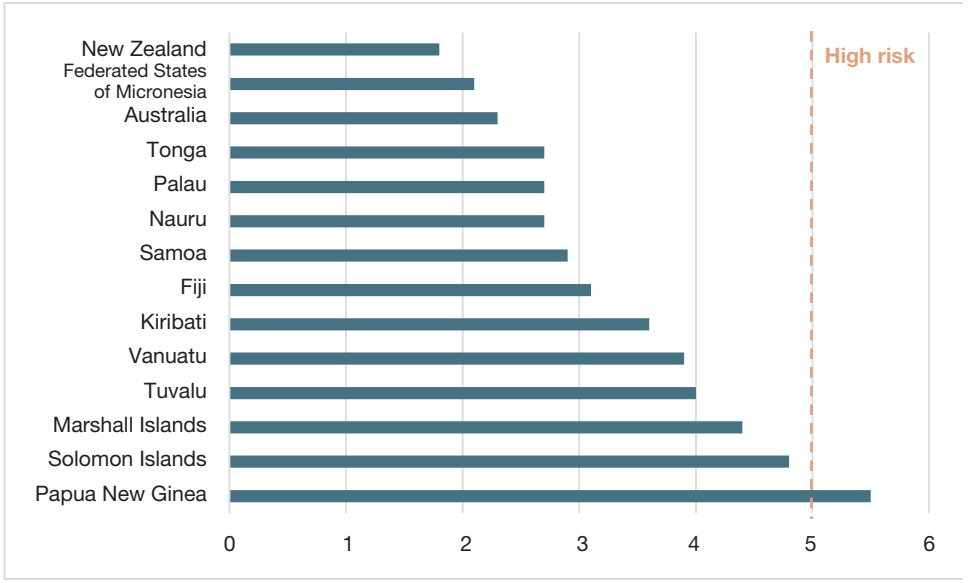
Note: The Institute for Economics and Peace is developing a Pacific Peace Index.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team on Preparedness and Resilience has developed the Index for Risk Management (INFORM) as a predictive measure for peace and conflict from a humanitarian perspective, focusing on exposure, vulnerability and capacity to address conflict.[5] Within this index, notwithstanding the challenge in attaining data on the Pacific subregion, Papua New Guinea ranks as a high-risk country for conflict, and for the other countries in the Pacific, there is an even mix in the medium-to-low risk categories (figure 1).

[4] Pacific island States are only occasionally included in global indices often because of a lack of a full set of data required for the construction of the index. The Fragile States Index focuses on state governance and vulnerability to collapse or conflict. The Global Peace Index focuses on societal safety and security, ongoing domestic and international conflict, and militarization.

[5] See www.inform-index.org.

Figure 1. Index for Risk Management (InfoRM), 2018



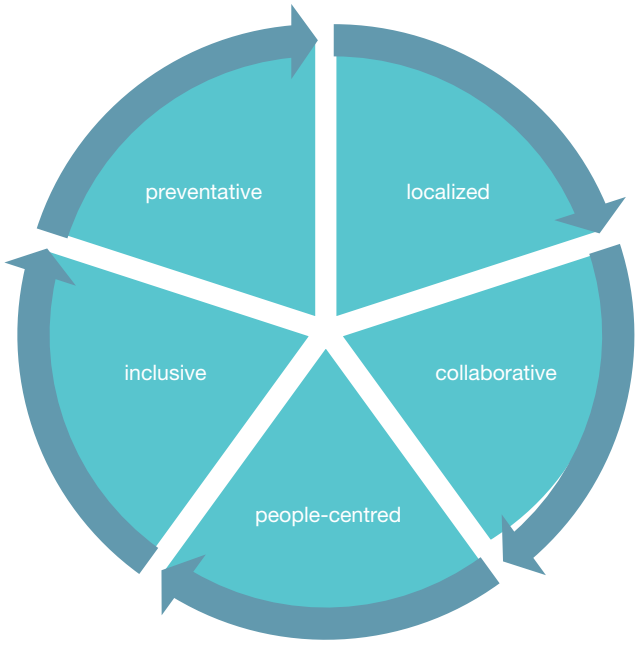
Source: Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Team for Preparedness and Resilience and the European Commission (2018). INFORM. Available at www.inform-index.org.

The measure of coping capacity of the Index for Risk Management is most relevant to the structural aspects of peace and conflict; it assesses governance and institutional capacity. The index's weakness, however, is the assessment of human and natural hazards for Pacific small island developing States. While the Pacific scores highly for natural hazards, the Index does not consider climate change risks or related uncertainties, such as coastal erosion. The absence of violent conflict (a measure of human hazards) pulls down the overall ranking of the Pacific. This indicates that the subregion is, in general, less vulnerable even though the constant barrage of natural hazards and disasters that occur in the Pacific are threat multipliers for inequality and exclusion, which also present challenges to governance systems and often erode development gains. A very resilient country is able to withstand and respond to an external shock, such as natural hazards, whereas the same shock can be a precursor for conflict for less resilient countries.

Similarly, Sustainable Development Goal 16 refocuses attention on the broader dimensions of peace and conflict in development through strengthening national institutions, but this still needs to be contextualized for the Pacific (as do the other Sustainable Development Goals). Ackman, van Es and Hyslop (2018) have highlighted the difficulties in measuring Goal 16 in the Pacific. Nevertheless, the Goal offers a policy opportunity for governments to focus on peace, justice and strong institutions in ways that resonate with their national contexts.

For the Pacific, a multidimensional approach to peace and conflict within development has in the past been facilitated through The Human Security Framework for the Pacific (2012–2015), which was developed by the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat. It provides five principles for addressing causes of conflict monitoring conflict escalation and strengthening conflict resolution mechanisms, suggesting that interventions need to be preventive, localized, collaborative, people-centred and inclusive (figure 2). Also stressed in the Framework is interconnectivity of the five elements of human security (political, economic, environmental, community/family/personal and social) and the necessity of an integrated approach to development. This is to ensure that inhabitants of the Pacific subregion are secure and safe from threats to their well-being, and can enjoy political stability, sustainable economic development and social fulfillment. The Framework was reviewed in 2015 and abandoned because of its generalist approach and lack of monitoring. Despite this, the principles of the Framework resonate with the approach taken under the 2030 Agenda and the revival of a more targeted framework may serve the subregion well in the Sustainable Development Goals era. The commitment of Pacific Island Forum Leaders to develop a comprehensive regional security architecture highlights the importance of an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, environmental security and climate change.

Figure 2. The key principles of the Human Security Framework for the Pacific (2012–2015)



Source: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (2017).

III. A "MOSTLY PEACEFUL" PACIFIC

With the notable exceptions of the prolonged independence struggle in New Caledonia (1980s), the Papua New Guinea-Bougainville Civil War (1989–1997), the "tensions" in Solomon Islands (1998–2003), and repeated coups in Fiji (1987, 2000 and 2006), episodes of national conflict, unrest and political turmoil in the Pacific have generally been short-lived, and in many cases, peacefully resolved, including through ongoing peacebuilding efforts, such as in Solomon Islands. Underpinning its standing as a "pacific" subregion is a long history of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, high levels of social resilience (Brown, 2006) and the limited availability of arms, in addition to widespread respect for the rule of law. Regional security cooperation has also played a role in this: in 2000, Pacific Islands Forum member States adopted the Biketawa Declaration as a regional security cooperation mechanism in the wake of the Fiji coup and ethnic tensions in Solomon Islands. The declaration facilitated the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands from 2003 to 2017.

Despite episodic violent conflict, the Pacific is not, however, exempt from persistent violence. Rates of violence against women are among the highest in the world. Neither is the Pacific immune to the causes of conflict. These include rising economic and social inequalities, land tenure and management issues, strained governance and institutional capacity, high youth unemployment and alienation, and poorly managed urbanization (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2014). Furthermore, the Pacific is as vulnerable as is every subregion to the risk that a conflict will recur.

These issues are compounded by emerging global challenges that transcend national boundaries, including, among others, climate change, religious extremism, political populism, rising rates of migration, transnational crime and an intensified competition for resources, including fisheries. Moreover, it should also be noted that the subregion is close to global security pressure points, such as the Korean Peninsula and the South China Sea.

As the world undergoes a period of significant change to the status quo, guaranteeing peace and development is not a given. According to the 2017 Global Peace Index, there has been a decline in peacefulness across the world over the past decade (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). Considered holistic strategies are required at national, regional and global levels. If countries are to address the root causes of conflict and protect any development gains, policy must not only keep pace with shifting trends, it must also take into account the links between development and security. This will ensure stronger, more resilient societies where people and their governments are better equipped to withstand internal and external shocks.

Future development shocks in the Pacific are likely to be centred around the subregion's particular vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events, economic constraints to improving levels of development and risks associated with the "youth bulge" and rapidly changing populations. Together these factors have the potential to overwhelm small government administrations and, consequently, further erode the traditional economic and social protection systems, and to increase levels of poverty, hardship, vulnerability and exclusion (UNDP, 2014). The sources of these challenges are multi-dimensional and increasingly complex, and pose serious risks of reversing hard-earned development gains, and of triggering sociopolitical upheaval.

Within this setting, the Pacific subregion is contextualizing the new global development agenda and rethinking its security cooperation arrangements under the Biketawa Declaration. The intent here is to formulate a new regional security policy which would set "the foundation for strategic future regional responses recognizing the importance of an expanded concept of security inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritising environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change" (Pacific Island

Forum Secretariat, 2017). This coincides with the rapid changes occurring in global power dynamics and the repositioning of the United Nations system to implement the 2030 Agenda. The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, developed in 2017, guides the subregion's responses for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goal from the perspective of national plans, the United Nations global small island developing States framework – the SAMOA Pathway – and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which was endorsed by the Pacific Island Forum leaders in 2014, to deliver "a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity".

IV. ACHIEVING PEACEFUL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – WHERE ARE THE PRESSURE POINTS/CONFLICT RISKS?

Key questions related to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals is the following: how can the Pacific, which reported limited progress under the Millennium Development Goals, achieve sustainable development in the context of economic constraints, climate change, natural disasters, and changing populations? and what are the Pacific subregion's pressure points for the attainment of peaceful sustainable development?

In a review of more than 100 academic and policy papers, reports, and media articles, the following emerging common themes around peace and development in the contemporary Pacific were assessed: resource governance; migration and displacement; urbanization; and exclusion and inequality.

Resource governance

Pacific island economies have limited options for growth and are reliant on their natural resources. As terrestrial and maritime resource-rich States, the productive sectors – agriculture, forestry, fisheries and mining – have been a fulcrum for development in Pacific island countries. Despite these natural endowments and high levels of aid, economic and social development has lagged, a situation that was described as the "Pacific Paradox" (Toatu, 2001). While resource development has contributed to economic growth, the combination of resource depletion and weak governance creates conflict risk. For example, in Papua New Guinea, the weak governance of resource-based rents has been identified as the single factor most likely to undermine prospects for sustainable growth (Avalos and others, 2013). Similarly, in Kiribati, problems with water and sanitation infrastructure persist despite high fisheries revenue and a growing sovereign wealth fund (Beitau, 2014). Uneven development and exclusion stemming from the problematic distribution of benefits, combined with rent-seeking behaviour, corruption, poor governance and

underdeveloped human capital, has resulted in numerous, often violent, localized conflicts.

Land disputes are among the leading causes of tension and conflict in the subregion, when resource development often competes with widespread subsistence activities for food security (Weir and Virani, 2011). In Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, in the 1990s and early 2000s, real estate, logging and mining sector activities[6] were the cause of numerous instances of intertribal conflict and violent disputes between companies and tribes. In cases in which State institutions fail to ensure good governance in relation to natural resource industries, local tensions are often exacerbated. The weak governance of resource-based revenue, in terms of accountability, transparency and government capability in the delivery of services has a particularly corrosive impact on equitable and peaceful development. The adequacy and enforcement of environmental protection legislation that protects the sustainability of countries' productive sectors is an ongoing concern.

Coastal fisheries are emerging as sites of potential resource tension. Offshore foreign-based fishing accounts for approximately 50 per cent of the value of the subregion's fisheries. Coastal fisheries (whether commercial or subsistence) constitute 12 per cent of the total economic value of the subregion's fisheries resource (Gillett and Cartwright, 2012). For many islands, particularly the low-lying atolls, coastal fisheries are major sources of food and livelihood, but overfishing of tuna stocks and illegal inshore commercial fishing has increased recently.[7] Additionally, coastal fisheries are expected to become less productive because of the degradation of coral reefs by climate change-induced bleaching events and increased cyclone intensity, as well as domestic environmental pollution and degradation.

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[6] Solomon Islands: logging and fishing account for 30 to 40 per cent of GDP for the past two decades, with numerous reports of corruption in the Asian-dominated logging industry. For more details, see Blondel (2012) and John (2017). Bougainville: One of the world's largest copper mines, the Panguna Mine in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville was shut in 1989 in response to violent clashes between local communities and the mine companies. For more details see Phillips (2015).

[7] From 2016 to 2017, there have been one to two media reports per month in the Pacific of arrests of Vietnamese "blue boats" for illegal fishing, particularly close to shore. As an example, see RNZ (2017). In May 2017, a Pacific workshop was held to strengthen regional cooperation in monitoring, control and surveillance regarding these "blue boats" (World Wide Fund for Nature, 2017).

The triple burden[8] on Pacific islanders — reduced economic potential, depleted environmental reserves and greater food insecurity — underscores the need for policy attention on conflict prevention and human security in development.

Box 1. Conflict-sensitive resource management

Recognizing the need for forward-thinking policy relating to food security and environmental protection, a number of Pacific island countries have already put in place coastal fisheries management plans, and are collaborating in the monitoring, control and surveillance of illegal fishing. In addition, the Government of the Cook Islands has created the world's largest marine protected area to ensure sustainable management of the country's marine resources, working closely with traditional communities.

Many Pacific island Governments are taking innovative measures in resources-based development, drawing on the strength of cultural institutions to foster peaceful development. For example, in Vanuatu, land reforms that embrace customary land governance and safeguard community resource rights have institutionalized conflict-sensitive land development.

These initiatives underscore the inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach that engages with multiple governance systems (both State and non-State based) to pursue resource-related development in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Migration and displacement

In the 2030 Agenda, "the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development" is recognized[9] along with the need for human rights-based migration, which applies to both sending and receiving communities, and to local domestic mobility hubs. Expanding migration opportunities have the potential to transform sustainable development and regional integration (Berkelmens and Pryke, 2016) and to provide adaptive solutions for resource-constrained countries. Nevertheless, the processes of migration and displacement may cause grievances if not addressed in a conflict-sensitive manner. This section deals with internal and external/international migration, distinct from urbanization, which is discussed in the following section.

[8] The issues of reduced economic benefit and environmental depletion have been previously described as a "double burden" on Pacific island countries' fisheries, however, the authors suggest that there is also a third burden of growing food insecurity, in particular, for low-lying atoll countries that rely significantly on coastal fisheries for their subsistence. For more details see UNDP (2014).

[9] A/RES/70/1.

Migration is occurring across the subregion as a "release valve" that provides decent work opportunities for resource-constrained countries in the areas of Micronesia and Polynesia. Migration, in response to climate change-related hazards, is also occurring (Oakes, Milan and Campbell, 2016). Migrant-sending countries often enjoy relatively easy access to larger labour markets, and tend to have lower rates of population growth, easing pressure on gross domestic product (GDP) growth, which, in turn, helps to boost living standards. Remittances also benefit their national GDPs significantly (Stahl and Appleyard, 2007). Recently, migrant and refugee receiving Pacific island countries have also benefitted from economic inflows, although this has been contentious. One example of this is the Government of Australia-run detention centres on Manus Island, Nauru, and Papua New Guinea.

In contrast to the preferential immigration access granted to citizens of some Pacific island countries through post-colonial arrangements with metropolitan powers,[10] citizens of Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have, to date, had few opportunities to move abroad. These six countries, which are among the most vulnerable to equitable economic growth, natural disasters, conflict and exclusions in the subregion, had difficulties meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and, in the case of the Melanesian countries, have the highest rates of population growth (Opeskin and MacDermott, 2009; Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, 2015). Governments in the region are increasingly considering labour mobility as an adaptive measure, focusing on protecting migrant workers and securing decent work opportunities.[11]

Migration policies result in a range of development implications that may lead to potential conflict. Increased pressures on already stressed social and physical infrastructure (Milan, Oakes and Campbell, 2016) from rural-urban mobility, concerns over prolonged depopulation in migrant-sending centres (Pacific Institute of Public

[10] The citizens of the Micronesian states in Compacts of Free Association with the United States of America (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and of the Marshall Islands) have right of access to the United States of America and territories in exchange for reciprocal military access and foreign policy influence. New Zealand extends citizenship to residents of its former territories (Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau), and also provides preferential visa access to citizens of other Polynesian countries, notably Samoa and Tonga, which also enjoy relative ease of access to Australia and the United States.

[11] See for example, Voigt-Graf (2016).

Policy, 2010)[12], "brain drain" and the social costs of temporary and seasonal labour migrants resulting family separation (Voigt-Graf, 2017), are some potential problems. Furthermore, global remittance flows are in decline, in part, because of the breakdown of traditional social support mechanisms (World Bank, 2017; UNFPA, 2014).

The promotion of external migration stemming from climate change, while improving adaptive capacity of households, has in some cases — as, for example, the 2014 purchase by the Government of Kiribati of 5,500 acres of land in Fiji —sparked concerns over integration, and competition for land and resources (Ellsmoor and Rosen, 2016). Similarly, displacement (whether temporary or long-term, voluntary or forced) caused by disasters and climate change impacts can lead to upheaval among individuals and within communities, and can inflame tensions as competition for resources increases. Policies that tap into traditional resilience and response mechanisms that provide for relocation, exchange and sharing of resources in times of crisis extend conflict sensitivity to migration processes (Kiddle and others, 2017).

In considering circular mobility, some countries are facing difficulties regarding the reintegration of citizens who have been forcefully repatriated for criminal offences abroad (Pereira, 2014). In 2016, Pacific Islands Forum leaders highlighted the growing number of criminal deportees from metropolitan countries as a regional security risk. Pereira (2011) found that in the Pacific, the average length of time people who had been deported had spent outside of their birth country exceeded 20 years. In addition to social stigma and discrimination, which often prevents employment or access to services, some returnees have poor language skills and lack cultural connectedness. Migration policy responses need to offer ways to further draw on the subregion's culture of strong family and kinship ties, and deepen these among the diasporic communities.

Migration in the Pacific, which may once have been considered simply in terms of gaining access to opportunity overseas, is now an increasingly complex interaction of social, political and economic factors. This transformation demands better balancing of the interrelationships between competing domestic and international positions. The range of issues affecting peace and development include, for example, the balance of inward and outward migration flows, returning migrants, depopulation, migration impacts on social structures (Lim and Brown, 2017), the processing of refugees, and the subregion's role in emerging global compact on safe and orderly migration.

[12] A far greater proportion of the populations of Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau all have far greater proportions of their population living in New Zealand than at home, and the Micronesian states are amongst the highest per capita net emigration rates in the world. See Pacific Institute of Public Policy, Micronesian exodus (Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 2010).

Box 2. Labour-based migration

Temporary labour migration has been a widely used and relatively successful development strategy in Pacific island countries over the past couple of decades. It serves the dual purpose of addressing domestic unemployment and alleviating pressures on basic services. The Kiribati seafarers scheme has endured for two decades, and remains popular among the male population. Many Pacific island countries have actively participated in the Recognised Seasonal Employment scheme in New Zealand, which together with the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia, has given more than 12,000 Pacific islanders work opportunities during 2015–2016, and generated approximately $60 million in remittances per year for the countries of the subregion. The focus of the Pacific island countries has been on securing ongoing access to these programmes. The programmes also present the opportunity to build on this success by aligning education and skills training for the subregion's young people with the need created by the ageing workforces in Australia and New Zealand. The Australia-Pacific Technical College, launched in 2007 to boost hospitality skills and promote labour mobility, was intended as a first step in this direction. However, a recent assessment notes that despite gains in skills development, graduates had an emigration rate of only 1.5 per cent because of barriers that limit migration opportunities for Pacific islands graduates.

Urbanization

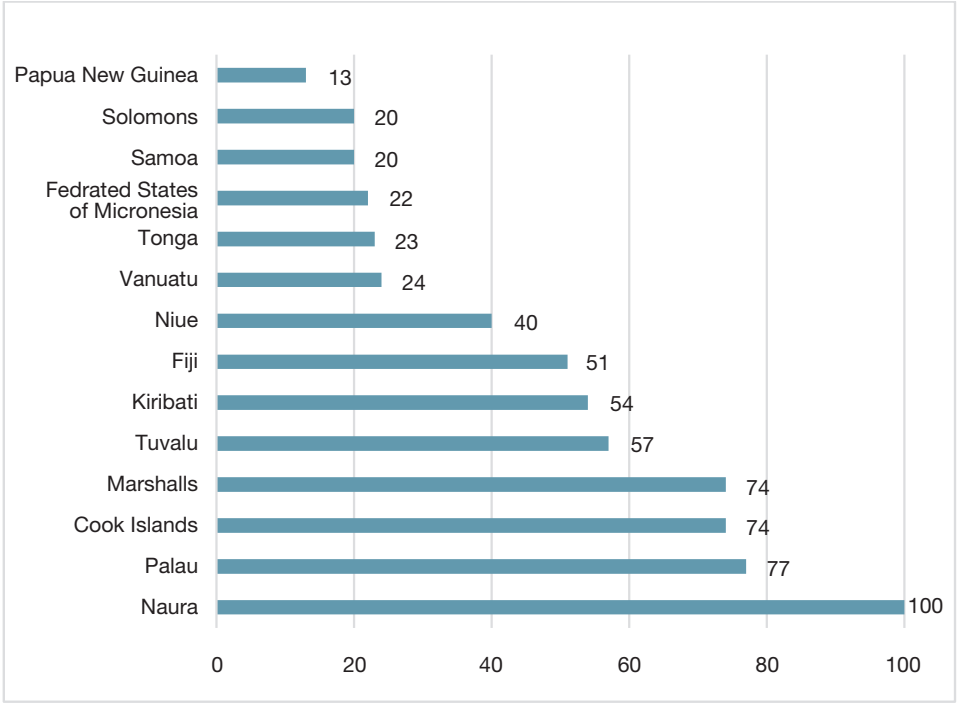
Internal migration within Pacific island countries in the form of urbanization remains an underrecognized area of policy attention, even though towns and cities across the subregion have become "hubs" for socioeconomic exclusion and inequality. While the subregion has in place the New Pacific Urban Agenda, the subnational focus has been unable to sustain high-level political attention, despite the prevalence and growth of informal urban settlements throughout the subregion. Generations of urban dwelling underscore that the urban issues in the Pacific are more than temporary.

Limited infrastructure, overcrowding, few employment prospects, patchy urban services, financial insecurity and land tenure insecurity, in particular in the burgeoning informal settlements, are chief among the litany of Pacific urbanization challenges. Static economic growth, weak urban governance and management, land disputes and the permanency of urban populations compound urban social issues (Connell, 2017). As hubs for economic activity and service delivery, the urban centres of the Pacific are under pressure to provide services equitably in the face of high urban population growth rates. Up to 50 per cent of Melanesian urban populations live in

informal settlements where poverty and hardship rates are high (ADB, 2010). Urban settlements are frequently on marginal land and are vulnerable to environmental degradation and climate change impacts; in the case of the low-lying and atoll countries, such as Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, coastal erosion is shrinking urban areas (Connell, 2017).

People who live on" "the fringe" face widespread inequalities that are potentially destabilizing; urban-based social safety nets cannot keep pace with the costs of urban living, and cash incomes are inadequate replacements for traditional resources that provide livelihood security. Mushrooming informal settlements, in particular, those in the larger Melanesian countries, are often sites of crime and violence (Dinnen, 2017).

Figure 3. Proportion of Pacific populations living in urban areas (percentage of total population)



Source: UNDP (2014).

To date, Pacific Government responses to the "urban challenge" have focused primarily on infrastructure projects. Community governance and social issues have received varying levels of attention, although this is beginning to change in some countries, such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The concept of "urban resilience", traditionally considered in terms of disaster risk reduction and infrastructure, is a new policy frontier for Pacific Governments that have committed to addressing socioeconomic and environmental dimensions of urban resilience in the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, which was endorsed by Pacific leaders in 2016. The Framework, under which attention is refocused on climate resilience, enables reinvigorated attention on urban affairs, and is a welcome policy opportunity to achieve the ambition of the Pacific Urban Agenda. Policies that go beyond "infrastructure and services" to also address the inequalities that feed underlying social tensions are particularly needed.

Box 3. Conflict-sensitive urban initiatives

Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands has a high concentration of urban youth, so countering high unemployment, boredom, substance abuse and violence is a peace-building policy priority for the Government. To manage potential conflict, the Government of Solomon Islands has developed skills training initiatives, and entrepreneurship fostering programmes. The "soft skills" (non-technical skills pertaining to, for example, social interaction, character and work ethic) imparted during the course of these initiatives have helped to deter crime and contributed to social stability, in addition to providing economic opportunities for urban youth. Additionally, with United Nations peacebuilding support, efforts are under way to engage young people in the peace process with society and leadership through dialogue and reconciliation, and implementation of the peace policy.

Fiji

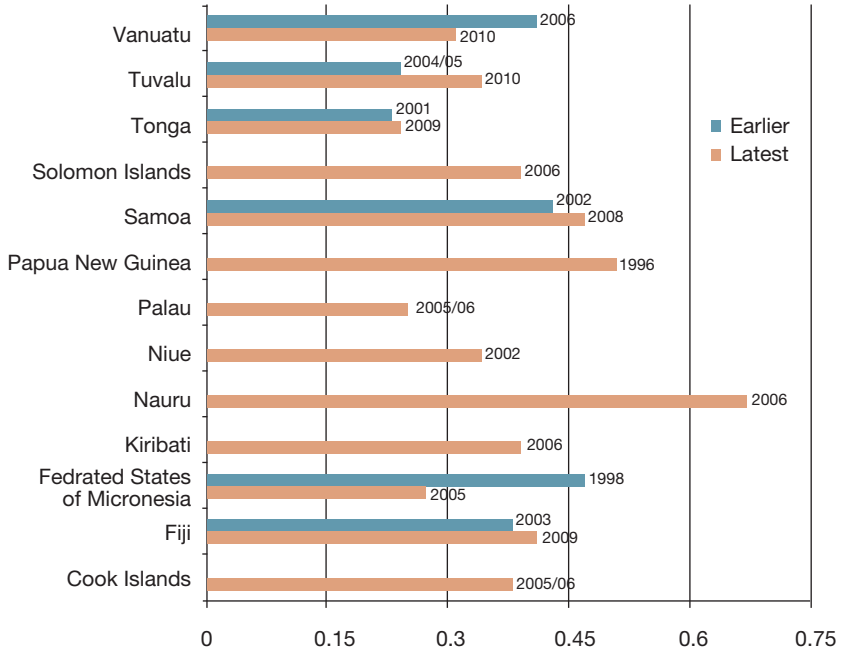
The urban development challenges in Pacific island countries and their associated demographic challenges—such as the "youth bulge"—have elicited a range of strategies to deal with the potential factors behind conflict. Fiji, with more than 50 per cent of its population living in cities, and 70 to 80 per cent of the urban dwellers living below the poverty line, has begun to recognize the rights of informal settlers and extend services to them, building tangible ties between the informal and formal sectors.

Exclusion and vulnerabilities – inequalities in terms of access, opportunity and participation

As a subregion, the Pacific reported in 2016 the greatest difficulty in achieving poverty reduction under the Millennium Development Goals. Despite efforts by governments, income and food poverty, and unequal access to basic services persist. The Pacific is far from achieving full equality for all its citizens, particularly with regard to income (figure 4).

The urbanization of poverty, gender inequalities and social exclusion are some of the persistent factors behind the vulnerability and insecurity in the subregion. The exclusion of marginalized groups – young people, women and the elderly – from political life and full economic participation coupled with imbalances in access to resources are indicators of the "slow violence" compounding human insecurity in the Pacific (George, 2014).

Figure 4. Inequality in the Pacific
(Gini co-efficient where 0 = full equality)



Source: UNDP (2014).

Gender inequality

In the mid-2000s, the Pacific reported some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the world: Tonga (79 per cent), Samoa (76 per cent), Kiribati (73 per cent), Fiji (72 per cent), Vanuatu (72 per cent) and Solomon Islands (64 per cent) (ADB, 2016a).[13] Intra-household inequality, along with women's limited access to justice in traditional and formal systems, has significant socioeconomic development implications. This type of violence generates economic costs, such as lost work days and cost to health systems, and societal costs, such as reduced access to education that constrains future participation in the formal sector. The Pacific island countries, except Tonga, have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and accompanying legal frameworks criminalizing gender violence are in place or in the process of being developed.

Policies aimed at comprehensively addressing gender disparities in political, economic and social affairs and in access to environmental resources are a practical means for attaining better development outcomes and maintaining peaceful and prosperous societies.

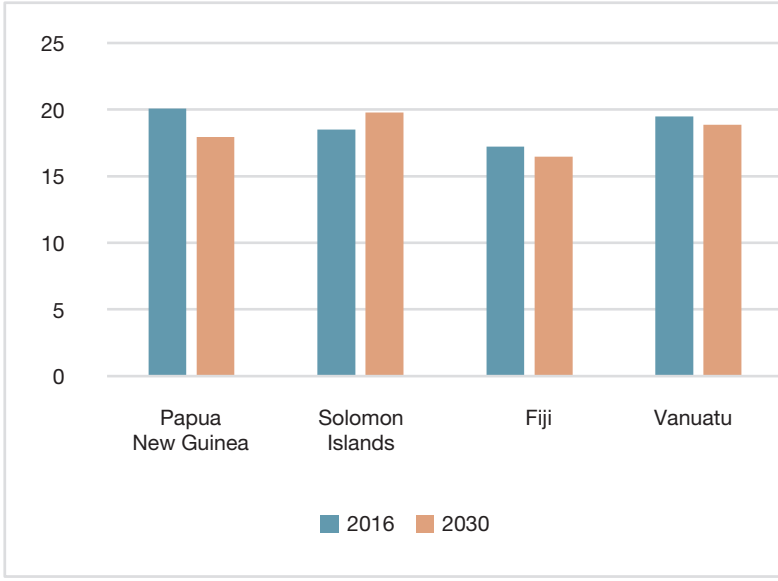
The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, adopted in Rarontonga, Cook Islands, on 30 August 2012, committed countries to greater action. Achieving the ambition of the 2030 Agenda requires enhanced efforts to combat gender violence and the gender disparities that breed violence, in particular through exploring policy bridges between traditional and formal access to justice and support for peaceful communities. There have been several progressive initiatives in this regard. For example, in Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, where women have played a critical role in brokering peace in the post-conflict context, and in Vanuatu, which has connected its dual governance systems (traditional and State-based) to foster social stability.

The youth challenge

While young populations present a challenge shared across all Pacific island countries, projections for 2030 suggest this will be a continuing challenge for Melanesian countries in particular (figure 5). The concentration of the "youth bulge" in the urban centres of the Pacific calls for greater focus on youth development policies and youth participation, especially when the links between disenfranchised and undereducated young people and youth-driven violence are well-established (Evans, 2017).

[13] See http://pacificwomen.org/our-work/focus-areas/ending-violence-against-women/.

Figure 5. Proportion of Melanesian populations aged 15–24 years, 2016 and 2030 projections



Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2018). National Minimum Development Indicators Version 2.0. Available at www.spc.int/nmdi/.

Policy approaches among Pacific island countries to date include vocational skills training, employment programmes, entrepreneurship schemes and sports development. In cases in which island States have brokered arrangements with neighbouring countries with relatively large metropolitan areas, such as Australia and New Zealand,[14] Government policies encourage out-migration of young people from urban and rural areas to join temporary work schemes. The impact of such schemes on inclusion and youth empowerment are mixed, however. As Solomon Islands has experienced, continued investments in youth empowerment are fundamental to mitigating youth-driven crime and violence, and ensuring that young people are not "left behind" in sustainable development (see also box 2).

[14] See previous discussion under the migration section.

Exclusion in development

Optimism about the subregion's generally positive economic outlook (especially the increasing investments in information and communications technology and labour mobility), however, must be tempered against the vulnerability of Pacific island countries and their limited ability to meet the increasing demand for public services, which is significantly being compromised by rising levels of sovereign debt (Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 2013). This poses the risk that Governments may have insufficient resources or policy space to meet the needs of their peoples. Conflict and instability can flourish in such circumstances, especially when high levels of youth unemployment, substandard service delivery, and inequality in resource sharing (including food and water) are already extant.

While development is an essential mean for avoiding conflict, it can also be a trigger if it results in marginalization, perceived or actual. Even a cursory reflection on the subregion's recent history suggests that the potential of domestic and external shocks warrants ongoing vigilance to protect development gains, and to prevent outbreaks of conflict.

V. CLIMATE CHANGE AS A THREAT MULTIPLIER AGAINST PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT

Climate change exacerbates development conflict pressure points. Accordingly, it can be considered a threat multiplier in countries experiencing conflict or vulnerabilities and inequalities. Mazo (2010) has argued that while climate change is unlikely to be the sole factor in conflict, as it becomes increasingly pronounced, climate change plays a larger role in terms of vulnerability, instability and exclusion.

Pacific island countries are among the highest at risk of being hit by natural disasters,[15] with the average annual cost of direct losses estimated at $284 million (World Bank, 2012). For some of the smaller economies, this means the cost of a single event could exceed annual GDP. The category 5 Tropical Cyclones Pam and Winston, which struck the subregion in 2015 and 2016 were estimated to have cost 61 per cent of the Vanuatu GDP[16] and 31 per cent of the Fiji GDP (ADB, 2016b), respectively.

[15] Including tropical cyclones, floods, storm surges, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis.

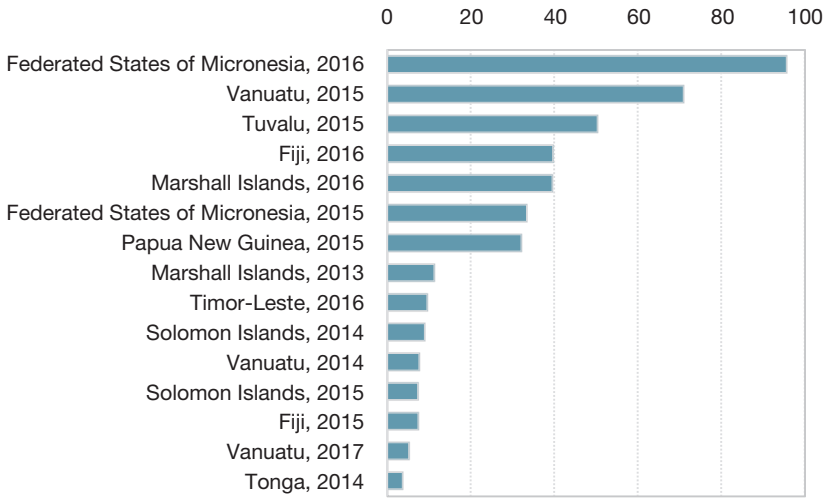
[16] Based on Government estimates of cost and ESCAP statistical data on GDP.

Between November 2013 and June 2015, nine extreme weather-related events occurred in the Pacific; five of them had significant humanitarian consequences (OCHA, 2015), which affected 25 per cent of the total population of the eight affected countries (figure 6). The subregion is now bracing for the prospect of higher intensity, more frequent extreme weather events, including unprecedented out-of-season cyclones (Noonan, 2015). Additionally, climate change will bring more saltwater intrusion, prolonged heavy rainfall and flooding, higher temperatures, droughts and more violent tropical cyclones.

The impacts of climate change are directly linked to the adequate provision of the basic determinants of health and well-being, food, water, and shelter (WHO, 2018). The potential for direct disruptions to agriculture (from flooding, drought, and saltwater inundation) and fisheries (rising sea temperatures, coral bleaching, coastal erosion) have been well established, as has the likelihood of increased water stress and damage to property. Often overshadowed by damage to life and livelihoods, however, are the health implications, including the toll that disaster trauma (dealing with loss of family members, housing, livelihoods, crops and livestock) imposes on mental health.[17] Positive mental health is fundamental for coping and when compromised can elevate stress and vulnerability. The overwhelming majority of people with mental health issues are living in poverty, suffer from poor physical health, and are subject to human rights violations (WHO, 2010a).

[17] While there has been an increased number of studies of the economic impact of mental health issues on the economies of high-income countries, for example depression was estimated to cost at least $800 billion in 2010 in lost economic output – a sum expected to more than double by 2030. Less clear is the understanding of the impacts on development gains in low and middle-income countries (see for example, Marquez and Hewlett, 2018).

Figure 6. People affected by extreme weather-related events in Pacific island countries, 2013–2017 (percentage of population, per year)



Source: ESCAP, based on data from the International Disaster Database, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (www.emdat.be/) and the World Population Prospects Database, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (https://population.un.org/wpp/).

The impacts of climate change also fuel infectious illnesses, such as typhoid, malaria, dengue, cholera and diarrheal disease,[18] further burdening the region's fragile health systems. Shifting temperatures and wet/dry seasons create changed conditions conducive to increased bacterial, viral and microbial development, which, in turn, fuel increased human exposure to disease. Changing lifestyles and diets, in particular among growing urban populations, have spurred a shift from traditional staples to imported, nutritionally poor foods (Bell and others, 2016). For example, reduced subsistence cropping because of changing climate or reduced agricultural areas as a result of coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion in low-lying areas are directly affecting food supplies. In addition to driving the region's non-communicable diseases crisis (WHO, 2010b), this shift is contributing to a decline in agricultural production, and a corresponding increase in susceptibility to global supply and price shocks in foodstuffs.

[18] Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, World Health Organization, speech during the COP23metting, Bonn, Germany, 12 November 2017. Available at www.who.int/dg/speeches/2017/cop23/en/.

Natural disasters have similar threat multiplier implications to development. As the subregion is highly vulnerable to natural disasters (Vanuatu and Tonga were ranked the first and second most vulnerable countries out of 171 in the 2016 *World Risk Report*[19]), safeguarding development gains from natural disaster is an ongoing challenge. Regular livelihood shocks and major disruptions to economic and social systems can potentially overwhelm formal and informal governance systems — the very structures that underpin peace and facilitate development — unless policy attention is given to these systems as a central component of national disaster preparedness.

National and regional integration of climate change and disaster risk reduction is advancing and is often coupled with community adaptation outreach. For example, in response to the subregional non-communicable diseases crisis, efforts are being made to promote a return to "island diets" in concert with climate change adaptation initiatives to build the resilience of food production systems, addressing the risks from changing rainfall patterns and saltwater intrusion to staple food crops, such as taro and cassava (UNDP, 2015).

Kinship obligations to provide food and shelter in times of disaster can supplement limited State disaster aid, but they also increase financial and social strains on families, in particular those in urban areas without access to subsistence crops. Reliance on relief aid can sometimes diminish traditional mechanisms. Acts, or perceptions, of political favouritism, can fuel tensions over the distribution of relief efforts. In 2018, the temporary mass relocation of the entire population of Ambae island in Vanuatu provided an example of a disaster response managed in tandem using traditional coping systems and a State-run humanitarian disaster response; it highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder engagement[20] to ensure peaceful outcomes.

Globally, climate finance flows have increased significantly. Across the subregion, 59 per cent of climate finance is directed to adaptation activities. The largest single share of it supports "enabling environments", which includes activities to mainstream climate change into sector policies, planning and management, —mainly in the energy, forestry and water sectors (Atteridge and Canales, 2017). Pacific Governments must take advantage of the option to use climate finance flows to help to tackle persistent inequalities and support conflict-sensitive approaches.

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[19] See United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security (2016).

[20] The Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific, An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management (FRDP) 2017–2030 provides high-level strategic guidance to different stakeholder groups on how to enhance resilience to climate change and disasters, in ways that promote the active engagement of diverse groups, both individually and in partnership.

Over the past decade, there has been considerable debate over the role the Security Council should play in the consideration of climate change.[21] While political divisions persist, the discussion has furthered a broader discussion of climate change within the context of peace and sustainable development.[22] The security–climate change nexus traverses social security (health and well-being); resource security (food, water, land, energy); national security (sovereignty, especially for the low-lying atoll States facing an existential threat); and international security (global peace and stability). Ensuring strong and resilient institutions to traverse these issues in times of multiple disasters is also a key element. Arguably, the peace-development nexus in the Pacific is necessarily a climate-peace-development nexus.

The urgent need to deal with in the subregion underscores why the Pacific must focus on its governance systems and conflict-sensitive development under the 2030 Agenda.

VI. THE COMMON THREAT: STRENGTHENING EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS IN THE PACIFIC

The ability of political and social institutions to cope with shocks to stability, such as conflict, is key to sustaining peace in development. Peaceful and inclusive societies depend on effective and accountable institutions at all levels, both formal and informal and where there is space for participation and dialogue. Attention to informal institutions, however, has been makeshift in Pacific policymaking, tending to focus on the rule of law, as in the examples of the land courts of Samoa and Vanuatu.

As previous discussions in this paper have highlighted, the persistent development challenges in the Pacific are amplified in the context of increasing resource scarcity, imbalances in migration policies and deepening urban inequalities. Combined with the threat multiplier of climate change, policymakers in the Pacific subregion must urgently steer development efforts to deal with these conflict pressure points in a manner that facilitates balanced and inclusive development by engaging with the full range of national institutions.

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[21] The Pacific, through its grouping in the United Nations (the Pacific small island developing States), has long lobbied for climate change to be considered an issue of global peace and security and that it should be on the agenda of the Security Council. The following article provides an overview of the engagement of the Security Council on climate change. See www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2017-08/the_security_council_and_climate_change_an_ambivalent_relationship.php.

[22] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&nr=3432&type=255&menu=35.

The simmering insecurities diminish the subregion's progress towards achieving sustainable development, and suggest that traditional aid-dependent development approaches are insufficient for facilitating transformational development (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2017b). As the Pacific draws strength from its rich and diverse traditional heritage that has long provided sustenance, social stability and resilience (Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, 2014), truly transformational and peaceful development must be supported by policies that bridge "customary and formal systems".

The Pacific subregion's rich heritage of informal and traditional social protection "buffers", based on elaborate kinship-based social structures linked to resource rights, are under increasing pressure from monetization in the transition from subsistence- to cash-based market economies (UNDP, 2014).

Institutions—formal and informal, State-centric and community-centric—are the common thread in the facilitation of sustainable development that is peaceful, inclusive, and equitable. Culture, however, has been described as a "barrier" to the development approaches taken by Pacific Governments in the effort to reach Sustainable Development Goal 16, many potential opportunities are presented to move ahead on persistent development issues, to think beyond the existing development paradigm and to embrace the opportunities that Pacific cultures and local governance systems offer for achieving peaceful development, while maintaining a human rights-based approach.

A shift in mindset is required to consider the role of social and customary institutions in conflict-sensitive development. For example, the social problems associated with high numbers of unemployed young people in urban centres are not simply a demographic problem, but they are also a consequence of a much more complex set of factors. Similarly, the challenges posed by migration have significant implications on social institutions at both the sending and receiving locations, which warrant attention. Such a mindset dictates an evolution from the traditional security lens — in the example of young people, to reinforce community policing with urban planning (for example, the creation of safe spaces for young people), economic management (notably, creating jobs), and social planning (for example, providing activities for people to engage in, as well as ensuring health care, education and training).

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable Development Goal 16 presents a valuable policy opportunity for Pacific island countries to advance their sustainable development through mobilizing attention to conflict-sensitive development. This highlights the importance of fostering peace in any sustainable development effort.

Balancing the traditional development focus on health, education and poverty with inclusive governance/institutions and conflict prevention must become a larger focus in policymaking in the Pacific. Development processes are inherently sites for potential conflict, in particular with regard to issues of resource scarcity, exclusion and inequality. Effective and resilient social institutions are essential buffers against conflict. Fundamentally, the threats to peace based on exclusion, vulnerability and resource scarcity can be avoided through the implementation of well thought out policy and programming that extends beyond a "business as usual" approach. Accordingly, in fostering peaceful development under the 2030 Agenda, the following two policy recommendations serve to advance efforts to encourage peaceful sustainable development approaches in the Pacific, drawing from existing good practices across the subregion.

Reinvigorated attention to the Human Security Framework for the Pacific is essential to support Pacific-style peaceful development in a holistic manner and advance efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 in the subregion;

- Drawing on lessons from the 2015 review of the Human Security Framework for the Pacific, renewed attention within the context of a Biketawa Plus concept needs to include specific target areas for policy attention. The following four issues should be included: resource governance; migration and displacement; urbanization; and exclusion and inequality. The Pacific Islands Forum could commission a rapid review of the Human Security Framework for the Pacific, taking into account the 2030 Agenda and more specifically Sustainable Development Goal 16 and Biketawa Plus as a way forward.

- Many aspects of human security are already being addressed by governments in a range of ways. Enhanced awareness of the customary governance principles of the Human Security Framework for the Pacific would encourage policymakers to turn their attention to challenges that have not previously been visible to them. Leadership on these aspects of the Framework should come from within governments.

- There is a need to develop new ways of monitoring human security in the Pacific. One option is for Pacific island Governments to work closely with regional agencies, such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, to enhance policy focus in this area.

Fostering peaceful development under the 2030 Agenda requires a rethinking of development approaches in the Pacific such that they would embrace working with State and non-State governance systems to increase the likelihood of peaceful development and stem "slow violence" in the subregion. The focus of attempts to localize efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 must extend beyond the global focus on weapons, violence and trafficking, to a more Pacific-relevant emphasis on more effective institutions in support of peace, sustainable development and conflict prevention;

- One area of focus of the 2019 High-Level Political Forum was on Sustainable Development Goal 16. This presented the opportunity to report through voluntary national reviews and also through regional sustainable development reporting mechanisms to demonstrate how this particular Goal relates to the Pacific subregion. The Human Security Framework for the Pacific reporting mechanism for progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals should be leveraged by Pacific participation to enhance global learning about contextualization of Goal 16.

- Consistent with existing efforts to localize efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Governments could contextualize Goal 16 into national planning and operations, tailoring it to focus on domestic drivers of conflict based on pressures points centred on exclusion, vulnerability and competition for resources.

This may require Governments – supported by partners in the subregion – to do the following;

- Provide policy and programming opportunities to incorporate conflict and context analysis into development planning, including domestic governance arrangements (both State and non-State), which, in turn, would lead to better programming that, at a minimum, does not exacerbate existing exclusions and inequalities, and ideally facilitates greater inclusion and equality.

- Invest in developing holistic strategies that would work with, not against, cultural and social institutions at local and regional levels. Hybrid conflict prevention mechanisms that work with both State and non-State/informal governance systems could be explored, for example, creating platforms for dialogue and participation at all levels.

- Leverage the Biketawa Plus and Pacific 2050 strategy processes to convene development and security/conflict prevention/peacebuilding practitioners to ensure a coherent approach to peaceful development. Leadership of the Pacific Islands Forum and its member States is essential.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the present paper, policy opportunities presented by Sustainable Development Goal 16, the "peace goal", to safeguard development gains in the Pacific are highlighted. Fostering peaceful sustainable development in the Pacific requires the formulation of the development approaches taken, increased emphasis on strengthening institutions – both formal and informal – and conflict-sensitive policy and programmes to mitigate the factors driving conflict, exclusion and inequality. Acknowledging limitations in the reach of and access to Pacific island State institutions, many such solutions will need to be through informal structures. The potential for regional-level initiatives, such as revisiting of the Pacific Human Security Framework 2012–2015, to complement national initiatives and provide a platform for regional innovation and knowledge exchange could be a viable way forward. Further policy research and innovation in bridging formal and informal institutions to support peaceful development would also add value, and further identify additional risks and challenges that Pacific island countries may need to address through policy and practice.

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