

Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security Programme and SSTV (PCCMHS)

Climate change and migration: Improving migrant labour rights and working towards climate preparedness through dialogue and South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Project name: Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCMHS)
Countries/territories/regions involved: Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Island, Tuvalu and Vanuatu
Nominated by: International Labour Organization (ILO), Country Office Suva
Sustainable Development Goal target(s): 8.8, 10.7, 17.18
Relevant priority area(s) of the SAMOA Pathway: Climate change, Social development- promoting peaceful societies and safe communities, sustained and sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth with decent work for all,) Means of implementation, including partnerships
Supported by: ILO Partnership for Development (PARDEV), International Trade Centre Turin, Country Office Suva
Implementing entities: ILO, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Platform on Disaster Displacement, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
Project status (ongoing or completed): Ongoing
Project period: February 2019 - January 2022
URL of the practice: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/projectdocumentation/wcms_714759.pdf

Challenge

Pacific communities are affected by a range of sudden-onset and slow-onset hazards that are either made more intense, accelerated by or caused by climate change. This contributes to voluntary migration flows, but at the same time, increases displacement both internally and across borders.

Labour migration can contribute to climate resilience by increasing earnings which can be invested in better housing, savings and investment in small businesses. Nevertheless, challenges faced include lack of decent work during recruitment and employment, low levels of financial awareness and literacy (resulting for example in an estimated AUD 11.4 million (approx. US\$ 8.8 million) in superannuation contributions not transferred as of mid-2019), adverse social impacts on families and communities left behind and a lack of policy and programme frameworks for reintegration.

To adapt to the impacts of climate change, some governments are supporting the movement of climate change-affected communities. At the International Labour Organization (ILO) Tripartite High-Level Forum on Climate Change and Decent Work in the Pacific (July 2019), Pacific Island countries acknowledged that well governed labour migration has the potential to deliver a triple win, as well as promote climate resilience. However, the Forum recognized that labour migration should be a choice and is not a substitute for creating decent jobs in countries.

Towards a solution

The adverse impacts of climate change compound existing challenges in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and have placed additional burdens on their national budgets and their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The programme “Enhancing protection and empowerment of migrants and communities affected by climate change and disasters in the Pacific region”, in short, PCCMHS (Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security) has three objectives:

Objective 1: Pacific communities and governments demonstrate strengthened capacity and coordination through a human security-based response to climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement, and planned relocation.

Objective 2: Migrants and communities in the Pacific Island Countries benefit from safe labour migration as a sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategy.

Objective 3: Contribute to the evidence-base on good practices in responding to climate change and disaster-related migration, displacement, and planned relocation with particular focus on the role of the human security framework.

The programme goal is to contribute towards the protection and empowerment of communities that are adversely affected by or at-risk of being affected by climate change and disasters in the Pacific region, focusing specifically on climate change-related migration, displacement and planned relocation. The programme is led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) alongside ILO, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

A regional policy dialogue was a key component of the PCCMHS programme. From September to November 2020, senior ministry officials (representing ministries related to foreign affairs, climate change, lands and disaster management) from 12 participating Pacific Island Countries (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) , with support from key stakeholders, undertook a series of virtual policy discussions that examined how climate change and disasters will affect mobility trends in the Pacific Islands.

The 2020 dialogue recognized that existing regional frameworks and mechanisms need to be better utilized, when needed, and that any new approach proposed through the Pacific Islands Forum would require the endorsement of leaders. The dialogue did not attempt to establish consensus on the modality for the regional approach, however, a number of options were identified, such as a non-binding legal and policy framework that encompasses key messages.

In 2020 under this programme a labour mobility training was organised for government officials from 11 Pacific Islands Countries and Territories: E-Academy on labour migration was held from 09 November- 18 December 2020, bringing on board 47 participants from 11 Pacific countries. The E-Academy on Labour Migration (e-LMA) offered participants a unique opportunity to benefit from a diversified training package, exploring fair and effective labour migration governance, linkages between migration and sustainable development, and instruments and mechanisms for protecting migrants’ and their families’ rights. The training also enabled participants to share experiences and ideas with peer officials from Pacific countries dealing with labour migration governance issues in the Pacific relating to climate change and relatedly increased South-South and triangular cooperation in the region.

A key area of work under the programme was a regional review of seasonal workers schemes. Data collection has been completed and once validated the results of the reviews will be shared with civil society organizations and employer and worker organizations in the region. Furthermore, consultations are planned with receiving states (Australia, New Zealand) and social partners to share the study results and promote compliance with international labour and human rights standards, including ratification of core migrant worker conventions. The reviews will make specific recommendations on how South-South and triangular cooperation can promote compliance with international labour and human rights standards.

The programme will continue to facilitate regional cooperation by involving all 11 ILO Pacific Member States, as well as worker and employer organization members from across the region, employing South-South and triangular cooperation approaches.

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