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**Climate Change Adaptation, Migration, and Promising Developments for Pacific Island
States**

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For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

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Abstract

The people of the Pacific Islands face an existential crisis due to climate change, despite the fact that they are the least responsible for contributing to carbon emissions. The effects of climate change, namely sea-level rise, pose a verified threat to low-lying islands, infiltrating water supplies, crops, and infrastructure. As a result, there is a need for improved solutions for adapting to the impacts of climate change and for easier access to legal migration pathways when the consequences are insurmountable. Through comparative discourse analysis of scholarly sources, intergovernmental policies, and non-governmental organizations, the thesis finds that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are actively responding to climate change by adapting and migrating. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for new and better solutions from intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and scholars. The passage of new laws and policies that would improve access to migration and adaptation for Pacific SIDS would also have implications for other island nations and developing states.

Key Words: Adaptation, Climate Change, Migration, Pacific Islands, Small Island Developing States

Climate Change Adaptation, Migration, and Promising Developments for Pacific Island States

The dawn of climate change is long past, as impacts on humans and their livelihoods are already seen around the globe. Unfortunately, many of the people who are hit hardest by the negative consequences of climate change have contributed least to its progression. Residents of developing nation-states primarily located in the Global South are witnessing the first results of a warming planet, and in particular, island states are in a vulnerable situation. Their comparatively smaller populations limit their economic and political power to act on climate change for their own benefit. Still, representatives of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) take to the international community to seek support and solutions to the impending threat that climate change brings.

The questions this thesis explores are: (1) How are SIDS in the Pacific managing the impacts of climate change on their lives? (2) What are the distinct conversations surrounding climate-induced migration and adaptation measures in inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and scholars? And (3) what are alternative strategies and policies that have the potential to be better utilized or implemented to address the challenges of climate change? Through a literature review and comparative discourse analysis, the thesis argues that SIDS in the Pacific are currently strained due to climate change. They are actively responding by adapting and migrating, but there is an urgent need for new and better solutions from IGOs, NGOs, and scholars.

This thesis proceeds in four distinct parts. First, the problem of interest is described in terms of climate change, the Pacific Islands, and the dominant discourses of IGOs, NGOs, and scholars. Second, this thesis discusses common adaptation strategies to climate change. Next,

migration, as it relates to climate change's impacts, is examined in further detail. Lastly, this thesis introduces recent developments in discourse and policies that have the potential to provide additional solutions and promising recommendations to address climate change in the Pacific Islands in the upcoming years.

Description of the Problem

Anthropogenic climate change is a result of humans contributing to the unnatural warming of the earth through the emission of greenhouse gases (United States Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], n.d.-a). Greenhouse gases are pollutants like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide that cause the atmosphere to retain heat (EPA, n.d.-c). These carbon emissions emanate from operations like transportation, deforestation, the burning of fossil fuels, and waste disposal. Clearly, these activities that emit pollution are happening continuously worldwide, and at a much higher rate in industrialized countries.

Recognizing climate change as a major global issue for the planet, the United Nations formed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 to keep tabs on the evolution of climate change and predict its future impacts. According to the IPCC's latest Assessment Report, there are already irreversible changes taking place as a result of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly in sea level rise, ocean warming, and ice sheet melting (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2021).

One of the major impacts of climate change that is pertinent to SIDS is the threat of sea-level rise. How does climate change result in sea-level rise? Because greenhouse gases maintain heat in the atmosphere, the oceans, too, are absorbing heat and warming the surface waters (EPA, n.d.-b). Basically, heat expands water molecules, known as thermal expansion, thus the sea level rises when the oceans are warmer (Bangladesh Red Crescent Society et al. [IFRC],

2021). Another contributor to sea-level rise is the accumulation of water from glaciers, which are melting at an accelerated rate (Leal-Arcas, 2012). Albedo is a term used to refer to the proportion of sunlight reflecting off a surface on the earth; unfortunately, the ice-albedo feedback loop is positive and perpetuates atmospheric heat absorption and warming. As fewer white surfaces, like ice, are present to reflect the sun's radiation, more sunlight is absorbed by the earth. This heat absorption contributes to further loss of Arctic sea ice, snow cover, and permafrost and, consequently, more sea-level rise (IPCC, 2021). Sea-level rise has more than doubled in the past couple of decades compared to rates throughout the entire 20th century (Lindsey, 2020).

Rising ocean levels pose a threat to island nations in particular because many of them contain low-lying coral atolls, some of which fail to peak 5 meters above sea level (Aung et al., 2009; OCHA, n.d.; The World Bank Group & The Asian Development Bank, 2021; Yamada et al., 2017).¹ The very existence of these islands' territories is in danger if the sea level continues to rise at this rate, and some islands in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Solomon Islands have already succumbed to the Pacific² (Albert et al., 2016; Nunn et al., 2017). Greenhouse gas emissions are impacting climate patterns to the point that some places may become uninhabitable. Locke claims, "As climate change intensifies, and food and water supplies become more unreliable, populations will undoubtedly respond by migrating. . ." (2009, p. 178). It is generally accepted that about 200 million people worldwide will face climate-induced displacement by mid-century (Campbell, 2014). A large portion of these migrants will originate from Pacific SIDS because of their disproportionate vulnerability to the

¹ For example, the highest elevation of Tuvalu is 4.6 m, of the Republic of Kiribati is between 3-4 m, of the Republic of the Marshall Islands is 2 m, and of Tokelau is 2 m.

² Five uninhabited islands each in the Solomon Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia have been submerged since 1947, with six more on the brink. Since 2011, Nuatambu has lost half its land and relocated 25 families. Even a Hawaiian island vanished within the past four years from the impact of Hurricane Walaka (Chow, 2019). While most of these islands are uninhabited, Tebunginako Island in Kiribati was once a thriving village, but now only the remains of a church emerge from the water (Chow, 2019).

effects of climate change and lower levels of development (Campbell, 2014). Development here refers to life expectancy, access to safe potable water, sustainable income, and education. SIDS are likely to experience greater threats from natural disasters as part of these changing patterns in climate.

Additionally, island communities are highly reliant on their natural resources and the ocean for their health, economy, and culture. Climate change is already impacting these aspects of islanders' lives. Higher sea levels are damaging to the shorelines of islands as the waves' constant movement erodes the ecological state of the coast and exacerbates the risk of storm surge (Campbell, 2014). The elevated risk of flooding feeds saltwater into agricultural fields and contaminates them (Campbell, 2014; Janif et al., 2016; Locke 2009). Salinized soil is not conducive to the growth of crops, resulting in stagnant crop yields. Agriculture and fishing comprises an average of about 16.9% of GDP in Pacific SIDS (The World Bank, 2020). Much of the arable land on islands like Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Nauru have already been devastated and contain little organic-rich topsoil (Curtain & Dornan, 2019).

Furthermore, rising saltwater infiltrates potable drinking water supplies, which are already scarce in countries like Tuvalu and Kiribati (Campbell, 2014; Leal-Arcas, 2012; Locke 2009). Drinking this contaminated water has serious health impacts and can cause salt poisoning and dehydration. Rising sea level is a threat for many, as about 40% of the world's population is situated within 100 kilometers of a coastline; however, it stands as a greater threat for SIDS, which have much fewer resources and more to lose to the ocean, including food and drinking water (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2007).

When saltwater diminishes crop yields and contaminates freshwater supplies, islanders are forced to adapt to these conditions. They resort to importing foods that are highly processed

with refined sugars and lacking in fiber for nourishment (Locke, 2009). Rather than a natural diet based entirely off the foods grown on the island, residents of Kiribati and Tuvalu have altered their diets and inadvertently exposed themselves to more health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and cancer (Locke, 2009).

Moreover, these island communities are seeing significant impacts on their fishing communities. Warmer ocean temperatures and ocean acidity have resulted in significant coral bleaching (Campbell, 2014). Climate change is acidifying the oceans because atmospheric carbon dioxide dissolves in the ocean (EPA, n.d.-b). Coral reefs provide a critical ecosystem for fish populations and biodiversity, but they are quickly vanishing due to climate change (Leal-Arcas, 2012). Further, the fish are becoming diseased with ciguatera poisoning when they continue to consume micro-algae of bleached coral, which causes serious illnesses in humans (Ainge Roy, 2019). Like the plunging agricultural yields, the loss of fish populations affects an integral part of the economy and diet of people in SIDS.

There is a range of different weather patterns that will become more common as climate change sets in, such as droughts and periods of extended rainfall. Scientists estimate that there will be an increase in the frequency and severity of intense rainfalls associated with the increase in evaporation in warmer environments (Campbell, 2014; IPCC, 2021; Leal-Arcas, 2012). Tropical cyclones, which have already hit Pacific Island Countries (PICs) hard in recent years, are expected to increase in intensity as well (Campbell, 2014; IPCC, 2021).³ Severe cyclones cause great infrastructural damage as well as coastal erosion and agricultural destruction on the

³ Four major cyclones hit the South Pacific in 2020 alone: Cyclone Sarai (Category 2), Cyclone Tino (Category 3), Cyclone Harold (Category 5), Cyclone Yasa (Category 5). In all four, Fiji and Tonga were impacted, and Vanuatu suffered damages in three. Recently, category 5 tropical cyclones have been making records in the past 7 years with Cyclone Pam (2015) and Cyclone Winston (2016) decimating Fiji and surrounding islands.

islands. These states are still struggling with standards of development and climate change is only exacerbating this (Kelman, 2011, 2014; Locke, 2009).⁴

The environmental impacts of climate change disasters coupled with rapid urbanization and food insecurity has resulted in the need for urgent solutions, including migration. Internal migration is often preferred over transnational migration for many reasons including preservation of culture, language, and economic viability, so islanders are moving to urban capital cities in PICs when the impacts amass (Locke, 2009). Cultural preservation allows for the agency and resiliency of a community through a common language, values, and well-being. Many of the islands like Vanuatu, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands are seeing accelerated population growth, resulting in a growing population of youth that has nowhere to work (Campbell, 2014; Curtain & Dornan, 2019; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2020). Couple that with waste management issues, gender inequalities, and health issues and persisting development problems result (IPCC, 2021; Locke, 2009). According to the IPCC, cities are more vulnerable due to the urban heat island effect—the increased energy and heat associated with the replacement of natural vegetation with concrete, buildings, and surfaces that absorb heat (EPA, n.d.-d)—and are more prone to flooding because of drainage issues (2021). It is easy to see that the impacts of climate change are being put on people who are already marginalized in a global society.

Voices on the Issue

Climate change is an important global issue deserving the attention of a global audience. The international community often comes together to discuss various global dilemmas through inter-governmental organizations (IGOs). IGOs are composed of states as representatives of the

⁴ Standards of development include access to safe drinking water, sustainable income, education, and overall life expectancy among others.

organization and are formed from treaties. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also major actors in the realm of international affairs. NGOs are often large advocacy groups, such as Greenpeace, Christian Aid, and Oxfam International, and are not affiliated with governments. Scholars from diverse sets of disciplines are another active voice that play an important role in international issues. Scholars are individuals that are well-educated in a specific subject and publish their writings, often in peer-reviewed academic journals. There are a great many scholars that write about climate change from many different disciplines including economics, anthropology, geography, ecology, environmental science, environmental law, international law, political science, human rights studies, and sociology. IGOs, NGOs, and scholars are all well-positioned to support PICs in this time of crisis because they play an influential role in establishing dominant discourses.

This thesis looks particularly at the lack of nexus between IGOs, NGOs, and scholars and the existing discourse on climate change solutions for SIDS in the Pacific. The IGOs and NGOs most frequently cited are the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Nansen Initiative, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and Oxfam International, respectively. It is important to look at the discourse in order to evaluate the current situation and perspectives of key actors and decision-makers that can change responses to climate change. Identifying the different conversations surrounding climate migration between IGOs, NGOs, and scholars helps to compare their different perspectives, their roles, and allows for miscommunication between the three bodies to be addressed. Lessons can be learned by examining why these three sources do not work in tandem and the potential reasons for their problems with communication, agreement

on adaptive and mitigative solutions, and initiatives to help people affected by climate change. Further research on these conversations would show there are ways that misunderstandings and issues can be resolved for the benefit of migrants. Finally, one of the goals of this thesis is to identify the best advocacy tools that islanders can use to support themselves.

Terminology

There are various technical terms that are included throughout the thesis that are defined for convenience and greater understanding. These terms help define the parameters and implications of the research. First, terms relating to the people that migrate will be defined, then the distinctions between adaptation and migration, and lastly, the terms “loss and damage” and “climate finance.” Many of the terms in this field are used to refer to the people displaced by climate change are used interchangeably but they each have a slightly different definition including: “climate migrant,” “environmental migrant,” “climate-displaced person,” “disaster-displaced person,” and “climate refugee.”

An environmental migrant is a generalized term referring to people who leave their homes because of harmful environmental changes that impact their living conditions (Locke, 2009). This migration can be a permanent or temporary move, either internally or across borders. Typically, “environmental migrants” and “climate migrants” take on broad meanings in comparison to other terms, which is the reason these terms were chosen for this research. Broad terms will best reflect the situations of the majority of people. Certain perspectives understand climate migrants to be people who are moving directly as a result of climate change, as well as people who are moving due to another environmental reason (Campbell, 2014). According to Campbell, an indicator that a person is moving directly because of climate change is relocation in “response to a long-term trend or set of trends, and [when] a return to environmental conditions

similar to those that existed prior to migration is likely to be unobtainable” (2014, p. 9). Campbell also recognizes a distinction between people who are forced to migrate and people who are incentivized to migrate. A forced displacement would refer to the loss of a habitable homeland, resulting in a climate-displaced person or a disaster-displaced person when a detrimental storm is the cause of displacement. Climate-induced migration would be the result of less severe environmental hazards.

An even more controversial term for people who migrate for environmental reasons is “climate refugee.” This term is usually legally incorrect because, officially, people who move for climate-related reasons are not recognized as refugees. “The notion of human displacement occurring as a result of climate change is a comparatively recent conceptualization *vis-a-vis* the more traditional ideas associated with refugees, such as persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Jaswal & Jolly, 2013, p. 47). There is little sufficient agreement on the term across international perspectives, in part, because recognition as “refugee” carries certain political responsibilities. Additionally, some actors perceive that the coinage of “refugee” coincides with “victim” (Atatagi, 2010; Kelman, 2014; Ni, 2015; Wroe, 2018). Islanders are strong and resilient, and it can be demeaning to refer to them in a way that diminishes them to merely victims of climate change.

An important goal of this thesis is identifying various adaptations people make as a result of climate change, so it is vital to distinguish the term adaptation from mitigation. While there are many definitions of adaptation, it is commonly understood to refer to measures that allow communities to cope with climate change and benefit from it, if possible (Campbell, 2014; Page & Heyward, 2017). Comparatively, mitigation can be defined as “the prevention of climate change by reducing emissions or enhancing withdrawals of greenhouse gases” (Page &

Heyward, 2017). In effect, mitigation relates more to preventative action taken to reduce the negative impacts of climate change, whereas adaptation is doing the best one can do from an impact that has already happened. These are all concepts frequently mentioned in the existing literature on climate change that will help garner understanding.

It is common in climate change research for the negative impacts directly resulting from climate events to be referred to as “loss and damage” or L&D (Nand & Bardsley, 2020). L&D frequently affects the quality of life of people and the systems that they rely on. Yet another critical term in this subject area is “climate finance,” which can be defined as the combination of official development aid and climate finance commitments from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Atteridge & Canales, 2017).

Methodology

To address these research questions, this thesis consults a variety of academic literature, primary source news, international agreements, declarations, frameworks, and publications from IGOs and advocacy organizations. The breadth of this review considers a variety of PICs and territories in the region of Oceania, including American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. The sources chosen for the review include documents that cover the topics of climate change, adaptation, migration, and climate migrants. Of particular interest are the websites of large IGOs and NGOs that paint a picture of dominant discourse, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Nansen Initiative, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Oxfam International, and Greenpeace Australia Pacific.⁵ These sources have published annual reports, blog posts,

⁵ IGOs: IPCC, IOM, the Nansen Initiative, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

media, and news articles related to climate adaptation and migration. The literature analysis included thematic inquiry of key topics in the discourse which was compiled using a categorical three-circle Venn diagram with each circle identified as IGOs, NGOs, and scholars. The similarities and differences between the three bodies are noted in the correlated overlapping and independent diagram sections and are the main foci of the literature review results.

Limitations

Writing a thesis has several limitations that give rise to questions for further research. With a limited time allotted to conducting the writing of the thesis, it was not possible to read every piece of literature published related to climate change, adaptation, and migration. While not everything could be read, or even read in detail, the strategy of collecting relevant literature included saturating the sources, meaning relevant themes were present and repetitive. Another limit to the depth of the research was the availability of online resources. Some organizations have more easily accessible opinions, reports, and are well-known organizations; due to their influence and accessibility, the work of these organizations was unknowingly prioritized and potentially biased. Yet another limitation to the extent of the review was that most of the literature collected originated from sources written in English. On that note, some sources were gathered in Spanish and French and later translated, but this does not account for the many other potential sources that could be found in other foreign languages.

Discourse Analysis

Adaptation

Different actors in the international community and at the local level are currently pursuing different means to adapt to the countless consequences of climate change. Measures

NGOs: IFRC, 350.org, Christian Aid, IDMC, Greenpeace Australia Pacific, Les Amis de la Terre France, NGO Committee on Migration, Oxfam International, Oxfam America, WWF

comprising adaptation are a commonly accepted response to deal with the negative impacts. Within scholarly literature, the concept of adaptation measures is frequently discussed. In these sources, scholars define a need for improved adaptation strategies and resort to recommending changes that would improve overall adaptation to climate change. Some scholars explicitly focus on the different methods of adaptation that are already utilized, for example, adaptations appropriate for islands specifically. An article by Klöck and Nunn explored where climate change adaptations are happening, what the adaptations are, and how successful they have been (2019). Part of the findings in this study touch on adaptations such as building sea walls, practicing water conservation, rebuilding mangroves, and creating protected areas (Klöck & Nunn, 2019). They noted that sea walls are generally unsuccessful, yet they are commonly proposed as an adaptation mechanism (Klöck & Nunn, 2019).⁶

Plenty of scholars who have voiced their concerns about the current state of climate adaptation in SIDS. The common plans that are formulated to adjust to rising sea levels often consist of strategies to fill lagoons, raise islands, build dykes, and place houses on stilts. However, as Klöck and Nunn write, these are not viable adaptations that work for long-term adaptation to climate change impacts, and they are resource-intensive (2019). Esteban et al. argue that humans have an underestimated and innate capacity to adapt to environmental change, but small islands might not have the resources to adapt in the same ways that Japan, Indonesia, and the Philippines can (2019). Adding elevation to an island is extremely expensive, especially if the island is distant from other places where land can be acquired. Additionally, it is a task that requires a lot of labor. Yet, despite the expensive price tag and unsustainability of the solutions, actors in the private sector and at times the local cultures still encourage these types of

⁶ Sea walls have a reputation for quick decay and collapsing, making it an unsustainable and temporary solution to address sea-level rise. In Kiribati, the sea wall showed erosion just after construction finished (Donner & Webber, 2014).

adaptations; moreover, these types of adaptation plans are the ones that are most likely to get funding from both public and private sources.

Actors willing to fund climate change adaptations for islands often limit their funds to small projects that are common universally because funders are not flexible or willing to take a risk on a new idea that would be customized to the situation (Bordner et al., 2020). Also, private funding is not ideal because it often consists of loans and investors looking to make a return on their investment for commercial purposes rather than humanitarian motives (Kramer, 2019; Bordner et al., 2020). In fact, almost 25% of GDP in SIDS is funded from external institutions, representing significant power over how aid is utilized at the local level (Bordner et al., 2020). “Outside funders have routinely used this power to intervene in the internal affairs of developing states, implementing projects of their own design to impose Western ideas of proper political, social, and economic arrangements” (Bordner et al., 2020, p. 5).

An IGO body that plays a crucial role in developing adaptation strategies is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC was created at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro through a multilateral environmental treaty with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere (Jaswal & Jolly, 2013). Parties that signed agreed that all states have a common, but differentiated, responsibility to protect and manage the global commons (Stavins et al., 2014).

In 1995, the first Conference of the Parties (COP) annual climate change meetings was established. In these meetings, the Parties, which are Member State representatives, analyze progress toward reducing emissions and the effectiveness of the instruments that the UNFCCC has adopted. Groupings of Parties are often formed to collaborate on negotiating strategies for climate change, such as the 40 Parties defined as SIDS and the 48 Parties of Least Developed

Countries (LDCs). In addition to the Parties, Non-Party Stakeholders can be admitted to the conference as either members of the press or representatives of observer organizations.

Organizations that can secure observer status can be within the UN system, an IGO, or an NGO.

Funding Mechanisms for Climate Change. Funding for climate change is a highly debated and controversial issue in the international community. SIDS do not have the financial capital necessary to push large-scale adaptations in comparison to the capital of large emitting states. The polluter-pays principle, that the countries which have contributed the most to climate change should pay the price, is often part of proposed solutions.⁷ As part of this campaign, the UNFCCC launched the Adaptation Fund in 2007 and the Global Climate Fund (GCF) in 2010. The GCF is a particular topic of interest in scholarly debate because there are criticisms about how funds are raised and distributed. At COP15 in Copenhagen, it was promised that the GCF would finance \$100 billion every year to support climate change adaptation and mitigation plans in LDCs starting in 2020. The funds were finally raised in 2014 from many developed states like the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.

The GCF started investing in projects and had distributed \$1.5 billion total by the end of 2016. Despite increased commitments from many states during the fund replenishment period in 2018, the GCF still only has \$9.7 billion in pledges. The majority of the developed nation-states have fallen short of their commitments to \$100 billion yearly (Tower, 2021). Simultaneously, a major problem LDCs are seeing is that there are no rules for fund allocation. States are competing for these resources both between and within borders (Atteridge & Canales, 2017). In fact, the operations of the GCF are so mystic, that it is difficult for scholars to find patterns in delivery of funds to SIDS, changes over time, and the biases that influence finance outcomes; the

⁷ In the concept of the polluter-pays principle, the states causing the most damage to the environment via carbon emissions should be responsible to pay for the damages on vulnerable places, such as SIDS.

money trails are in part hidden by the fact that the data is attributed to “Asia” as a whole, rather than “Oceania” or “SIDS” (Atteridge & Canales, 2017). All this climate finance is intended for industrialized states to help smaller countries pay for L&D caused by climate change; however, very few funds actually make an impact at the ground level.

In addition to funding pools for climate change disasters, the UNFCCC created an instrument to address the loss and damage (L&D) inflicted by climate change. At COP19, the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) was established as a temporary body with an executive committee (ExCom) to address L&D from both slow-onset events and sudden disasters. It was then that L&D was added as the third pillar of the UNFCCC, rather than a subset of adaptation.⁸ One of the WIM’s prime areas of focus is the task of creating innovative financial instruments for climate change damages. Ideas for instruments listed in the initial two-year work plan were risk management, catastrophe risk insurance, contingency financing, themed bonds, and improving resilience in the places impacted.

Scholars and NGOs alike argue that developed states have not provided sufficient support to L&D in PICs (Atteridge & Canales, 2017; Nand & Bardsley, 2020; Page & Heyward, 2017; Singh, 2018). A few mechanisms have been created with the hopes of easing the process of acquiring funds to compensate for L&D, however, none of them have been successful at securing money or distributing it. Consistently, the WIM has failed to create a system of distributing international climate aid funds to developing countries (Atteridge & Canales, 2017; Nand & Bardsley, 2020; Page & Heyward, 2017; Singh, 2018). Any funds provided by bodies such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) are largely unavailable for emergency climate events and always difficult to negotiate (Nand & Bardsley, 2020). For example, when Cyclone Pam decimated Vanuatu in 2015, only a small fraction of needed compensation was covered for L&D, but this

⁸ The pillars of the UNFCCC are adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage.

financial payout to the Government doesn't even cover the non-economic impacts of disasters which could be used for further compensation and rehabilitation (Nand & Bardsley, 2020). Page and Heyward, both scholars, argue that policies of L&D in developing countries need to respect norms of compensatory justice that make the victims feel "whole again" (2017). Accordingly, scholars are of the opinion that L&D is not solely a financial matter but also one of resilience-building and understanding (Atteridge & Canales, 2017; Nand & Bardsley, 2020; Page & Heyward, 2017).

Additionally, it is difficult for PICs to have grant applications approved when there are missing baseline measurements and data that could be able to directly attribute events to climate change (Nand & Bardsley, 2020). Adding to the issue of procuring funds, social and ecological geography scholars Nand and Bardsley argue that developed states deny any responsibility for L&D in PICs and that this is the reason they have not provided sufficient support for L&D in the Pacific (2020). It would be more difficult to justify developed states' neglect if it can be better proven that specific natural disasters are directly attributed to anthropogenic climate change (Nand & Bardsley, 2020).⁹

An excellent example of how developed states refuse to make valuable commitments to supporting PICs is seen in the conversations surrounding the Suva Expert Dialogue. The Suva Dialogue was a discussion workshop in 2018 in which participants from states, non-state actors, and civil society evaluated the sources of funding for people impacted by climate change.¹⁰ Their work informed a comprehensive account of financing available for L&D within and outside the WIM and the ways to access that money. However, reports on the workshop indicate a sense of

⁹ A promising tool called Probabilistic Event Attribution (PEA) is a technique that could be a uniform way to measure causal events from climate change and inform the WIM for purposes of L&D distribution (Nand & Bardsley, 2020).

¹⁰ Organizations present in Suva included the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, Oxfam, WWF, and ICLEI, among others (Singh, 2018).

frustration from developing countries and civil society (Nand & Bardsley; Singh, 2018). They feel that the WIM has failed to distribute funds for L&D, and they ask, in addition to the \$100 billion already pledged for climate finance, that \$50 billion be raised for L&D (Hirsch, 2019).

During the two-day workshop, a vast portion of the discussion was on the topic of risk management as a financial mechanism, rather than funding. Singh writes that developed countries have pressured insurance as a financial instrument for L&D for far too long (2018). It is almost as if the ExCom was being pressured to stop looking for new ways to pay for climate change because insurance seems like the most promising solution, which is primarily proposed by developed countries such as Germany (Singh, 2018). It is important to consider that insurance for L&D has its own set of limitations and won't work for frequently-occurring events (Singh, 2018). Various insurance situations employed now only cover low probability, high severity events (Nand & Bardsley, 2020). For these reasons, NGOs like Christian Aid (Kramer, 2019) criticize these perspectives of developed states. Another common request—from developing countries and NGOs—is that developed countries provide transparent financial commitments, for both adaptation and L&D (Atteridge & Canales, 2017; Kramer, 2019). However, these are quickly dismissed and seen as a threat (Nand & Bardsley, 2020).

The results of this workshop were compiled in a technical paper¹¹ by the UNFCCC secretariat which have led to continued concerns at the COP26 in Glasgow. Developed countries have not met promised emissions targets, and it results in significant consequences to vulnerable developing countries, who have to pay a much higher proportion of their income to address L&D in their own territory. This supports the argument that rich polluting countries need to pay more

¹¹ The technical paper was mandated by the UNFCCC and later entitled “Elaboration of the sources of and modalities for accessing financial support for addressing loss and damage.”

for this funding. Further, the delay in receiving funds for SIDS causes more suffering and more damage to infrastructure, socioeconomic systems, and food security.

As criticisms are still prevalent concerning the operations of the WIM, it was a contested topic under review at both COP25 and COP26. NGOs have voiced their concerns in publications about how the COP should approach the WIM as many already see it as a failure on the terms of L&D (Sen, 2021). There was one proposal to create a new L&D financial facility that would focus on rebuilding livelihoods after losses from climate disasters (Oxfam International, 2019). This proposal to fund reconstruction and compensation after disasters was blocked by the U.S. and the E.U. (Sen, 2021). Overall, there is a recurring pattern that NGOs and scholars recommend the adjustment of climate financing procedures and L&D mechanisms to better adapt to climate change impacts in developing states. The financing called for by these actors are subject to soft limits rather than hard limits. Hard limits are set by the limitations of the physical environment, and there is not much that can be done to fix them. Soft limits, however, are a result of social, cultural, political, and economic forces that contribute to a limit to financing, governance, and innovation for adaptations (IFRC, 2021).

Mitigation. On the flip side of adaptation lies the importance of mitigation. NGOs, IGOs, and scholars have not lost their vision of mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A significant advancement in global diplomacy surrounding mitigation took place at COP21 in 2015. A majority of Member States united under the new Paris Agreement multilateral treaty to make new pledges to reduce emissions, with certain aspects of the treaty binding. Pursuant to the Paris Agreement, countries commit to make more challenging emissions targets each year (Paris Agreement, 2015). Needless to say, SIDS are contributing the least to emissions and global climate change. An issue with the stipulations of the Paris Agreement is that there is

no consequence for countries that fail to reach their goals for mitigation; a system of accountability is missing, which was compromised when they chose that it was more important to have more Parties ratify it (Nand & Bardsley, 2020). Countries like Australia are really lacking in commitment to reducing greenhouse gas concentrations (Edney-Browne, 2021).

Migration

As islands have always been vulnerable to the results of environmental changes, migration has been an option historically for survival and maintaining a sense of community, culture, and place. Through a study of elder islanders in Fijian island communities, researchers found that almost 30% of the 27 communities they interviewed had relocated in the past due to serious environmental events like coastal erosion and tidal flooding (Janif et al., 2016). While migration has been a natural progression for PICs, there is also a gruesome history of forced migration in many of these nations, even in recent years. Bordner et al. describe how the Marshallese people were displaced in the past due to Western colonialism and American nuclear testing (2020). The impacts of forced displacement and colonialism on SIDS are ongoing and have resulted in economies of dependency as well as natural resource extraction (Bordner et al., 2020). In the past century, developed countries have used their power to extract the rich natural resources of the Pacific Islands, such as phosphate mining in Nauru and Kiribati and logging in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (Nicholas et al., 2021). In the waters of Kiribati and the Federated States of Micronesia, the overwhelming majority of fish caught are from foreign vessels (Nicholas et al., 2021). There is also negative sentiment associated with colonizers and their descendants as they continue to practice forms of control, dominance, and authority over some aspects of islanders' lives (Bordner et al., 2020).

Discussions on climate-induced migration began back in the 1980s and 1990s when the term “environmental refugee” was first used in the UN (Bergo, 2021). During this time, the discussions were more based on environmental disruptions than climate change explicitly. Since then, it has evolved to become an even greater issue of concern on a global scale. As the consequences of climate change continue to exponentiate, people living on islands will likely lose their land security, livelihood security, and habitat security (Campbell, 2014). Without these necessities and the ability to recover them, many families will resort to migration, either internally or externally, to find better living conditions.

Refugees and Recognition. When the relationship between forced and voluntary migration is considered, it is very much a issue of international law and legal definitions. The common understanding of “forced” and “voluntary” is quite different in the political sphere. In order for migration to be considered “forced,” the movement must be based on the impacts other humans have on a person. The legal essence of forced migration was founded in the accepted definition of a refugee—a person who left their home country due to a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, p. 3); this status is determined by the state, which must decide whether this “well-founded fear” exists to the extent that the individual is considered a forced migrant. Everything else within the international legal infrastructure is categorized as voluntary migration, even if one’s home is completely decimated by a storm.

International migration, which occurs more frequently among Pacific islanders than inlanders, is subject to very strict laws and policies. The first law that comes to mind for many people is the applicability of international refugee law for environmental migrants. Refugee law

offers strong protections to those people who qualify for it. Recognized refugees are protected from being returned to their origin country. They also receive basic rights to the freedom of movement and economic and social rights, such as the right to medical care, education, and work (UNHCR, 2002). However, the vast majority of climate migrants will not fit into the requirements that allow for refugee status, which is persecution. Because the main contributor to the migration of climate migrants is an environmental perpetrator, not a person, they will likely never attain refugee status. This is especially the case in SIDS because there are few violent conflicts that arise in these states, the notable exceptions being Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, and now New Caledonia (Coljin, 2018; IDMC, 2021).

Should refugee law be altered to accommodate environmental migrants? Is there a need for a new multilateral treaty to establish protections for those people? This is highly contested among scholars. Many respected scholars make an argument that a new international agreement is necessary and a component of a longer list of recommendations for dealing with the burdens of climate change (Bergo, 2021; Gibb & Ford, 2012). Gibb and Ford argue that what climate migrants really need is recognition from the UNFCCC. In this context, recognition consists of a legal term or mechanism in international law, a budget assigned to them, identification of an agency responsible within the UNFCCC, designation of persons to protect, and measures to deal with the issue. Gibb and Ford acknowledge that recognition is not the most pressing issue of climate governance, but they see an opportunity for it to happen (2012). Gibb and Ford provide a series of proposals for this process of recognition, starting with the mechanism as an international framework (2012). Likewise, Bergo encourages a binding international agreement that offers recognition, equivalent refugee protections, plans for resettlement, and is ratified by developed countries (Bergo 2021). The major theme emerging from this position is that scholars

are looking for ways to protect climate migrants, and some of them think this is best done via an international treaty.

Across the spectrum, there are also many scholars who share concerns about the focus of establishing another international framework through the UN (Cullen, 2020; Leal-Arcas, 2012; McAdam, 2012). Some scholars do not want to push this agenda because it would require major effort and cooperation at the global level, which is not efficient for people who are struggling to migrate now (McAdam, 2012). It is a slow process that requires extensive time to build consensus, ratify, implement, and enforce. McAdam elaborates further that a legal instrument would shift attention away from alternative adaptation solutions that could push back the need to migrate (2012).

Yet another difficulty with the creation of a new multilateral treaty is the process of defining who is included under its umbrella and the scope of protections offered. Cullen agrees in that there is a disconcerting gray area in the realm of climate-induced migration which makes concrete definitions hard to come by (2020). It would be hard to define eligibility into distinct categories of people when they all have differing circumstances and degrees of disaster (Cullen, 2020). Any definition that would be agreed on universally would fail to be all-encompassing of people who are migrating due to climate change impacts. Leal-Arcas recognizes that not all scholars agree on whether a new multilateral tool is the best choice (2012). He suggests that another option could be to improve existing migration mechanisms (Leal-Arcas, 2012). As a result, more scholars have been shifting away from recommending an international instrument in recent years (Cullen, 2020).

As such, many scholars have settled that existing refugee law is not the answer for providing protection to Pacific Islanders who are evading the consequences of climate change

(Jaswal & Jolly, 2013; McAdam, 2011). Legal scholars have been analyzing potential solutions and providing recommendations that graze on the edge of refugee protections (Cullen, 2020; Jaswal & Jolly, 2013; Leal-Arcas, 2012). Jaswal and Jolly insist that states themselves should establish alternate forms of protection specifically for people who don't qualify as refugees under the UN Human Rights Convention 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol (2013). Referring back to McAdam's argument, she claims that instead of an international, universal treaty, regional and local soft law approaches would be effective (2011). She believes that these approaches are quicker because they would not have to account for the interests of all states. For example, the Niue Declaration on Climate Change has been an influential regional tool for the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and advocating for joint action by Pacific Island nations (McAdam, 2011). To bring it full circle, even if islanders could acquire this status of protection, it does not force states to accept them into their borders, and thus, does not solve the humanitarian issue (McAdam, 2011).

NGOs are divided on the idea of advocating for the recognition of climate migrants as "climate refugees." Many NGOs have openly used the term and published reports endorsing the establishment of a multilateral treaty (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2021; Mauthe, 2021; Tower, 2021). McAdam says that NGOs have done a really effective job at mobilizing the public for the "climate refugee" cause (2011). However, McAdam warns that with the influence NGOs hold over the perspectives of civil society, they should be wary and well-informed on the opinions they are lobbying (2011). "Because if there is an absence of rigorous analysis and empirical evidence to support claims being made, it will not achieve its ends" (McAdam, 2011, p. 27). She is concerned that the NGOs and the media are not well-versed on the issues they write about and may push agendas that are biased or unsupported.

There are also multilateral instruments in place with important protections for cross-border migrants, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration of 2018. Within this intergovernmental agreement is a clause for the commitment of states to reduce the push factors for migration from their home countries (Cullen, 2020). The soft law includes values grounded in state sovereignty, responsibility-sharing, non-discrimination, and human rights. The Global Compact for Migration promotes “cooperation in managing the root cause of migration” (Atapattu & Schapper, 2019). Another one is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015). The UN General Assembly adopted this framework as a non-binding agreement with seven global targets and four priorities: understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance, invest in resilience, and enhance preparedness response for disasters. Bergo states that it focuses on displacement, but there is a lack of focus on how climate change exacerbates the effects of displacement by driving more disasters (Bergo, 2021). However, aspects of this framework include provisions that could be the basis for future action regarding displacement and local decision-making.

Options for International Migration. As previously noted, environmental migrants have no rights to settle in another country and no entitlement to protections outside of their general human rights (Leal-Arcas, 2012). Often climate migrants are at the mercy of the national immigration laws of whatever state they migrate to. Traditionally, there are three categories of immigrants that states accept: economic, family, and humanitarian. As such, residents of SIDS will not usually meet the criteria for immigration acceptance (Leal-Arcas, 2012). J. R. Campbell closely examined the options for SIDS when migration becomes crucial (2014). To the dismay of some islands, there are inequities between states for access to migration pathways. Access to

migration is not readily available to states that don't have a colonial connection or aren't freely associated with a developed country¹² (Campbell, 2014; Locke, 2009).

Some developed states have unique immigration laws that can be applied to climate migrants in some way or another. An important feature of laws that protect migrants is that they do not return a person to their place of origin which has been determined unsuitable or dangerous. In the United States, migrants can seek refuge through the U.S. Temporary Protected Status Mechanism (TPS) (Jaswal & Jolly, 2013; Leal-Arcas, 2012; NGO Committee on Migration, 2017) which appears to be supported by scholars and NGOs alike. The law stipulates that asylum seekers in the U.S. can attain temporary refugee status and remain in the country if three requirements are met: (1) an environmental disaster in their state of origin has substantially disrupted living conditions; (2) the state of origin cannot handle the return of migrants that left; and (3) the foreign state formally requested this temporary status be applied (Jaswal & Jolly, 2013). The clear issue with this is that it is not a permanent solution for those people; what if islanders will never have a country to return to (Leal-Arcas, 2012)? TPS does not include a path to permanent residency in the U.S. Likewise, in the European Union (EU) there is the Temporary Protection Directive, which can be applied to waves of mass migration. However, these solutions are also not very likely for slow-onset events, such as floods and droughts.

Another seemingly temporary solution for migrants and prospective migrants are movements based on labor. One international instrument is mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (Leal-Arcas, 2012). The GATS is a multilateral instrument accepted by 148 Member States of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Through the GATS mode 4, a person can migrate to another WTO Member State to work temporarily, by providing a service.

¹² The colonial powers that continue to foster colonial relationships in Pacific SIDS are the United States (American Samoa, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau), New Zealand (Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu), and France (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna).

Countries like the Republic of Kiribati, Tuvalu, and Nauru lack options for large-scale migration pathways, due to a dearth of colonial connections and status outside the WTO. A limited labor migration program that has been provisionally successful for key SIDS is the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy in New Zealand. This national policy, first implemented in 2007, permits seasonal workers from overseas to labor in horticulture and viticulture. Only residents of Fiji, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu are allowed to apply (Campbell, 2014). The workers can stay in New Zealand for 7-9 months.

New Zealand has another migration instrument that also prioritizes immigrants from the Pacific Islands. The Pacific Access Category Resident Visa is a solution for permanent residency in New Zealand for adults up to age 45 and their families. The New Zealand Government issues 75 visas each year to I-Kiribati and Tuvaluan citizens and 250 visas each year to Tongan and Fijian citizens (Jaswal & Jolly, 2013). One of the main requirements for applicants is the ability to read, write, and speak English. This is a hindrance but also an aid, as there is a vast cultural difference between these islands and the Western culture of New Zealand (Locke, 2009). According to Leal-Arcas, “The PAC was not set up with an aim to making climate migration from these island nations easier. More likely, it demonstrates New Zealand’s historical inclination to grant immigration preferences to its Pacific Island neighbors” (2012, p. 92). There are residents of a few other SIDS that also have access to New Zealand’s shores via a system of free association, meaning a relationship in which New Zealand respects the autonomy, yet the nations lack full sovereignty (Campbell, 2014); residents of Niue, the Cook Islands, and Tokelau automatically are granted citizenship of New Zealand through this relationship.

New Zealand is not the only country that has opened its borders to the potential of permanent residence for climate migrants. National immigration laws in Sweden and Finland also grant permanent residence to climate-displaced people (Leal-Arcas, 2012). Finland's Aliens Act and Sweden's Alien Act grant permanent residents to foreign nationals that cannot return to their state due to an environmental catastrophe (Leal-Arcas, 2012). These provisions were enacted due to Chernobyl as an environmental disaster (Leal-Arcas, 2012). The application of these national immigration laws is still not certain because the law does not define a catastrophe or a disaster, meaning there is the chance that it will not apply to slow-onset disasters like droughts and sea-level rise (Leal-Arcas, 2012). However, the protections granted in these scenarios are still important as it is recognized that rights under permanent residency are needed to rebuild lives after migration.

Domestic Protections. Internal migrants are subject to the policies and protections observed in their country. Until human rights are violated, there is no international influence on how people are being treated because states follow principles of sovereignty. For internal migrants in Pacific SIDS, movement primarily consists of relocating to another island and/or to an urban location. One applicable international law instrument in this scenario is the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Developed by Francis Deng and adopted by the UN, this is a nonbinding framework for people who have had to leave their homes but have not crossed a state border. This serves as general protection against natural disasters, but it is still uncertain whether this principle will apply to slow-onset disasters in the same way (Leal-Arcas, 2012).

Factors Affecting Migration Decisions. The decision to migrate, whether this is internally or across state borders, is a difficult one for many islanders and is fueled by multiple push factors. This is well-understood and documented by scholars and NGOs, however, IGOs are

less concerned with this personal approach. In fact, when analyzing IGOs, one finds that the support and action surrounding climate migration has been slow from some states within the United Nations (UN) (Coljin et al., 2018).

From the perspective of scholars, there are a great many forces that contribute to migration patterns, and it is difficult to define or categorize any one method. This is why recognizing a definitive term for environmental migrants on the international scale would be so difficult. Curtain and Dornan argue there is a range of economic, social, and cultural push and pull factors, in addition to pressure from the collective community and the presence of overseas diasporas, such as large resettlement populations of Fijians, Tongans, Samoans, and Tokelauans in New Zealand, and Marshallese people in Springdale, Arkansas (2019; IOM, 2020). Kelman has also taken great interest in what variables are considered when making decisions related to environmental migration (2015). He writes, “further examining a decision-making process for migration could assist in understanding if, when, and how to move entire island or country populations” (Kelman, 2015, p. 135). The most accurate assessment of the complexities of decision-making on SIDS is described in the work of Marino and Lazrus, ecologists-turned anthropologists. The authors argued that climate migration interacts with “traditional” migration on the ground on these islands (Marino & Lazrus, 2015). Migration pressures are not cut in stone and cannot be separated by distinct reasons. Economic forces, social relationships, and ecological predictions all comprise the blurry myriad of reasons to migrate. Forced displacement and migration by choice likewise are not so easily separable. Kelman, Marino, and Lazrus find that decisions to migrate are made by a combination of individuals, families, and communities (2015).

Concern for Protection of Climate Migrants. Other sources of academic literature take the perspective of accepting that migration is likely necessary for some islands and focus on ways to make safe migration possible (Campbell, 2014; Janif et al., 2016; Jaswal & Jolly, 2013). NGOs are more inclined to think of solutions that would allow islanders to stay, in part because they are aware of the dangers and hardships associated with migration. A report published by Greenpeace Australia Pacific focuses little attention on migration being a potential outcome of climate change, but it spends much more time talking about Australia's failures and mistakes in helping its neighboring Pacific states (Edney-Browne, 2021). It mentions that migration would result in a loss of identity and culture among islanders and shows that Greenpeace is against migration. Migration may have to happen, though, if emissions are not significantly reduced.

On the subject of IGOs, COP21's Paris Agreement created the Task Force on Displacement under the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM). The outcomes of the Conference of the Parties (COP) from multiple years have introduced displacement concerns to the world of climate policy. This Task Force has drafted a series of recommendations for states and IGOs, including that national laws consider including specifics on climate migration and that safe and regular migration pathways are created for climate-induced migration (IOM, 2020). Through the creation of the Task Force, the inter-governmental community demonstrates that it is concerned with the protection of climate-displaced people.

Another IGO that expresses concern explicitly for climate migration is the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Their objectives are to facilitate migration in the context of climate change adaptation and increase the resilience of affected communities (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2020). The IOM's goals also relate to the protection of migrants and the prevention of forced migration. In its analysis, the IOM summarizes that there

are three common framings in international discourse with regard to environmental migration: security, protection, and adaptation strategies (IOM, 2020). In contrast to other IGOs, the IOM criticizes these common framings because they only allow limited agency for islanders (IOM, 2020). Yet, the IOM still reflects these principles, as its focus is on the protection of migrants, as it sees proactive migration as a better solution than forced migration.

The Nansen Initiative is one of the organizations that embodies the common frame of protection for cross-border disaster-displaced persons (CBDDP). As an IGO, it created the Protection Agenda,¹³ a soft law framework, which was endorsed by 109 states through intergovernmental consultations in 2015. Aptly named, the Protection Agenda places great importance on the protection and rights that should be afforded to CBDDP. It recommends that states should be able to admit CBDDP at least temporarily or refrain from returning them to a country affected by a disaster because most states lack policies that would provide criteria on how to protect CBDDP if they were to show up at their borders (The Nansen Initiative, 2015). The Protection Agenda stresses the need for states not to return foreigners to their country of origin at a time of disaster and that human rights law needs to be followed.

Within the humanitarian aspect, the Agenda suggests several ways that would make admission easier to achieve for CBDDP. These ideas include a “humanitarian visa,” granting visas or temporarily suspending visa requirements, prioritizing the process for people from countries affected by disaster, and suspending document requirements in disaster situations (The Nansen Initiative, 2015). The Protection Agenda also includes the rights and responsibilities after being admitted to stay in the receiving country. They recommend that their basic needs are to be met: shelter, food, medical care, education, livelihoods, security, family unity, respect for cultural

¹³ Shortened from “Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change”

identity, and that information is provided to them in a language they understand (The Nansen Initiative, 2015). The final part of the Protection Agenda's first section is the ending of temporary displacement. The people can be returned to their origin countries if it is safe or if they want to go back. However, in cases where their homes are not safe, there are three other options. They can go back to a different area within their home country, they can stay in the receiving country, or in extreme cases, be relocated to a third country permanently (The Nansen Initiative, 2015).

Hardships of Migrating. Pacific Islanders are often attributed little agency by IGOs and NGOs, and some scholars even write them off as helpless. This notion will be discussed in detail later on, but it also relates to the perspectives of IGOs, NGOs, and scholars and the ability of islanders to migrate, in a physical rather than legal sense. Because the world is far from perfect, it is not likely for all the people in a community to relocate to the same place (Locke 2009). It also seems as though outsiders dismiss the importance of islanders' cultures and overestimate the capability of relocating an entire community's culture (Bordner et al., 2020). It is connected to the ancestral land and place, and cannot be recreated when there are so many variables that can be lost with travel. Loss of ancestral land and connection with the sea contributes to a sense of loss of community identity, social cohesion, and overall well-being (Oxfam International, 2019). Social life is bound to be starkly different after migration, and the process of moving is highly taxing on a person's well-being.

Scholars have recognized that there are numerous hardships that come with migration. Locke argues that international migration brings potential benefits and advancements for some people, but certainly not all (2009). Older folks have difficulty assimilating to the vastly different cultures of Western and developed countries that would take them in. There may be

psychological trauma resulting from culture shock and language barriers (Locke, 2009). A functional understanding of English is a primary concern for transnational migration, as highlighted in New Zealand's migration openings for SIDS; yet there have been declining literacy rates enrollments at educational facilities on SIDS like Tuvalu, which exacerbate "the difficulties of adapting to modern Western market-based culture" (Locke, 2009, p. 178). It further translates to trouble securing a full-time job in a new location, in part because the skills islanders practiced in their own country are not needed for the same jobs in the new place (Oxfam International, 2019). At the same time, their cultural heritage (including important sites and structures) is still threatened by climate change as they remain on the sinking islands (Greenpeace Australia Pacific, n.d.).

Some scholars refrain from admitting there are clear hardships resulting from migration and prefer to focus on the benefits that can arise from it (Bergo, 2021; Campbell, 2014; Curtain & Dornan, 2019). Of course, there is the potential that life in a new place could be safer, easier, and better than in one's home place. However, specific benefits that are most likely with relocation are found on the financial side of things. When families send one person away to a developed country, they can secure a job with potentially higher pay. It is also important for SIDS to find jobs for their increasing young population. Migration provides for labor mobility for young people that cannot find employment in their hometowns that face economic challenges (Curtain & Dornan, 2019). The youth who migrate for work may benefit the home country by sending back remittances from their higher incomes (Bergo, 2021; Campbell, 2014). Curtain and Dornan further elaborate that the remittances benefit the family "due to higher consumption and savings, ownership of durable assets, and dietary diversity" (2019, p. 10).

As there are clear difficulties and hesitations associated with migration, the question arises whether it is an effective adaptation strategy or whether it represents a failure of adaptation and mitigation strategies. Different actors and stakeholders seem to take different approaches when addressing this question. Many scholars question the idea of migration as a method of adaptation (Bordner et al., 2020; Locke, 2009). Instead, they believe that migration is a last-choice decision, yet many developed countries and scholars encourage it as the most feasible option for battling climate change. Bordner et al. offer a notable refutation of migration as an adaptation strategy saying, “Migration is increasingly viewed by international agencies, policymakers, and researchers not as a failure to adapt but as an effective adaptation strategy” (Bordner et al., 2020, p. 1). IGOs, and some scholars, often support the concept of migration because it is the most cost-effective option for what they see as an inevitable shift. In this way, some scientists neglect the value these cultures have of their land and the difficulties of immigrating to a foreign country. Some scholars, like Curtain and Dornan, remain in the middle, not assigning it either way, while Locke and McAdam both agree that it is more of a last-resort choice to adapt (2009, 2011). NGOs are also conflicted on this idea, usually wanting what is best for those impacted. An article by Bryan at 350.org shows that the NGO accepts migration as another adaptation strategy.

Synthesizing Developments in Law and Discourse and Analyzing the Promising

Interdisciplinary Approaches

Legal Approaches. Research and progress towards solutions for climate migrants has seen an improvement over the years. Developments in legal approaches and judgments suggests a more promising future for the protection of cross-border migrants. Newer strategies proposed by scholars are more encompassing of variables and interdisciplinary approaches, and they often

consist of ideas for adaptation, mitigation, and migration. The following legal developments, concerns, and recommendations are important matters to consider on this topic. These developments range from new precedents in international law to recommendations that are more promising than the traditional proposals of the decades past due to the interdisciplinary perspectives that consider more than just environmental science and politics.

Scholars against campaigns for a new multilateral instrument have provided alternative solutions that would recognize environmental migrants and climate-displaced people. McAdam, an expert in climate change and migration law, is one of these scholars, and she suggests that a regional soft law instrument would be more effective in granting recognition and protection to migrants than a binding multilateral instrument (2011). Local and regional approaches are likely to be passed in a more timely manner, in part, due to the fewer number of states that have to make agreements, but also because they may share some of the same values, interests, and perspectives (The Nansen Initiative, 2015).

There are existing regional instruments that take on broader definitions of “refugee” than the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, such as the Organization of African Unity Convention in Africa and the Cartagena Declaration in Latin America (McAdam, 2012). These regional instruments are binding and non-binding, respectively, and each has limitations to its application; for instance, it requires a serious disruption of public order to have taken place and limits preemptive protection (McAdam, 2012). Despite some drawbacks, regional laws agreed on by IGOs are a potential solution for progressing international protections for islanders. As can be seen in these regional instruments, fewer compromises can be made when there are fewer actors involved, which will ultimately benefit migrants. If this legal

approach is taken with regions in mind, it would make recognition of international climate migrants easier to facilitate.

Another area of development comes in judicial proceedings at the international level, where we find developments in the law that have yet to be applied in their full capacity to help disaster-displaced people (Cullen, 2020). There have been new interpretations of human rights law that coincide with an increase in the movement to protect people. For example, the right to life has been put in question as to how it will be applied to SIDS which are facing the impacts of rising sea levels. In 2020, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled on a case in relation to slow-onset disasters happening in Kiribati (Cullen, 2020). Ioane Teitiota filed a claim for asylum in New Zealand after his visa expired. Because his migration does not fall within the legal bounds of forced migration, he cannot assume refugee protections. In his claim, he cited that his right to life would be violated if New Zealand were to return him to Kiribati. His case was appealed to the Supreme Court of New Zealand, which ruled against him (Atapattu & Schapper, 2019). After he was deported, he filed a suit to the UN Human Rights Committee, charging that New Zealand violated Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Aidun & Francis, 2020). Specifically, he cited that there is a lack of clean drinking water in Kiribati caused by sea-level rise.¹⁴ The majority ruled the threat to his life was not at the required level of “extreme” precarity and that the deprivation of life must be personal. There were two dissenting opinions, however, that asked, ‘how long do we have to wait until it would be considered an extreme level of precarity? What is the threshold?’ (Cullen, 2020). To paraphrase, it is counterintuitive to the right to life to wait until deaths occur to consider the risk extreme. Even though Teitiota did not win the case, this holds promising improvements for the future

¹⁴ He even adduced that members of his family had already suffered health consequences due to the water problem. One of his children was infected with blood poisoning, a life threatening condition (Aidun & Francis, 2020).

because, eventually, the decision will have to be made that it is a danger to someone's life to return them to a place that does not have water to drink.

Promising Recommendations. To follow up on these legal solutions, there are auxiliary recommendations that have potential for islanders and their dealing with climate change consequences. A key aspect of these solutions, mostly posited by scholars, is the importance of agency for islanders. Bordner et al. emphasize that migration is that last thing that Pacific Islanders want to endure (2020). Western influence—which tends to pressure decisions of migration through commentary, financial incentives, and dependencies—has no place in making these decisions. Rather, it is up to individuals, families, and communities on how they want to approach migration or even if they want to consider it as an adaptation strategy (Bordner et al., 2020; Kelman, 2015; Marino & Lazrus, 2015). There are inherent difficulties with migration when it comes to preserving culture, a sense of community, valuable traditional knowledge, and heritage. Rather than be subjected to outside influence, islanders would benefit by having complete authority over their own adaptation strategies to cope with climate change. Historically, most SIDS have suffered as a result of Western colonialism, and they should not be pressed to accept the conditions of Western society out of necessity. “It is necessary to dismantle systems of dependency and move towards an aid system that supports the autonomy of decolonizing states” (Bordner et al., 2020). Adding to this, a bottom-up approach for decision making, including the poorest people, to discuss and determine solutions would improve adaptation and access to migration pathways and social mobility (Bergo, 2021).

In fact, Pacific residents are capable of making and facilitating their own adaptation strategies. Campbell explains that local island communities already have ideas and plans on how to improve their reaction to climate change events. They want relief in the form of financial aid,

early warning mechanisms, resilient infrastructure to withstand the ocean's strength, sustainable livelihoods and international support (IFRC, 2021). It is important that local-level decision making and adaptations are implemented and maintained. This will allow locals to lead more resilient lives. As an organization that gives a platform to other NGOs, the Pacific Islands Association of Non-governmental Organisations (PIANGO) is keen on improving the strength of civil society, building Pacific leadership, evidence-based policy advocacy, and development proficiency. It is able to execute these values through open collaboration, democratic practices, and responsible partnerships.

Furthermore, islanders have the resources to make well-informed decisions through scholars, NGOs, IGOs, and traditional ecological knowledge. Research conducted on the ground in Fiji by Janif et al. in 2016 depicted how traditional knowledge¹⁵ can inform adaptation strategies and migration. The findings of this qualitative study suggest that traditional knowledge is in need of strengthening because it is not being passed along to younger generations as a result of globalization. Ways to improve this, as noted by Janif et al., is to record on paper, gather more information on precedent community migration, and empower elders to take action on climate change (2016). Traditional knowledge ties in with climate change as islanders utilize this understanding to predict weather and ocean patterns. For example, it informs islanders about times and places to fish and if climate change is impacting fish behavior. Traditional ecological knowledge can also help to inform adaptation strategies and build a more integrated model of how climate change has progressed on the islands using historical knowledge.

Anthropologists have been fighting for the recognition of the need for cultural preservation. Herrmann's work concludes that cultural heritage and archeology can support

¹⁵ Traditional knowledge is the cultural and environmental knowledge passed down through generations and expresses the beliefs about human relationships and their relationship to the land (Herrmann, 2017).

climate change policy (2017). She further argues that resiliency can be improved by protecting historical and cultural assets in the Pacific Islands (Herrmann, 2017). Traditional knowledge can inform risk management strategies, which in turn, builds local resiliency before and after relocation (Herrmann, 2017). Bergo's research identified that human mobility can also be used to increase resilience for individuals that have an adaptive capacity, as there is an expressed interest in labor migration (2021; Thornton et al., 2018). This can only be true, however, if the positions offered to migrants have the interests of the workers at heart. If the opportunities afforded to labor migrants are cheap and dispensable, then it serves the interests of Western businesses and capitalism.

The way Western countries handle climate migration typically infringes on islanders' agency. When research suggests that migration is the "only hope" for islanders, it takes away from their humanity and their agency to cope with these challenges (Bordner et al., 2020). Esteban et al. further insist that humans have an underestimated and innate capacity to adapt to environmental change (2019). Local communities are indeed capable of taking actions to adapt, however, there are hard economic limits that stand in the way of adapting to their full potential. Despite Western media's insistence that migration is inevitable for islanders, Western sources have not made significant changes to the accessibility of migration and are not giving these communities the resources to go through with migration.

This Western perspective is common in the discourse of migration due to powerful climate change consequences. It is characterized as an alarmist outlook within the climate change movement. Scholars and NGOs are both guilty of adopting this viewpoint, which assumes there will be vast numbers of migrants flooding the borders of developed states. Their publications exacerbate this alarm by incorporating fear-striking phrases and trigger words like "mass

migration.” In attempts to make others care more about the issues of climate migration, the popular climate change narrative does just the opposite (Bryan, 2021). These phrases do little to provoke action on climate change and can be used to defend xenophobic fears about thousands of migrants arriving at borders (Bryan, 2021). In a crooked way, this narrative almost justifies the poor treatment of migrants who have already lost their homes and are frequently subjected to exclusion and surveillance (Bryan, 2021). Instead of perpetuating this harmful narrative, writers and journalists can maintain a sense of optimism and hope about addressing climate change and adaptation. Further, if investors catch wind that there is no hope in the place they have financially committed to, they are likely to withdraw their investments in adaptation infrastructure to minimize their losses (Marino & Lazarus, 2015).

Disciplines focusing on finance and economics as it relates to climate change have proposed solutions that could give islanders the funding needed for climate adaptations. The current situation does not make funding available for climate migrants—especially not international migrants—to access. Vital solutions to help with financial aid for the Pacific Islands are new and differing financial instruments that reflect transparent commitments from donors—which are ideally developed states. The variety of financial instruments will also need to have transparent distribution techniques in which states and communities receive that aid in different situations. In terms of L&D within the WIM, anthropologists argue that the policies addressing it should respect norms of compensatory justice to help make victims of climate change disasters feel “whole again” (Page & Heyward, 2017). Civil society and NGOs at the Suva Dialogue reportedly approve of public financing from developed countries and taxes to help pay for L&D, such as instituting a climate damages tax (Singh, 2018). More options for financing climate adaptation and L&D will help island communities to cope with climate change.

Financial contributions to this cause will almost always be helpful for adaptation as long as they are unconditional, transparent, timely, and well-distributed, making the development of financial instruments a strong solution for islanders.

Another recommendation supported by scholars and IGOs is preparation for migration before it becomes necessary and disaster strikes hard. Scholars from different disciplines concur on this proposal. Campbell, Bergo, and the IOM all consider planned migration to result in a better outcome than the potential of migration forced by environmental disaster (2014; 2021; 2020). A proactive approach to resettlement can allow for the mitigation of the downsides to migration. One can plan for it financially by saving up what they can and try to set up livelihood opportunities in the future place of settlement. Communities can compose integrated plans with one another to preserve their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge as well as social relations and proximity to one another. While these plans do not negate the hardships that will be present in migration, they significantly reduce the challenges associated with sudden-onset disasters.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to examine how Pacific SIDS have been affected by climate change and how they are addressing the consequences of climate change. It is clear that SIDS are in a vulnerable position in regards to ecological impacts which further exacerbate other issues such as standards of development, health, infrastructure, and cultural preservation. Pacific SIDS are adapting to the impacts by applying for grants to fund various adaptation strategies, however, there are issues with the top-down approach at the IGO level. To address these faults, reform in the WIM and GCF are necessary, and more financial aid needs to be allocated to non-economic L&D. Additional financial instruments apart from insurance schemes need to be options for

SIDS to adapt to climate change. It would also be useful for climate finance to be used for migration strategies because this is one of the biggest and most damaging impacts of climate change.

SIDS are also affected by rising sea levels and natural disasters that make their people more likely to migrate from their homes. Because the islands are water-locked, limited in resources, and experiencing urbanization and population growth, international migration is more likely than in other parts of the world that are experiencing climate change firsthand. Resorting to migration is often a last-choice decision, yet islanders have to navigate the legal world of immigration as environmental migration typically does not qualify islanders as refugees. This thesis also touched on alternative strategies and policies that can be better implemented to address the challenges of climate change. There are more promising solutions, such as regional instruments and bottom-up approaches, recommended by scholars in recent years, as well as new potential interpretations of international law.

This thesis sought to explore the distinct conversations surrounding adaptation and migration between IGOs, NGOs, and scholars. In discussing the literature available and the recommendations provided by each source, similarities and differences in dominant discourses are discovered. IGOs, NGOs, and scholars alike commonly frame the topic of environmental migration within the bounds of protection, security, and adaptation strategies.

The complex responses to the research questions beg a complex argument to be made on the topic of climate migration for SIDS and solutions for the future. The current approaches to adaptation and policies of migration are not enough to safeguard against the impending impacts of climate change. The problem is very well defined in this research, but the design of this thesis has limitations and does not provide the wherewithal to test how well the identified strategies

might work. For example, has regional soft law worked well for other nations? It is important to understand the effectiveness of different strategies when recommending approaches to pursue for the Pacific Islands. Further research could better develop the options available for climate migrants under international human rights law. What other climate change issues constitute violations of human rights in SIDS? What other human rights laws can be applied to protect cross-border migrants from being returned to their country of origin? Another argument to consider would be the examples of SIDS receiving financial support from developed nation-states and retaining authority over its allocation. Applying this bottom-up approach could eliminate fears from SIDS about accepting financial support from developed countries and would support their sovereignty by giving them the authority over fund usage.

It is evident that SIDS are in trouble and need improved strategies to address climate change. The passage of new laws and policies that would improve access to migration and adaptation for Pacific SIDS would have greater implications for other island states and developing nations across the globe. These places are also facing negative impacts and would benefit from international instruments and strategies that would protect migrants and improve adaptation measures. This direction of solutions points to future migration patterns that were previously closed. Current approaches to climate change solutions aren't working—especially for vulnerable states like SIDS. The current, common conceptions in adaptations and migration do not function sustainably, nor do they solve the problem. Recent and alternative strategies to address climate change for SIDS are options that may help with these problems.

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