



ISAP 2025

International Forum for Sustainable Asia and the Pacific

Climate Mobility in the Asia-Pacific: Lessons Learned from National and Regional Responses

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Understanding Climate Mobility and Security

- “**Climate Mobility**” is an umbrella concept for diverse movements (displacement, migration, and planned relocation, immobility/staying in place).
- Traditional Perspective: Uncoordinated human displacement to raise security concerns for individuals and communities (UNSG’s report, 2009).
- Current focus: Broader threats to social structure, cultural identity, and economic potential → Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility (PIF, 2023)



The Legal Gap for 'Climate Refugees'

- Climate-induced migrants are not legally recognized as 'refugees' under the 1951 Convention.
- Example: Ioane Teitiota (Kiribati) claim for refugee status in New Zealand was rejected in 2013.
- Major Step: **The ICJ Advisory Opinion** in July 2025 (Vanuatu-led) confirmed the **non-refoulement principle** (no forced return to danger).
- Status: Not yet legally binding, but a **significant shift**.



Photo: Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change

Our Research: Purpose, Questions, and Scope

Purpose:

- Provide policy recommendations for better preparedness through national, bilateral, and regional approaches.

Key Questions:

- What is the current shape of multi-level governance?
- What are the national and regional policy experiences?



Scope: Origin (Fiji, Tuvalu, Bangladesh, Thailand) and Recipient (Australia, NZ)

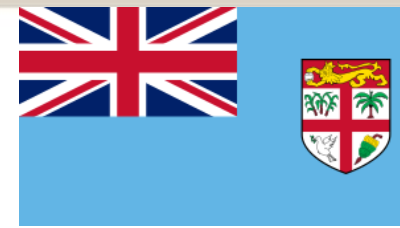
Methods: Desk review, stakeholder interviews, and community surveys

Case Study: Fiji (Planned Relocation)



Vunidogoloa in Vanua Levu,
First Fijian village to experience relocation





Case Study: Fiji (Planned Relocation)

Policy Framework:

- The Climate Change Act 2021 mandates guidelines for planned relocation

Success requires a holistic approach:

- **Economic Stability:** Sustainable livelihood and market access in the new location
- **Cultural Retention:** Supporting traditional lifestyle and community components (e.g., church)

Carefully planned relocation with appropriate follow-up is vital for community well-being and conflict resolution.



Regional Approaches (I): Australia

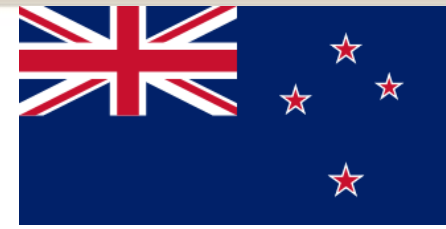


Photo: X (Twitter) post of AUS Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (10 November 2023)



Regional Approaches (I): Australia

- Engagement driven by both **responsibility** and strategic **security interests** (e.g., regional influence).
- **The Falepili Union (with Tuvalu):** Offers a migration pathway and security cooperation. (FY2025: 8750 ballot registrations for 280 visas)
- **Key Goal:** Explicitly aims to support **human mobility with dignity** for Tuvaluans, safeguarding their future, identity, and culture.
- **c.f., Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV):** Pacific Migrants to fill labour shortages (agriculture, care), gaining skills, and sending remittances for home-country adaptation.



Regional Approaches (II): New Zealand

- The Pacific Access Category (PAC): Visa grants up to 650 annual permanent residents (Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu) since the 1990s.
 - Already existing Pacific communities, serving as the hub and safety net.
- Though often viewed as "**humanitarian**," strict requirements (age, job offer, etc.) are criticized for excluding the most vulnerable.
- Policy Shift: NZ withdrew a 2017 "experimental humanitarian visa" proposal after 6 months. Pacific people prioritize emission reduction and adaptation aid.
- Current Approach: Integrating climate response into existing labor schemes and development aid (adaptation).

Japan's Role and Perspective

- Japan has a time buffer against immediate mass migration. Future arrivals will be driven by a combination of climate and economic/educational pulls.
- Current policies often focus on short-term post-disaster relief; we need anticipatory adaptation for (im)mobility and (in)voluntary displacement.
- Develop domestic acceptance policies that ensure human dignity, cultural respect, and not limited to economic prosperity.
- Align ODA to enhance resilience in origin countries (preventing brain drain/adaptation failure), and coordinate with Australia and NZ, and ASEAN on regional security and aid effectiveness.



Key Findings and Conclusion

1. **Complex Drivers:** Mobility is rarely climate-only; it involves economic and educational aspirations.
 2. **Human-Centered Approach:** Need to respect **culture, identity, and social structure and justice**; avoiding "refugee" or simple "labor force" framing.
 3. **Anticipatory Policy:** Focus must shift from short-term disaster relief to anticipatory adaptation for human security (displacement / (im)mobility).
- Countries in Asia may need **higher policy attention**;
learn from **early Pacific planned relocation experiences**.
 - Japan and partner countries could co-develop **holistic policies**
covering mobility acceptance and adaptation support of the countries of origin.



ご清聴ありがとうございました。

Thank you very much for your attention.

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