

Climate and Migration in Oceania

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Abstract

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have been identified as 'hot spots' from which relatively large numbers of people may be either induced or forced by the effects of climate change to leave their homes. Climate change induced migration is mobility of individuals and families in response to climate change impacts. Migration relieves pressure on a degrading environment and remittances supplement declining livelihoods of those who remain. Climate change forced relocation, however, is likely to occur when places become fully unable to provide the life support systems to enable continued occupation by humans. There are three scenarios where forced relocation may become necessary: the places may no longer exist (land insecurity), the places may no longer be able to provide livelihood security and finally, the places no longer provide an environment secure from disease and injury. To date there has been no successful forced relocation in the Pacific region although there are some places that are becoming increasingly insecure. An extremely important issue in PICs is that of land which in most countries is inseparable from those who live on it. Relocation will disrupt this critical aspect of Pacific cultures in many ways that will make relocation highly problematic.