Promoting a Regional Approach to the Challenges of Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change in the Pacific

Regional Consultation in Nadi, Fiji, 30 November – 2 December 2022

Chair’s Summary

1. The Government of Fiji convened the Regional Consultation “Promoting a Regional Approach to the Challenges of Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters and the Adverse Effects of Climate Change in the Pacific” in Nadi, Fiji, from 30 November – 2 December 2022 in its capacity as outgoing Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD).

2. The meeting was hosted by the Fijian Government and co-organized with the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and partners of the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Programme (PCCMHS), which include IOM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) as well as PDD and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as partners. It was generously supported with funding from the European Union and the government of Germany.

3. More than 70 participants including representatives from Pacific Islands and Territories (PICTs), the PDD’s Steering Group, from regional and international organizations, UN agencies, civil society and academia gathered at the occasion. Participation from the Pacific included Australia, the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

4. The meeting had the objective to share lessons learned and effective practices on averting, minimizing and addressing displacement in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, and to support ongoing efforts to develop national and regional approaches to addressing challenges related to displacement in the context of climate change in the Pacific.

5. On the first day of the Regional Consultation, 30 November 2022, participants visited a planned relocation site in Tukuraki in the highlands of Ba province, where a community displaced by a landslide found new homes. The visit provided an opportunity to learn about the complexities of planned relocation and ways to address them through joint and sustainable action of the government, affected communities and civil society.
6. The meeting was opened on 1 December 2022 in an official welcome session by the Permanent Secretary for Rural, Maritime Development and Disaster Management of Fiji, who handed over the Chairmanship of the PDD that Fiji has exercised from 1 January 2021 until 30 June 2022 to the European Union which will chair the PDD from 1 July 2022 until 31 December 2023. The EU Representative highlighted how the EU will build on the achievements made under the Fijian Chairmanship of the PDD and presented the EU’s priorities as the incoming Chair.

7. The meeting provided participating countries the opportunity to share experiences and learn from each other with regard to addressing the challenges of human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change (displacement, migration and planned relocation) and emphasized the importance of evidence and scientific data when planning and implementing relevant policies and action.

8. The meeting took stock of lessons learned, shared effective practices and presented tools and outputs from the Pacific Response to Disaster Displacement (PRDD) project which officially concludes in December 2022. Project partners including IDMC, PDD, IOM, SPC and the Technical Working Group on Human Mobility under the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP) presented data, reports and other outcomes of the project.

9. The meeting supported and continued consultations among PICTs and other stakeholders in their efforts at developing a robust and practical draft regional framework on climate mobility in the Pacific that can provide guidance to Member States to address the key issues emerging in the context of climate change, disasters and related mobility.

10. The meeting reflected on the relevance of displacement and human mobility in the context of ongoing global policy discussions on climate change adaptation and loss and damage, in particular under the UNFCCC, with a focus on outcomes and decisions of COP27 and preparing for COP28. In light of recent decisions taken on loss and damage, including funding, and the operationalization of the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage at COP27, participants discussed national and local approaches towards averting, minimizing and addressing the implications of loss and damage including displacement on the countries in the region.

11. In working groups, participants got together to discuss the harmonization of approaches on humanitarian entry and stay in the context of disasters and climate change; to discuss lessons learned and next steps of the PRDD Project; to reflect on outcomes of COP27 and discuss elements for key messages for COP28 and to prepare input to the Sendai Framework Midterm Review.
12. Key take-aways and recommendations from the panel discussions, working groups and presentations of national and regional approaches to the challenges of human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change include:

a. “We want to stay but we may have to move”: Displacement and relocation are a complex dilemma for Pacific communities. Participants re-emphasized that planned relocation can only be a measure of last resort and needs to happen after thorough consultation with disaster and displacement affected communities, both those displaced and those hosting.

b. Building on the achievements of COP27, the voices of small island developing states and the Pacific need to continue to be heard and positioned in the climate change negotiations, at COP28 and beyond, continuing to advocate for bolder steps towards reaching the 1.5 degree goal and ensuring robust and sustainable funding for adaptation and loss and damage.

c. Any successor to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction will need to address displacement in coherence with other policy agendas and ensure that disaster risk reduction places human mobility within its scope of action. This is essential for securing a future for the Pacific youth who wish to live in their ancestral homes and not be forced to relocate or move.

d. Recognizing the large potential to learn from experiences and practices in other world regions, participants emphasized the importance of culture, spiritual beliefs and practices that make the Pacific and its subregions unique. Solutions must be tailored to local context.

e. Human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change encompasses migration, displacement and planned relocation. Both in the formulation of policy frameworks and for data gathering, the use of terminology and the distinctions between these different forms and their particular protection and assistance needs need to be clear-cut and consistent.

f. An inclusive and human rights based whole-of-society approach must be at the core of any and all discussions and decisions about human mobility in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, including not only governments but community representatives such as civil society, youth, faith-based organizations and other actors. SOPs and existing guidelines should be reviewed regularly with this in mind and supported by the necessary funding for implementation.
g. Decisions to move persons away from their traditional land and homes are complex and touch on many issues including land rights, mental health, livelihoods, access to basic services and community structures. They need to be based on sound data. Capacities and resources need to be made available and strengthened to support governments and other stakeholders collect, analyze and use data as basis for policy formulation and implementation.

h. Building on the experiences of COVID-19, there is an opportunity to continue moving towards harmonization of approaches on humanitarian entry and stay in the context of disasters and climate change building on existing laws, practices and cultural traditions.

i. It will be important to build on the outcomes of the initiatives discussed at this consultation to ensure that initial interventions on policy and capacity building are built upon and scaled up. In order to make a difference for displaced persons, governments, data actors and communities need to be enabled, resourced and capacitated to work together in order to make a difference for persons displaced in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change. There is a need to establish a consultative mechanism to further the discussions from this consultation at the regional level.

13. The Pacific, like no other region in the world, needs to continue to make itself heard in international fora and processes to ensure that the largest number possible of its inhabitants can remain living in the places where they were born and have cultural and spiritual ties as well as their livelihoods. International and regional organizations can play important roles as partners for governments and civil society actors, supporting whole-of-society approaches that implement the national and local priorities defined through consultation with displacement affected communities. Loss and damage including displacement are happening today and require greater recognition and support from the international community while the Pacific region at the same time can offer a lot of practices and experiences to share with other regions facing the challenges of displacement in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change.

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