



The Journal of Pacific Studies

Volume 36, Issue 1, 2016

Faculty of Business and Economics, USP



# The Journal of Pacific Studies



Volume 36, No. 1 2016

## SITUATING THE NEXUS *MIGRATION, GENDER AND POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN PACIFIC ISLANDS*

ISSN 1011-3029





The Journal of Pacific Studies

*Volume 36 Issue 1, 2016*

*The University of the South Pacific  
Suva, Fiji*

*2016*

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ISSN 1011-3029

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# The Journal of Pacific Studies

*Volume 36 Issue 1, 2016*

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## **Introduction JPacS Special Issue**

*Alessio Cangiano & Andreea R. Torre*

[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-1](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-1)

### **INTRODUCTION**

The last decades have witnessed a global surge of interest in the developmental impact of migration and mobility. A growing body of research has shed new light on the nature of the migration-development nexus, with emerging evidence showing a positive impact of migration on poverty reduction in migrant sending countries (e.g. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002). The rising awareness of the development potential of migration has also reached policy arenas, counterbalancing long-established – and still motivated – concerns about the negative impact of the loss of skilled professionals (Newland, 2013). Analysis of the development outcomes of migration has also moved beyond the economic impact of labour mobility and remittances, considering the broader social implications of mobility processes and recognising their highly gendered connotation (e.g. Piper 2009).

Interest in the transformative potential of migration has also risen in the South Pacific region, where small island economies and environments share development challenges related to a history of (neo)colonial exploitation of labour and natural resources; reliance on a limited number of industries; remoteness from markets; and vulnerability to economic shocks, political upheavals and environmental hazards. Furthermore, rapid demographic growth and pockets of high population density in low lying and coastal areas make island dwellers particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which threatens the very existence of atoll island communities. While for many Pacific Island Countries (PICs) massive out-migration has played a significant role in mitigating unemployment, it has also left behind labour markets affected by strategic skills gaps and economies highly reliant on migrant remittances (see Connell, 2006 and Bedford and Hugo, 2012 for a comprehensive overview).

Despite a rich migration literature that has unveiled the main qualifying features of the Pacific mobility systems, attempts to provide an integrated reading of the multipronged nature of the migration-development nexus in the region are rare. The recent diversification of the Pacific

migration flows that have become more multidirectional, interdependent and temporary/circular in nature further challenges our ability to conceptualize, operationalize and measure the developmental implications of migration and to formulate effective policy strategies in this area.

The general objective of this edited collection is to shed new light on significant gendered, social, economic and political aspects of the diverse Pacific Islands' migratory landscape. The articles focus on some of the emerging patterns and development implications of current migration trends and policies in the region such as temporary and seasonal labour mobility, migrant women's work in traditionally male-dominated sectors, strategies for managing environmentally-induced migration and the policies for coercive relocation of asylum seekers. Processes of internal mobility, which have often been left out of the picture in international dialogues on migration and development, and their connection to challenges posed by rapid urbanisation in Melanesian countries, are also addressed in this collection. The intent is to set future grounds for a more integrated approach which will enable researchers in the Pacific to explore the diversified impact of multiple mobility patterns and their linkages with processes of social and economic development (e.g. Skeldon, 2008). Without losing sight of global forces that have structured and still impact economies and patterns of mobility in the region, our approach situates the migration and development nexus within the context of Pacific Islands' colonial legacies and post-colonial relations, economic and environmental vulnerabilities, and socio-cultural belongings. Ultimately, the gendered and situated perspectives deployed by the authors expose structured relations of power and unpack some of the problems and contradictions of current migration governance and related politics of development in the region, allowing for questions of accountability and responsibility to be addressed.

This introduction sets the scene by providing an overview of mobility patterns in the South Pacific, identifying some key knowledge and evidence gaps in the regional literature, and synthesizing the conceptual approach and principal arguments put forward by the contributed articles.

## **POPULATION MOBILITY IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC**

The South Pacific region, with its three sub-regions of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia (figure 1), is characterised by a long-standing history of population mobility (Hau'ofa, 1998). In Pre-Colonial times Pacific island peoples would regularly move between communities and islands of the Region. Those inter-islands movements were aimed at trading goods, strengthening kinship relations, fostering resilience to natural hazards, and periodically at engaging in conflicts and wars. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century European imperialism have played a major role in reshaping and redirecting mobility patterns in the region. The historical interconnectedness of Pacific island peoples was replaced by intraregional labour mobility and 'blackbirding', largely orchestrated by colonial powers, and by international arrivals of indentured Indo-Chinese and Indian workers (Connell and Rapaport, 2013; Crocombe, 2001, Lee, 2009).

**Figure 1:** Map of the South Pacific and its sub-regions

Source: Adapted from CartoGIS, ANU College of Asia & the Pacific

While the territorial boundaries imposed by colonialism and its new political and administrative structures “placed significant restrictions on the movement of people between the islands of the Pacific” (Opeskin and MacDermott, 2010: pp. 2), de-colonisation also brought about new prospects of migration for Pacific islanders. Pacific towns and cities, initially established as European trading ports and administrative centres, became hubs for rural migrants attracted by job opportunities in the public sector and by facilitated access to health services and higher education. Progressively, circular and temporary mobility patterns that typically involved the return to the island or village of origin were replaced by more permanent forms of rural-urban migration – that led, in some cases, to the depopulation of some smaller islands (Storey and Connell, 2013).

Opportunities for international migration also opened up through new managed labour mobility schemes as well as “new rights of citizenship” for some Pacific islanders from former colonial territories (Opeskin and MacDermott, 2010: pp. 2). From the post-WWII period, and in the aftermath of the mandate and trusteeship systems developed by the League of Nations and United Nations, international mobility flows have been largely re-directed towards the so called *Rim Countries* – the U.S., New Zealand and Australia. These new avenues for international labour migration have not been equally accessible to all PIC citizens, but have rather emanated from different approaches taken by the former colonial rulers, generating separate “clusters of mobility” (Burson & Bedford, 2013). The U.S. and New Zealand provided relatively unrestricted



migration opportunities to Pacific islanders of their former Micronesian and Polynesian territories by granting citizenship and/or establishing targeted visa categories for labour migration (such as the New Zealand's Samoan quota and Pacific Access Category visa lottery) to meet demand for cheap unskilled labour in the primary and secondary production sectors. In contrast, Australia did not provide targeted migration opportunities to Melanesian territories over which they had exercised colonial authority (Bedford & Hugo, 2012; Burson & Bedford, 2013). As such, Pacific islanders are entitled to permanently migrate to Australia only if they qualify for general visa categories – or as naturalized New Zealand citizens benefiting from the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangements. While in the last decade both New Zealand and Australia have established new schemes for managing temporary labour mobility of workers in the agricultural sector, the different degree of openness of the two countries towards Pacific islanders' mobility is also apparent from the size of these schemes. For example, recent data (2012-14) shows that about 6 thousand Pacific workers (almost half of whom from Vanuatu) have been admitted annually into New Zealand, compared to less than 2 thousand in Australia (Bedford, 2014).

PICs historical and post-colonial legacy is reflected in the significant diversity of the current demographic and mobility landscape, characterised by large variations in the rates of international migration, as well as in the patterns and pace of the rural-urban transition (Table 1). Independent Melanesian countries feature high population growth rates that have not been mitigated by large permanent overseas emigration. These countries are still at an early stage of the urban transition, with still predominantly rural populations (about 80%) that are rapidly urbanizing. They currently experience some of the highest urban growth rates in the region largely driven by a massive rural-urban drift – but natural change is also a significant factor because urban fertility rates remain high (Rallu, 2009). Fiji is the partial exception: after decades of rural-urban migration the country has already a majority of urban dwellers living in several cities and urban agglomerations. Population growth has slowed down (0.5% annually) and is now largely concentrated in urban areas, while the rural population has stopped growing. Fiji's demographic regimes is further characterized by significant outmigration, with large waves of highly skilled migrants leaving the country in the aftermaths of several coups that destabilized its economic and political climate (Reddy et al., 2004 ).

**Table 1:** Population and mobility Indicators in selected Pacific Island Countries

Region/country or territory	Population (estimate, mid-2013)	Urban population at last census (%)	Last intercensal annual growth rate (%)		Crude net migration rate (‰)	Emigration rate of tertiary educated (%; 2000)	International migrant stock (% of pop.)	Remittances (% of GDP, aver. 2004-13)
			Urban	Rural				
<b>Melanesia</b>								
Fiji	859,200	51	1.5	-0.1	-6.1	63	2.1	5.5
New Caledonia	259,000	67	2.3	-0.7	3.6	..	23.7	..
Papua New Guinea	7,398,500	13	2.8	2.7	0.0	28	0.4	0.1
Solomon Islands	610,800	20	4.7	1.8	0.0	26	1.4	1.9
Vanuatu	264,700	24	3.5	1.9	0.0	8	0.4	1.8
<b>Micronesia</b>								
FSM	103,000	22	-2.2	1.0	-18.5	36	2.6	6.4
Guam	174,900	94	0.4	-1.2	14.1	..	48.9	..
Kiribati	108,800	54	4.4	0.2	-0.7	56	2.1	8.1
Marshall Islands	54,200	74	1.4	-2.0	-17.1	43	3.2	14.8
Nauru	10,500	100	1.8	-	-9.4	..	..	..
Palau	17,800	77	0.0	3.9	0.0	81	29.3	0.9
<b>Polynesia</b>								
Cook Islands	15,200	74	-1.2	-3.0	-5.2	..	..	..
French Polynesia	261,400	51	0.7	1.8	-9.6	..	12.9	..
Samoa	187,400	20	-0.3	1.2	-24.1	73	4.4	18.7
Tonga	103,300	23	2.4	0.9	-19.3	76	1.0	25.3
Tuvalu	10,900	47	1.4	-0.2	0.0	65	1.7	15.7

Source: Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2013 population & demographic indicators; World Bank, World Development Indicators Database

The dominant feature of Polynesian's population trends is the large and persistent overseas migration. For several decades Samoa and Tonga have had some of the highest negative net migration rates in the world (cfr. United Nations, 2015-revision of the World Population Prospects), including the loss of about three quarters of their highly skilled professionals. This has brought about significant reliance on migrant remittances, which account for one fifth or more of these countries' economic outputs (cfr. Tab.1). Emigration in Polynesia has also acted as a 'safety valve' for population growth (Connell and Rapaport, 2013: 281), counterbalancing a high birth rate and even mitigating the demographic pressure on urban areas – Apia, Samoa's only urban area, has even experienced negative population growth over the last inter-censal period (2006-11). The demographic impact of high emigration in Polynesia has also resulted in the depletion of young adult cohorts, contributing to high dependency ratios (Rallu, 2008).

Some Micronesian countries (FSM and the Marshall Islands) are also characterized by very high levels of permanent emigration to the United States. In contrast, recent permanent emigration from Kiribati has been a prerogative of the highly educated population, while many i-Kiribati lesser skilled workers migrated temporarily to work in the fishing and mining industries (see Kagan's article in this special issue). The small landmasses of most Micronesians states imply that urbanization has been a pervasive phenomenon in this Pacific sub-region, with urban densities reaching those of the most populated Asian cities (Storey and Connell, 2013). U.S. territories or associated countries such as Guam and Palau are also amongst the few PICs with large immigrant populations.

Although the volume of international migration between PICs is low compared to flows directed towards the Pacific Rim, case-study research has shown the existence of significant intra-regional mobility networks. This has been mainly associated with work-related movements of skilled professionals in women-dominated industries such as the education and health care sectors (Liki, 2001; Rokoduru, 2006; Voigt-Graf, 2003; Connell, 2010). However, there is a lack of quantitative data on intra-Pacific flows and it is likely that official population statistics do not capture the full extent of the phenomenon – a gap that is also reflected in the dominant conceptualisation of Pacific mobility as emigration to the Pacific Rim and in the very limited volume of studies investigating migration between Pacific Island States (ibid.).

## **THE MIGRATION-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: PERSPECTIVES FROM PACIFIC ISLANDS**

Academic and policy debates on migration and development that have taken place since the 1950s have witnessed several discursive shifts, moving back and forth in between the developmentalist optimism that characterised those discourses until the 1960s, to the neo-Marxist pessimism of the 1970s and 1980s, and towards more heterogeneous and articulated views from the 1990s (e.g. Nyberg-Sørensen et al., 2002). More recent years have seen a revival of optimism around the potential of migration, and of the migrant as *homo economicus*, to enhance development in countries of origin (de Haas, 2010: 227-28). This has been appealingly summarized as the *three Rs* of the migration-development nexus – Recruitment, Remittances, and Return (Martin et al., 2006). Support for optimistic views was also driven by research providing new empirical evidence of a positive impact of migration on the economic and social status of households

in migrant sending communities, including – but not limited to – a significant contribution of remittances to human development (see de Haas, 2007 for a review).

In a similar vein, the MIRAB acronym – Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy – has long been used as the main conceptual framework for the analysis of economic causes and consequences of migration mainly in Polynesian and Micronesian countries of the Pacific (Bertram and Watters, 1985). A number of empirical studies on Pacific countries have also revealed the (largely positive) impact of migrant remittances (e.g. Brown and Jimenez 2008; Kaitani et al. 2011) and the patterns and implications of human capital loss on economic development (e.g. Reddy et al., 2004).

Largely disconnected from international migration research, research on internal mobility and urbanization has undergone similar discursive swings, with the modernisation theory emphasising the roles of cities as poles of economic growth, job creation, education and technological advancement, and the world system/dependency perspective focusing on the inherent economic and social inequalities that arise from rural-urban mobility induced by capital penetration into developing countries (Peng et al., 2010). Currently a more balanced approach emphasizes the duality of outcomes of rural-urban mobility and the need for inclusive rural-urban strategies to maximise the benefits and limit the costs of urban growth (e.g. UNFPA, 2007). Given the failure of policy attempts to limit rural-urban migration, consensus is also now emerging that urbanization is an inevitable component of development and modernization processes in the Asia-Pacific (Skeldon, 1997).

Traditional dichotomist ways of looking at the links between migration and development have been challenged in the recent migration literature. The brain drain vs. remittances cost-benefit paradigm has opened up to encompass more nuanced and embodied implications of migration which is increasingly becoming more multidirectional, diverse (i.e. age, gender, nationality, status) and interdependent (Vertovec, 2007; Piper, 2009). An emerging literature on transnationalism and transnational migrant families (Vertovec, 2001; Levitt, 2001; Nyberg-Sørensen and Vammen, 2014) has brought to the fore a concern with social and cultural implications of mobility as well as gendered remitting patterns (Rahman and Fee, 2009), and the different social spaces and networks women and men embody in the migration process (Piper, 2005). An alternative reading of the gender, migration and development nexus has also been suggested by highlighting the multifaceted character of social practices encompassing “multi-layered social relations, contested concepts of identity and multiple social roles” (Oso and Ribas-Mateo, 2013: 18).

Also in the regional migration literature the initial framing of the MIRAB model has been criticized for being, as Bertram himself recalls, a “reductionist economic exercise which fails to engage with the richness and detail of social and economic reality as lived by islanders themselves” (Bertram, 2006: 3). Its macroeconomic focus and purely economicistic interpretation of development has been seen as overshadowing local contexts (James, 1993) and the agency of Pacific Islanders as well as their embeddedness in transnational networks of goods, people, and meanings (Marsters, et al. 2006, 31). While this critique somehow seems to build on the existing metaphor of the *transnational corporation of kin* discussed within the original formulation of MIRAB, its analysis goes beyond maximising families’ economic benefits and strongly advocates for the centrality of

culture and (gendered) personal experiences as catalysts for social networks and motivations for migration and remitting practices.

From the 2000s studies looking at the broader social, cultural and gender aspects of migration have started to become more visible in the South Pacific literature. A concern with the emergence of autonomous decision-making and the agency of skilled migrant women who leave their families behind providing them with remote support has been highlighted by research on Pacific migrant nurses (Rokoduru, 2006). In turn, Chandra (2004) discusses the consequences of family separation for family relationships and care responsibilities of women left behind. Interestingly, the case of Fijian nurses and teachers (Voigt-Graf, 1993) who left in the aftermath of the 1987, 2000 and 2006 coups (the largest group of skilled migrant women who left for the Pacific Rim) also illustrates the intersections between gendered labour demand in receiving countries and political and racial push factors.

The transnationalist perspective has also contributed to shifting the focus from the study of Pacific Island communities in their countries of settlement on the Rim to transnational communities that inhabit cross-border and multi-directional social spaces (Lee & Francis, 2009; Rensel & Howard, 2012; Keck & Schieder, 2015). This analysis builds on the human face of migration and transnational experiences of life and work of Pacific islanders and explores questions of cultural values and identity, so called “social remittances” (Levitt, 2001) and intergenerational and kinship changes. Gendered migration patterns of Pacific Islanders have also been analysed within a household framework deploying indigenous metaphors such as the Samoan concept of ‘aiga’, or extended family, (Liki, 2001) to explain migration as a “social and cultural act” (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009, p. 3) characterised by regular transnational gendered family connections including the mobility of wealth as well as diasporic ceremonial exchanges (Addo, 2015). Transnational labour mobilities should therefore be seen not simply as “a path to economic development” (Cumming, 2013, p.390). Successful experiences of mobility (and local development for that matter) look rather more nuanced when seen from the contextualised and gendered perspectives and understandings of migrants, their families and local communities (see also Kagan and Cumming in this Issue).

Notwithstanding the thick legacy of influential indigenous scholars and western anthropologists and human geographers such as Epeli Hau’ofa, David Gegeo and Murray Chapman whose works have strongly advocated for “alternative manners of thinking” (Chapman 1995, 254) about practices of mobility in the Pacific, studies focusing on socio-cultural dimensions of migration rarely engage with mainstream development debates in the region. As a matter of fact, existing work which provides conceptualisations of migration processes from a more contextualised migrant agency perspective rarely attempts to identify clear and feasible policy options to enhance the transformative potential of migration for Pacific island societies – a challenge that is taken up by some of the articles in this Special Issue. It is then unsurprising that, despite the mainstreaming of the more comprehensive ‘capabilities’ approach underpinned by the notions of human and social development and under the aegis of dedicated UN agencies such as UNDP, migration policies and programs in the region show little understanding of gender and socio-cultural concerns. A notable example is the temporary/circular migration “triple-win formula”,

which tends to define development exclusively in economic terms (Castles & Ozkul, 2014) or, at most, to establish simplistic correlations between the (low) number of women involved and processes of women empowerment.

A more refined understanding of the manifold ways in which human mobility contributes to PICs' development is also needed in the light of the diversification of mobility patterns, in the South Pacific as well as globally. The traditional characterisation of small islands as countries of permanent out-migration and remittance-dependant economies no longer fully describes the region's migratory landscape (Lee, 2009). The partial shift from permanent to more temporary or circular forms of mobility to the Pacific Rim, the emergence of new intra-regional migration routes and the new role of some PICs (e.g. Fiji) as immigrant-receiving countries, the rise of student mobility and women-led labour migration, the gaining significance of environmental and climate change push-factors, and the diversification of transnational diasporic linkages and practices have added significant complexity to the South Pacific mobility system. This calls for an integrated approach emphasizing the links between various forms of mobility – for example, between rural-urban mobility and temporary labour migration to Pacific Rim countries (see also Cumming and Bedford in this issue) – that is conspicuous by its absence in the regional literature.

Last but not least, the regional migration literature would benefit from deeper analyses of the links between the migrant agency and socio-cultural practices that shape migration decision-making and the institutional and regulatory structures that enable and (largely) constrain labour and other types of cross-border mobility. Structures for the governance of mobility inherited from colonial architectures provide unequal migration opportunities for Pacific islanders. Restrictive mobility routes primarily designed to fulfil the economic needs of the receiving countries constrain the transformative potential of migrant agency, thereby limiting the benefits of labour and skill transfers and of diasporic connections for PICs' socio-economic development. Therefore, a post-colonial, situated reading helps unravelling significant examples of current neo-colonial interference in the South Pacific mobility system through intertwined processes of exploitation of economic and environmental vulnerabilities of PICs and double-edged regional integration and aid distribution policies.

## **CONTRIBUTION OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE**

To address some of the evidence and knowledge gaps reviewed in the previous section, this Special Issue embraces a wide-ranging and inclusive analytical perspective. While remittances and economic empowerment through mobility and access to paid work are certainly acknowledged as factors contributing to socio-economic development, the conversations within and among the different articles provide a more comprehensive and diversified perspective going beyond the economicistic reading of the *three Rs* paradigm and MIRAB framework. The analytical lens adopted by the contributed articles moves between global pressures and sensitivity to context, between political and economic structures and agency-driven processes, and, between local histories and legacies and contemporary experiences of inequality and vulnerability and/or adaptability. In particular, to “situate” our findings, the underpinning inquisitive approach of this Special Issue is guided by a concern with the contingency of knowledge on the presence

of culture, history, power, and geography (Harraway, 1988; Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). The combination of case study and mixed-methods using both qualitative and quantitative data also allows for deeper and more complex interrogations of the intersections between migrant agency and macro-level development outcomes. Ultimately, the diversity of disciplinary backgrounds of the authors enriches the special issue with a variety of voices and narratives and leads to an ample and articulated spectrum of findings that could better inform migration and development policies.

The six contributions to this Special Issue weave together empirical and analytical reflections on some qualifying features of the migration-development nexus in Pacific Islands, including – but not limited to – the role of gender norms in migrant experiences of temporary and seasonal work, the social transformations associated with internal mobility and urbanisation, the impact of policies for the coercive relocation of asylum seekers, and the prospects for “managed” labour migration policies and regional integration agreements to enhance migration opportunities for Pacific Islanders as adaptive strategy to environmental change.

The need to incorporate gender as a central analytical category taking into account the diverse ways in which men’s and women’s social relationships and belonging are negotiated and reconstructed throughout the migratory process strongly features in Maggie Cummings’ and Sophia Kagan’s articles. In her paper, Cummings looks at the gendered experiences and responses to the New Zealand’s Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme of young urbanised men in Vanuatu’s capital, Port Vila. Developing her analysis along the intersecting lines of gender and generations, the author’s ethnographic work shows that social transformations brought about by participation into the scheme must be considered not only as the result of migratory experiences, but also in relation to local understandings of gendered relationships, and their connection to commodity consumption. Her findings also reveal that participation in the RSE scheme is often a stepping stone to an urban life. This points to the above-mentioned connections between temporary international labour migration and urbanization, opening up promising avenues for future research on Melanesian mobility. In an effort to translate ethnographic findings into policy language, Cummings argues that for a more efficient and sustainable RSE scheme actions should be taken to develop the transferability of skills and to support local entrepreneurship in urban areas as tangible local “exit plans” for a post-RSE life in alternative to repeated migration. Gender imbalance in recruitment should also be redressed to reshape gender biased cultural norms and work practices at both ends of the migratory process that undermine women’s agency and the positive development impact of migration.

Migrant women’s potential in relation to overall social development of PICs is also taken up by Sophia Kagan in her article on i-Kiribati women working on international cruiseships. Her interesting empirical study of the “migrant workers of the ocean” emphasises the relevance of temporary migration as both long-standing employment opportunity for i-Kiribati nationals and significant experience with the potential to reshape the social positioning of women in Pacific societies. Interviews conducted with migrant worker returnees unveiled the “complex and nuanced nature of women’s migration on cruiseships” – and, we can add here, the lack of a gender focus in temporary labour mobility schemes in the Pacific and beyond. While greater control over

remittances did not appear to be central to women's narratives and experiences, and household roles of women returnees were for the most part unchanged, significant transformations had taken place in respondents' confidence in their working abilities and future work and family aspirations and plans. The author's indications for policy actions emphasize the need for striking a good balance between enhancing market access for i-Kiribati migrant women – with a view to rebalance what is currently a male-dominated sector – and ensuring the presence of appropriate measures to prevent migrant exploitation.

Bringing back to the forefront the role of structures in constraining or enabling sustainable development in the South Pacific region, Ash's and Campbell's article makes the case for voluntary labour migration to be pursued as an adaptive response to climate change. The paper emphasizes the positive benefits for both Australia and Pacific countries that could arise from the identification and promotion of skilled and unskilled labour migration avenues – including more equal opportunities for Pacific women. This strategy would rely on strong national commitment of the sending countries to ensure full and inclusive participation in existing unskilled labour schemes and to improve training and strengthen capacity in areas that would enhance access to skilled labour migration avenues. On the other hand, as an enabling factor for promoting migration to Australia, public opinion towards Pacific migration is pivotal. Reflecting this, the article addresses some of the myths that have contributed to negative views of Pacific migration, promoting a more evidence-based understanding of the impacts of Pacific Islander migration to Australia and fulfilling the need for a multipronged approach to migration management.

The specific case of the forced transfer of asylum seekers arriving by boat on Australian shores to detention camps on Nauru and Papua New Guinea (Manus Island)<sup>1</sup> is addressed in Brian Opeskin and Daniel Ghezelbash's article. Their analysis of Australia's well-known and controversial 'Pacific Solution' expands the regional migration and development debate through a situated lens that acknowledges the role of superimposed institutional factors deeply rooted in colonial legacies and neo-colonial economic and political dependencies. In their article the authors argue that Australia's border security and refugee policies have profound economic, political and social impacts on the two PICs, making them *vulnerable to coercion* and imposing the social costs of resettling refugees in already fragile socio-economic contexts. Gendered implications of the policy are also paramount. Besides the contested reintroduction of Temporary Protection Visas (TVPs), with its potential implications for increased numbers of women and children willing to take the dangerous boat-journey to Australia, numerous cases of gender based violence, including those against underage asylum-seekers, are reported in and outside the processing facilities in Nauru. Episodes of conflict between refugees and locals highlight that failure to address contextual socio-cultural and gender dynamics embedded in the asylum experience may compromise the success of the broader refugee determination process and be harmful to local community relations and social cohesion. At a broader level, we may add, the example of the 'Pacific Solution' mirrors a dismissing attitude towards Pacific island states' sovereignty that undermines long-standing prospects for sustainable socio-economic development.

The inclusion in this Special Issue of articles looking at internal mobility provides the reader with a more inclusive understanding of the multiplicities of migration patterns in the region and of



their complex and potentially interrelated impacts. Vijay Naidu's and colleagues' article offers a panoramic view of internal migration processes in the South Pacific, their historical genesis and their predominance over international migration especially in Melanesian countries. Building on development theories of urbanization, the paper highlights the intertwined economic, social, structural (colonial and post-colonial factors) and socio-psychological motivations, opportunities and constraints underpinning mobilities. The analysis undertaken by the authors also points to further, less evident, dynamics characterising both internal rural-to-urban migration processes and life in urban, often informal, settlements such as the birth of ethnic enclaves, inter-ethnic conflicts, gendered changing demographic realities, and increasing exposure to environmental hazards and climate change.

An integrated approach to the analysis of the links between population dynamics and mobility within and across national boundaries inherited from the Pacific colonial history is also provided in the last paper of this collection by Richard Bedford. Building on influential scholarly work that has shaped our understanding of Pacific mobility systems since the 1990s – and reconciling the ostensibly contrasting perspectives of Hau'ofa's borderless Pacific and Callick's "doomsday scenario" – this article reflects on the prospects for enhancing future mobility opportunities in the region, especially for the large majority of the new urban dwellers in Melanesian countries who have so far been excluded from the major admission routes into Pacific rim countries. Bedford's forward-looking vision highlights the challenges of Melanesia's urban future and identifies the potential for enhanced labour and study migration opportunities to Australia and New Zealand as an essential policy strategy to build skills and entrepreneurship indispensable to the development of Melanesian urban economies and societies. Setting his discussion against the backdrop of the current restructuring of Pacific international relations, the author suggests that opening up options for greater circulation of all Oceanians would also be a constructive way to fulfil a commitment to regionalism and address the significant environmental challenges that all Pacific Island countries will face in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Without the presumption of touching upon all aspects of the migration-development nexus in the South Pacific, articles in the Special Issue provide a more refined analysis of mobility in PICs, taking into account its enabling character but also its broader cultural and social implications and distinctive impact on gendered customary roles and institutions. In-depth analyses of context-specific experiences of mobility, besides revealing the diversity of the South Pacific migratory landscape, also demonstrate the value of Pacific-centered empirical evidence to inform effective policy-making in the region. Such conducive and enabling policy environment is shown to be essential for unleashing the transformative potential of migrant agency and for reaping the benefits of migration for the wellbeing of Pacific peoples.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Nauru and PNG (both were first protectorates under the German and British control and then trust territories under the UN with Australia designated as a mandate power, and then trustee, until these territories achieved independence—Nauru in 1968 and PNG in 1973)*

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## Uncertain Belongings: Relationships, Money, and Returned Migrant Workers in Port Vila, Vanuatu

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[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-2](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-2)

### ABSTRACT

*New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme allows Pacific islanders, including many from Vanuatu, to migrate as temporary agricultural labourers. For government stakeholders, the program's success can be measured, in no uncertain terms, by the increased consumption of foreign goods and community development projects funded by returned migrants. Yet it is precisely in these terms, of new belongings and one's sense of belonging, that returnees, especially young men, experience the greatest uncertainty. How should they use the money they earn overseas: to strengthen their kinship networks and communities by sharing their wealth, or to purchase clothes, stereos, cars, or even land, which will belong only to them as individuals? Each strategy has its potential promises and pitfalls, and the outcomes remain uncertain. Will workers who spend on belongings alienate themselves from their kin and island communities? And how might they be forging new kinds of belonging as young urban wage earners? In addition to exploring these questions, this paper suggests that these strategies might inform and inspire relevant policy that is able to better grapple with the very uncertainties the RSE helps to create.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Recognised Seasonal Employer, Gender, Wage Labour, Vanuatu

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme has employed Pacific Island workers for temporary, seasonal work in the horticulture and viticulture industries. One of the key aims of the scheme is to encourage Pacific economic development through the remittances of Pacific Island participants. The scheme is frequently described as a migration-as-development "triple-win" in which migrants, the sending country, and the receiving country all benefit (Gibson and McKenzie, 2014, p.229). An early evaluation of the scheme suggests that one key "win" for migrants and their communities, at least in the short term, is "economic and wellbeing benefits from increased income"; for the sending countries, remittance incomes, framed as "consumption support", were also considered a short-term "win" (New Zealand Department of Labour, 2010, p.8). By these measures, the scheme has been a success for Vanuatu: after tourism, RSE remittances are the greatest source of foreign income, and in 2012, Labour Commissioner Lionel Kalmut estimate that in its first five years, the program had brought in 3.8 billion vatu (NZ \$54 million) (cited in Bailey, 2014, p.26). As well, per capita incomes in those households with an RSE participant have risen by 30% (Gibson and McKenzie 2014, p. 239). Another key measure of the scheme's success (Gibson and McKenzie, 2010; 2014) that is particularly relevant here is the increase in participating households' "durable goods" such as DVD players, radios, and refrigerators. At the same time, the scheme delivers little in terms of skills improvement or self-employment opportunities in Vanuatu for returned workers (Gibson and McKenzie, 2014, p.242). The success of the program, in terms of development, seems to reside in giving ni-Vanuatu greater access to the cash economy and the goods which money can purchase. This paper focuses on the longer-term repercussions of higher incomes and increased consumption for returned migrants, especially men, and their families and communities. The great promise of the RSE scheme as a means of facilitating development through migration is accompanied by a great degree of uncertainty, as well. The uncertain promise of participation in the scheme has to do with the way that the unprecedented possibility to acquire such belongings has the potential to change customary relationships of belonging as they are shaped by local understandings of gender, kinship, and place. The research findings discussed here demonstrate that, far from being paralyzed by such uncertainties, returned migrant workers employ various creative, culturally intelligible strategies to deal with the uncertain promise of their new-found temporary employment. These strategies might inform and inspire relevant policy that is able to better grapple with the very uncertainties the RSE helps to create.

This paper draws on ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews, conducted in 2008 and 2011 with returned RSE workers recruited via snowball sample, most of whom were young ni-Vanuatu (indigenous) men in their 20s, living in Vanuatu's national capital of Port Vila. Data is drawn from 55 semi-structured interviews with 40 research participants, which ranged in length from 30 minutes to 2 hours; most interviews were conducted one-on-one, but in 2011, 10 participants preferred to be interviewed in a group setting (in 2 groups of 5). 20 participants were interviewed in 2008, and of these, 15 were re-interviewed in 2011. In addition, 20 new participants were interviewed in 2011. The overall purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of how participation in the RSE might affect ni-Vanuatu understandings of kinship obligations, work, gender, and future livelihood

possibilities. Interviews, conducted in Bislama, one of the national languages and a pidgin lingua franca, began with demographic questions (for instance, about age, marital status, residence, education). These questions were followed by more descriptive questions about participants' lives in Vanuatu and their experiences overseas (for instance, How did you become involved in the RSE? What kind of work did you do in New Zealand? How have you spent your money upon your return to Vanuatu?) As the interviews progressed, the questions became more hermeneutic in nature (for instance, How did participation in the RSE affect your life in Vanuatu? What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future? Are men or women better suited to RSE work, and why?) These questions generated rich descriptions of contemporary life in Vanuatu and of participation in the RSE, including many anecdotes and vignettes. During analysis of the interviews, the data, including the vignettes, were cross-checked through triangulation, a process that employs different data points and perspectives to demonstrate validity and reliability (Campbell and Lassiter, 2015, p.118). This paper includes several such vignettes, and while each one presents the unique experience and perspective of the participant, they have been selected for presentation here because they are representative of perspectives that reoccurred, in various forms, in most of the interviews. As well, the insights presented in this paper draw on the researcher's broader experiences and understandings of ni-Vanuatu culture during ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation. Most of the fieldwork referenced here occurred during two two-month periods in 2008 and 2011, but insights are also drawn from 12 months of fieldwork in 2001-2002. Such participant observation included participation in local events, sharing of meals, attendance of community meetings and church services, and generally spending time immersed in the everyday lives of participants and their families.

The experiences of ni-Vanuatu RSE migrants vary greatly between men and women (Cummings, 2013); the focus here is on the gendered experience of and responses to the scheme of informants who represent the approximately 82% of participants from Vanuatu who are men (Gibson and McKenzie, 2014, p.231). Although a majority of participants migrate from and return to rural villages (McKenzie, Martinez, and Winters, 2008), this research focuses on young men from the capital of Port Vila (cf. Bailey, 2009; 2014 on experiences of rural participants). Vila is a magnet for ni-Vanuatu looking for wage labour, although they often meet with little success. Findings suggest that the RSE is having a noticeable effect on the urban population: unable to find a way into the program from their rural villages, many young men are migrating to the capital in hopes of finding a recruiter who will take them on. Although not all of these men succeed in finding their way overseas, many of those who do opt to stay and make a permanent home in Port Vila upon their return. The adverse effects of climate change are also increasingly significant factor driving urbanization in Vanuatu. As the archipelago, already extremely vulnerable to climate change (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery 2011), experiences its adverse effects with greater frequency (such as super-Cyclone Pam in March 2015), so too does urban migration continue to increase. The twin factors of the search for wage labour and for refuge from the effects of climate change are closely interconnected, and suggest the importance of understanding the experiences of urban RSE participants, for whom the scheme further increases the desirability and perceived feasibility of a life in town.



There has been a strong focus, in preparatory briefings for migrants and in studies on the scheme, on the RSE workers as individuals and as drivers of community development. Here the focus is slightly different. Young men who go to work overseas find that, upon their return, the wages they have earned, and the choices they face about spending their earnings, mean that they must rethink and recalibrate the kinds of relationships they have and want to invest in. Both the promise, and the uncertainty, must be understood not only as the result of participation in the scheme itself, but within existing understandings of gendered relationships and their connection to commodity consumption, as well as concerns about rapid urbanization as it relates to long-standing patterns of internal labour migration in Vanuatu. The implementation of policy to improve the efficacy and sustainability of the RSE scheme must take each of these factors into consideration.

### **ABOUT VANUATU AND NEW ZEALAND'S RECOGNISED SEASONAL EMPLOYER (RSE) SCHEME**

Vanuatu is a Y-shaped archipelago in the southwest Pacific comprised of 82 islands. According to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, the nation's population stood at 280500 in September 2015 ([www.vnso.gov.vu](http://www.vnso.gov.vu)). Situated on the central island of Efate is the national capital of Port Vila, with a population of approximately 52 000 (VNSO 2013, p.6). Often referred to simply as "town", Port Vila is Vanuatu's main urban centre (the second is Luganville, with a population of 14 000). The rate of population growth is a rapid 2.3% per year; but the pace of urban growth outstrips even this, at a rate of 3.5% in Port Vila and 1.9% in Luganville (VNSO, 2009). Each year, ni-Vanuatu migrate to town in greater numbers in search of paid employment. Nonetheless, the population of Vanuatu is still mostly rural (76%), and most ni-Vanuatu make their living through subsistence agriculture supplemented by intermittent forays into the cash economy (by selling copra, for instance) (VNSO, 2009). Although the lure of potential employment, especially in the capital, is strong, the reality is less promising, with the majority of newcomers remaining un- or under-employed (ILO, 2009), making temporary overseas employment all the more alluring, especially for those already living in Port Vila, where cash is a necessity but jobs are hard to come by.

Unlike many other developing nations with a long history of sending migrants workers overseas and relying heavily on the remittances from these workers, Vanuatu, prior to the implementation of the RSE, had no opportunities for migration in significant numbers for overseas labour. The one notable exception was the "blackbirding" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this period, thousands of ni-Vanuatu (and other Pacific islanders) were recruited, and often coerced or misled, to work as indentured labours on the sugar plantations of Queensland, Australia and Fiji. As Margaret Jolly has put it, the blackbirding reality of "men taken away to work, and women left in their places in Vanuatu's villages" (Jolly, 1987, p.121) provided a template for gendered practices and understandings of migration throughout the colonial period, one which remains salient today. From 1906 to 1980, Vanuatu, then known as the New Hebrides, was jointly ruled and administered by both Britain and France. During this period, Port Vila was effectively a settler space (Rodman, 2001); an administrative centre in which ni-Vanuatu did not belong, but rather passed in and out of as workers (typically, men as gardeners, women

as housegirls or domestic workers). This established a pattern of circular migration, between town, rural villages, and back, has, at least until very recently, been both the conceptual norm and the most common form of migration for most ni-Vanuatu (see, for instance, Haberkorn, 1992). People, but especially men, have tended to migrate to Vila, for brief work opportunities, for school, or to sell their crops, but would then migrate home again; repeating the pattern as necessary, but rarely staying permanently in urban areas. These understandings of labour migration as circular and as gendered shape the way that today's RSE workers experience and make sense of the scheme and its challenges.

The typical RSE contract is seven months long. Workers are either recruited directly by approved employers through the Vanuatu Department of Labour or through an approved recruiter working on behalf of New Zealand farmers. Most urban participants are "walk-ins" who apply through the Department of Labour; recruiters far more frequently draw from rural areas (Gibson and McKenzie, 2014, p.231). Potential participants must provide (and pay for) in advance relevant paperwork including medical clearance, police clearance, passports, and return plane tickets. Men often work outdoors, maintaining vines and trees and picking produce such as apples or kiwis (women tend to work indoors, grading, sorting and packaging the produce). Men's work is thus often piecemeal, with workers being paid per bin of picked fruit. The more fruit they pick, the more money they make, with the typical take-home pay after a season's work being approximately \$7000 NZ. This piecemeal pay system was often cited by research participants—alongside exhortations from both farmers and pre-departure trainers to "take responsibility for themselves" and "make the most of themselves-- as one of the factors that led them to think of themselves, as workers, in increasingly individualistic terms.

## **NI-VANUATU UNDERSTANDINGS OF PLACE, MONEY AND COMMODITY CONSUMPTION**

Local understandings of belonging, and of what it means to be ni-Vanuatu, are closely tied to one's relationship to place in general and to land, specifically. Indeed, the term "ni-Vanuatu" means "people of the place". Most ni-Vanuatu, regardless of where they currently live, identify themselves as being "from" a particular island community: *man Tanna*, *man Ambrym*, *man Santo*, and so on. Even those born and raised in Port Vila identify themselves as belonging to the island communities of their parents or grandparents. Although there is some suggestion that this may be changing, and that some young people born and raised in the settlements that surround Port Vila are actively challenging their status as "unplaced" by "planting roots" and cultivating a sense of primary town emplacement (Kraemer, 2013), rapid urbanization nonetheless poses serious challenges to long-standing notions of personhood, belonging, and livelihood. These challenges may in fact be exacerbated by the effects of participation in the RSE scheme.

In Vanuatu, land belongs, under the constitution, only to ni-Vanuatu *kastom* owners; and one in turn belongs to the place where one's family are the *kastom* landowners. Men's relationship to place, especially, is traditionally embodied through land ownership; for women, relationships to place are created through marriage and childbearing (Jolly, 1994). Land is also the primary resource used by ni-Vanuatu to engage in the cash economy, usually through the selling of one's

garden produce, or copra, or kava. Challenges to traditional ideas and practices of land ownership and use are therefore fraught with uncertainty about both belonging and livelihood. Two of the key challenges, both of which are relevant here, are urban drift (through which people often lose access to land in the islands through prolonged disuse, and because of which many people inhabit, through a variety of informal and often temporary arrangements, land in town to which they have no *kastom* ties) and the increasingly frequent treatment of land as a commodity that can be turned into cash, primarily through long-term leases. Although some such arrangements are for use and occupancy by ni-Vanuatu, the majority are for developers, foreign investors, and tourism ventures (Farran, 2011). As such, when ni-Vanuatu discuss and try to make sense of changing patterns of land occupancy and ownership, by ni-Vanuatu and foreigners alike, they also discuss ideas about concurrent shifts in understandings of identity, belonging, and how they are changed by commodity consumption and migration.

During a 2011 interview, research participant Conrad told a story, a cautionary tale, loosely based on actual events, about the upheaval wrought by the influx of relatively large sums of money, and the new patterns of consumption that accompany it, upon local experiences of belonging, especially as they relate to land and place. When Conrad first participated in the RSE in 2008; by 2011, he had been back four times. The story he told was in response to a question about what kept him going back, season after season, despite his professed ambivalence about, and sometimes disdain for, monotonous work in the orchards, for being away from home, and for working under a boss. It was a story which, at least on its surface, had less to do with the RSE than with the recent spate of land “sales” (really long term leases of questionable legality) to foreigners. Conrad began by insisting, despite his ambivalence that, “at least I have money. Because today all anyone cares about is money. Life is money, and money is life, and people will do anything to get it”. It was by way of demonstrating this money-craze that he told the story paraphrased below:

A couple of days before Christmas, town was a-bustle, as it always is right before the holiday, with crowds of shoppers stocking up on gifts of cheap toys, fabric, and cooking utensils at the Chinese stores, and buying food at the local market and the supermarket for Christmas celebrations. Beyond the usual festive melee something stood out: A mini-convoy of three brand-new pick-up trucks, their beds filled to the brim with bicycles, appliances, toys, televisions, and people. These shopper-revellers were from the peri-urban village of Erakor, and had, according to the *tok tok blong rod* (gossip), just made a deal to “sell” (lease) their *kastom* land to an Australian company that intended to build a hotel. In addition to the cash windfall from the land sale, the buyer promised to hire Erakor villagers exclusively to staff their new enterprise--thus ensuring their continued, if landless, prosperity for years to come. Hence the celebratory spending spree. However, it turned out that the land deal, like so many over the last decade, was not as promising as it seemed, at least not for the Erakor villagers. Rather than building the promised hotel, the new landowners instead subdivided the land to sell to foreigners in search of the good life. In “selling” their land (such leases are typically 75 years in length) the Erakor villagers had effectively locked themselves into the world of money (with no gardens nor beach access), but found themselves without the promised means of earning a living. They believed the wrong promises, and now their entire future seemed uncertain. To be from Erakor, now, is to belong

nowhere, and to be defined by your (dubiously enviable) belongings. As Conrad put it: “Every child from Erakor has a bicycle, but none of them has a garden.”

There are at least two things worth noting about this story and why it was such a compelling cautionary tale (indeed, it was retold, in various iterations, by several other research participants). Firstly, part of the reason that the story “works” is precisely because it is about Erakor village, which, with its peri-urban location, about 10 km from Port Vila proper, has long occupied an uneasy physical and conceptual place in the ni-Vanuatu imagination: neither fully rural nor fully urban.. Erakor villagers lead fairly “typical” rural lives, but have long been in the orbit of the capital. As Jean-Marc Philibert’s work on commodity consumption in Erakor village in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates, peri-urban villagers were among the first ni-Vanuatu to “embrace” conspicuous consumption-in the form of modern conveniences such as concrete houses, televisions, refrigerators, and cars (Philibert, 1989), as their proximity to town meant that were among the first ni-Vanuatu to work in the nation’s then-nascent tourist industry. According to Philibert, “Erakor villagers like to think of themselves at their best, as culture brokers for their whole island. This is how an informant put it: ‘When a large wave comes from far away on the seas, it must first break on Erakor reef. It has always been so’” (Philibert, 1989, p.81). Erakor village is, in many ways, the harbinger of things to come in Vanuatu, and as rapid urbanization and changes to migration patterns shift the relationship between money, consumption, land and belonging, it is little wonder that people pay close attention to what has happened there.

Secondly, the story is compelling in a context where many ni-Vanuatu now have the unprecedented opportunity to migrate and to make cash through participation in the RSE. In telling it, Conrad alluded to the issues that so many returned migrant workers face: like the Erakor villagers, RSE workers suddenly have a lot of money to spend on new belongings. And like the Erakor villagers, they find their relationship to place, to land, to kin, to community, altered by that very ability to spend money. Like the Erakor villagers, the RSE workers often become the subjects of cautionary tales about the dangerous lure of money. People who have not been to New Zealand tended to accuse migrants of being seduced by all things foreign, and forsaking *kastom* and kin, saying, for instance, that “the RSE workers come back with a taste for cash, and they sell their land when they get back in order to get more cash”. However, none of the research participants had ever done this; indeed very few had any land to sell, or to go back to upon “retirement” from the RSE. Most of the interviewees were born and raised in the settlements around Port Vila, and could be called *SPRs*: young men who *sperem pablik rod* (hit the road); that is, who wander aimlessly around town, window-shopping and causing trouble, because they have no jobs and no land to garden, either. These men were already well-ensconced in the cash-only economy, but with little cash to speak of.

## **MEN’S GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF THE RSE**

Migration has long been a gendered phenomenon in Vanuatu, as has belonging. Participation in the RSE is also gendered. As such, it raises many challenges and uncertainties for the men who participate. Because of their youth and their lack of status as urban-dwelling *SPRs*, interviewees had not yet accrued any of the *kastom* knowledge and respect that comes with being an elder

man in Vanuatu's gerontocracy, knowledge and respect that might be turned, through the skillful working of networks, into wealth and prestige. For young men like the ones who participated in this research project, who had little to no access to *kastom* land, it is relationships that root them in place, connect them to *kastom*, and presents challenges upon their return from New Zealand. At best, this demand new strategies and relationships; at worst, it renders some kinds of belonging undesirable or untenable. Each of the following vignettes encapsulates a common strategy for re-negotiating masculinity vis-à-vis relationships of belonging through kinship in the wake of the challenges posed by the sudden prosperity that their participation in the RSE brought them.

#### CONRAD

Conrad is ambivalent about his RSE experiences, to such an extent that he stated unequivocally that he intends to stop going overseas when he turns 30, regardless of how prosperous he is. His mixed feelings stem from the fact that although the money that he earns is based on his own hard work as an individual, "when you get back to Vanuatu none of the money is yours. This money is for a wedding. That money is for a nephew's school fees. This money sends your parents to the doctor", and so on. Although he spent most of his money after his first season abroad on consumer goods for himself and his wife (a stereo, nice clothes, a DVD player, a bicycle), since then, he has decided to embrace his role as a key provider for his entire extended family, with whom he and his wife live, on land that they rent from the *kastom* landowners. He now goes out of his way to contribute as much as possible to weddings, naming ceremonies, and school fees. In doing so, he has started to become "senior", in the sense of becoming more and more respected and influential, among his kin. Moreover, he says that his hope is that, if he invests his earnings to "*leftemap*" (lift up, enrich) his extended family, future generations will be able to choose *not* to go overseas in order to make ends meet. He lamented that, "money is great, but this is no way for ni-Vanuatu to live", referring both to the long stretches away from home and to working under close supervision to enrich someone other than oneself and one's kin. Conrad's strategy for managing the uncertainty that wage labour and money introduce to his relationships and his sense of gendered identity and belonging is ultimately an investment in traditional values around gender, livelihood, and place. This investment is particularly interesting given that, as an urban-dwelling *SPR*, he had little to no access to many of these traditional pathways to proper masculine respectability in the first place. However, it remains to be seen whether or not his vision for his family's future will come to fruition because, as Gibson and McKenzie (2014, p.242) point out, seasonal labour does little in terms of developing skills that can be used at home, and therefore "migration is likely to be a long-term part of the economic organization of Pacific Island economies".

#### WILLY

Willy also feels the pull of family on his earnings, or, as he put it, "their hands in my pockets". Willy moved to Port Vila many years ago, after being "pushed out" of school after Class Six, and he has few meaningful ties to his extended kin on Ambrym; nor does he have any viable claim to any land there. When first interviewed in 2008, Willy had just returned from his first season away, and confessed to having spent his money *olbaot* (carelessly) on clothes, alcohol, and

convenience food. He also picked apples too slowly in that first year to make much real money, after deductions, at this piecemeal task. “I was just an SPR”, he said. “What did I know about making money”? However, when re-interviewed in 2011, he had spent several more seasons overseas, and had in fact become a shift manager. He no longer drinks, he goes to church every week, at home and overseas, and part of his job is to keep the rest of his team “in line. Indeed, some of the other members of the team accused him of being “in the pocket of the white man [the farmer]”, and in danger of becoming too much like a white man himself—that is, stingy, lonely, and bossy. Unlike Conrad, who is investing in the potential promise of kinship and respected masculine influence, Willy has devoted all of his earnings to the purchase of a piece of recently-subdivided land on the outskirts of Port Vila. This land is not for his extended family, but for himself, and he is working on building a small but well-appointed concrete house suitable only for himself and his new wife and young baby. He is part of a new but growing group of ni-Vanuatu who are not *kastom* landowners, but the beneficiaries of the recent spate subdivisions, and who choose to make town their permanent home.

#### HAROLD

Harold joyously embraced everything the RSE, and the world of wage labour and money, had to offer. Unlike Conrad, he was not investing in his extended kin; unlike Willy (nor almost any other research participant), he had no wife or children, nor even a serious girlfriend; nor did he show any interest in forming and supporting a nuclear family of his own. Unlike Conrad and Willy, he was not at all sheepish about spending nearly all of his money on clothes, cds, alcohol, and other consumer goods. “Money is for spending”, he said. “When I run out, I’ll just go back again. In New Zealand, no one cares how you act or what you do with your money. It’s great! *Mi harem mi fri* (I feel free)!” Harold’s love of the RSE and all it has to offer might be partly explained by the fact that the farmer he works with has entrusted him to work on his behalf as a recruiter in Port Vila. As more and more people clamour to participate in the RSE, he becomes more and more influential, as one cannot go overseas without first being recruited (with fewer recruiters in town than in the islands, this is particularly challenging). He has mastered the new kinds of knowledge, particularly bureaucratic knowledge, needed to get ahead in the RSE, and he would help out naive potential recruits by asking “do you know who is going to do your papers”? (and then pointing them in the right direction). Knowledge, especially men’s knowledge, is literal and metaphorical wealth in Vanuatu (Lindstrom, 1990), and Harold is turning everything he knows about the RSE into wealth. Showing a true embrace of the entrepreneurial spirit, he even offered to recruit interviewees from the ranks of his fellow workers, provided, of course, that he was paid a commission.

#### **NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND WAYS OF BELONGING: APPLE-PICKING, BUS-DRIVING WANTOK?**

Living in Vanuatu today, as Conrad pointed out, means worrying about money and how to get it; two of the main ways of getting money, and the much-desired belongings that money buys, are participation in the RSE, or the leasing of *kastom* land. Although seemingly unrelated on the surface, these two phenomenon must be seen as influencing each other: as ni-Vanuatu move

to and stay in Port Vila in greater numbers, attachments to land decrease at the same time that the desire, and need, to earn money through wage labour grows, feeding both lands sales and participation in the RSE. Both of these roads are fraught with uncertainty, especially when it comes to figuring out where, and with or to whom, you belong. The struggles of Conrad, Willy, and Harold are typical of young men's struggles to find their place in this shifting cultural and economic terrain. The successes and failures of young migrants from Port Vila will undoubtedly shape the future of urbanization in the archipelago. As the vignettes above show, although the nature of the labour in New Zealand's orchards is highly individualized, young men's strategies for making sense of life as urban-dwelling wage labourers are relational, and are closely tied to cultural norms of masculinity, which are also subject to new possibilities in this new landscape.

The creation of another new kind of belonging is also worth paying attention to: the crew, team, or cohort of men who work together for the same farmer. Conrad, Willy, and Harold did not know each other before they went to New Zealand to pick apples together on the same farm. They were from different island communities in different settlements around town, and had not encountered each other as schoolmates as they had each been "pushed out" after year six. Nor were they members of the same church congregation. Yet they were great friends after having spent several seasons together on the same farm. Although each has hedged his bets in terms of kinship, masculinity, and belonging in a different way, collectively they have invested, socially, emotionally, and economically, in this new "crew" identity, and it is their relationship with each other, as RSE-cohort members that seems to be the most promising strategy of all. They are, in this sense, like the "Football *wantok*" described by Kobayashi et al. (2011, p.38)--creating and drawing upon "dense social networks in which access to essential resources are available to members of the network". Rather than fellow language speakers, schoolmates, or sports teammates, they are RSE *wantok*. Perhaps most promisingly of all, Conrad, Willy, Harold, and a couple other crew members have pooled their resources to buy a mini-bus. The crew members take turns driving the bus when they are not in New Zealand, and rent it out to relatives while they are away. As a belonging purchased with RSE money, the bus is a fitting one. For one thing, owning a bus complements common strategies for dealing with money and relations: Conrad's brothers and cousins are able to (partly) support themselves through bus earnings, further "lifting up" his family, and easing the pressure to support them with his RSE earnings. Willy's share of the money from the bus allowed him to build not one, but two, houses on his recently-purchased subdivided plot; now he will be a landlord as well as a land-owner. And for Harold, especially, co-owning and driving the bus is a good "fit": bus drivers always have cash on hand to spend; and Harold, rather than just driving around looking for fares, takes calls, like a taxi, which means that he is always in demand, just as he is as a recruiter. One afternoon in 2011, all three men were observed together in their bus. As they drove through town, they waved at friends and relatives, whistled at girls and tourists, showed off their nice clothes and shiny new bus in a way that was reminiscent of the Erakor villagers in Conrad's cautionary tale. But theirs is a happier story: for the villagers, the uncertain promise of money left them with plenty of belongings but belonging nowhere. But as *SPRs* first, and then RSE migrant workers, this crew is more peripatetic than rooted --they had no land to call their own in the first place. As migrant workers, they further uproot themselves, but as bus owners and drivers, they symbolically and economically "double-down" on their hyper-mobility, their cash-savvy, and their ability to create and draw upon new

networks. It gives them a chance to be in the driver's seat, so to speak, among all of these promising uncertainties.

The RSE aims to increase ni-Vanuatu access to and engagement with the cash economy; it is then hoped that the cash will be infused into local communities, encouraging further development from the grassroots level. However, there is a paradox at the heart of these schemes—ideally, they work best when people remain loyal to their traditional communities, kin networks, and church congregations. But being a part of the RSE not only demands the cultivation of an individualistic sensibility and work ethic, at least temporarily; it often cuts short relationship networks and challenges conventional loyalties and relationships. Perhaps by throwing their lot in with their fellow RSE *wantok*, and by embracing their peripatetic-ness, these new cohorts of men have found a tenable middle road?

## CONCLUSIONS

Both pre-departure and on-the-job training for RSE migrants currently place a heavy emphasis on the individual work and coping skills that must be cultivated if one is to succeed overseas. As well, the New Zealand Department of Labour (2010, p.xv) has identified skill development as one of the positive outcomes for migrant workers, while at the same time noting that skills-related and money-related challenges, such as “transforming RSE income flows into job creation” and “engendering a savings culture”, have yet to be adequately addressed (ibid. p. xviii). This research suggests that success, at home and in local terms, is experienced relationally, and means being able to skillfully manage, and even re-imagine, one's relationships to one's kin, to place, and to other workers. The problems faced by the research participants, as well as the creative ways in which they attempt to solve these problems, should serve to inspire any future attempts to improve the experiences and outcomes of ni-Vanuatu RSE participants. For instance, greater attention and resources must be devoted to developing transferable skills, supporting entrepreneurs, and cultivating leadership capabilities. This is especially true of migrants from urban areas, most of whom have never been and will never be subsistence farmers, and who rely completely on the cash economy to survive. Moreover, supporting the creation of “exit plans” for a post-RSE life is important, as it takes seriously ni-Vanuatu concerns about the long-term desirability (or lack thereof) of participation in the scheme. Potential and existing participants need to be able to envision a positive future for themselves that does not rely solely upon endless migration that undermines local understandings of place and personhood. Furthermore, it is important to take into greater account the fact that the appeal of the RSE does not occur in a vacuum: interrelated factors such as urban drift and vulnerability to climate change drive ni-Vanuatu into the program as much as any particular desire for “development” per se. One suggested response to Cyclone Pam was to increase intake of RSE workers from Vanuatu (Moroney, 2015); but care must be taken to find longer-term solutions that do not exacerbate existing problems. Finally, greater effort must be made to create opportunities for all ni-Vanuatu to participate in the scheme if they wish. Recruiters tend to prefer rural migrants over “unemployed urban youth” (Bailey, 2014, p.35); but the fact of the matter is that urban youth may stand to benefit the most from the program. Moreover, a greater effort needs to be made to include women as RSE migrant in greater numbers. Without doing so, existing ideas about gender and circular migration, many of



which are limiting to women's potential and the potential for development in Vanuatu overall, run the risk of being replicated and re-entrenched. The potential of the RSE is promising indeed, and ni-Vanuatu skill at dealing with the uncertainties that arise in its wake should be supported and augmented through the program itself.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges funding for this research received from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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## **'On the ship, you can do anything': the impact of international cruiseship employment for i-Kiribati women**

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[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-3](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-3)

### **ABSTRACT**

*Kiribati is a remote, small island country with a long history of male temporary migration as a mechanism for relieving unemployment and facilitating remittances. This article looks at a unique case study of female i-Kiribati migration and is based on interviews with a small sample of i-Kiribati women who worked on international cruiseships between 2009-2012, thus providing interesting insight into first-time migration experiences of women from a remote island country. The findings suggest that while the experience did not generally lead to observable changes in their ability to manage remittances, nor in gender relations between husband and wife, employment on the ship did nonetheless have strong reported benefits in terms of independence, skills development and confidence of the women interviewed. These findings corroborate existing literature showing while entrenched gender norms rarely shift directly due to women's migration experiences, migration does contribute to the women's empowerment through increased agency and ability to make decisions, both during and after their migration.*

**Key words:** *temporary migration, Pacific, Kiribati, gender, women's empowerment, cruiseship employment*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In a unique set of circumstances, around 120 i-Kiribati women with almost no migration experience were employed on international cruiseships during the period of 2004 to 2012 under an agreement between the Government of Kiribati and the Norwegian Cruise Liner (NCL) company. After 2012 the agreement was abruptly brought to a halt with no further contracts issued to i-Kiribati women, there was a lingering perception amongst government and private recruitment stakeholders that this ‘experiment’ in opening maritime migration opportunities to women was unsuccessful because of the proportion of the women who fell pregnant on the ship, and the lack of long-term economic impact as a result of the migration. This chapter in women’s migration in Kiribati also feeds into a broader debate on whether female migrants working in low-skilled occupations benefit from migration and whether they are ‘empowered’ by their experience, which is relevant to future policymaking around whether governments should facilitate female migration, including in the cruiseship industry.

Based on in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 female migrants from NCL, and 12 other interviews with key stakeholders (including government officials) in Tarawa, the research looks at the degree to which women were ‘empowered’, as a result of their cruiseship employment. To assess whether there was a degree of empowerment, the research considers three variables: (1) the extent to which women had control over their earnings (proxied by remittance decisions) relative to their control over their earnings before cruiseship employment; (2) whether the women felt that their position within their family was strengthened as a result of their migration (in terms of power dynamics with parents and husbands); and (3) whether their experience impacted on their subjective sense of confidence and independence, and to what extent this influenced future plans and ambitions.

The article begins by providing a review of the literature linking women’s migration and gender empowerment before outlining unique aspects of the international cruiseship industry. The article then turns to the specific socio-economic context of Kiribati and the situation of women’s migration before presenting the evidence from the field research. The final section returns to the research questions and places the experience of the interviewees in the broader literature.

## **WOMEN’S MIGRATION AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT**

The growing research looking at the nexus between women’s autonomous migration and women’s empowerment has generated a spectrum of scholarly opinions on whether migration is a liberating, a benign or an exploitative experience for women, and whether it is correlated in any way with a changing of social norms in the societies from which the migrant women come. While some have argued that migration can be a liberating experience for women, resulting in greater personal autonomy and independence, as well as increased power in the household (Sassen, 2006; Ghosh, 2009; Lopez-Ekra, Aghazarm, Kotter & Mollard, 2011), others have posited that women’s inequality in sending countries is merely replicated in destination countries, with little tangible impact on empowerment as a result of migration (Ramirez, Garcia Dominguez & Morais, 2004; Parreñas, 2001).

Gender empowerment is of course a broad concept, which at its core may be conceptualized as a process involving ‘conscientization, agency, ownership of and control over resources, ability to make choice and to participate in decisions that affect one’s life’ (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003). This definition sees empowerment as a context-specific phenomenon which is highly dependent on women’s status in the sending country – thus, it could be argued that even where female migrants’ socio-economic situation in a destination country may be far from perfect, migration may still provide for more agency and independence than was at women’s disposal prior to migration. Other, particularly feminist scholars, have hastened to add that what appears as agency in migration may in fact be highly constrained and embedded in kin obligations (Williams, 2004). Combined with the exploitative nature of domestic work, which most low-skilled female migrants are involved in, genuine empowerment may be illusory (Parreñas, 2001).

Here it is important to make a distinction between immediate/short-term outcomes for the migrant women, and the longer-term broader impact on gender relations whether within households, a community or a country from which the women come. Without discounting the very real exploitation that is experienced by some female migrants particularly in domestic work, empirical evidence, on balance, suggests that ‘immigrant women achieve some limited, albeit uneven, benefits from migration and settlement’ (Levitt, 2001). These benefits might include quantitative outcomes (such as changes in women’s income); observable changes (such as job status, social inclusion, household bargaining power) and qualitative assessments of women’s own situations (such as understanding of notions of rights and entitlements) (Piper & French, 2011). In particular, empirical literature has suggested that women’s migration can impact on household decision-making, including women’s ability to determine how their remittances are used (Morrison & Schiff, 2010). There is some evidence of changing gender dynamic in relation to domestic duties, such as men’s participation in domestic work (Levitt, 2011); and women’s increased independence and autonomy as a result of the skills, knowledge and network they acquire through migration (De Oliveria Assis, 2014).

It is important to note, of course, that many of these empirical studies are context specific and dependent on a myriad of factors including social, cultural factors, including education and religion (Lopez-Ekra et al, 2011). Also important are specific factors around how women live and work in the destination country, for example, if they live independently from a family group, and whether they worked in the formal sector (Hugo, 2000). For example, women who previously had social capital in the household may find it ebbing away through migration – such as where women who make decisions on how household income is spent may find that being away from the household through migration can weaken their continuing ability to maintain this status due to physical absence from home (Guzman, Morrison & Sjoblom, 2008). On balance, however, where women increase their income as a result of migration, they commonly do experience an elevation in their status in the household, and increased bargaining power (Lopez-Ekra et al, 2011).

When looking at indicators of long-term change – and particularly the diffusion effects on gender relations at community level – the empirical case for empowerment is more ambivalent. On the one hand, living and working in a country with more progressive gender rights can encourage

women to 'start questioning the assumption that gender inequality is 'naturalized' and to bring back these ideas when they return to their communities (Bastia & Busse, 2011). However, the degree to which these views are actually adopted by others in the community is often limited. Even where gender roles in the migrant women's own households shift during the period of migration (for example, husband and wife will share equally the domestic duties), upon return to the sending country, this may be 'undone' – with social roles shifting back to what they were before migration –by the entrenched views on stereotyped gender roles (Ghosh, 2009; Levitt, 2001). Levitt argues that overall there is 'little evidence that migration profoundly changes gender ideologies or that power within households is radically redistributed' (Levitt 2001). This may, in part, be due to the fact that traditional gender norms are often entrenched in the very process of women's migration. For example, argues Parreñas, women's migration is commonly in limited to occupations such as domestic work and caregiving, which reinforces the predominant view in many sending communities that domestic work is a 'woman's responsibility'. So, instead of a woman's absence leading to her husband taking on domestic duties, the duties pass through to other women in the family (aunts, mothers and female siblings) (Parreñas, 2001).

## **GENDER AND INTERNATIONAL SEAFARING**

The discourse of women's migration is often focused on low-skilled women and typically in domestic work – an industry which employs the majority of autonomous female migrants from Asia (see for example Yamanaka & Piper, 2005). Unlike Asia, there has not been large scale migration in domestic work from the Pacific, with most female migration associated with more skilled occupations such as nursing and teaching (Voigt-Graf, 2007; Khoo & Voigt-Graf, 2011; Rokoduru, 2004). Little empirical research has however looked at lower skilled female migration from the Pacific.

One sector where some female migration is known to occur is the tourism sector, which is a mainstay of many Pacific Island economies.

A number of large cruiseship companies pass through the Pacific region, and while there have been relatively few Pacific Island workers aboard these ships, with the exception of a small number of i-Kiribati, ni-Vanuatu and Fijians (P&O, 2011), governments in the Pacific are increasingly looking at this industry as a form of employment for their workers (Garae, 2015).

Sometimes referred to as 'migrant workers of the oceans' (Chin 2008), workers aboard cruiseships and shipping vessels are, in a number of ways, different to other migrant workers. First, for these workers there is no 'destination country' as employees of shipping and cruiseship companies are travelling between numerous countries, and are therefore also generally not subject to national immigration regulations, nor employment provisions (Terry, 2011). This results in a unique form of transnationalism, described by Borovnik as based on a common identity and a building of social networks through temporary and multi-national work-based communities on board ship (Borovnik, 2004). The second unique aspect is the diverse number of nationalities working side by side onboard with dozens of nationalities aboard, largely as a result of the de-regulated nature of the sector because of open registries (Chin, 2008).

The cruise ship industry employs hundreds of thousands of workers globally – more than 70,000 come from the Philippines alone (Terry, 2014). Women are largely concentrated in the low-skill end of the hotel division of ships, though this is often correlated with ethnicity – with most of the female employees from West Europe and North America employed in white collar hotel jobs while the majority of women from Eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia in much more low-paid blue collar jobs such as cleaning, housekeeping and bartending (Wu, 2005).

Few studies on employment in the cruiseship sector have taken a sex-disaggregated approach, looking specifically at the experiences of women (Terry, 2014). The only exceptions are a small number of studies looking at sexual health amongst female workers appear to have considered the social situation of female workers on cruiseships (Thomas, Bloor & Little, 2013).

## **RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Migration has been an enduring aspect of Kiribati history. As one of the most remote countries in the Pacific Island region, with prevailing issues of poverty, and lack of access to employment opportunities, it has long been seen as a country which is integrally dependent on migration (through remittances) and aid.<sup>1</sup>

In 2010, the unemployment rate was 31% of the labour force but higher amongst females (34.1%) (Kiribati National Statistics Organization (KNSO), 2012). Youth unemployment was particularly high, with 54% of the 15-24 year old persons being unemployed (KNSO 2012) with at least half of the school leavers left without training opportunities or jobs. Because Kiribati does not have a free mobility agreement with other countries, permanent migration is not an available option, except for the highly skilled (who can migrate under skilled migration programs), those with family reunification opportunities, or successful candidates in the Pacific Access Category, which permits up to 75 i-Kiribati per year to settle permanently in New Zealand.

Temporary migration has been a long-standing employment opportunity for a significant proportion of i-Kiribati, almost all of whom have been men. Although mining and export of phosphate in Nauru provided significant migration opportunities (as well as national employment opportunities on Banaba Island), these largely disappeared by 2004-05. Another long-standing migration opportunity has been for male seafarers working aboard cargo ships. I-Kiribati workers are recruited through the South Pacific Marine Services – a recruiter representing a consortium of six German shipping vessels. As of December 2013, there were about 1,008 Kiribati seamen on board, which while lower than in previous years, is still a sizeable proportion of the working age male population (SPMS, 2014; Borovnik, 2006). Another key sector of migration is the fisheries sector with approximately 500 I-Kiribati crew are working on international vessels (KNSO, 2012).

Another, more recent form of temporary migration, is migration to New Zealand and (and later) Australia, through seasonal and guestwork programs. In 1977, a Fiji Rural Work Permit Scheme was amended to include workers from Tuvalu and Kiribati (renamed the South Pacific Work Permit Scheme South Pacific) and later, a visa-waiver scheme operated from 1986 – 2002 which included i-Kiribati migrants. More recently, seasonal worker programs in agriculture

have admitted i-Kiribati workers both to New Zealand (since 2007) and Australia (since 2008). However, Kiribati faces competition from larger Pacific Island countries with better resourced labour administrations, and cheaper air linkages to Australia and New Zealand. It has therefore not been easy to find New Zealand or Australian employers for seasonal workers from Kiribati and the number of workers remains small.

#### ***I-KIRIBATI WOMEN, EMPLOYMENT AND MIGRATION***

While there is largely gender parity in terms of educational attainment in Kiribati, there are clear difference in labour market participation. According to the latest census (2010), women do have access to jobs in the public service, however the proportion of women in private sector work is much lower than men's, and a much higher proportion of women than men was not in the labour force (KNSO, 2012).

Wages in Kiribati are low, and many of the more lucrative jobs are in international employment such as seafaring, to which women have had limited opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Other than the more recent experience of women working in seasonal work, there had been only two key periods of female migration, which are discussed below.

There is no record of migration in a female-dominant sector having been explored as a labour strategy until 1997, when the then-President Teburoro Tito (interview 21) initiated discussions within government on possible opportunities for i-Kiribati women as domestic workers and carers for the elderly in Hong Kong. It is unclear whether negotiations had formerly commenced when leaders of major churches in Kiribati showed strong opposition to the talks, lobbying MPs that this kind of migration of i-Kiribati would lead to prostitution and exploitation. The discussions were abandoned, however migration of 'domestic helpers and caretakers' was included in a Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Kiribati Governments regarding Labour Cooperation in 2006 (alongside manufacturing, construction, merchant shipping and fishing). There was no record of the agreement ever having been implemented in any way (interview 31).

In 2004, in response to interest from the SPMS in employing women stewards, around 26 women were trained in catering and stewarding at the MTC, took up employment on shipping vessels (Quinn, 2014). Over a period of three years, women were placed in pairs on various merchant ships. As a consequence of a number of issues including a high level of pregnancy, numerous complaints of sexual and other harassment by i-Kiribati seafarers, the suicide of an i-Kiribati female steward and a murder of a German man by an i-Kiribati man, allegedly due to a dispute over an i-Kiribati seafarer, SPMS stopped recruiting women in 2007 and has not resumed since (Quinn, 2014).

The recruitment of women on Norwegian Cruise Liner (NCL) ships came about as a result of an agreement between the Kiribati Government and NCL regarding the latter's use of Kiribati territory (Fanning Island) along the ship's route pursuant to which, NCL agreed to recruit women in a number of low-skilled roles including housekeeping and reception. The agreement was terminated in 2012, and NCL stopped the recruitment of i-Kiribati workers.



## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is based on field research carried out in South Tarawa in June 2015. The research involved semi-structured qualitative interviews with 20 of the women who worked on NCL, and who lived in South Tarawa, as well as twelve key stakeholder interviews.

The NCL workers were identified through a snowball technique with initial contact made through hotels that employed some of the NCL women, and then asking for further potential interviewees' contacts.<sup>3</sup> An informal organization of NCL women living in South Tarawa had been formed in 2012, so many of the women interviewed knew the details of other women on island whom they knew from the organization. This was judged to be the best methodology for reaching the NCL workers, as there were no reliable records of workers on NCL.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to recognize that this method has limitations, most importantly that women from outer islands were not included. Second, the women in the sample, who were likely to belong to the informal group may have shared particular characteristics such as age or time spent on the ship. The research tried to address this sampling bias by ensuring that the sample included women in different age ranges, marital situations and number of contracts on the ship.

Interviews were conducted in a private setting either in the woman's home, or workplace. Interviews lasted around 45 minutes to one hour and focussed on the women's social and financial situation before, during and after the NCL experience – particularly focussing on family relationships, control of finances.

Interviews conducted with key stakeholders including the head of SAOK (private recruitment agency which recruited the women); the head of the MTC; a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development; the Taiwanese ambassador and other stakeholders.

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### *RECRUITMENT*

The recruitment of the women was managed domestically by a private recruitment company (SAOK), with collaboration from the NCL head office in the United States. The call for recruitment was done by radio, which invited men and women over the age of 18, with English language ability and completion of Form 6 education to apply. Those shortlisted after the initial application were required to sit a written test. The women shortlisted after the test results were invited for an interview, which was conducted by a human resource manager from NCL headquarters.

Although there are no statistics on the characteristics of the women chosen, as a group, of the women interviewed for this research the majority were, at the time of recruitment, mainly in their early to mid-twenties, and largely single.

**Table 1:** Age and marital status at time of recruitment

<b>Age when commenced at NCL</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>Married/widowed</b>	<b>Total</b>
20-24	9	1	10
25-29	4	2	6
30-34	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>20</b>

Most had been working for a number of years before recruitment, in a variety of low-skilled roles in Tarawa. With the exception of two interviewees, none had lived abroad.

All of the women interviewed, along with others engaged on NCL had no specific training on ships, with the exception of a one month course which was carried out at the MTC, and largely focused on safety on board ships.

#### *LIFE BEFORE NCL*

The majority of the single women interviewed commented on the strict i-Kiribati cultural norms that they were obliged to follow by their families. A typical response, given by one interviewee was that:

*'I was not allowed to go out at night or socialize with others too much, except for church activities. My curfew was 10pm and I was not allowed to drink alcohol.'* (interview 1).

Those interviewees who were already married also often had to obey rules about going out, set by their husbands. One woman said that her husband didn't want her to go out during the day and she was only allowed to go out at night if they went out together. However her husband would regularly go out drinking and would sometimes not come back for up to three days (interview 9).

Whilst most of the interviewees were employed prior to working, few had much control over their savings. If they were single, typically their salary would be given to either the father or sometimes the mother (particularly common if the father had problems with alcohol consumption).

Where the interviewees were already married, income was either shared between the husband and wife, or managed only by the husband.

### *DURATION AND NATURE OF WORK ON THE SHIPS*

The majority of women had contracts of around 10 months (a small number had shorter contracts of around four months). Between 10 month contracts they would be given two months of vacation time in Tarawa. Most of the women interviewed worked in housekeeping with a small number in hotel reception – sectors which both employed mostly women.

Although the interviewees were not probed about their rights at work, most said that they had good working conditions, regular time off and were happy with their wages. Several interviewees commented on a sexual harassment policy which set rules for conduct for men and women and which was regularly enforced. Relations with other nationalities on the ship were generally cordial and often friendly, though one interviewee commented that there was some discrimination against i-Kiribati workers by other crew members from South Asia, on the basis that the i-Kiribati were uneducated and untrained.

While it is far from clear that the conditions were exemplary, the working conditions were reported to be far better than those of women who were employed by SPMS on cargo ships between 2004-07. One of the women interviewed had previously been employed for two years on a merchant ship as a stewardess. Her biggest fear was the i-Kiribati seafarers on board, who would sometimes get drunk and pester the women to join in the drinking. She recalled an incident when one of the i-Kiribati men came towards her with a knife and told her that if she didn't join them they would 'do something bad'. When she reported the incident to the captain the entire i-Kiribati crew were dismissed, though she herself was also required to leave soonafter.

On NCL, there were also procedures in place to report incidents, and the women reported that they felt that they could discuss problems with other women. The interviewees noted that they formed close kinships with other women from many nationalities, some of which they would meet across several contracts.

### *SOCIAL EXPERIENCES ON THE SHIP*

The majority of unprompted responses to life on the NCL ships relative to life in Tarawa was that it was 'like another world' where you had the freedom to 'do anything that you want'. The majority of women commented on the fact that there was no one 'bossing them' which they found liberating. 'In Kiribati, there are many places you cannot go and things you cannot do because your family will become angry or feel ashamed'. However on the ship, it was not only the fact of others not dictating their behaviour, but also the fact that on the ship there was a feeling of privacy – that the women could do what they wanted without the rest of the family or community knowing.

This was generally seen as a liberating aspect of life on the ship by many of the interviewed women. However two of the women also commented that freedom could be difficult to manage. In particular, not having someone 'who tells you what to do and not to do.. can be dangerous because you do not know how to protect yourself. At home, your parents will.. stop you from doing silly things' (interview 17).

When elaborating on what ‘freedom’ on the ship meant, many of the women commented on the ability to drink alcohol, which often became routine after completing a shift, either at the staff bar or in their individual rooms. The women interviewed generally noted that consumption was limited to one or two alcoholic beverages, and that they enjoyed the ability to socialize with other crew in an inclusive, relaxed setting; although some felt that it also led to problems of binge-drinking, and this sometimes led to unsafe sexual conduct.

Many of the women commented that being on the ship, for the first time, brought them into contact with men who were not their relatives – particularly male crew members who largely came from the Caribbean, and parts of Asia. Several commented on the difference between the way that they were treated by men on the ship, relative to conduct in Kiribati. For example, men were outwardly courteous and cautious in terms of their public conduct around the women. One interviewee commented that while in Kiribati it might be ok to touch a woman’s bottom, or slap her, this was entirely unacceptable on the ship. Both friendships between men and women, and romantic liaisons, quickly formed between some of the women and male crew members.

While on the ship, many of the single women fell pregnant to another member of the crew (12 out of 20 interviewed). Some of these were planned pregnancies as a result of relationships formed on the ship, though several were unplanned and resulted from unprotected sexual intercourse.<sup>5</sup> Knowledge of family planning and contraceptives was mixed among the women. Several commented on the fact that the pre-departure training in South Tarawa allocated just one day to sexual health and that the content covered only sexual transmitted diseases and did not specifically deal with pregnancy. Others were aware of the risk of pregnancy but assumed that this risk was low, either because they thought that pregnancy was unlikely after one or a few episodes of sexual intercourse, or if during previous periods of sexual activity they had not gotten pregnant.

Women who became pregnant on ship were often concerned about how to discuss the news with their parents and scared to return home. One woman ‘hid’ from her father at a friend’s house when she returned because she was afraid of his reaction. However for most of the women, the anger and disappointment that the family’s initially expressed after hearing about a pregnancy was resolved while the women were still on the ship through phone conversations with family. It was rarely possible to keep the pregnancy a secret from the family, even while on the ship, as news quickly travelled either through i-Kiribati colleagues who returned from the ship earlier, or through friends.

#### *REMITTANCES AND DEALING WITH MONEY*

Depending on the contract and position they had, women earned between AU\$600 – 800 a month (US\$430-580), which was up to eight times the average salary for the women prior to leaving.

Unlike seafarers, the women on NCL were not provided with information on an allotment system which would enable them to remit a specific amount every month and they were not provided with guidance on how much to remit, nor on investment options to ensure long-term benefit of their savings. Most women sent around half of their money to their family and saved the rest in cash, which they brought back in a lump sum at the end of each contract, after spending a small

amount of money on their own purchases.

In sending remittances, single women generally sent money to their mothers, who managed household income. Those that had children would generally send money to whomever was looking after the children – often their husbands’ family, such as the mother or sister-in-law. However, rarely did the women have control over the specific details of how their earnings were spent. Conversations about remittances were generally limited to confirmation over the telephone of whether the money was received via the transfer. A few of the women stated that it would have been inappropriate (‘mistrustful’) to ask how the remittances had been spent. However women with school-aged siblings knew that the bulk of remittances went to payment of school fees. This is consistent with research on seafarer remittances which shows that school fees form a significant part of remittance spending (Borovnik, 2004). Other common expenses were house construction (such as tiling, house extensions) and household purchases such as a washing machine or TV. Some of the women, however, had no idea how the money had been spent, and did not see any specific items purchased, or changes in the household, when they returned on vacation.

The money that was saved by the women interviewed was generally brought back in cash. Many of the women had saved around AU\$2000 (US\$1450) after a 10 month contract, though this depended on how much they sent home in remittances and how much they spent on the ship (although food was provided, snacks, alcohol and purchases off the ship, particularly in ports was another use of the money earned). One woman was able to save around AU\$5500 (US\$4000) after each contract, but, as with the other women, found it quickly disappear.

*‘When I returned home, most of the money would be used for my brothers. If they wanted something I would buy it. They said that they were bored of eating fish, so some of the money went to chicken, meat. I felt happy making them happy. Other things that money was spent on were tools (brothers were carpenters), house extensions, fishing gears, some purchases like a TV and fridge... In the end there was not much left for me, but I felt that I had treated myself on the ship already [through little purchases made on clothes and drinks] (interview 9).*

Commonly money was requested by relatives on outer islands as part of the Kiribati bubuti system. This cultural tradition obliges family members to provide goods or money when requested and ensures the equal distribution of surplus made by a family (Borovnik 2006). The women interviewed commented that remittances would be widely distributed within the extended family and as with seafarers, requests could be made either directly to the woman, or more commonly to her parents, particularly if it came from outer island family (Borovnik, 2006). Money was often also spent on special feasts called botakis which can sometimes cost AU\$1000 (US\$730).

This system of distributing money made it difficult for the women to save. Single women in particular, found it challenging to deflect requests from relatives. While women with children could sometimes justify that they have to spend money for their upkeep and education, several of the interviewees commented that single women were often looked down on if they do not distribute their income widely as they were perceived to have less onerous obligations to immediate family. ‘You cannot save’ commented one of the women. ‘The family always comes

to ask, including people from the outer islands. If they come to live [with you], it is a shame not to share your money with them' (interview 2).

One of the women said that she asked her mother to put all of the savings towards purchase of a property and did not have to contribute to family requests. However this was a unique case as the woman's family already had several people working and earning reasonable wages who could presumably respond to bubuti requests from extended family.

Amongst the women interviewed, only one had used her savings to start a business but this did not last very long because she needed assistance to continue the business but family members were reluctant to help on a regular basis (interview 9). However several other women also commented on their desire to start a business (interview 20).

#### LONGER TERM IMPACTS FOLLOWING RETURN

Following the termination of the agreement between NCL and the Government of Kiribati and changing of the NCL route, many of the women were upset that they no longer had the opportunity to get back on the ship and expressed that they were 'desperate' to get new contracts. They approached an MP (former President) for assistance, and he encouraged them to start a women's group and lobby the government to recommence negotiations with NCL. Around 30 women continued to meet weekly or fortnightly over the next year to try to find out why their contracts were cancelled and to lobby the government to recommence negotiations with NCL. They were organized by one or two of the older NCL women, who would make the arrangements to meet at one of their homes. However, by end of 2012, with no real change, the women stopped meeting.

When reflecting on the longer-term changes in their lives as a result of their NCL employment, most of the women noted that there was some, but not dramatic, impact on how much autonomy they had within existing relationship, such as with parents and husbands. While some additional autonomy was permitted for single women (being allowed to go to nightclubs or socialize with friends), most of the married women did not see much impact of the experience on their relationships with their husbands. One woman commented 'I had a husband and child before I left, and after I returned... It was the same. He was still the boss' (interview 3). Another woman commented that despite attempts to get her husband to be more involved in domestic duties after returning from NCL, little had changed in her relationship.

*'My husband is very stubborn. On the weekends he sleeps, drinks kava.. I do everything... He thinks that he is the boss... It's difficult, sometimes I argue with my husband because he does not give me any support. I must just do what he tells me and what his family tells me'* (interview 13).

However, more dramatic was the impact on the women's relationships formed after NCL. For example, one woman commented that being on the ship changed her perspective on men and women as she saw the men treat women in a 'special way'. After she returned and (some time later) got into a relationship with an older man, she wanted it to be 'on equal terms'.

*‘Sometimes he is upset with me because I want everything to be fair. If he goes out with his friends, I go out with my friends. And he now considers me an equal, not like before. If he sees that I’m tired, he will cook. I tell other men that they should do the same... but his family is not very happy with me’ (interview 9).*

Particularly dramatic were the changes in the women’s own views of their independence, and their views gender relations in the community. More than half of the women interviewed commented that their views on women’s role in a relationship or household had changed or become strengthened in some way. Particularly prevalent was the attitude that being in the workforce was important for women’s independence. One of the women commented that:

*‘After working on ships it helped me to realize two important it was to be independent and not rely on someone else. Whatever I plan it is for the benefit of me and my kids – not my husband. I don’t plan on giving up my job.’ (interview 11)*

For single women, their perspectives of partnership were also impacted. One woman commented that ‘I will not stop working when I get married. It may be hard to find a guy who will accept that. I may be very old when I get married (laughs)! (interview 5).’

This attitude on women’s employment extended to a view that women should have access to migration opportunities. ‘Women as men can make money. Women can work, can migrate, can earn money’ (interview 16).

A number of the women commented that their migration helped them to acquire professional skills and attitudes which helped them secure post-NCL jobs. A common comment was that working on the ship according to the demands of the customers and supervisors, made time management and responsibility essential skills. ‘Most of our clients were from New York and they were very demanding,’ said one woman, ‘It helped us to grow professionally and there was lots of guidance and training provided on the ship. I believe that it helped me to get a new job [on return to Tarawa]’ (interview 10). Other life skills such as management of money were also seen to be very important. Several women commented that being on the ship also helped them learn how to manage their income and how to resist ‘temptations’ (interview 13).

A proportion of the women (8 out of 20) said that they wanted to work abroad in future. This was particularly common for women with children, who commented that they were concerned about the quality of education that their children would receive in Kiribati. Two had applied to work in the seasonal worker programs to Australia and New Zealand, and others were looking to move either through family reunification or skilled migrant visas. Although the primary reasons given were education and access to good jobs, two of the women interviewed also commented that gender parity was important and that this was difficult to achieve in Kiribati.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

The study provides useful insight into some of the positive and negative experiences of women who worked aboard the NCL cruises. As previously noted, the broad concept of empowerment can be conceptualized through such outcomes as a migrant woman's ability to exercise a degree of control over use of remittances; the strengthening of the women's role in the family and the degree to which the experience contributes to future plans and ambitions, and the changes or lack of changes in these indicators in the lives of i-Kiribati women who worked on the NCL provides important policy lessons for future migration schemes.

In relation to management of remittances, there seemed little evidence of the women interviewed being able to control how remittances were spent, except where there was previous negotiation with the family and a reason for why money could be saved rather than diverted to bubuti requests (for example, to purchase land). Largely because of their absence from the household and the cultural impropriety of asking their elders to spend remittances in particular ways, the women had little knowledge of, and little control over, household spending except in relation to schooling of children. Although they were better able to track money that was spent from the savings they brought back from the ship, they still exercised limited control over the money when relatives made bubuti (family obligation) requests for assistance.

On the question of whether the women felt that their role within their family was strengthened as a result of their migration, there did not seem to be a strong indication of this having been the case. As outlined in previous research, husbands did not necessarily take up domestic responsibilities during their wives' absence, and instead child rearing often passed to another female member of the household. Upon return to their husbands, few women found the distribution of domestic duties had altered. However, this is not to say that there was no potential impact on gender relations - women who had engaged in relationships after their return from the ship or were looking for a relationship did appear to be influenced in their selection of a partner by the desire for a more equal relationship (at least to the degree that they could continue to work and earn money).

Finally, on the question of the degree to which their experience contributed to increased subjective change in independence, and influence of migration on future plans and ambitions, there seems to have been a dramatic impact. The women interviewed all reported that they felt a degree of change in themselves – either increased confidence in their work, or increased independence in their lives.

The findings of this study are consistent with prior empirical research on the impact of women's migration which suggests that migration has a positive impact on the women's sense of autonomy and independence, but considerably less impact on overall gender dynamics. However when considering the fact that for almost all of the women, this was their first migration experience, and in most cases was limited to less than five years, the degree to which the experience impacted on many of the interviewees' perspectives on gender relations and their own abilities was quite startling. Importantly, it should be emphasized that in the women's own conceptualization of agency in this research, they felt that working on NCL gave them freedom, choice and independence.



This emphasis on women migrants' perspectives is something that should be more fully considered in policy responses. Even though the proportion of women who fell pregnant on the ship shocked some policymakers (interview 21), it should not eclipse the empirical evidence that the women migrants' highly valued their migration experiences and felt that migration channels should be more accessible to i-Kiribati women. The issues of sexual and reproductive health is not specific to i-Kiribati women, and previous research earlier referred to suggests that women on cruiseships have greater autonomy to take on partners and engage in sexual behaviour on ships than they would in their communities, but that they experienced higher levels of sexual harassment (Thomas et al 2013). While the interviewed women did not cite sexual harassment as a problem, some did note that men on the ship were 'very persistent' and they may have felt pressure to engage in sexual behaviour as a result. This suggests that sexual and reproductive health needs to be more fully explored in future research, and that future migration schemes need to be combined with access to comprehensive pre-departure training, which includes sexual and reproductive health. This could help to ensure that female migrants are making educated decisions about whether they want to start a family with a male colleague (interestingly, NCL did not appear to have any policies on this, and accommodated crew members that formed relationships by allowing them to live in the same cabin).

The risk of unplanned pregnancies is not the only issue to consider from the perspective of increased women's migration, particularly in relation to vulnerable occupations such as domestic work. Ensuring that protection measures are in place when facilitating migration in these sectors is very important to help eliminate the risk of migrant exploitation. Pre-departure and reintegration training could include not only protection measure, but also financial literacy, remittance management and business entrepreneurship training. This type of training should be available not only to migrants but also their families, to help ensure that remittances are used in a planned way rather than disappearing through ad-hoc *bubuti* requests.

Overall, this study shows that i-Kiribati women can benefit from migration, and that many see it as a positive strategy to supporting their family and getting access to new skills and knowledge. From a policy perspective, the Kiribati government could consider a greater emphasis on exploring access to migration opportunities for women, so that it is more equally balanced with opportunities that are currently only accessible to men (seafaring, fisheries, etc). This might include conducting market research on labour migration opportunities in tourism and catering, as well as domestic work, aged and community care. It should also include researching further opportunities on international cruiseliners.<sup>6</sup>

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex and nuanced nature of women's migration on cruiseships, and the need for more in-depth analysis of future migration that affects women. In particular, it is important to recognize that migration did have a number of positive individual outcomes for the women interviewed and that future migration of i-Kiribati women can, given the right circumstances, have an equally positive effect. While the study corroborates previous research in other parts of the world indicating that migration does not 'profoundly change gender ideologies or that power within households is radically redistributed' (Levitt 2001), this does not mean that the small and important changes in the women's own perspectives and perceptions do not form part of an incremental process that leads to greater empowerment for women.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *With a growing population of 103,058 as at 2010 (KNSO, 2012), half of which live in the over-crowded capital (already above the carrying capacity of the island according to the Kiribati Government's National Framework on Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation), both temporary and permanent migration is being promoted as one strategy to relieve population growth.*
- <sup>2</sup> *Seafaring and fisheries employment provide a significant sources of remittances to families living in Kiribati, with around AUD 5.6m remitted in 2014 by seafarers working on German shipping vessels (SPMS 2014). The majority have reported that they are usually expected to send back between 50%-70% of their salaries (Borovnik 2006).*
- <sup>3</sup> *Interviews were held one-on-one in the women's home or workplace, in a quiet place where privacy could be ensured. All interviewees were advised of the voluntary nature of the interviews and that they could withdraw at any time. They were also informed that their names would not be used in the article and consented to use of other qualifying information such as age and duration of contracts.*
- <sup>4</sup> *One previous study suggested that there were 120 i-Kiribati workers on NCL ships in total (Quinn, 2012) but many of the women interviewed suggested that it was only 80-90.*
- <sup>5</sup> *The distinction between planned and unplanned pregnancies was not always clear and the women who said that pregnancies were planned often didn't elaborate on the level of planning involved. For example, one woman said that they had gotten pregnant because she was upset about her husband's cheating and wanted to 'teach him a lesson'.*
- <sup>6</sup> *It is understood that the Marine Training Centre has so far trained around 50 women in catering and hospitality, who could be gainfully employed on vessels operating in the region (interview 23).*

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## Climate change and migration: the case of the Pacific Islands and Australia

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[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-4](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-4)

### ABSTRACT

*There is growing consensus that voluntary labour migration can promote economic development in migrant sending and receiving countries and can be a positive adaptive response to the effects of climate change. However, for voluntary migration to be a positive form of adaptation, policy commitment and collaboration between migrant sending and receiving countries will be required. In the Pacific, Australia has capacity to collaborate with Pacific Island governments to facilitate voluntary migration; however, Australia has been reluctant to expand migration access to the Pacific. This article makes the case for promoting migration opportunities between Australia and the Pacific as part of the adaptive strategy efforts.*

**Keywords:** migration, climate change adaptation, Pacific Island countries, Australia, policy.

## INTRODUCTION

According to the International Panel on Climate Change, “small island states - especially the atoll nations of the Pacific and Indian Oceans - are among the most vulnerable to climate change, seasonal-to-interannual climate variability, and sea-level rise...Among the most vulnerable of these island states are the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Cook Islands (in the Pacific Ocean); Antigua and Nevis (in the Caribbean Sea); and the Maldives (in the Indian Ocean)” (IPCC, 2014, p. 936).

Reflecting this, there has been considerable discussion on climate change adaptation in the Pacific region. As articulated by Campbell (2014, p.4), climate change adaptation generally refers to “measures that enable communities to cope with, and where possible benefit from, the effects of global warming”. Based on this definition, voluntary labour migration can serve as a positive adaptive response for Pacific communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Bardsley & Hugo, 2010; Barnett & Chamberlain, 2010; Barnett & Webber, 2010; ADB, 2012; Koser, 2012; Edwards, 2013; Birk & Rasmussen, 2014; Campbell, 2014; Campbell & Bedford, 2014; Hugo, 2014; IOM, 2014; World Bank, 2014; Burson & Bedford; 2015). More specifically, voluntary migration is identified as a way for communities to cope with environmental change through alleviating pressure on existing resources and diversifying income, thus allowing those who remain to better adapt to the effects of climate change. However, for voluntary migration to realise its potential as a positive climate change adaptation strategy, policy intervention is required in both the sending and receiving countries (ADB, 2012; Koser, 2012; IOM, 2014; World Bank, 2014). This is particularly the case for Pacific island countries with limited migration options, including the Melanesian states of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and the isolated microstates of Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu (Koser, 2012; Hugo, 2014; World Bank, 2014).

Due to geographical proximity, colonial legacies and existing social networks, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America (USA) are currently key destination countries for many Pacific migrants. Current migration routes to these countries are largely based on colonial relationships, family reunification, educational pursuits or employment through skilled and seasonal worker programmes. Both Australia and New Zealand have existing seasonal workers programmes. Many Pacific island countries have access to the USA through the Compact of Free Association which grants visa-free access to the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Similarly, the Cook Islands, Tokelau and Niue have access to New Zealand. Additionally, many Pacific Islanders can access New Zealand through the Pacific Access Category scheme for long term migration. Australia offers limited permanent migration access for Pacific Islanders in comparison with New Zealand and the USA. Many papers have noted the benefits of expanding migration from the Pacific to Australia for those who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Opeskin & MacDermott, 2009; Koser, 2012; Hugo, 2013; Weber, 2015). However, the current policy climate in Australia seems to be leaning toward maintaining existing migration programmes, such as the Skilled Migration Programme and the Seasonal Worker Programme (Campbell & Bedford, 2014).

This article<sup>1</sup> reviews and analyses the existing Pacific climate change literature on voluntary

migration as a positive adaptive response to climate change, with a particular focus on migration to Australia. The article then discusses the potential benefits that could arise through identifying and promoting skilled and unskilled migration from the Pacific to Australia. In order to facilitate such migration, it would rely on strong national commitment of the sending countries to ensure full participation in existing unskilled labour schemes and to improve training in order to promote participation in skilled labour schemes. This article makes a case for migration to Australia as providing positive benefits for both Australia and Pacific countries. As an enabling factor for promoting migration to Australia, public opinion towards Pacific migration is pivotal. Reflecting this, the article aims to address some of the myths that have contributed to a negative public opinion, and contribute to improved public opinion by providing an enhanced understanding of the potential positive and negative impacts of Pacific Islander migration to Australia.

## **CHANGING CLIMATE, CHANGING HOME: VOLUNTARY MIGRATION AS AN ADAPTIVE RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

### THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) binds countries to emission reduction targets and sets the overall direction for global climate change adaptation and mitigation. The through the UNFCCC process, the term “loss and damage” was first recognized in the Bail Agreement (2007) and was then given its own work programme through the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage. The Warsaw Mechanism was established “to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change, including extreme events and slow onset events, in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change” (United Nations, 2013).

Although the First Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1990 emphasised that the greatest single impact of climate change might be on human migration; the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage only included text related to improving the research “to enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planning relocation, where appropriate, at the national, regional and international levels” (United Nations, 2013). The inclusion of climate change related migration in the upcoming Paris Declaration which will arise out of the COP21 in Paris in December 2015 has been widely controversial. The draft of the Paris declaration elaborates on migration in paragraph 70.3 a: “Institutional arrangements under the Convention shall be strengthened to support the implementation of the commitments related to loss and damage under this agreement: a. Provisions for establishing a climate change displacement coordination facility that: i. Provides support for emergency relief; ii. Assists in providing organized migration and planned relocation; iii. Undertakes compensation measures.” (UNHCR, 2015)

The current version of the Paris Declaration primarily focuses on climate change displacement and does not mention voluntary migration as a opportunity to reduce future displacement. Additionally, there is no mention of the need for an international legal framework related to international displacement or migration, which has implications for the human security of migrants from small atoll countries in the Pacific for which internal migration is not an option.

The International Organization for Migration suggests climate change is expected to affect human security to the point that may result in the movement of people in at least four ways (IOM, 2014). Firstly, greater frequency and intensity of natural disasters, both sudden and incremental, may lead to higher risk of humanitarian emergencies. Secondly, the effects of climate change on livelihoods, health, food security and water availability are likely to exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. Thirdly, rising sea-levels may make coastal areas and low-lying islands uninhabitable. Lastly, competition over shrinking natural resources, such as availability of fresh water, may exacerbate tensions and potentially lead to conflict. As human security becomes threatened some people may feel that they are forced to move or displaced, while others may make a voluntary decision to migrate partially due to climate change.

The International Organization for Migration defined forced migration, or displacement, as a “migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes” (IOM, 2014).

The relationship between voluntary migration and climate change is more complicated (Campbell, 2014). Most voluntary migration is primarily due to education, employment, family reunification, etc. However, when the decision making process is partially influenced due to a decline in human security, livelihood opportunity, land security or natural resources due to climate change, then could be considered being related to climate change. In simpler terms, while climate change may not be a primary reason for migration in many cases, it may be a factor that makes a person more likely to decide to move as compared to staying.

There is not an agreed distinction between displacement and voluntary migration. Each individual makes migration decisions based on a complex range of factors and there is no clear line between when a person chooses to move or feels forced to move. Voluntary migration is perhaps best articulated by Barnett and Webber (2010, p.6), in that a voluntary migration can only be considered voluntary if the person feels that they are making a choice, i.e. they have “the right to stay as well as the right to leave, so that people are free to choose the response that best suits their needs and values”.

Climate change may therefore be seen as one variable of many, which in turn makes it challenging to discern environmental factors from other factors motivating migration (Koser, 2012). Due to the fact that migration decisions are made due to a variety of factors, it is very difficult to estimate the impact of climate change on migration. One approach to attempting to estimate the future impacts of climate change on migration is through agent-based modelling in when an individual (agent) decides to migrate due to a combination of their propensity to migrate (a combination of education, employment status, climate change and other factors) and their ability to migrate (financial means necessary, health, ability to obtain visas, etc.). Based on this way of viewing voluntary migration, it is likely that many people will have a propensity or interest in migration as climate change becomes more severe, but will not have the ability to make this interest a reality.



## THE PACIFIC CONTEXT

Migration is not a new phenomenon in the Pacific region. For centuries Pacific Islanders have been migrating in response to both environmental and social change, and as a means for individuals and families to pursue educational and economic opportunities. The bulk of contemporary migration from Pacific island countries has involved permanent resettlement abroad, with about half a million Pacific Islanders residing overseas, or about one-fourth of the populations of Micronesia and Polynesia (Bedford & Hugo, 2012). In parts of Polynesia, more people are resident overseas than in the home islands, while Melanesian migration remains predominately internal. As emphasised by Connell (2011) and Bedford and Hugo (2012), the next 40 years are likely to see significant increases in migrant populations from the Pacific Islands, with the main drivers of migration likely to be: rapid population growth, resulting in overpopulation in areas with limited resources; the pace of environmental change, largely brought about by climate change; and limited prospects for economic growth.

There has been high-level recognition of the important relationship between migration and climate change in the Pacific, including through President Tong of Kiribati's vision for "Migration with Dignity". The Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 2013 established a population development agenda for Asia and the Pacific for next decade through the "Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development". Item 197 of the Declaration acknowledged the need to "support and facilitate adaptation and/or migration with dignity and respect for identity where countries can no longer support their lives of people due to adverse changes in their circumstances and environment resulting from climate change" (ESCAP, 2013, p. 24). However, Australia expressed significant reservation towards the Declaration, particularly in relation to climate change and migration.

The effects of climate change in the Pacific region are reported to include significant temperature increases, changing rainfall patterns, greater monsoon variability, sea-level rise, floods and more intense tropical cyclones (ADB, 2012; IPCC, 2014). The impacts of climate change coupled with pre-existing socio-economic and development challenges in Pacific island countries, such as rapid population growth and poor infrastructure are likely to exacerbate the vulnerability of people in the region (Weber, 2015). Campbell and Warrick (2014) identified three key elements of climate change affecting Pacific island communities: land security; livelihood and food security, such as through the reduction of crop productivity and water quality and quantity; and declining health and habitability, due to changing disease vectors and restricted access to water supply. As the quality of life available to people in the Pacific declines, it is expected that more and more people will consider migration (either internal or international) as a personal climate change adaptation strategy.

It has reported that almost all the island states of the Pacific are considered vulnerable to changes in the environment due to climate change; however, some communities will experience particularly acute challenges that will make these communities likely to become source areas for climate change-related migration (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Koser, 2012; IOM, 2014; Campbell and Warrick, 2014). Atoll countries and communities are considered some of the most vulnerable. Atolls are low-lying islands many of which have high population densities (these

include the countries of Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu and a number of other islands in the Pacific in the countries of Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga). Atoll countries often have very limited ground and surface water, a lack of land for agriculture, are highly dependent on subsistence fishing, are susceptible to salt water intrusion and the entire population is located on the coast line, which makes them vulnerable to storm surge, king tides, natural disasters and sea-level rise. In the cases of many atoll nations, internal migration will be difficult due to a lack of available land to migrate to and the climate change vulnerability of the entire nation.

Campbell and Warrick (2014) also identified Pacific coastal communities, river deltas and large river systems as being highly susceptible to climate change related migration.

While estimating the number of future migrants impacted by climate change is a challenging task, some scholars have provided estimates for the Pacific islands region. Campbell (2009) estimated that there could be between 665,000 and 1,750,000 climate migrants in the Pacific region by 2050 when the total population is projected to read in excess of 20 million people. Another estimate by Edwards (2013) noted that by 2050, in the worst-case scenario, 600,000 people will face resettlement associated with climate change across the Pacific. While these numbers should be used with caution, it is reasonable to postulate that the effects of climate change will increase mobility across the Pacific islands. By not planning for this future challenge, there is potential for humanitarian crises to occur.

The Government of Kiribati, recognising their country is particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise, had established a long-term relocation vision for promoting voluntary migration in order to avoid forced displacement in the future. This is based on the premise that by planning for migration now, it will preserve the dignity of those being relocated as well as minimise the burden on the receiving countries. The vision consists of two components, establishing opportunities with potential destination countries, and equipping I-Kiribati with the skills needed to find work and settle abroad. However, as raised by McNamara (2015), low-skilled and unskilled citizens are likely to be left behind, and some groups might not have the financial and informational resources to migrate voluntarily. Weber (2015) further argued that these people may likely become 'climate change refugees', with few skills and little wanted by countries that should receive them.

Voluntary migration, either temporary or permanent, is seen as having potential as a positive climate change adaptation strategy in the Pacific for three key reasons. Firstly, voluntary migration can reduce population pressure, thus increasing environmental sustainability in climate change affected areas. However, as articulated by both Locke (2009) and Campbell and Warrick (2014), policies supporting gradual migration would need to be coupled with local adaptation strategies if they are to relieve environmental pressure to the degree required to increase security. Secondly, migration can be a means of income diversification for climate change affected communities and may also increase income generation through remittances. Remittances can ensure access to basic needs, and provide added capital to the local economy (Barnett & Webber, 2010). This added capital could be utilised to fund community-level infrastructure to build resilience against the effects of climate change and provide communities the tools to adapt. Thirdly, migration can result in skills transfer between the migrant receiving country and the sending country,

increasing a community's access to information and technology. This is particularly the case when permanent migrants return home temporarily, or when temporary migrants return, bringing with them new skills and knowledge. However, for voluntary migration to be a successful climate change adaptation strategy there should not only be benefits for sending countries, but also for receiving countries.

Tuvalu, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu are examples where migration is working as a positive development strategy, and reducing climate change vulnerability. All of these four countries have high numbers of overseas migrants in Australia and/or New Zealand. This migration has been voluntary through existing employment opportunities and provides a mechanism for generating remittances and income diversification. In particular, the population of Tuvalu has experienced only a slight increase over time, with an average annual population growth rate of 0.27%, despite a high fertility rate. This limited population growth in Tuvalu is due to the high access to international migration on a per capita basis (United Nations, 2013a). On the other hand, Kiribati, which experiences similar climate change vulnerability, has a rapidly rising population at an annual population growth rate of 1.55% due to high fertility and limited international migration (United Nations, 2013a).

## **PACIFIC MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA**

As mentioned, there has not been any formal recognition of cross-border relocation or the idea of climate change refugees at the global level or in Australia. There has been discussion on climate change relocation and displacement at the national level in Australia; however, most of the discussions around the issue of a legal framework for climate change displacement is happening at the global level.

In 2006, the Australian Labour Party proposed a Pacific Rim coalition to accept climate change refugees; however, this was not endorsed. In 2007, the Australian Greens Party proposed the Climate Refugees Amendment Bill which would create a new visa class to formally recognise climate refugees and to grant the Minister for Immigration the power to declare certain environmental disasters as a result of climate change. However, this initiative failed to gain backing from the major parties, partially due to the lack of appropriate criteria for defining a climate change refugee and if Australia implements a migration programme specifically for Pacific climate change migrants, it may then be seen as inequitable as it excludes other countries experiencing similar environmental changes. The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection has recognised that potential internal migration due to climate change in Pacific island countries may be necessary; however, this view constrains climate change migration to internal relocation rather than resettlement abroad (Mence et al, 2013).

Although a decision on climate change refugees or displacement is not likely to be made at the national level in Australia in the near future, expanding opportunities for voluntary temporary and permanent migration to Australia for Pacific islanders could provide climate change adaptation benefits in the Pacific and provide benefits to Australia.

The overall objective of Australia's migration programme is to contribute to Australia's economic, demographic and social well-being (DIBP, 2013). Incoming migrants can play a key role in filling labour gaps in Australia's labour market, as well as contribute to positive population growth and cultural diversity.

Many countries in the Pacific have recognised migration as a means of income diversification and sustainable development. Migration can help reduce population pressure on the resource base by lowering the population, and remittances from migrants can provide significant income support for those who remain at home (Hugo, 2014).

Australia has also recognised the important role of migration as a tool for development in migrant sending countries through being a signatory to the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013 which acknowledged "the important contribution made by migrants and migration to development in countries of origin, transit and destination" (United Nations, 2013, p.1). In 2014, Australia was ranked as having a high potential to use incoming migration as a development tool for less developed countries<sup>2</sup>. Migration between Australia and the Pacific enhances remittances and the skills and knowledge transfer. Australia could then be considered as well positioned to further the migration and development agenda, through intervention of migration policy which facilitate positive outcomes. However, migration has been under recognised as a development tool in Australia's aid policies.

If migration were to be included in the aid programme it would be necessary to ensure that migration does not contribute negatively to development through "brain-drain" or created social cohesion problems. Circular migration can reduce the risk of "brain-drain" and help Pacific Islanders acquire skills, knowledge and insights that can become crucial when they later have to leave their home countries for good (Weber, 2015). Furthermore, the return of temporary migrants to their home communities can result in skills and knowledge transfer, as well as an increase in financial capital, in turn enhancing the capacity of the community to adapt to changes in the environment. Other migration related issues could be addressed through promoting well-managed migration through good policy.

The purpose of the aid programme is to "promote Australia's national interests by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction" (DFAT, 2014, p. 1). The aid programme is heavily focused on the Pacific. It is in Australia's self-interest to promote development in the Pacific and regional security, as increased conflict or irregular migration could contribute to security issues for Australia and Pacific island countries. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has recognised that "without intervention, the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation will erode and reverse development gains, and jeopardise the livelihoods of poor people" (DFAT, 2015). However, Australia's aid programme focus on hard climate change adaptation programmes as opposed to soft adaptation such as climate change.

Although the aid programme does not include a focus on international migration, there are some opportunities for Pacific islanders to migrate to Australia. The current opportunities that are open to Pacific islanders for migration to Australia include primarily short-term unskilled

opportunities, longer term skilled opportunities and a new semi-skilled visa which is open only to Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru. The semi-skilled “micro-state visa” will include 250 slots in total for Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru. This visa has only been introduced this year and it is not yet clear how the visa will work in practice.

Australia has recognised the need to use migration as a tool to fill labour shortages in the existing Skilled Migration Programme and Seasonal Worker Programme. However, these programmes do not attempt to link to vulnerable populations or to improve climate change adaptation. Additionally, the volume of people who participate in the programmes is not high enough to result in large development gains, except in the countries with very small populations.

The Skilled Migration Programme provides access for people based on job skills and outstanding abilities and the programme does not discriminate in respect to country of origin. Since the Skilled Migration Programme is not coupled with a Pacific training outreach programme, it primarily attracts only candidates that are already well-qualified.

The Seasonal Worker Programme, which commenced in July 2012, offers Australian employers in the horticulture industry the ability to employ workers when they cannot find enough local labour to satisfy seasonal demand. While horticulture is the main industry for seasonal workers, the scheme is also trialling the accommodation, aquaculture, cane and cotton sectors. In 2014, the participating countries in the program included Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. However, it has been reported there is both a low up-take by Australian employers and a low take-up of visas by Pacific Islanders (Gibson *et al*, 2014; World Bank, 2014). While the Seasonal Worker Programme facilitates temporary migration, it can help spread the benefits of migration widely and create familiarities with destination countries.

The Seasonal Workers scheme requires limited skills and thus provides a means of income diversification for vulnerable households. However, it is difficult for women and people with disabilities to find placement in the Seasonal Workers schemes due the physically demanding nature of the job.

Much of the permanent migration of Pacific Islanders to Australia has been through the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, otherwise known as step-migration, which allowed Australians and New Zealanders to move easily between the two countries to visit, live and work (Vasta, 2004). A number of Pacific island countries and territories have migration access to New Zealand, so when they become permanent residents or citizens of New Zealand, some take advantage of the arrangement to migrate to Australia.

If these existing schemes were expanded then it could help decrease population growth, or perhaps even result in negative population growth, for those nations vulnerable to climate change. However, the number of people with access to migration would need to drastically increase. According to estimate by Bedford and Bedford (2010) the level of net out-migration in Kiribati would need to increase from the current level of about 100 people per year to 5000 people by 2030; however, Tuvalu, with its much smaller population, would only need to increase from the current level of around 100 to 250 people by 2030.

## **PUBLIC OPINION MYTHS VERSUS FACTS**

Across countries, the public and policymakers in receiving countries often believe immigration can become an economic burden, as immigration is feared to lead to loss of jobs, heavy burden on public services, social tension and increased criminality (UNDP, 2009). Immigration can be perceived to intensify the competition for existing jobs and allegedly bring down the wages for the locals (Ratha *et al*, 2011).

Public opinion plays an important role in shaping a country's immigration policy. Therefore, it could be considered that public attitudes in Australia are a critical factor in the positive and successful settlement of Pacific migrants. While most Australians recognize the value of immigration for bringing new ideas and cultural diversity (Markus, 2011), the people in Australia with negative views may feel more strongly about these views. Therefore, these negative views may be more prominent in the media. This section aims to highlight that negative views toward migration are not shared by most Australians.

Numerous surveys have been conducted in Australia and internationally over the last few decades to gauge the attitudes of existing residents towards migrants, immigration policy and multiculturalism, including the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, Australian Election Studies, the International Social Survey Program and the Gallup World Poll. On the whole, these surveys demonstrated that levels of support for increased immigration is increasing, with higher percentages of the Australian population agreeing that immigration has a positive influence in Australian society, and lower percentages of the population agreeing that immigration into Australia needs to be limited (Gibson *et al*, 2004; Markus, 2014). Australia ranks among the countries most receptive to immigration (Markus 2011).

Most recently, the International Organization for Migration analysed survey results on how the world views migration. Drawing on data from the Gallup World Poll, the report detailed results from surveys conducted in more than 140 countries between 2012 and 2014. Worldwide, people are generally more likely to want immigration levels in their countries to either stay at their present levels (21.8%) or to be increased (21.3%), rather than to see immigration levels decrease (34.5%) (IOM, 2015). In the region of Oceania, around 69.3% of respondents want immigration levels to stay at the present level or to be increased, which places the region as the most receptive towards immigration.

While there is limited research focusing on Australian attitudes towards Pacific Islander migrants, George and Rodriguez (2009) found in their study on youth identity in Pacific diasporas in Australia that overall acceptance of Pacific Islander youth by the broader Australian community appears high, particularly when compared with the experiences of other migrant groups.

Australian migration policy is increasingly focused on economic factors. In a recent government discussion paper on Setting the Migration Programme for 2015-2016, the key criteria for planning around migration into Australia is to ensure migrants make a strong contribution to Australia's economic prosperity (DIBP, 2014). Furthermore, the Australian Government has called for an inquiry into the greater use of charges relative to quotas and qualitative criteria to determine the intake of temporary and permanent entrants into Australia. The Australian

Government's objectives in commissioning this inquiry are heavily focused on migration being a source of economic enhancement, specifically to examine and identify future options for the intake of temporary and permanent entrants that improve the income, wealth and living standards of Australian citizens, and improve the budgets and balance sheets of Australian governments (Productivity Commission, 2015).

Migrants in Australia have contributed to three factors of economic growth: the volume of the working age population, labour force participation and productivity (DIAC, 2011). Specifically, they add to the size of the labour force, have high labour force participation rates and bring innovation and entrepreneurship to Australia and help make business and trade connections overseas. In Australia, migrants typically fill labour gaps and tend to fill low skilled, minimum wage jobs that existing residents may not want such as in the aged care or manufacturing industries; and thus do not take jobs away from the local population or drive down wages. The common industries of employment for Pacific Island-born people in Australia in 2011 were manufacturing (9.2% of Pacific Island-born workers) and healthcare and social assistance (9.3%) (ABS, 2011). In terms of the drain of the social welfare system, the unemployment rate Pacific Island-born population in 2011 was very low at 5.0% - which is less than that of Australia as a whole (5.6%) (ABS, 2011). In addition, greater numbers of Pacific Island-born people participated in the labour force, with around 77.7% of working age Pacific Island-born people working, compared to 65.0% for Australia (ABS, 2011). Due to the fact that the entire population of the Pacific, excluding Papua New Guinea, is under 3 million people, and that many people in the Pacific are not interested in migration (and are not highly vulnerable to climate change), it is unlikely that an increase in access for migrants from the Pacific to Australia would result in serious disruptions to the economy.

Due to the high labour force participation, there is little merit to the assumption that migrants rely heavily on public welfare but pay relatively little in taxes and welfare contributions (Ratha *et al*, 2011). As with the population overall, migrants in Australia pay tax on income and purchases of goods and services. Additionally, Pacific Island-born people who migrated to Australia from New Zealand via the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement or are in Australia on a short-term visa are not eligible for welfare benefits in Australia until they become a permanent resident or Australian citizen. Overall, research and data indicates that Pacific Islander migrants in Australia largely bring benefits to Australia's economy through high workforce participation, contributions to productive diversity and innovation, and low take-up of welfare services.

In addition to economic benefits, migration also brings changes to the social and cultural landscapes of communities in Australia. The evidence that is available overwhelmingly supports the view that migrants in Australia have made, and continue to make, substantial contributions to Australia's social capital and that the social benefits of migration far outweigh the costs, especially in the longer term (Carrington *et al*, 2007; Markus, 2011; Hugo, 2014). Most of the social costs associated with migration identified are short term and generally arise from the integration phase of the settlement process (Carrington *et al*, 2007). However, research has indicated that the presence of diasporas can be highly effective in assisting newcomers to Australia as they can help migrants make the transition without imposing costs on government

and community support systems (Woolford, 2009; Hugo, 2013). The presence of migrants also substantially increases the range and viability of available recreational and cultural activities for all Australians (Carrington *et al*, 2007). The impact of immigration on leisure and recreation at the grassroots level are clearly demonstrated in many communities throughout Australia through different types of cultural activities in which people participate. As demonstrated in the opinion polls, most Australian's feel that migration enriches the cultural diversities of the receiving communities by expanding the range and viability of recreational and cultural activities, such as the establishment of cultural festivals which can be enjoyed by all

## **POLICY OPTIONS FOR AUSTRALIA**

Several scholars have emphasised that current policy mechanisms in Australia are amenable to adjustment in ways which would allow people affected by climate change in the Pacific to make voluntary choices about migration (Opeskin & MacDermott, 2009; Koser, 2012; Burson & Bedford, 2013; Hugo, 2013; Hugo, 2014). However, there has been little dialogue on how existing policy could be amended in ways that brings benefits for both Pacific island countries and Australia.

Australia should consider a multi-pronged approach for approaching the nexus of issues around climate change and migration in the Pacific.

### **TRADITIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION**

Promotion of migration opportunities does not eliminate the need for climate change adaptation. Climate change adaptation helps improve the living conditions and future security and livelihoods of people living in the Pacific. Managing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations through climate change adaptation and working to reduce future climate change through mitigate will continue to be a priority. Climate change adaptation and mitigation will decrease the need for climate related migration. Thus any activities in support of climate related migration should not be at the expense of support for traditional climate change adaptation or mitigation.

### **IDENTIFYING NEW VISA SCHEMES WHICH COULD FACILITATE VOLUNTARY PACIFIC MIGRATION**

As noted above, facilitating voluntary migration from the Pacific will reduce the change of future climate related displacement and provide income diversification benefits which also results in greater climate change resilience. For a new visa scheme to be effective as a climate change adaptation strategy, it would need to provide opportunities that are open to the populations most vulnerable to climate change, including unskilled women and men. Additionally, a new visa scheme would need to have a high enough quota to result in a decrease in the environmental pressure in the migrant sending community. As noted above, as an example, the quota for Tuvalu could be relatively small at an additional 150 migrants; however, for Kiribati it would need to be much higher at near 5,000.

Australia has currently developed and will soon pilot a micro-state visa for Tuvaluans, i-Kiribati and Nauruans, with an initial quota of 250 migrants. In addition, by targeting the countries with



the highest vulnerability to climate change and the lowest access to international migration, Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu, the scheme has the potential to significantly enhance the development prospects of the countries through providing options for people vulnerable to climate change and hardship. However, this new visa is only for a maximum of two years and only for a very small number of people.

A migration scheme similar to New Zealand's Pacific Access Category (PAC), which grants residency each year via lottery to a set number of migrants from Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and Tuvalu is an example to an existing permanent migration scheme in the region. The ballot process attempts to provide an equal chance of being invited to apply for residence; however, the complexity of the application process and the PAC application fee acts a barrier for the most vulnerable populations. Additionally the PAC has the same quota for Kiribati and Tuvalu which means that the per capita access to the PAC is much less in the countries with higher populations, like Kiribati.

The PAC scheme is successfully improving the development prospects of the countries through providing options for people vulnerable to climate change and hardship to voluntarily migrate abroad. However, there are also implications involved with implementing this scheme. As noted in Section 2.2, some Pacific islanders may not be eligible due to being unskilled, not being able to meet the language requirements or do not have the informational resources to find a job in Australia. Those that do migrate through this scheme may result in a loss of human and social capital at their community of origin, which may decrease the community's adaptive capacity to changing environmental conditions. However, ensuring that communities of origin receive the financial and social benefits, such as through remittances and technology transfer, of permanent out-migration may help mitigate any possible negative effects of the loss of human capital.

#### EXPANDING EXISTING VISA SCHEMES IN AUSTRALIA

The Seasonal Worker Programme and the Skilled Migration Programme provide opportunities for migration. The Seasonal Workers Programme is open to more vulnerable groups; however, it is only for very short periods of time. The Skilled Migration Programme only provides opportunities to a very small percentage of highly skilled people, who are unlikely to be considered vulnerable.

Australia could extend the visa period to longer time periods for the Seasonal Worker Programme and increase the Pacific participation in the programme. This would be a way to expand the already successful impact the programme is having in the Pacific.

Additionally, Australia could preferentially select qualified Pacific persons in the Skilled Migration Programme, and strengthen Pacific diasporas and community organisations in Australia. However, for the Skilled Migration Programme to be an effective means of climate change adaptation then there would need to be additional investment in providing training to potential migrants, including training which would provide certification recognized by Australian companies. Australia has a long history of providing technical training in the Pacific through Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) which could be further expanded to provide additional opportunities. Additionally, a foundational course which helps people transition into the APTC would be necessary to reach vulnerable populations. It should be mentioned that

vulnerable populations will not be able to participate in the course unless it is fully funded with transportation and room and board.

#### MANAGING THE TRANSITION TO AUSTRALIA DURING THE MIGRATION

There may also be lessons learnt from the Australian Community Proposal Pilot that could be shared across the other migration programmes in Australia. The Community Pilot aims to assist those with humanitarian visas settle in Australia. It couples migrants with a sponsoring community to help ease the migration process, including meeting them at the airport, assisting them to find permanent accommodation and helping familiarise them with services and service providers such as banks, public transport, health-care, education and employment services. The sponsorship of migrants from communities or organisations helps offset the costs to the Australian government. Promoting a similar community sponsorship programme with Pacific diaspora communities could yield successful outcomes, particularly due to existence of many Pacific diaspora communities in Australia, as well as the importance of kinship in Pacific cultures. The Pacific diasporas in Australia could link new Pacific migrants with services and provide economic and social support, and thereby reduce the costs to the government (Hugo, 2012; George & Rodriguez, 2009).

#### PROMOTING THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN MIGRATION

Many of the migration opportunities are easier for men to access as compared to women. Australia could include separate quotas for men and women migrants. To promote women migrants may require a careful review of the types of employment included in the seasonal workers and micro-state visa scheme. Semi-skilled migration for aged-care and hospitality could provide additional opportunities for women.

Promoting women migrants would also require careful consultation between the Australian Government and the Governments of sending countries and additional research on gender and migration. Research would need to include the barriers that women in the Pacific experience due to migration, since the Pacific countries have high levels of gender inequality.

These policy options illustrate how Australia could play a more significant role in promoting Pacific migration and in turn ensuring the success of voluntary migration as a climate change adaptation strategy for vulnerable countries in the Pacific region.

#### **CONCLUSION: MANAGING A FUTURE CHALLENGE**

With a history of migration and demonstrated support for helping Pacific island countries combat climate change, there is scope for both sending and receiving countries to look to amend existing migration policy to cope with future challenges. An increase in Australia's Pacific Islander population is likely to yield positive or neutral impacts on Australia as migrants contribute to Australia's working age population, labour force participation and productivity and innovation. In addition, Pacific Islanders contribute to Australia's rich cultural diversity. As Australia will lose workers over the next four decades due to low fertility and ageing, migrants from the Pacific can contribute to maintaining the workforces in Australia, particularly to the aged care sector. In

tandem, by providing additional options for Pacific Islanders to migrate to Australia, it can also enhance the development of the Pacific region.

It is crucial to Australia's migration future that not only policy development, but also public opinion, is shaped by a balanced assessment of soundly based evidence about the nature, causes and impacts of migration (Hugo, 2014). By promoting migration between the Pacific and Australia, Australia could help promote development today and also manage a future challenge. Voluntary migration can increase climate change adaptation through income diversification, reducing environment and population pressure, and improving technology transfer. This could in turn reduce the likelihood of irregular migration, humanitarian crises and conflict, and contribute to the positive development of the Pacific.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This study was prepared for the Pacific Climate Change and Migration (PCCM) project. The PCCM project is a three year project (2013-2016) implemented by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project is funded by the European Union.
- <sup>2</sup> Each year, the Center for Global Development's Commitment to Development Index ranks wealthy governments on how well they are living up to their potential to help poor countries. The Index scores seven policy areas that affect the well-being of others around the world: aid, trade, finance, migration, environment. The majority of voluntary migration from Pacific islands will likely utilise existing social networks and traditional visa channels established by earlier generations of migrants (Bardsley & Hugo, 2010; Campbell, 2014). Many of these social networks are located in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. In 2011, there were 125,506 Pacific Island-born people residing in Australia, accounting for around 0.6% of Australia's total population and 2.4% of Australia's total foreign-born population (ABS, 2011).

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## Australian Refugee Policy and its Impacts on Pacific Island Countries

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[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-5](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-5)

### ABSTRACT

*Refugees present an immense challenge globally but until recently Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have been relatively sheltered from this phenomenon. However, changes to Australia's border security and refugee policies in recent years have significant implications for the Pacific because of Australia's determination to prevent asylum seekers from arriving by boat in Australian territory. This article examines Australia's so-called 'Pacific Solution', which entails the transfer of asylum seekers to camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, where they are detained pending determination of their refugee status and ultimate resettlement. The social impacts of Australia's policies include the heightened tensions that arise from establishing large detention facilities in small island communities, and the social costs of resettling persons who are found to be refugees among poor local populations. Australia's policies also have other impacts on PICs. Australia's selective allocation of foreign aid and other funds make PICs vulnerable to pressure from its developed neighbour, and create the danger that Australia's perceived 'problem' with unauthorised boat arrivals is being shifted to acquiescent countries in the Pacific.*

**KEYWORDS:** *asylum seekers, Australia, immigration detention, international aid, maritime arrivals, Nauru, Pacific Solution, Papua New Guinea, refugees, regional processing, resettlement.*



## INTRODUCTION

The challenges faced by people who have been displaced from their homes due to persecution or war now regularly attract media attention worldwide. Whether it is the death at sea of individuals who have undertaken risky voyages to seek asylum, or the harsh conditions of refugee camps or immigration detention centres, the problems of deracination are all too common.

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have not been immune from these challenges but historically the scale of refugee movements in the Pacific has been modest compared to other regions. Recently, however, Australia's policies regarding border protection and refugees have threatened to unsettle this quiescence by shifting Australia's 'refugee problem' to neighbouring countries in the Pacific. This has occurred because of the determination of successive Australian Governments to stop unauthorised arrivals of boats carrying asylum seekers (which typically originate in Indonesia), and to process the applications of these refugee claimants beyond Australian territory. At present, Nauru and Papua New Guinea (PNG) co-operate in Australia's 'Pacific Solution', but other Pacific countries have been touted as possible sites for offshore refugee processing or resettlement, and attempts have also been made to involve south-east Asian countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia in resolving the asylum-seeker issue.

This article examines the impact of Australia's border protection and refugee policies on its Pacific Island neighbours. Although the number of asylum seekers transferred by Australia to the Pacific is not large in absolute terms, it is highly significant when viewed in relation to the small and relatively homogeneous populations of the destination countries. Moreover, the social impacts of Australia's policies include the tensions that arise from establishing large detention facilities in small island communities, and the economic and social costs of resettling persons who are found to be refugees among local populations. The article concludes that the economic vulnerability of some PICs make them susceptible to pressure by Australia, and that there is a danger that Australia's perceived problem with unauthorised boat arrivals is being transferred to the Pacific.

Part 2 of this article examines the international legal regime for protecting refugees and its relevance in the Pacific. Part 3 details the scope of refugee movements in the Pacific using recent United Nations data. Part 4 explains the development of Australian refugee policy and practice, with emphasis on the birth, decline and renaissance of the 'Pacific Solution'. Part 5 analyses the impact of these policies on PICs, and Part 6 offers a brief conclusion.

## THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE FRAMEWORK IN THE PACIFIC

The 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (the '1951 Convention') seeks to protect asylum seekers in two ways. The obligation of *non-refoulement* (non-return) prohibits a State from returning a refugee to the frontier of a territory where he or she would face persecution. Additionally, persons who are found to be refugees are afforded a suite of rights, which allow them to enjoy the same standard of treatment enjoyed by nationals of the host country, or by other non-nationals in the host country, depending on the right.

These protections inure only for the benefit of a person who is a ‘refugee’ as defined in the 1951 Convention, namely, a person who: ‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country’. The five ‘Convention grounds’ of persecution are restrictive—they certainly do not extend to every circumstance in which a person leaves his or her country of origin under duress to seek a better life abroad. The grounds do not specifically include gender, although protection of girls and women is sometimes achieved through liberal interpretation of ‘membership of a particular social group’.

The 1951 Convention was supplemented by the 1967 *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (the ‘1967 Protocol’), which dispensed with the temporal and spatial limitations of the original instrument. At present, 146 States are bound by the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, including Australia and New Zealand, but ratification is not widespread in the Pacific (Table 1). Only six PICs have ratified both instruments. Coverage is best in Melanesia (where all States are party except Vanuatu); and poorest in Micronesia (where no State is party except Nauru, which ratified in 2011).

**TABLE 1:** *Ratification of Refugee Instruments in the Pacific*

Region/ State*	1951 Refugee Convention	1967 Refugee Protocol
<i>Melanesia</i>		
Fiji Islands	1972	1972
Papua New Guinea	1986	1986
Solomon Islands	1995	1995
Vanuatu	—	—
<i>Micronesia</i>		
Federated States of Micronesia	—	—
Kiribati	—	—
Marshall Islands	—	—
Nauru	2011	2011
Palau	—	—
<i>Polynesia</i>		
Cook Islands	—	—
Niue	—	—
Samoa	1988	1994
Tonga	—	—
Tuvalu	1986	1986

Source: United Nations Treaty Collection, *Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary General*

However, the application of refugee law in the Pacific may be both narrower and broader than Table 1 suggests. It is narrower in so far as the Convention and Protocol permit States to make reservations at the time of expressing their consent to be bound, and this has the effect of modifying treaty obligations in relation to the reserving State. The most significant Pacific example occurred in 1986 when PNG acceded to the 1951 Convention but rejected the obligations in seven articles relating to employment, housing, education, freedom of movement, penalisation for illegal entry, expulsion, and naturalisation of refugees. The reservations were prompted by the Government's concern that it lacked the economic capacity to grant refugees the same social assistance as nationals (Glazebrook, 2014). It is relevant to the themes of this article that this reservation was partially withdrawn in August 2013 'in relation to refugees transferred by the Government of Australia to Papua New Guinea', but it remains in force for other persons.

The application of refugee law in the Pacific also has the potential to be broader than appears from Table 1 in so far as the Convention and Protocol allow metropolitan States to extend the treaties to any of their territories. This is relevant to the many British, French, New Zealand and United States territories in the Pacific. Thus, on ratification in 1954, France extended the 1951 Convention to all territories on behalf of which it conducts international relations, which includes New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna. The application of refugee law in the Pacific is broader in another sense too: non-party States may be bound by rules of customary international law that relate to the *non-refoulement* of refugees, but the ambit of customary obligations in refugee law is contested.

## REFUGEE MOVEMENTS IN THE PACIFIC

According to data compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ('UNHCR'), at the end of 2014 some 59.5 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence or human rights violations, of whom 19.5 million were officially refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015). UNHCR estimates that women comprise half of the adult refugee population, and children some 51 per cent of the total refugee population. The Pacific accounts for only a tiny fraction of the world refugee population, whether assessed by country of origin or country of asylum (Table 2).

Viewed by country of asylum, in 2014 9,916 individuals sought refuge in PICs, almost all of them Indonesian nationals seeking protection in PNG. They reflect the intractable situation of West Papuans who crossed the border from the Indonesian province of Papua into the Western Province of PNG—initially in the 1960s following Indonesia's takeover of the western half of the island of New Guinea from the Netherlands, and more recently following mass exoduses from Indonesian-controlled territory (Glazebrook, 2014; King, 2004).

Viewed by country of origin, the number of Pacific Island nationals who have sought refuge outside their country of origin is even smaller. In 2014, only 1,334 refugees or people in refugee-like situations originated from PICs. Over 96 per cent of these individuals came from the 'arc of instability' in Melanesia. Fijians alone accounted for nearly 70 per cent of refugees from the Pacific, which is a consequence of successive coups d'état in 1987, 2000 and 2006.

In sum, the Pacific has had its own challenges with respect to refugees, which arise from

circumstances of conflict, instability or human rights abuse specific to the region. Some of these problems are long-standing, others are short-lived; yet the scale of the challenges has been modest. In this historical context, Australia and New Zealand have not burdened their developing neighbours but, rather, have provided a potential haven on the Pacific Rim for asylum seekers from the region.

**TABLE 2:** *Refugees and People in Refugee-Like Situations, Pacific States, 2011–2014*

	Refugees by country of origin				Refugees by country of asylum			
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2011	2012	2013	2014
<i>Melanesia</i>								
Fiji Islands	1,579	1,317	1,112	924	7	6	5	13
Papua New Guinea	128	174	221	288	9,377	9,383	9,378	9,510
Solomon Islands	72	61	61	70	-	-	-	3
Vanuatu	1	1	1	1	-	2	2	-
<i>Micronesia</i>								
Fed. States of Micronesia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kiribati	33	33	20	3	-	-	-	-
Marshall Islands	-	2	3	3	-	-	-	-
Nauru	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	389
Palau	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>Polynesia</i>								
Cook Islands	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Niue	7	10	14	18	-	-	-	-
Samoa	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Tonga	10	13	18	22	2	3	3	-
Tuvalu	1	1	2	2	-	-	-	-
<i>Total</i>	<u>1,833</u>	<u>1,614</u>	<u>1,455</u>	<u>1,334</u>	<u>9,387</u>	<u>9,395</u>	<u>9,389</u>	<u>9,916</u>
Australia	39	48	28	25	23,434	30,083	34,503	35,582
New Zealand	18	20	17	17	1,934	1,517	1,403	1,349

Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends (various years)*

## DEVELOPMENTS IN AUSTRALIAN REFUGEE POLICY

Australia's refugee policy and practice is complex and contradictory. On the one hand, Australia portrays itself as a good international citizen, and it has a strong track record of admitting refugees for resettlement. In 2014 it accepted 11,600 (11 per cent) of the 105,200 global resettlement arrivals—third only to the United States and Canada (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015)—and in 2015 it agreed to accept an additional 12,000 refugees from the conflict in Syria. On the other hand, since the 1990s Australia has taken an increasingly harsh stance towards asylum seekers arriving by boat, largely to assuage public opinion, which is hostile to international migration programs if they are considered poorly-managed (Opeskin, 2012). In consequence, there have been many twists and turns in refugee policy as successive Governments have sought to address the intermittent flows of asylum seekers coming from Australia's northern borders. This Part charts the legal and policy developments that have been most significant for the Pacific.

## EARLY EXPERIENCE OF ASYLUM SEEKERS ARRIVING BY BOAT

Australia did not develop a clear policy towards onshore refugees until the first waves of asylum seekers began to arrive by boat from Vietnam in the late 1970s in the aftermath of the Vietnam War (York, 2003). Australia's generosity to these arrivals stands in sharp contrast to the policies introduced in later years. The asylum seekers were provided with comfortable hostel accommodation and comprehensive settlement services. Rather than seeking to deter arrivals, the Australian Government participated in a multilateral management plan aimed at containing asylum flows within the region. Under these arrangements, Australia and other Western nations agreed to resettle large numbers of Vietnamese refugees and, in return, Vietnam's neighbours were to grant the Vietnamese temporary asylum while they awaited resettlement. These initiatives were largely seen as successful in stemming the flow of arrivals (Crock & Ghezelbash, 2010: 248).

## MANDATORY DETENTION AND TEMPORARY PROTECTION

Starting in 1989, successive waves of boats carrying Cambodian nationals, then Sino-Vietnamese and Chinese nationals, began arriving in Australia in search of asylum. Despite their modest numbers, these arrivals provoked a strong reaction from the government and community. The Labor Government, led by Prime Minister Hawke, began detaining all unauthorised boat arrivals. Mandatory detention legislation was introduced in 1992 as a temporary and exceptional measure for particular cohorts of boat arrivals, but in 1994 it was expanded to apply to all 'unlawful non-citizens'. This change broadened mandatory detention to all persons who either arrived without a visa or who were in Australia on expired or cancelled visas. Although there have been minor reforms in the intervening years, the architecture of mandatory detention has remained in force ever since.

The next wave of boat arrivals, starting in the mid-1990s, was dominated by fugitives from Iraq, and later Afghanistan, who made their way to Australia via Indonesia. One of the policy responses to this cohort was the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) regime in 1999. This provided for temporary, rather than permanent, protection for those persons found to be refugees. The rationale was that the measure would deter prospective arrivals by providing only a limited period of protection, after which the holder had to go through the refugee determination process afresh. TPV holders were also denied many of the rights afforded to permanent residents, including the right to sponsor the immigration of family members. TPVs were abolished in 2008, only to be reintroduced in 2014.

The TPV regime has had ramifications for the gender composition of asylum seekers. In the 1970s and 80s, individuals seeking asylum in Australia were predominantly adult males, following a traditional practice of sending a father or eldest son to find a country of refuge, with the rest of the family following later as regular immigrants (Crock, Saul, & Dastyari, 2006: 169-170). By making it more difficult for refugees to be reunited with their families, TPVs swelled the proportion of women and children attempting the perilous journey to Australia. Data on the gender composition of asylum seekers arriving in the two years before and after the introduction of TPVs in 1999 indicates that the proportion of females increased from 7 per cent to 20 per cent,

and the proportion of children from 7 per cent to 24 per cent (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, 2012).

### THE 'PACIFIC SOLUTION' IS BORN

In the face of continuing maritime arrivals, the Coalition Government introduced an interdiction and offshore processing regime in 2001. Whereas TPVs and mandatory detention sought to deter asylum seekers by making life difficult for them once they arrived in Australia, interdiction and offshore processing sought to prevent asylum seekers from accessing Australia at all. The immediate trigger for the policy change was the rescue at sea of 433 asylum seekers by a Norwegian registered container ship, *MV Tampa*, in August 2001. After a five-day stand-off, the crisis was resolved when agreements were reached with New Zealand and Nauru for the rescuees to be transferred to those countries to have their protection claims assessed.

In the aftermath of the *Tampa* incident, in 2001 the Australian Parliament enacted a series of reforms that retrospectively validated the executive's response and introduced new provisions that would deprive future asylum seekers arriving by boat from access to regular asylum procedures. The scheme, which became known tendentiously as the 'Pacific Solution', and later as the 'Pacific Strategy', involved three initiatives. The first was the 'excision' of specified territory from Australia's 'migration zone', with the effect that migration legislation pertaining to the mainland (including refugee determination procedures) no longer applied in these places. A new category of 'offshore entry person' (OEP) was created to catch all asylum seekers who landed without a valid visa or authority on an excised territory. OEPs were barred from making a valid application for a protection visa unless the Minister exercised a discretion to allow it.

The second initiative involved the power to remove OEPs to a designated country for their claims to be processed. Hasty agreements were reached with Nauru and PNG for the establishment of offshore detention facilities in their territory, to which OEPs could be transferred. Depending on where asylum seekers were held and when they arrived, their claims were processed by either UNHCR or by Australian immigration officials. Individuals found to be refugees were not entitled to resettlement in Australia. Rather, they were required to await resettlement in a third country, although in practice many were resettled in Australia.

The third strategy was an interdiction program dubbed *Operation Relex*, which allowed unauthorised boats to be intercepted on the high seas by the Australian Navy. The Navy would first attempt to tow or escort the unauthorised boats back into Indonesian waters. If this failed, the asylum seekers aboard the vessels were transferred to naval ships and taken to Manus Island or Nauru for processing of their claims. Between August and November 2001, 12 boats carrying asylum seekers were intercepted by the Australian Navy in this way. Of these, eight could not safely make the journey back to Indonesia, and their passengers were transferred to Manus Island and Nauru—in total 1,501 asylum seekers, including those rescued by the *Tampa* (Manne, 2004).

### THE 'PACIFIC SOLUTION' FALLS DORMANT

Over the next few years the number of unauthorised boat arrivals dropped off significantly. In 2008, the newly elected Labor Government announced that it would bring the 'Pacific Solution'

to an end, describing it as a ‘cynical, costly and ultimately unsuccessful exercise’ (Evans, 2008). It did not abandon the policy completely, maintaining the legislative provisions underpinning the strategy. Australia’s offshore territories also remained excised from the migration zone. However, after the February 2008 resettlement in Australia of the final group of refugees detained on Nauru, the Government adopted a policy of not exercising the power to transfer OEPs to third countries. Instead, asylum seekers interdicted at sea were held on the Australian territory of Christmas Island. As such, OEPs remained barred from the mainland status determination procedures and were subject to separate, inferior, processing on Christmas Island.

The scheme was designed to keep status determination procedures beyond the reach of the Australian courts, but in a landmark case in 2010 the High Court of Australia decided that OEPs were entitled to have their status determinations reviewed by the courts to determine whether those decisions were made according to law, including the common law rules of procedural fairness (Crock & Ghezelbash, 2011). The decision resulted in a surge of litigation by OEPs challenging adverse status determinations. This also coincided with the start of a new wave of asylum seekers travelling to Australia by boat, predominantly originating in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Iran. Public opinion began to turn against the Government, with a view that the perceived ‘softening’ of Australia’s border protection policies was to blame.

#### REGIONAL AND BILATERAL SOLUTIONS ARE SOUGHT

In response, the Government led by Prime Minister Gillard moved to introduce a number of measures to stem the flow of new arrivals. Attempts were made to seek agreement for the creation of a regional processing centre. East Timor was flagged as a possible location but this plan was abandoned after support within the East Timorese Government evaporated. A bilateral arrangement was then negotiated with Malaysia, giving rise to what became known briefly as the ‘Malaysian Solution’. Shortly after the deal was announced, but before any asylum seekers could be transferred, the arrangement was struck down in the High Court on the grounds that the protections provided in Malaysia were inadequate and did not meet the statutory thresholds required for third-country transfer. Relevant to the Court’s decision was the fact that Malaysia was not, and still is not, party to the 1951 Convention or 1967 Protocol.

#### THE ‘PACIFIC SOLUTION’ IS REVIVED

Following recommendations from a report by an expert panel set up to examine policy options (Houston, Aristotle, & L’Estrange, 2012), the Australian Labor Government reversed its opposition to offshore processing on Nauru and Manus Island and moved to reopen the facilities at those locations. The ‘Pacific Solution Mark II’ was born. In 2012, legislation was passed to replace the threshold requirements that had been relied on to strike down the ‘Malaysian Solution’, in an attempt ensure future third country transfer and processing arrangements would not be invalidated by the courts. The Government also negotiated new memoranda of understanding with Nauru and PNG to reopen their processing camps. As at the end of July 2015, 637 asylum seekers were being held at the processing centre on Nauru and 942 at the facility on Manus Island (Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2015).

The new offshore processing regime differs from the original ‘Pacific Solution’ in a number of

ways. First, legislative amendments expanded the categories of persons liable to be transferred to third countries to include all unauthorised boat arrivals, not just those who arrived at an excised offshore place. Second, whereas under the ‘Pacific Solution’ refugee status determinations were carried out by UNHCR or Australian Government officials, status determinations under the current regime are carried out pursuant to newly enacted domestic refugee legislation in Nauru and PNG, by officials from those countries. Third, the updated memorandum of understanding signed with PNG not only allows for the transfer of asylum seekers for processing but also for the resettlement in PNG of transferees assessed to be refugees. Nauru has made it clear that it cannot offer permanent resettlement to refugees. Rather, recognised refugees will be settled in Nauru temporarily until a third country can be found to accept them. In September 2014, Australia signed a memorandum of understanding with Cambodia that would allow for the resettlement of some of the recognised refugees from Nauru in Cambodia.

### ‘STOP THE BOATS’

Upon being elected in 2013, the Government led by Prime Minister Abbott launched Operation Sovereign Borders, a military initiative to deter and prevent asylum seekers reaching Australia by sea. The policy involves both the continuation and expansion of offshore processing on PNG and Nauru, as well as the reintroduction of a policy of interdicting and returning sea-borne asylum seekers to their point of departure wherever possible. As of January 2015, Australia had intercepted and turned back 15 boats carrying a total of 429 asylum seekers (Medhora & Doherty, 2015). The majority of these turn-back operations involved the return of asylum seeker boats to Indonesian waters, often without the cooperation of the Indonesian Government. Recent allegations suggest that Australian officials have even paid substantial sums to people smugglers to return boats to Indonesian waters (Roberts, Yaxley, & Conifer, 2015).

A High Court challenge to Australia’s interdiction practices prompted the Australian Government to introduce amendments in 2015 which significantly expand the executive’s powers to interdict, detain and transfer asylum seekers at sea. Most significantly, the amendments stipulate that when exercising maritime powers, an authorising officer is not required to consider Australia’s international obligations, or the international obligations or domestic law of another country. Further, the amendments stipulate that authorisation of maritime powers under the Act are not invalid if inconsistent with Australia’s international obligations. As such, there are no legal safeguards in place to ensure that Australia does not breach its *non-refoulement* obligations by returning persons to a place where they face persecution, or to a situation where they are in danger of death, torture or other mistreatment.

In combination, Australia’s border protection and refugee policies have been largely successful in recent years in significantly slowing the influx of asylum seekers arriving by boat. However, this has come at great cost to the health and wellbeing of those seeking asylum and, as the next Part shows, to some Pacific communities.

## THE IMPACT OF AUSTRALIAN REFUGEE POLICY ON THE PACIFIC

Australia’s refugee policy has had a discernible impact on some of its Pacific neighbours. In



so far as Australia receives and processes asylum seekers from the Pacific—Fijians escaping military coups or West Papuans fleeing Indonesia—that impact is benign and reflects Australia's fulfilment of its international obligations. However, this Part focusses on the deleterious effects of Australia's policies, commencing with the 'Pacific Solution' in 2001 and its later variants. Because some of these impacts depend on the magnitude of Australian transfers to the Pacific, we begin with an account of that issue.

#### SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF ASYLUM SEEKER TRANSFERS TO THE PACIFIC

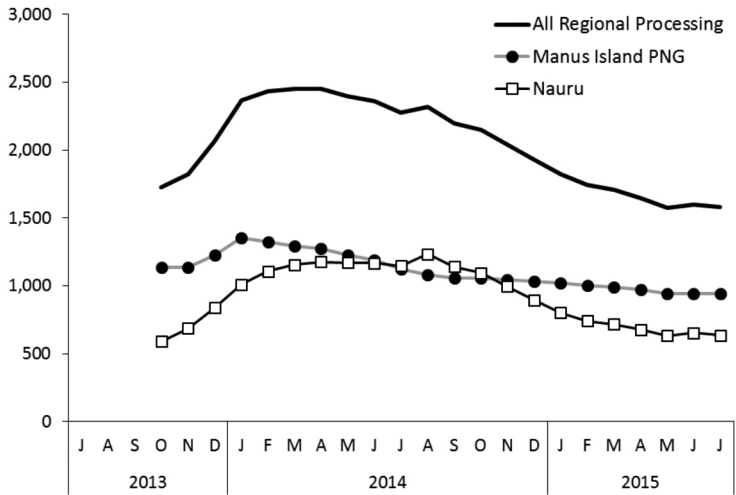
During the first phase of the 'Pacific Solution', which spanned 2001–08, a total of 1,240 individuals were transferred from Australian control to Nauru, and 365 to Manus Island (Phillips, 2012: 12-13). As a result of these arrivals, the asylum seeker population peaked at 1,115 on Nauru and 357 on Manus Island in early 2002. Overwhelmingly, they were Afghans and Iraqis, but there were also Sri Lankans, Palestinians and Iranians among them. In terms of gender, females accounted for 20 per cent of Nauru arrivals and 34 per cent of Manus Island arrivals. In terms of age, minors accounted for 21 per cent of Nauru arrivals and 35 per cent of Manus Island arrivals.

Since the rebirth of the 'Pacific Solution' in 2012, the size of these population movements has grown (Figure 1). For Nauru, the peak number of asylum seekers (1,233 in August 2014) is not dissimilar to the peak during the first phase of the 'Pacific Solution'. However, the numbers are now sustained at high levels, whereas in the earlier phase they declined from their peak fairly rapidly. For Manus Island, the peak number of asylum seekers (1,353 in January 2014) is nearly four times the peak during the first phase, and it too has been at sustained levels, with over 900 detainees still on the Island.

These numbers must be evaluated in relation to the size of the populations in each locality. The mid-2013 population of Nauru was estimated to be 10,500 persons (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2013), hence the peak number of Australian transferees corresponded to 12 per cent of the country's population. Nauru also has the highest population density of any country in the Pacific—499 persons/km<sup>2</sup>—further heightening the pressure-cooker effect. On Manus Island the situation is less extreme, with the peak number of asylum seekers accounting for 3 per cent of island's population.

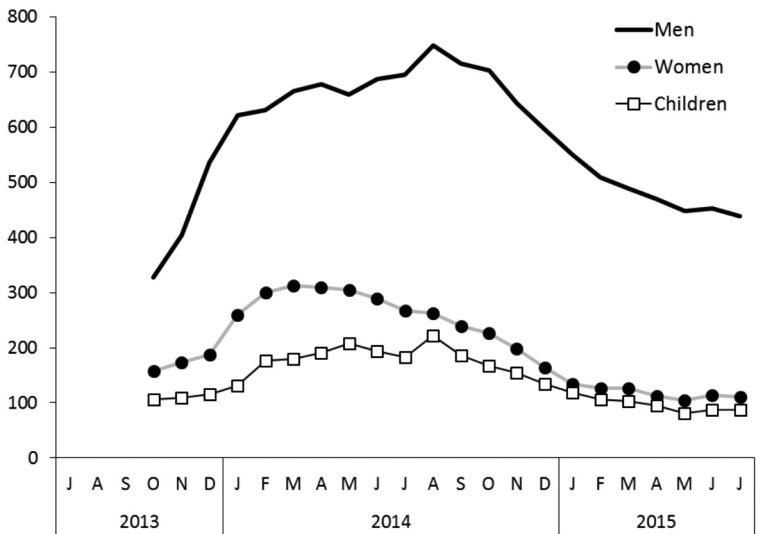
The composition of the asylum seekers has also changed. The Manus Island immigration detention centre currently contains no women or children because the Australian Government has taken the view since mid-2013 that conditions are too harsh for anyone other than adult males (Metcalf, 2014). Women and children are thus sent to Nauru for regional processing, rather than to Manus Island. By contrast, in the first phase of the 'Pacific Solution' about one-third of the detainees were children and one-third were females. The composition of the detention centre on Nauru is more diverse (Figure 2), although it is still predominantly masculine, with 69 per cent adult males, 17 per cent adult females, and 14 per cent children, according to July 2015 data.

FIGURE 1: Persons in Australia’s Regional Processing Centres, by Location



Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (various months)

FIGURE 2: Persons in Australia’s Regional Processing Centre in Nauru, by Sex and Age



Source: Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (various months)

EXERTING PRESSURE ON PACIFIC STATES

The bilateral relationships between Australia and its Pacific neighbours are not partnerships among equals in any practical sense. Australia’s role in the Pacific region is underpinned by its historical ties as a colonial administrator. It is likely no coincidence that the two Pacific countries involved in the initial ‘Pacific Solution’ were Australia’s two former territorial possessions in the region—although unsuccessful approaches were also made to Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati,

Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu (Australian Senate, 2002: 293). Over the 20th century, Nauru and PNG evolved from protectorates or colonies, to mandates under the League of Nations, and then to trust territories under the United Nations. Australia was designated as a mandate power, and then trustee, until these territories achieved independence—Nauru in 1968 and PNG in 1973. But Australian influence did not terminate when the new nations were born. As Taylor (2005:19) has noted with respect to the ‘Pacific Solution’, ‘Australia’s historical ties with Nauru and Papua New Guinea are particularly intimate; however, rather than treating those ties as a source of special responsibilities to the islanders, Australia chose to use them for its own opportunistic ends.’

A further reason for Australia’s importance in the region is its towering presence in terms of foreign aid. In 2013, Australia was the largest donor of Official Development Assistance to the Oceania region (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). Its contribution of USD 1,041 million was nearly five times the contribution of each of New Zealand and the United States, which are the second and third ranked donors in Oceania today. Indeed, in 2013, Australia accounted for 59 per cent of all bilateral aid to the region. Moreover, Australia has held this position consistently since 1970—except for the period 1985–2000 when it was outranked by France—indicating a sustained regional presence. According to Australia’s 2015 budget, in 2015–16 Australia will expended 27 per cent of its total foreign aid on the Pacific. Of this regional contribution, PNG will secure AUD 554 million (50 per cent) and Nauru AUD 26 million (2 per cent) (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2015).

The aid flowing from Australia to the Pacific makes PICs susceptible to overt and covert pressure from their principal donor because their needs as developing countries are so vast. These needs are particularly acute in the case of Nauru, whose ‘riches to rags’ story has been told elsewhere (Connell, 2006; Hughes, 2004). Although the giving of aid is not necessarily without altruism, President Nixon’s injunction to ‘remember that the main purpose of American aid is not to help other nations but to help ourselves’ (Hayter, 1990: 83-84) is a salutary reminder of the prudential motivations that can underpin the actions of the world’s wealthy industrialised states (Opeskin, 1996). There is some evidence of this in Australia, whose foreign aid budget has shrunk dramatically in recent years as a measure of fiscal austerity. Yet, despite the planned reductions, PNG and Nauru have been largely spared from the cuts, prompting one commentator to speculate that this is their reward for assisting Australia in its policy of stopping the boats (McDonald, 2015). There have been other financial payments too—since the Nauru facility was reopened in 2012, Australia has paid Nauru \$29 million (more than its annual foreign aid contribution) in fees to obtain transfer visas and refugee visas in respect of the transferees (Farrell, 2015).

With respect to the ‘Pacific Solution’, and having regard to the asymmetric power relationship between Australia and its Pacific neighbours, Taylor (2005: 32-33) has pithily concluded:

*‘it is very clear from what transpired after the bargains were struck that the governments of Nauru and Papua New Guinea did not factor in the social and political costs to their respective countries ... when they accepted Australia’s offers. They did not, because they could not. Both governments were too desperate for money and too dependent on Australia’s continued patronage to bargain with the Australian government on equal terms.’*

## SOCIAL TENSIONS IN SMALL ISLAND COMMUNITIES

The damage to both the physical health and mental well-being of asylum seekers detained in remote offshore facilities has been well-documented (Newman, Proctor, & Dudley, 2013). What has received much less attention is the broader damage that Australia's offshore processing policy is having on social cohesion in Manus Island and Nauru. The presence of foreign asylum seekers in close-knit Pacific communities has led to tensions between locals and foreigners, whether they be asylum seekers awaiting their status determination or refugees resettled in the local community. The locals view these foreigners as the face of a problem thrust upon them by Australia, and their animosity is exacerbated by accusations of mistreatment made by the transferees (Chandler, 2014a).

In February 2014, tensions between detained asylum seekers and locals on Manus Island erupted in a confrontation in which one Iranian asylum seeker was killed and another 77 detainees were seriously injured (Cornall, 2014). There have also been numerous reports of violence against asylum seekers living in the community in Nauru, possibly aggravated by the cultural differences between them (Warbrooke, 2014). In October 2014, four unaccompanied minors were hospitalised after being physically assaulted by two local men (Chalmers, 2014). Shortly after this attack, a threatening letter from the 'Youth of the Republic of Nauru' was distributed to refugees telling them to stop stealing jobs and fraternising with local women and to leave the island or face 'bad things happening' (Perera & Pugliese, 2014). By December 2014, these attacks had become so commonplace that refugees living in the community were requesting that they be returned to detention to ensure their safety (Mathiesen, 2014).

The presence of the asylum seekers in Manus Island and Nauru has also caused tensions between locals and their governments. On Manus Island, locals were angered by the fact that they were not adequately consulted by the PNG Government before the decision was made to reopen the detention centre. There is also rising tension between the local community and personnel from the military, police and security forces, who mostly hail from the mainland (Chandler, 2014b).

The promised economic benefits of the regional processing centres have also failed to meet the expectations of locals. There is brewing discontent about the fact that only a small portion of the funds received by the PNG Government under the deal with Australia has flowed on to Manus Island. Only AUD 37 million out of the total AUD 420 million aid package (9 per cent) has been allocated to Manus Province (Chandler, 2014b). There is also resentment about the large discrepancies between wages paid to local and foreign workers, with Manus Island locals reportedly being paid only four kina (AUD 1.84) per hour (Chandler, 2014b). Similar issues have arisen in Nauru, where locals find it hard to understand the need for the influx of foreign workers to the detention centres when the unemployment rate for the local population is estimated at 90 per cent (van Berlo, 2013). These economic concerns are aggravated in Manus Island and Nauru by the fact that the inflow of foreign money has led to rapid inflation, with rents and food prices soaring (Chandler, 2014b; van Berlo, 2013).

This growing resentment places the Governments of Nauru and Manus Island in a political bind when determining the level of support services that are to be delivered to persons who are

recognised as Convention refugees and released into the local community. If the refugees are provided with access to housing and services that are not available to locals, this will further fuel the tensions; but a failure to provide adequate support could give rise to a humanitarian disaster for individuals who cannot return home because they face persecution.

#### EXACERBATING GENDER INEQUALITIES

There is increasing recognition that females' experience of persecution can be different to that of males. For example, the Australian Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) has issued *Gender Guidelines*, which aim to 'promote a gender inclusive and gender sensitive review process' (Refugee Review Tribunal, 2010: 1). The guidelines recognise the special vulnerabilities of female asylum seekers, yet the decision to transfer such persons to the processing centre on Nauru disregards these vulnerabilities by exposing women and girls to harms that may be similar to those they are fleeing in their countries of origin.

Pacific States have some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world (UNICEF, 2015). In PNG it is reported that 68 per cent of women have been the subject of some form of violence (Blackwell, 2013), while in Nauru the figure is 48 per cent (Nauru Ministry of Home Affairs, 2014). This compares with one in ten women worldwide.

There have been numerous reports of physical and sexual violence against asylum seeker women in Nauru, both inside and outside the detention centre (Mathiesen, 2015). Females held at the detention centre are vulnerable to attacks from guards, locals and male detainees. A government review into the processing facility found evidence of numerous instances of sexual assault (Moss, 2015). In May 2015, a 23 year old Iranian asylum seeker was allegedly the subject of a violent sexual assault while on day-release from detention (Bagshaw, 2015).

The presence of asylum seekers on Nauru has also put local women at a heightened risk of violence. The letter distributed to refugees, discussed above, stated '[o]ur women, girls and daughters are having contact with refugees and having affairs with them and we can never see our women having fun with refugees and neglecting locals' (Perera & Pugliese, 2014). This contact has the potential to exacerbate tension and violence in the community, as well as within families, with women being punished for interacting with asylum seekers against the will of male members of their families.

#### CONCLUSION

Australia has a long history of accepting refugees. More than 800,000 refugees and displaced persons have been settled in Australia since 1945 (Phillips, 2015). The country's current annual intake of humanitarian migrants places it among the most generous of UNHCR's resettlement states. This intake covers forced migrants admitted through planned programs, but when faced with another type of asylum seeker—persons without visas who seek Australia's protection at their own initiative—the response has been radically different. Over the years, various measures have been implemented to deter such arrivals, in particular those who journey to Australia by boat.

One of the keystones of the current deterrent framework is offshore processing in Nauru and PNG. This has involved the Australian Government shifting responsibility for processing asylum seekers and caring for refugees to countries that are less well equipped for the task. The passage to Nauru and PNG has been smoothed by longstanding historical links between Australia and these territories, but it has been hastened by the liberal disbursement of foreign aid and other funds. The presence of Australia's asylum seekers in Nauru and Manus Island has caused acute social unrest in these small tight-knit Pacific communities. It has also resulted in nativist sentiment that has at times erupted in physical violence against asylum seekers. Women have been particularly vulnerable to attacks, being targeted by reason of their gender and their status as foreigners. Thus, despite the political success of Australia's refugee policies at home, it is fair to say that they have been harmful both for the development of mature relations between Australia and PICs, and for the status of female asylum seekers living in affected Pacific communities.

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## Internal Migration in the Pacific Islands: a regional overview

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[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-6](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-6)

### ABSTRACT

*Internal migration in the Pacific islands, especially in Melanesia has become more widespread and intense over the last 50 years. However, this movement of people from smaller 'outer' islands and interior regions of the larger islands to 'main' islands and coastal towns and cities is less documented, and studied when compared to international migration from Pacific Island Countries (PICs). This paper seeks to provide an overview of internal migration in PICs using the apparently contradictory standpoints of urban bias theory, and new economic geography as well as by using historical and contemporary information to provide the context of current internal migration trends. It is shown that there are significant gaps in the provision of statistics relating to both inter-provincial migration and urbanization, particularly with regards to gendered information. The paper maintains that with modernization there has been on-going improvement in girls and women's access to education, and opportunities of employment in the formal sector. As both higher educational and employment opportunities are primarily found in urban areas, the previously male dominated migration patterns are being replaced by movements that exhibit greater gender parity.*

**Key words:** *Internal migration, urbanization, gendered migration, informal settlements, and ethnic enclaves*

## INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to describe trends in internal migration in Pacific island countries (PICs) over the last 50 years based on existing literature, population censuses and media reports. It eclectically uses elements of Urban Bias Theory (UBT) and the opposing ‘new economic geography’ approach in its examination of these trends. It notes that historically towns and cities were places for Europeans and Asians where indigenous people generally, and indigenous women in particular were only itinerant ‘strangers’. This situation changed in the post-Second World War era, and especially since the 1960s with the initial movement of mainly men followed by increasing numbers of women, the latter reflecting changing gender relations over time.

In their discussion of the continuing debate about UBT and its critiques, Corbridge and Jones (2010) point out that UBT has shifted over time from the argument that ‘price twists’ (distortions) for rural products favour urban consumers to a more generalised policy orientation that favours the concentration of administration, commerce and other services as well as better infrastructure and utilities in towns and cities. This appears to have some validity (Lipton, 1977; Lipton, 2005). Interestingly, policy makers in PICs have not been favourably inclined to urbanisation. According to the World Bank:

“Despite the many benefits of urbanization, many policy makers in the region continue to view towns with concern, if not alarm. They cite the profound effect on customary traditions and relationships as well as the difficulty of providing and maintaining public infrastructure and services, the proliferation of informal settlements, worsening environmental conditions, and increasing social problems associated with unemployment and underemployment. (ND, 3).”

However the recent ‘new economic geography’ perspective, (Corbridge & Jones, 2010; Ellis & Harris, 2004) perceives urban centres as ‘engines of growth’ with numerous positive linkages to rural areas. Cities are looked upon very positively by all international financial institutions as well as UNESCAP (ADB, 2010; IMF-World Bank, 2015). The standpoint of this paper is that in PICs there appears to be some urban bias in policy making reflected by relative neglect of rural areas, however urban areas are not all centres of growth but do have complex interconnections with rural hinterlands (see McDonald, Naidu & Mohanty, 2014).

Internal migration in the Pacific has become widespread. Hitherto international migration and attendant internal migration characterized nearly all Polynesian and Micronesian countries but not the larger countries of Melanesia, the exception being Fiji. While scholarly research on emigration and its effects up to the contemporary period in the region is well established (see Hugo & Bedford, 2013; Connell, 2011), the equally significant longer term movements of people within Pacific island countries (PICs) is not so well researched. Among reasons for this state of affairs is that information relating to internal migration is somewhat more difficult to garner, and even national census data are not altogether adequate for analysis of internal migration (Walsh, 2006). This paper will explore the various types of internal migration in PICs including urbanization with a focus on gender dimensions of these forms of longer term population mobility. It argues that with the emerging trends in education and employment there will be more demographically balanced migration involving men and women in the future.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Population movements were not uncommon in pre-colonial Pacific countries in the sense of people, usually groups of them moving spatially from the territorial area of one tribal group to another. Although there was no nation state in the Pacific prior to European colonialism, polities comprising a tribal group or a number of such groups, and even proto-states did exist (see Crocombe, 1971, Gilson, 1970, Nayacakalou, 1975; Sahlins 1970, Valentine, 1970, Naidu 1988). Both matrilineal and patrilineal systems existed with a number of societies exhibiting attributes of the two systems. In terms of gender relations, the division of labour was based on clearly defined work for men and women. The extent of ownership over resources such as land and power held by men and women varied from society to society and in accordance to the extent to which they were patrilineal or matrilineal. However in all Pacific societies women played important roles in production of food, artefacts and in the provision of services, as well as in reproduction and nurturing. They also were part of exchange relations between communities. Relationships between neighbouring tribes as well those more distant were established and reinforced by marriage ties, with the exchange of women and gifts. These also strengthened trading relations and alliances during times of war (Chowing, 1973). Conflicts between clans and tribes often resulted in the relocation of the defeated group. The victors took the territory and not unusually women from the vanquished. The era of 'black birding' and slavery followed by the Pacific labour trade extracted more than 100,000 islanders to labour in the guano mines of Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico, and to toil in the plantations of Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa and Hawaii (MacArthur, 1968; Parnaby, 1972; Graves, 1984). This labour trade ceased in Australia in 1900 with the Australian Federation and the adoption of racist 'White Australia' immigration policy which included the forceful repatriation of islanders and their families, but it continued as an adjunct to the Indian indentured labour in Fiji until 1920s. Mostly men, but women, boys and girls were also recruited.

"Prices for good-looking women were highest, around 13 pounds per head, for men, from 9 pounds, for boys and girls, from 5 pounds to 7 pounds..." (Ross, 1964, p. 72).

Labour recruitment in the islands occurred during a period of declining populations largely because of islanders' lack of immunity to European diseases (Moorehead, 1966). With young able bodied persons leaving to labour in mines and plantations abroad, their villages increasingly faced poverty and disorganization. This in turn encouraged those who had returned to their home countries to return to work abroad again. Some 30 percent of the workers in Queensland in the later period had previously laboured in other islands (Graves, 1984, p. 121).

The labour trade began with coastal 'salt water' people but ended up with the recruitment of inland people in the larger islands of Melanesia (Parnaby, 1972). And it was not unusual that on their return passage on several occasions labourers were dumped on islands and communities other than their own. When these labourers were unable to find their way home, and if they survived the ordeals of being in hostile territory, and if allowed by generally suspicious resident land owners, they and their descendants settled among host communities assimilating their languages and cultures. This engendered the settlement of people in a new locality which would not have happened without the labour trade.

Following the conversion of many Pacific islanders and the imposition of colonial rule, movements of people became safer and more established. With conversion to Christianity, it was common place to separate and relocate the converted from those who were perceived to be pagans. This practice was began by the missionaries and reinforced by the colonial authorities. Nuclear families based on monogamous relationships were encouraged together with a gender division of labour not unlike Victorian English practices. In-land communities were encouraged to move to coastal and more accessible localities. What are deemed to be 'traditional villages' in a number of PICs are the products of this nineteenth and early twentieth century process.

However, in most cases indigenous people were encouraged by colonial authorities to inhabit designated villages and hamlets, and to continue to engage in subsistence livelihoods unless required to labour in the colony's plantations, mines, other economic activities and public works. Generally speaking such in-country labour recruitment was short term to ensure that wages would be kept low, and the terms and conditions of labour (for instance, housing) also assured high profit margins. Initially a clear majority of labourers for mining and plantation work were men, although overtime small numbers of women were engaged. The pre-capitalist modes of production subsidized the capitalist venture. It was only in the post-second world war period that there was more permanent recruitment of island labourers, married couples and somewhat improved housing (Emberson-Bain, 1994; Amarshi, Good & Mortimer, 1979).

With the exception of Dili in Timor Leste, and Hagåtña in Guam, urban centres in PICs are relatively new phenomenon. Most are less than 150 years old, and some half as old. As places of native settlement, there are even more recent still. In the early period too, the emerging port towns and cities were not for 'natives', these were places for Europeans, and sometimes Asians (Spoehr, 1963). These foreigners dwelled in the foreign enclaves whilst indigenous islanders were compelled by law to reside in their villages. A system of 'pass law' prevailed in Fiji which required indigenous Fijians to have an official permit to travel outside their village. However, as labour was needed for onerous physical work such as road construction, building and stevedoring there was some relaxation on the tight control of the movement of able bodied male 'natives'. Small migrant settlements were established unobtrusively at the margins of urban areas especially from the 1950s. For instance, by 1959 Honiara had a population of 3,534 comprising 80% Melanesian and Polynesian Solomon Islanders, 10% Europeans and 8% Chinese. "Males outnumbered females by three to one in 1959 with a sex ratio in Honiara of 315 (males per 100 females), reflecting the fact that population circulation and cash employment at that time were dominated by males (Government of Solomon Islands, 2008, p. 18).

Both in towns and cities and in mining and plantation localities, more and more women began to join their men-folk. In mining settlements female company was sought by white male workers as well as indigenous men. Mining companies often turned a blind eye towards prostitution in the midst of company settlements (Emberson-Bain, 1994). It can be said that towns and cities (often port towns and cities) which in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries began primarily as places for Europeans and Asians, increasingly, in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became home to indigenous men, and only very gradually to indigenous women.

## **URBANISATION IN THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD**

Internal migration to places of commercial economic activities including the movement of people to urban centres gained momentum in the last 50 years. According to the Director of Statistics and Demography Programme, Secretariat of the Pacific Community:

“A major structural change has taken place in Pacific rural-urban migration from the late 1970s/early 1980s onwards, with formerly temporary rural urban mobility from a strong rural basis becoming more long-term, or permanent in nature, as Pacific peoples adopt a more pronounced urban focus to their lives. The result is urban growth rates that have outpaced rural population growth everywhere in the Pacific over the past 25 to 30 years. At present, this pattern is almost universal. At current rates, urban populations throughout Melanesia are expected to double in one generation (25 years), with the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu likely to achieve this in 16 and 17 years respectively, and American Samoa, Kiribati and the Northern Marianas in 20 years. This poses serious challenges for planning, land use, water and sanitation, housing and general infrastructure, as well as some serious rethinking of current social, health and employment policies (Haberkorn, 2008, pp. 109-110).

The former foreign urban enclaves have become settled mainly by male and female Pacific Islanders, although as pointed out by Gerald Haberkorn not in entirely salubrious ways. Unplanned urbanisation has been on-going in the region, with South Tarawa and Ebeye in the Kwajelien Atoll providing perhaps the worst examples of overcrowding, sub-standard housing, and insanitary conditions.

A majority of the smaller PICs have predominantly urban populations, and in Melanesia the rate of urbanization at 3.1% is larger than the average population growth rate (ADB, 2012, p. 23). Intermixed with the emergent and burgeoning towns and cities there is a very complex array of population movements. They include step migration from smaller islands to larger islands, from smaller villages to small towns and then to the larger centres, from remote interior regions to coastal localities and towns with different rates of movements of communities, of chain migration and of men and women (Connell, 1990; Connell & Lea, 1995). As noted above, in the earliest phase the movement of indigenous persons to such centres was primarily a masculine activity. However over time women also began to move and to settle in these towns. Towns and especially the capital were centres of administration and services. The latter included health and education as well as entertainment such as cinema, dance halls, and sports. At the absence of rural health clinics, more and more women began to access the hospital and medical services available in urban centres during pregnancy and child-birth. Parents accompanied their children to support them while they attended schools in urban localities. A cadre of lower ranked public service workers such as clerks, primary school teachers, and police men formed the beginnings of an urban dwelling lower middle class of islanders by the 1950s and 1960s. In some instances, segregated government housing was provided in native settlements for such persons and their families (see McCreary, 1973 for a discussion of the structure of Pacific towns in this period).

Besides the ‘bright lights’ of towns and cities alluded to by Connell (2011), rural-urban migration is engendered by inequality in opportunities and access to services. While the economic factor

is important, the socio-psychological also matter as PNG poet, Korop observed in his poem, 'Village Life':

*"Life is boring, so dull and isolated*

*One thing you wish for*

*The bright lights"* (cited in Crocombe, 2001, p. 65)

There is a clear 'demonstration' effect of different standards of living. This is reinforced by the improved communication between rural and urban kin networks fostered by radio, and mass media, and in the current period by the massive increase in the use of mobile phones. The movement is tending towards greater gender balance with many women, especially girls and single women who have sought better educational and employment opportunities in towns and cities as well as other places of economic growth (McCleary, 1973; Meynen & Stephens, 1995; Obaid, 2006; Sijapati, 2015).

As observed earlier internal migration data is not readily available and requires close scrutiny of census figures. These tend to dwell on inter-provincial movements, and do not always capture the movements within provinces, especially larger provinces (Walsh, 2006). Two primary factors contribute to this state of affairs. First, there is a lack of qualified personnel to design research instruments, and to collect, analyse and present data; and second, the wide scatter of islands in archipelagic countries, together with the difficult terrain in the continental high islands make such research extremely difficult and costly.

## **INTER-PROVINCIAL MIGRATION**

It is evident that there has been increasing inter-provincial migration in nearly all PICs that is captured in their national censuses, however intra-provincial migration is not so well documented, nor are statistics provided on gender aspects of internal migration. Table 1 below shows internal migration in 2009 between the provinces of the Solomon Islands with largest net migration to Honiara, the capital province, and to Guadalcanal province where the capital is located. It is noteworthy that there were both in-and out-migration in all provinces, but in 6 out of the 10 provinces there was a net loss of people. Malaita with 30,046 people leaving their island experienced the largest internal movement which can be assumed to be for Honiara and Guadalcanal. Relatively to population size, the net migration rate takes the highest negative values in Temotu (-158 per thousand population) followed by Makira-Ulawawith (-150), and the highest positive values in Honiara and Guadalcanal (+193 and +126 net migrants per thousand population respectively (Table 1).

**TABLE 1:** *Inter-provincial lifetime migration in Solomon Islands, 2009*

Province	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net Migration	Net Migration rate per 1,000 population
Choiseul	4,610	3,545	1,065	40.38
Western	10,090	10,973	-883	-11.52
Isabel	3,172	3,915	-743	-28.40
Central	6,068	3,656	2,412	92.71
Rennell-Bellona	637	758	-121	-39.79
Guadalcanal	15,656	3,822	11,834	126.41
Malaita	9,421	30,046	-20,625	-149.89
Makira-Ulawa	1,832	3,856	-2,024	-50.07
Temotu	1,314	4,683	-3,369	-157.70
Honiara	34,833	22,379	12,454	192.76
Solomon Islands	87,633	87,633	0	-

*Source:* Adapted from Solomon Islands Population and Housing Census (2009)

The ethnic tension and related conflicts (1998-2003) between land owning groups on Guadalcanal and Malaitans erupted in violence, resulting in an estimated 30,000 internal displaced persons in Honiara. However, following the establishment of law and order by the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, RAMSI, Malaitans have continued to migrate to the capital city and the province on which it is located (Solomon Island Government, 2009, p. 6).

Table 2 provides figures that show inter-provincial migration in Tonga in 2011. These figures reveal that all outer island provinces are depopulating with most former residents leaving for Tongatapu. It is unclear what proportion of these migrants has set their eyes on moving to other countries after their sojourn on the main island. The Table also shows that while all provinces experienced both in-and out-migration, the residents of Tongatapu were less inclined to migrate. The northern Ha'apai and Vava'u provinces experienced the largest number of departing inhabitants, while in relative terms the Ongo Nui Division experienced the largest population loss (-1140 migrants per thousand population), followed by Ha'apai and Vava'u Divisions (with a net migration rate of -766 and -282 respectively). The highly positive value of the net migration rate in Tongatapu (+144 migrants per thousand population) makes it the only division gaining population as a result of migration.

**TABLE 2:** *Interprovincial lifetime migration in Tonga 2011*

<b>Division</b>	<b>In-migrants</b>	<b>Out-migrants</b>	<b>Net Migration</b>	<b>Net Migration rate per 1,000 population</b>
Tongatapu	14,809	3,944	10,865	144.07
Vava'u	2,544	6,748	-4,204	-281.73
Ha'apai	1,479	6,546	-5,067	-765.87
'Eua	1,635	1,767	-132	-26.31
Ongo Nuia	357	1,819	-1,462	-1140.41
Tonga	20,824	20,824	0	-

Source: Tonga Department of Statistics and SPC (2014)

The pattern of internal migration from outer islands and provinces to the province that has the national capital is repeated in Vanuatu. Sefa province comprising primarily of Efate Island on which Port Vila is located received the most in-migrants over the 5 years before 2009. Table 3 shows that all other provinces had a net loss of residents. The net migration rate per thousand population is high in Penama followed by Malampa province with -73 and -56 migrants respectively. The net migration rate is high positive value in Shefa province with 74 migrants per thousand population suggesting that the province receives more migrant population in Vanuatu.

**TABLE 3:** *Interprovincial migration in Vanuatu, 2004-2009.*

<b>Province</b>	<b>In-migration</b>	<b>Out-migration</b>	<b>Net Migration</b>	<b>Net Migration rate per 1,000 population</b>
Torba	321	595	-274	-29.28
Sanma	2,593	3,180	-587	-12.80
Penama	847	3,102	-2,255	-73.17
Malampa	1,339	3,377	-2,038	-55.50
Shefa	8,525	2,704	5,821	73.94
Tafea	975	1,642	-667	-20.50
Vanuatu	14,600	14,600	0	-

Source: Vanuatu National Statistics Office (2010).

Provinces of net out-migration in the Solomons, Tonga and Vanuatu are characterized by the relative lack of services and employment opportunities. Those with net in-migration include towns and capital cities and provinces where there are a larger range of services and employment possibilities. Not insignificantly, the provinces where the major city is located tend to have the largest influx of migrants. The 2012 Asian Development Bank study of urbanization in PICs noted that:

“In PNG, for example, the latest census shows that 20% of the total population was not born where



they were enumerated. Of these migrants, 37% were counted in urban areas. Males were slightly more likely than females to be migrants in urban areas. Significantly, 58% of Port Moresby's population comprised migrants. In other words, more than half of all urban residents were not born in Port Moresby. In urban areas, migrants were more likely than those in rural areas to have moved long distances, with 70% of migrants having moved between provinces (Government of PNG, 2003). In Kiribati, the 2005 Census showed that only 49% of South Tarawa residents were born in South Tarawa" (ADB, 2012, p. 15). In the case of Honiara in 2009, 53.9% of the residents were not born in that province.

## **GENDER AND SOCIAL DIMENSIONS IN INTERNAL MIGRATION**

### **WOMEN AND INTERNAL MIGRATION**

It is apparent that changing gender relations and dynamics which include women's education and possibilities of non-agricultural livelihoods have also contributed to greater participation of girl children and women in internal migration. As noted above, early forms of internal migration for hard labouring work was dominated by men who were followed by their spouses and children, but with the possibility of many other employment opportunities, women have increasingly become significant migrants in their own right. From being passive migrants in the company of their men folk and families, girls and women have increasingly moved independently to places of opportunity including urban centres. It is apparent that more and more girls and women are moving on their own for education and employment. However, more research is needed to understand specific questions about female migration such as the extent of single women migration, their employment status, and whether migrating women leave their children with family in the rural community.

In this regard two points are noteworthy: first, more girls and women have been accessing education in the last three decades, and second, in all PICs there are established employment areas for women in the formal sector. This process has been significantly pushed by the second goal of educational for all and gender parity in education in the MDGs. According to the 2013 MDGs Tracking Report (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2013) many PICs have achieved gender parity in primary education. The exceptions being PNG, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Palau, with some recent significant gains in both Solomon Islands and Tonga. The days of more than 60% of girls not attending primary schools are certainly over.

In all PICs more girl children and women are going to school, and post-secondary institutions in contrast to a generation ago when mainly boys tended to be leave home for education especially at secondary and post-secondary levels. Women have made significant gains through education and have taken education most seriously. At the regional University of the South Pacific in recent times there are more women graduates, several of whom have also been recognized for their academic accomplishments. They become spatially mobile as they seek higher education, and employment outside their provinces of birth. They appear just as keen as young men to escape the restrictive norms that regulate their lives in rural communities (Connell, 2011). In short, the search for educational opportunities, and the gains reflected at a higher level of education feed further internal migration.

Educated girls and women tend to seek employment opportunities in the formal sector, and some increasingly turn to self-employment as professionals and business people (IFC, 2010). Until recently in most PICs there were split labour markets. Certain professions and jobs were dominated by women and deemed to be suited for them. These included teaching especially in primary schools, and as nurses and secretarial support personnel. Fish processing and canneries have also been important for women's employment in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and American Samoa. Women have also been heavily engaged in the garment and footwear industry in Fiji. However, women have branched out into other professions including as accountants, lawyers, senior public servants, and business executives. And new opportunities are taken on a regular basis. There are women journalists and media personalities, police officers, pilots, scientists, engineers, and academics. Such women have become role models for other girls and women.

Despite these achievements, gender barriers continue to exist in nearly all professions, and in the labour market generally, and there is clearly no gender parity in many areas of employment. As a result of the previously gendered division of labour, formal sector employment of women has lagged behind, and as pointed out by Narsey (2007) in the case of Fiji wage and salary rates are lower for women compared to men's emoluments. In his gender analysis of the 2004-05 Annual Employment Survey data of the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics, Wadan Narsey shows that female labour force participation is 37% compared to 46% for Mauritius and 51% for Trinidad, and that in Fiji there are twice as many economically active males compared to females. He points out that women continue to constitute 99% of household workers, and although females do 52% of all time work done in the economy, they received only 27% of all income earned. With regards to formal sector work (primarily in urban areas) and the role of Economically Active women, Narsey observed that they

“..tend to push their households into the higher deciles ranked by Household Income per Adult Equivalent: the Bottom 3 deciles (containing 30% of the population) contains only 14% of Economically Active Females (but 23% of Economically Active Males); while the Top 3 deciles (containing 30% of the population) contains 47% of the Economically Active Females (and 35% of the Economically Active Males).” (Narsey, 2007, p. xi).

He noted that there was a sizeable gender gap of 19% in average incomes earned by economically active men and women. The former on average earned FJD 9,393 and the latter on average earned FJD 7,600 (Ibid, x).

Women's engagement in the modern economy albeit in the informal sector is very revealing. In Fiji women make up 87% of market vendors, in PNG nearly 60% of women reported selling subsistence produce in the market, 90% of the vendors in the market are women in the Solomon Islands, and in Vanuatu where 90% of the private sector is constituted by informal businesses, women head 60% of them. “Despite its small-scale, vending and other informal sector activities, contribute between 15-40 percent of GDP across the countries’ (PIFS, 2013: 36). These activities include internal migration, circulatory migration and commuting.

It is apparent that women prefer urban life styles which free them from the more restrictive

norms of rural villages and settlements. These are coupled with property rights over land and other chattels being largely in the hands of men, and with the likelihood of inheritance by males. However, women do face continuing challenges of gender based discrimination at the point of recruitment, at the work place in terms and conditions of work which include emolument and promotion, as well as sexual abuse and violence. A majority of PICs continue to have less than 50% of formal sector employment held by women because of the continued gender division of labour, and gender stereo-typing (PIFS, 2013, p.34). Although PICs governments have committed themselves of gender equality (PIFS, 2013) and a majority have acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), cultural and structural barriers including patriarchy, and the stereotype that women's role is primarily in the domestic sphere pose significant challenges (Emberson-Bain, 1994).

#### ISLAND AND ETHNIC ENCLAVES IN URBAN CENTRES

In most Pacific towns and cities there are a number of interesting aspects of internal migration. First, some communities (whether inland or outer island) have longer traditions of migrating to urban centres and places of economic activities. Early migrants have been followed by their families over the generations and distinct communities have emerged with their original island/ethnic identities still intact. More than 40 years ago, McCleary (1973, p. 14) noted that,

“Such a social structure lays the way open for population groupings whose network is constructed of relationships which do not come from the urban situation. Ethnic networks, island networks, village networks, are all found in Pacific towns with church groups frequently reinforcing the other divisions. These groupings not only lay the basis for conflict but may also be a variable in the migrant's adaptation to town-life”.

The term ‘cultural permeation of urban areas’ has been used in Papua New Guinea to describe distinct aspects of such settlements (see ADB, 2012, p. 18). In Suva, there are discrete communities living under customary arrangements (*vakavanua*) from the islands of the Lau group, Lomaiviti group, Ra and other parts of the country. There are distinct ethnic settlements in Honiara and Port Vila. Such communities maintain ties with their home villages by periodic exchanges including remittances, regular communication and travel, as well as commemorating significant anniversaries. Women often play a leading role during such events as organisers, fund raisers and producers of various goods that are sold. As primary care givers their role in socialising children into the language, values and norms, and to the ethnic culture of their respective communities cannot be underestimated. Women also act as leaders in the local community including in religious activities, albeit in ways that also subordinate them to men's authority (see Naidu et al. 2013).

#### INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Another feature of internal migration to towns and cities, and especially to the capital is the emergence of informal or squatter settlements throughout Melanesia and some parts of Micronesia and to a lesser extent in Polynesia. The ADB study noted that nearly half of urban residents in PICs dwell in such settlements; “all Pacific towns and cities, especially Melanesian capitals of Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila and Suva having squatter or informal settlements

that have 15% -50% of their total urban population” (2012, 3). Ebeye Island on Kwajalein atoll and South Tarawa also represent overcrowded urban slums. These settlements reflect the rapid demographic shift taking place from rural localities to urban areas. They are a manifestation of the failure of the colonial and post-colonial state in providing land and housing for internal migrants, and the near complete failure of urban planning (Connell, 2011; ADB, 2012; Storey, 2006).

The settlements are generally on marginal land most exposed to environmental hazards and climate change related risks. In low-lying areas periodic floods inundate settlements, and those housed on slopes are vulnerable to land-slides. Whole communities may be compelled to relocate as a result of environmental changes. In May, 2014 the Matanako and Lunga rivers in Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands burst their banks and caused havoc for the residents of the informal settlements that lay between them causing the deaths of 20 residents (Wood, 2014). Under normal circumstances there is inadequate sanitation, water supply, electricity and roads. While these settlements may reflect a degree of hope about future wellbeing deemed to better than the boredom of rural life (Connell, 2011), residents are generally employed in low paying menial work, and often struggle to survive. Some are self-employed and form the core of the informal economy associated with these settlements, frequently dominated by women (Naidu & Matadradra, 2014; Naidu et.al, 2015).

In Fiji, most of the informal squatter settlements occupy formerly vacant state land. According to a supplementary report to the 2015 National Budget address, the state land currently occupied by squatters will be subdivided and residents be given 99-year land leases (The Fiji Times, 21 November, 2014). In order to reduce rural-urban migration, and thus the squatter dwellers in urban areas, the government has also village development initiatives (The Fiji Times, 9 January, 2014).

In Port Moresby and other Pacific cities informal settlements are associated with illicit activities. Often young men turn to peddling drugs, homebrew and pornographic material, and girls and young women to prostitution (see UNICEF, 2007). A minority of residents in these settlements, usually males, do hold positions in the public service and have higher incomes and secure jobs. They include clerical officers, police men, school teachers, taxi, mini-van and bus drivers. Their earnings however are not sufficient to invest on land and building materials outside the settlement.

#### OTHER SOCIAL ISSUES

Urbanisation and increasingly mobile populations are seen as contributing to overall productive gains in PICs and if managed better, internal migration generally and urbanization in particular are perceived as positive social transformation. However several issues have emerged in the context of internal migration and urbanization. The movements of people to towns and cities in some cases have depopulated rural areas and have caused concerns about their future viability. With girls and young women seeking education and employment opportunities in urban centres, in some localities such as the Lau Group in Fiji, it has been reported that young men have difficulties finding marriage partners. With able bodied and educated persons moving out of rural communities, often the very young and the elderly remain which increases their vulnerability.

In the urban centres, there is often serious overcrowding and inadequate physical and social infrastructure to cater for the growing populations. The absence of employment and livelihood opportunities for all urban residents has meant that poverty has increased.

Unemployed persons, particularly male youth have become entangled with the criminal justice system because of substance abuse, and offences against the law that range from petty thefts to seriously violent crimes. Impoverishment, patriarchy and substance abuse contribute to tensions and conflicts within households, among neighbours, and in Melanesia between ethnic groups. Inter-ethnic violence and urban riots have occurred in Honiara, Port Moresby, Port Vila, Suva and even Nukualofa. Violence against women generally, and especially intimate partner violence, has affected 60% to 80% of women in Melanesia and other PICs (UNFPA, 2013) While gender violence occurs in both rural and urban areas, the presence of women's NGOs and women's refuges in urban areas as well as easier access to hospitals and the police encourage victims to report incidents of violence against them. Patriarchal cultures, and an amalgam of attitudes and values about masculinity that combine traditional and modern ideas and practices together with changing gender roles, and increasing independence of women have contributed to this unacceptable state of affairs. In the urban context, while there is freedom from the wider kinship group and social norms of rural communities, the protection afforded to women by close relatives and these very norms are often missing. In urban localities nuclear families are more prevalent with or without some close relatives present, which is not the case of rural households that are generally in close knit communities of relatives. The widespread consumption of alcohol and binge drinking by men contribute to violence generally, and especially violence against women and children.

## **GOVERNMENTS' RESPONSE AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

Besides the perceptions of the 'good life' in the larger islands and port towns and cities, a significant dimension of internal migration and urbanization is the failure and negligence of PICs governments in both rural development and urban planning. Rural neglect is reflected in inadequate and often deteriorating rural roads, shipping and transport and communication networks. There has been a relatively lack of decentralization of services. Until recently, for every higher level service provision, people were compelled to travel to the capital city. In addition the absence of satisfactory infrastructure and rural services has also meant that employment and livelihood opportunities have been limited. Lack of rural development and increasing poverty have triggered what is becoming an exodus of migrants from rural localities. Severe bottlenecks have emerged in urban areas because of the massive unplanned growth (Corbridge & Jones, 2010; Davis, 2003). Demands for more land subdivisions, affordable housing, improved roads, water supply, sewerage and sanitation, schools, health services and so on accompany the rapidly growing population. PICs governments have hitherto been disinclined to support the growth of towns and cities and did not have the appropriate policies and planning in place to tackle the numerous challenges of urbanization. There is a huge governance and human capacity shortfall at both the central and municipal government levels (see Storey, 2006).

Fiji Government recognised in its Strategic Development Plan 2003-2005 the importance of

urban economy and planned for an urban sector strategy (Government of Fiji, 2004). The urban development strategy aimed at providing support to increase the viability of rural development. Urban Policy Action Plan 2004-06 with a vision for this urban strategy strongly recognised the importance of economic and social rural-urban linkages (ibid). In response to rapid urbanization, apart from road and infrastructural improvements, provided by the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA), Government has been providing financial support for urban and peri-urban development in partnership with municipal councils (Government of Fiji, 2015). New town development in Fiji for example, in Seaqaqa and Nabouwalu has been planned by Government with a budget allocation of F\$2 million in 2015 (ibid). According to Fiji Government, ‘further development of these centres will reduce rural-urban migration and create employment in these areas’. Government of Fiji has provided “F\$530,000 for the City Wide Squatter Upgrading Project to upgrade settlements in urban and peri-urban areas in the Suva-Nausori corridor, Nadi-Lautoka corridor, Labasa and Savusavu” (ibid). Government has also been encouraging development and upgrade of proper market facilities in urban and peri-urban centres to support income generation from agro-based activity (Government of Fiji, 2015).

Rural and village development is a high priority on Government’s development agenda. Government has placed special emphasis on the provision of roads, electricity, water supply and income generating opportunities in the rural region (Government of Fiji, 2015). Nearly F\$1.6 million is provided for the construction of Rural Sports Complexes in Gau and Kadavu (ibid). These development initiatives of government in both in rural and urban areas will not only lead to regional development and bridge the rural-urban divide and in turn, help reducing rural-urban drift, but also meet the growing demand for infrastructure and basic services in urban and peri-urban areas. Such policy initiatives will make a difference to rural lives generally as difficulties of transport and communication and access to services have been seen as drivers of internal migration. Both men and women will benefit in terms of being able to enjoy improved living standards, transport produce and handicrafts, and access health facilities. The latter is especially important for pregnant women.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Since independence there has been a qualitative shift in internal migration with urbanisation, especially to capital cities, increasing at twice the rate of population growth rates in most PICs. It is likely that in Polynesia and Micronesia there is some confluence of internal migration and international migration. However, for much of Melanesia, internal migration has been predominant. Movements from smaller to larger islands, from outer islands to the main island, and from small villages and towns to the capital city can be discerned. Whereas during the colonial period internal migration largely involved men engaging in mining and plantation work, over time, and especially over the last three decades women have become increasingly mobile. Like their male counterparts, women seek the opportunities for education and employment, and the greater availability of services in Pacific towns and cities. The split labour markets of the past with career opportunities for women in teaching, nursing, secretarial work have been supplemented by other opportunities in formerly male dominated areas.

There have been considerable inter-provincial population movements with the provinces that have the main island, and the capital city receiving the highest number of in-migrants. Infrastructural bottlenecks have resulted in land, housing, public utilities, transport and communication shortages. These have led to the mushrooming of informal or squatter settlements in nearly all Melanesian and some Micronesian urban centres. The demands of urban living, unemployment, criminal activities, impoverishment, and the close proximity of culturally diverse groups in these crowded settlements have contributed to tensions and conflicts. Women and children have been the victims of violence. Life time violence against women has affected 80% of them in some countries. Contributing to this unacceptable situation has been established systems of patriarchy and changing gender roles.

Internal migration will continue to be a feature of PICs socio-economic condition with the uneven and unequal development of peoples and places. It is likely that urban centres and especially the capital city will continue to be the places with the most employment opportunities as well as various forms of livelihood and the widest range of services. These will provide the drawcards for those living in less endowed rural places and outer islands. The greater ease of communication and transportation, and the massive increase in the use of mobile phones will further encourage such movements. With more girl children and women becoming educated, there will be growing gender parity among internal migrants.

Several recommendations can be derived from this descriptive account of internal migration. To begin with there is hardly any gender disaggregated statistics on inter-and intra-provincial migration or on movement of islanders to urban centres to provide a meaningful basis for policy formulation, and/ or urban planning. This lack of crucial demographic data has been commented by Haberkorn (2008) needs to be addressed at both the national and regional levels. The aggregated statistics of rapidly increasing urbanisation and the growth in informal settlements in virtually every Pacific urban centre points to the need of PIC governments to address access to land for residential sites, as well as other economic activities. In this regard there is continuing demand for more affordable housing for low income earners who together with their families suffer insecurity of tenure and unsanitary conditions in the informal shelters they call homes.

Governments in partnership with community based organisations, faith based organisations and NGOs need to address rural social services especially in education and health. The decentralisation of such services is likely to reduce the rate of movement of people from rural to urban localities. Clearly the diversification of rural livelihoods and better transport and communication networks may also reduce the flow of urban drift. Urban growth cannot be stemmed as town and cities do contribute to economic growth and are places of a wider variety of economic activities, employment and livelihoods. Pacific islanders recognise urban centres as places of new opportunities, and governments need to give serious attention to urban planning, capacity building and urban governance (Storey, 2006).

Such opportunities together with easier access to services and the relative freedom from restrictive rural norms make towns and cities especially attractive to younger people and women, as well as for sexual minorities.. However, not all migrants are able to fulfil all their expectations of city life and there are numerous dangers that can adversely affect them. Young men without jobs are

often caught in a downward spiral of petty crimes, substance abuse, violence and more serious crimes. Young women may also become subjects of sexual abuse, violence and some may be recruited into the growing sex industry. Changing gender relations as women gain higher levels of education and become economically more independent have resulted in a large number of men resorting to violence against their partners to assert their authority and control over them. Legislation proscribing domestic violence including 'no-drop' policy by the police together with education and awareness campaigns by government and NGOs need to be adopted more widely in PICs.

As women enter the labour market in larger numbers gender discriminatory recruitment, promotion, and unequal pay require more effective action by governments and advocacy groups. Employment relations as they pertain to gender require scrutiny and review in all Pacific countries if the commitment to gender equality by Pacific island country leaders at the regional level, and their accession to CEDAW are to be meaningful. Pacific islanders irrespective of gender and other social markers have fundamental rights to equitably enjoy the benefits of development and security in their search for better opportunities in various parts of their country including the rapidly growing capital cities and other towns.

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## Pacific migration futures: ancient solutions to contemporary and prospective challenges?

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[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-7](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-7)

### ABSTRACT

*Scholarship published by staff and students at the University of the South Pacific has had a profound impact on understandings by researchers of both historical and contemporary transformations in Oceania. This paper contains some reflections by a geographer who has been researching population movement in the region since the mid-1960s. It begins by drawing attention to seminal writing by the late Epeli Hau'ofa in the 1980s and 1990s, and traces the impact of some of Hau'ofa's messages about regional integration and identity in Oceania in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Reference is made to another very significant collection of essays by scholars, students, politicians and government officials linked with the USP in 2015 which explores what is being called 'the new Pacific diplomacy'. Like the discourse generated by Waddell, Naidu and Hau'ofa's (1993) *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, ideas reported in Fry and Tarte's (2015) *The New Pacific Diplomacy* have the potential to shift thinking about identities, regional co-operation and migration in Oceania.*

**Keywords:** *Hau'ofa; sea of islands; Pacific integration; borders; international migration; futures*

## INTRODUCTION

In 1993, on the occasion of the University of the South Pacific's (USP) 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the late Epeli Hau'ofa reminded us that Pacific peoples used to range widely across their ocean in search of resources and opportunities for a better livelihood. In his celebrated essay entitled "Our sea of islands", he cautioned that the requirement to request permission to enter a neighbouring country, even for a short visit, and the need for visas and passports, are very recent innovations in a region that was home to many of the world's best sailors and navigators. This 'sea of islands' was transformed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by European resource extraction, the creation of colonies and, from the 1960s, the emergence of more than 20 independent nation states and dependent territories. Some of the major contemporary and prospective challenges facing the mobility futures of Pacific peoples are associated with this modern 'sea of small island states' that have fixed boundaries encompassing reasonably well defined land areas and exclusive maritime economic zones.

What are the prospects of Pacific peoples regaining some of their ancient freedom to roam and seek opportunity away from their places of birth, in much the same way that New Zealand and Australian citizens can with their privileged passports and visa-waiver agreements? In the past, Pacific peoples often found that an option for resolving social, economic, political and environmental challenges was to move to another island in the ocean. Is this an option for Pacific peoples in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or will limited access to visas and increasing regulation of boundary crossing continue to reduce opportunities for seeking new lives outside the perimeters of their nation's exclusive economic zones? This paper reflects on some challenges that are likely to require greater freedom for movement, both between island countries in the region as well as into and out of countries on the Pacific rim.

## RECALLING HAU'OFA'S ARGUMENT AND VISION

When the USP's School of Social and Economic Development published "Our Sea of Islands", along with a series of responses by Hau'ofa's colleagues at the University, in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, (edited by Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu and Epeli Hau'ofa), they produced a book that changed for ever the way many researchers, including me, conceived of the Pacific and its islands. The various contributors introduced some very challenging ideas about a world of islands and small countries that Hau'ofa had been reflecting on for some time – ideas that gained much wider circulation amongst the academic community when his essay was re-printed a year later in the top-ranked Pacific journal, *The Contemporary Pacific* (Hau'ofa, 1994). A second paper, elaborating on a concept of an Oceanian regional identity that includes Australia and New Zealand, followed soon after (Hau'ofa, 1998).

An important collection of Hau'ofa's writings, published by the University of Hawai'i Press (2008) under the title *We are the Ocean. Selected Works*, appeared shortly before his untimely death. It contains an invaluable record of the thinking of one of the Pacific's most influential scholars, and I want to acknowledge at the outset that many of the things I say in this paper about Pacific migration futures have their roots in Epeli's evocative conception of Oceania as a 'sea of islands', inhabited by a very diverse population that includes "anyone who has lived in our

region and is committed to Oceania” (Hau’ofa, 1998 reproduced in Hau’ofa, 2008, p.51).

The following observation by Hau’ofa has particular relevance for the central argument I develop in this paper:

*The resources of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Niueans, Tokelauans, Tuvaluans, I-Kiribatis (sic), Fijians, Indo-Fijians and Tongans, are no longer confined to their national boundaries; they are located wherever these people are living permanently or otherwise. This is as it was before the age of Western imperialism. One can see this any day at seaports and airports throughout the central Pacific where consignments of goods from homes-abroad are unloaded, as those of the homelands are loaded. Construction materials, agricultural machinery, motor vehicles, other heavy goods and a myriad of other things are sent from relatives abroad, while handicrafts, tropical fruits and root crops, dried marine creatures, kava and other delectables are despatched from the homelands. Although this flow of goods is generally not included in official statistics, yet so much of the welfare of ordinary people of Oceania depends on an informal movement along ancient routes drawn in bloodlines invisible to the enforcers of the laws of confinement and regulated mobility (Hau’ofa, 1993, p.11)*

Hau’ofa reminded us that the current confinement of peoples in Oceania to a patchwork of 24 nation states and dependent territories, encompassing the 22 island countries as well as Australia and New Zealand, is a very recent phenomenon. It is a product of less than 100 years of colonial domination in most parts of a region that has been inhabited for over 60,000 years going by estimates of the earliest Aboriginal societies in Australia. As Hau’ofa notes, before the colonial irruption from the late eighteenth century:

*The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. ... Theirs was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers. From one island to another they sailed to trade and to marry, thereby expanding social networks for greater flow of wealth. They travelled to visit relatives in a wide variety of natural and cultural surroundings, to quench their thirst for adventure and even to fight and dominate (Hau’ofa, 1993, p. 8).*

In his later extension of the idea of an over-arching Oceanian identity to encompass Pacific Island peoples, as well as the peoples of Australia and New Zealand, Hau’ofa (1997, reproduced in Hau’ofa, 2008, p.54) noted that “as far as ordinary people of Oceania are concerned, there are no national boundaries across the sea between our countries”. He drew attention to the Pacific people who did not reach their intended destinations while out fishing or visiting friends and relations; ‘drifters’ who were always taken good care of by the communities in which they ended up.

Whether negotiating the oceans of the northern and eastern Pacific, or traversing the hills, valleys and plains of Papua New Guinea and the large islands of the western Pacific (Melanesia), Pacific peoples were not constrained by externally imposed boundaries or by the requirement to have a visa to enter another country. There were constraints on movement, but these owed their origins to local cultural, environmental and psychological factors and forces – not the decisions of rulers

and regulators who lived thousands of kilometres away and who never set foot in the islands.

Two hundred years after the initiation of sustained contact with Europeans, Pacific peoples are, in Hau'ofa's words, "once again enlarging their world, establishing new resource bases and expanded networks for circulation" through what he termed a process of 'world enlargement'. He acknowledged that this process is not evenly experienced across the island states, especially when the 'enlargement' refers to opportunities for work and residence outside the boundaries of their nation states.

There are some island peoples that have much more access to 'world enlargement' spanning several countries than others. In general, the peoples of western Melanesia (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) currently have far fewer opportunities in this regard than the much smaller populations of the northern and eastern Pacific (Bedford and Hugo, 2012; Burson and Bedford, 2013). On the positive side, however, these large continental islands have much richer resource endowments to support the sorts of development that are valued in contemporary societies than the coral reef islands and atolls or the much smaller volcanic islands to the east and north. In the pre-colonial world there were boundaries both between groups of islands as well as between groups living in the larger islands, but these boundaries were fluid and functional. Crossing these boundaries depended more on long-standing relationships with neighbours and mutually beneficial economic exchanges than the rules and regulations of some central authority administering a particular state from within or afar, or the existence on maps of lines demarcating the territories of colonies and later independent states in the region.

Most of the independent Pacific states and territories have given citizens of other Pacific states the right to enter for a short-term visit without a visa (Burson and Bedford, 2013; Bedford et al., 2014). These rights of visa-free entry for Pacific citizens are also extended to citizens of Australia and New Zealand in most of the Pacific's independent states, as well as the citizens of many other more developed nations. Papua New Guinea is one notable exception in this regard: citizens of Australia and New Zealand, as well as most Pacific Island states (except those that comprise the Melanesian Spearhead Group, see below) are required to purchase visas as visitors at the border.

Few of the more developed nations extend the same privilege to citizens of independent Pacific countries. The visa-waiver privileges for short-term visits by New Zealand and Australian tourists to most Pacific countries, for example, are not extended to the island-based inhabitants of Oceania when they visit Australia and New Zealand. New Zealand did have a very short-lived experiment with visa-waiver for the citizens of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga in 1986 and early 1987, and a somewhat longer one with the citizens of Kiribati and Tuvalu between 1986 and 2002 (Bedford and Bedford, 2010). However, in 2015 the citizens of the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau are the only Pacific people to have visa-free access to New Zealand unless they also happen to be citizens of countries like Australia, the United States of America, Canada or the United Kingdom.



## ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE FROM THE EARLY 1990S

Before discussing further the links between boundaries and mobility, it is appropriate to go back to 1993 and the challenges that were issued in that year to our thinking about mobility and development in Oceania. In the same year that the USP published “Our sea of islands”, another slim volume, containing a series of essays that also caused considerable debate, was published by the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University – *Pacific 2010 – Challenging the Future* – edited by Rodney Cole (1993). The opening essay by Rowan Callick carried the title “A doomsday scenario”, a title that challenged Hau’ofa’s optimism over being able to re-centre the debate about Pacific development around hope and empowerment of people living in a sea of islands rather than the conventional approach towards people living on small islands in a far sea.

Callick’s (1993) deliberately provocative scenario of an increasingly impoverished and marginalised Pacific by 2010 had the same fundamental objective of challenging prevailing mindsets about prospects for the region as did Hau’ofa’s plea for recognition of the ancient bloodlines and resource flows that linked people and places across the Pacific ocean and provided a basis for a much more empowering and inclusive concept of ‘the region’ than had been achieved to date. While Hau’ofa talked of a ‘sea of islands’ in an ocean that was hospitable and generous, Callick, one of Australia’s most prominent and best informed Pacific journalists, evoked the imagery Hau’ofa wanted to challenge – small islands scattered over a vast ocean; a region of few centres and much remoteness that was prone to increasing social, economic, environmental and political distress and dysfunction.

Callick’s primary focus was the impacts of two demographic processes, especially in the western Pacific: rapid population growth (some of the world’s fastest growing populations continue to be in Melanesia) and rapid urbanisation. He did not comment much on overseas migration; the regulatory regimes that restricted the sort of free movement Hau’ofa had at the centre of his argument were seen, implicitly if not explicitly in his argument, as persisting rather than changing and becoming less restrictive.

Looking ahead in the early 1990s Callick (1993, p.2) observed:

*By 2010, population growth in the Pacific islands is careering beyond control. It has doubled to 9 million. Malnutrition is spreading. Levels of unemployment are high. Deaths from AIDS, heart disease and cancers have greatly increased.*

*Government services have been privatised or in many cases have lapsed. Crime has increased. Pollution and land degradation has spiralled. Much of the surviving rain forest has been logged. Coastal fisheries have been placed under threat from overfishing. Skill shortages in the labour market yawn wide.*

Hau’ofa did not make any specific forecasts for 2010 but he did conclude his 1993 essay with the following challenge to Pacific peoples:

*We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take away our freedom (Hau'ofa, 1993, p.16).*

. How do things look with regard to these challenges in 2015?

## **TAKING STOCK: SOME CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS ON THE 1993 PERSPECTIVES**

Callick's deliberately exaggerated estimates in 1993 had, in his own words, 'sadly become a reality in 2010'. In a media release at the time of the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Vila in August 2010, entitled 'Peering into Pacific's perilous future', he challenged the leaders to begin the long haul back from doomsday. In his view "the Pacific has failed to live up to its people's reasonable -- and mostly modest -- expectations. The blame must largely be sheeted home to its political elites" (Callick, 2010, p.2).

### **WORLD ENLARGEMENT?**

Population estimates prepared by demographers based at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in Noumea suggest that the 9 million mark that Callick's scenario for 2010 referred to was passed sometime in 2006. By 2010 there were just under 10 million people resident on the thousands of islands, excluding Australia and New Zealand, that comprise Oceania, and by 2015 the Secretariat of the Pacific Community estimates this had increased to just under 11 million (SPC, 2014). Over two-thirds (68 percent) of these residents were living in one country -- Papua New Guinea (PNG). A further 19 percent were living in the other four countries that comprise the region of Melanesia with PNG: Fiji, New Caledonia, Solomons and Vanuatu. In the three countries of western Melanesia (PNG, Solomons and Vanuatu) the indigenous inhabitants have very limited opportunities for migration to other countries. They had not regained the freedom of movement across the ocean that they once had, despite over 30 years of 'independence'.

The remainder of the region's population (around 1.2 million, or 11 percent of the estimated total of 10.9 million in 2015) was living in the myriad of oceanic island societies that comprise Polynesia and Micronesia. The indigenous inhabitants of most of these countries have, as a result of their colonial histories, some outlets for migration to countries on the Pacific rim (Burson and Bedford, 2013). By 2010 it was estimated almost 500,000 people born in Pacific island countries -- roughly the equivalent of the total population of Micronesia -- were living in towns and cities on the Pacific rim, mainly in Auckland, Wellington, Sydney, Brisbane, Honolulu, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Vancouver (Bedford and Hugo, 2012). The elites in Polynesia and Micronesia were the ones who were no longer confined in Hau'ofa's (1993, p.16) words "physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces that we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed places and from which we have recently liberated ourselves".

During the intervening years since Hau'ofa's and Callick's 1993 provocations there has been some movement towards 'enlargement' in the mobility worlds of some ordinary Pacific peoples. The visa waiver privileges that I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans had in New Zealand were complemented by work permit schemes through to 2002, and those citizens who could afford the expensive airfares from Tarawa and Funafuti to Fiji and on to New Zealand could make the long journey south without the need for visas if they were just visiting the country. These visa-waiver privileges and temporary work schemes ceased in 2002 when the New Zealand government introduced the Pacific Access Category (PAC) and allocated small quotas to Tonga, Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu for permanent residence in New Zealand, subject to some quite stringent conditions relating to employment (Bedford, 2008). Access to the PAC is via a ballot, and the numbers selected each year are small (75 each in the case of Kiribati and Tuvalu; 250 for Tonga and, since the lifting of a 2010 embargo in 2015, 250 for Fiji).

Since 2007 the seasonal work schemes introduced by New Zealand and Australia have provided opportunities with limits for some "to fly back and forth across national boundaries ... cultivating their ever growing universe in their own ways" (Hau'ofa, 1993, p.15; C. Bedford, 2013). But these schemes do not allow participants to transition to other types of visas either for temporary work or residence. They are highly regulated and by 2015 were providing around 12,000 Pacific Islanders with several months of work in Australia and New Zealand (C. Bedford and Bedford, 2014). While some commentators have viewed these schemes as nothing more than a "band aid" in the wider context of employment opportunities for Pacific people in Australia and New Zealand (Connell, 2009), others have viewed them more positively, especially with regard to the remittances they generate in rural communities where there are limited opportunities to earn cash incomes (C. Bedford, 2013; Bailey, 2015).

Protracted negotiations around a labour mobility chapter in the regional free trade agreement, PACER-Plus, are nearing conclusion and it is likely there will be concessions over access for Pacific Islanders to more employment opportunities, if not long-term residence, in Australia and New Zealand. Within the region, sub-regional groupings, like the Melanesian Spearhead Group (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and the FLNKS, the pro-independence Kanak party in New Caledonia), are opening up opportunities for greater movement of skills as well as goods and capital between member countries (Somare, 2015; Cain, 2015).

There has also been a substantial increase in mobility of skilled Pacific Islanders between countries in the region, especially of health and education professionals, and small numbers of Pacific business managers and employees (Voigt-Graf, 2003; Connell, 2009; Iredale et al. 2015). But these are members of Hau'ofa's elites; they are not the village residents who comprise the great majority of Pacific peoples, especially in Melanesia. For those with skills as subsistence farmers, fishermen, hunters, and small-scale commercial producers of crops and livestock there are few opportunities to move across international borders unless they live close to national boundaries and have customary access to land through long-term use, inheritance or marriage in a neighbouring country. Mobility beyond the local territory for most Pacific peoples remains restricted to internal migration, and the most popular destinations are, as Callick recognised, towns and cities within their countries.

## URBAN FUTURES?

Internal migration in Pacific countries since the early 1990s has been dominated by a debate about on-going urbanisation of Pacific populations (Connell and Lea, 2002; Connell, 2011). There is enormous variability in the extent to which Pacific populations are urbanised, ranging from 100 percent in the cases of Nauru and Guam to zero in the case of the Tokelau Islands unless one counts Tokelauans living overseas as part of the country's population. By 2010, when the United Nations estimated that 50 percent of the global population was urban-resident, half of the 22 Pacific island states and territories had this share or more of their resident populations living in towns and cities in their countries. Seven had more than sixty percent in such places.

The regional 'average' for urbanisation in the Pacific Islands is only 23 percent, or 2.5 million out of the total 10.9 million that the SPC (2014) estimates for the island countries, because of the low percentages of the population in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu living in towns and cities. The persistence of high proportions living in rural areas has been seen to be due in part to strong and enduring ties with village-based livelihoods as well as being due to limited opportunities for employment in the small Pacific towns and a long-standing anti-urbanisation rhetoric amongst Pacific politicians and planners (Hau'ofa, 1993; Connell and Lea, 2002; Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 2011).

Notwithstanding the persistence of a dominant rural share in national populations in the three western Melanesian countries, over the next 50 years it is inevitable that much higher shares of their populations will be living in towns, either in their own countries, or in neighbouring countries. If we assume that by 2030 around 30 percent of the Pacific's total population might be living in urban places in the islands, then the urban population would rise to around 4.3 million (30 percent of the 14.3 million that the SPC projects might be living in the islands in 2030). Regional averages are not very helpful, however, because most of the future urban population growth in the region is going to be in Melanesia, not across the Pacific as a whole.

Using similar assumptions about levels of urbanisation, and data contained in the most recent population projections produced by the SPC, it can be shown that by 2030 Papua New Guinea, with 30 percent of its population in urban places, could have an urban population of 3 million compared with around 1.5 million in 2015. If Papua New Guinea was to reach the 2010 global average of 50 percent of people living in towns and cities by 2050, then the population in towns and cities would be close to the country's current total population of around 7.7 million. – i.e. around 7 million urban residents in a population of over 14 million. When similar sorts of speculative exercises are done for the populations of Solomons and Vanuatu we end up with a combined urban population for western Melanesia in 2050 of around 8 million -- or the equivalent of the Pacific region's total population around 2001. The United Nations Population Division does not forecast such dramatic growth in urban populations in Melanesia in the 2014 revision of its *World Urbanization Prospects* (UN, 2014) but there is some evidence that levels of urbanisation in Melanesia especially have been understated, especially in recent censuses, partly because of the challenges of enumerating populations in squatter settlements (Connell, 2011; Pacific Institute for Public Policy, 2011; Jones, 2012).

Whatever the statistical outcome for levels of urbanisation in Melanesia by 2050, it has been made abundantly clear by many researchers for quite some time now that there is going to be accelerating expansion of the populations living in towns and cities in Papua New Guinea, Solomons and Vanuatu. The populations in these three countries are not going to defy the global trend towards urbanisation of the majority of their people, despite the arguments about the persistence of more sustainable rural livelihoods for Pacific peoples long-term compared with living in squatter settlements and slums in and around towns.

In a remarkable book entitled *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping our World*, journalist Doug Saunders (2010) has done for slums what Hau'ofa (1993) did for small islands. He has used the lives of ordinary people -- their hopes, dreams and triumphs -- to tell stories about urban places that tend to be belittled and demonised as fetid social sinks, drowning in people and their excretions (David, 2006). In a sense, Saunders' (2010) *Arrival City* is the antithesis of Mike Davis's (2006) *Planet of Slums*, in the same way Hau'ofa's (1993) 'Our sea of islands' might be read as the antithesis of Callick's (1993) 'A doomsday scenario'.

Saunders argues that this is the final century of global urbanisation, and that by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century over 80 percent of the world's population will be living in or around towns and cities. He believes we can harness the optimism and drive of the new urban arrivals to make this last great migration "a force of lasting progress, an end to poverty, a more sustainable economy and a less brutal existence" (Saunders, 2010, cited by Pearce in his review of the book for the *Guardian*). In reality, we have little choice but to anticipate and facilitate such an eventuality.

The progressive urbanisation of Melanesian populations will need to be accompanied by improved access to employment opportunities beyond their national boundaries, as has been the case in most parts of Polynesia and Micronesia. The great majority of the new urban residents will have to be absorbed into informal and formal economies in the countries concerned, and this in itself will be a major challenge. However, the transition will be greatly facilitated by increased opportunities for Melanesians to work overseas to gain skills and income that will be needed when developing the economic base for the future urban societies of Melanesia.

There will be much more intensive mobility of elites between the different countries in Melanesia as this urban economy and society develops and the process of world enlargement that Hau'ofa describes for Polynesia and Micronesia will increasingly become part of the lives of a burgeoning Melanesian middle class. It is essential that Australia and New Zealand anticipate these sorts of changes in Melanesia and adopt policies that facilitate movement of larger numbers of Melanesians in and out of their countries for work as well as study and as visitors. As Vijay Naidu (2008) stated in a lecture on regional integration in the Pacific at Victoria University of Wellington some years ago, a critical issue associated with enhanced co-operation at the regional level would be the scope for Melanesian labour migration to Australia and New Zealand. He saw such migration acting as a safety-valve for the sending countries in the short-term, while at the same time building capacity amongst Melanesians by enhancing skills and entrepreneurship that will be essential for the development of their future urban societies.

## A SINGLE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY?

Hau'ofa's vision for a regional identity that unifies the various states and territories that comprise Oceania (including Australia and New Zealand), and that is rooted in the sea as a unifying metaphor, has been facing some serious challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The legitimacy of the Pacific Islands Forum, the longest-established regional organisation that meets annually to establish and promote consensus perspectives on major economic, social and environmental issues, has been challenged by a Fiji-led initiative, the Pacific Islands Development Forum, since 2013 (Tarte, 2013).

The expulsion of Fiji from the Pacific Forum in 2009, and the decision to exclude Fiji from the PACER-Plus negotiations soon after, created significant tensions within the region that have contributed to the emergence of sub-regional groupings of states that provide some exclusive privileges with regard to mobility for citizens of member countries (Burson and Bedford, 2013; Tarte, 2013). These are: the Melanesian Spearhead Group (which has existed since the early 1980s but which gained much more profile and prominence under Fiji's chairpersonship between 2011 and 2013), the Polynesian Leaders Group (which emerged after the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in the Cook Islands in 2012) and the Micronesian Chief Executives' Summit (an annual meeting, since 2003, of leaders of the northern Micronesian states which have special arrangements for mobility within the sub-region as well as with the United States of America) (Burson and Bedford, 2013; Somare, 2015; Gallen, 2015).

A major concern that the current Prime Minister of Fiji has about the Pacific Islands Forum is the continued participation of Australia and New Zealand as full members rather than as aid donors with observer status. His aim is to have a regional forum of Pacific *Island* states which is not unduly influenced by or dominated by the two southern Pacific metropolitan countries. This challenges Hau'ofa's conceptualisation of Oceania that includes Australia and New Zealand as part of what he termed "a single regional society and economy" in the first of his seminal papers that are included in the University of Hawai'i Press' collection *We are the Ocean. Selected Works* (Hau'ofa 1987, reprinted 2008).

The Pacific Islands Forum, and its Plan for Strengthening Regional Co-operation and Integration (the Pacific Plan), was reviewed extensively in 2013 (Pacific Plan Review, 2013). At the annual meeting of the Forum in 2014 members adopted the Framework for Pacific Regionalism which "aims to change the development paradigm to ensure that Pacific Island Leaders are determining and driving the regional development agenda in order to deliver the kinds of public goods and services that ensure that we as a region are living healthy and fulfilling lives" (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2016).

The Framework articulates the vision, values and objectives of an enhanced Pacific regionalism which, in Greg Fry's (2015, p.13) words "keeps Australia and New Zealand within the PIF and at the same time meets the concerns of the Pacific island states about 'charting their own course'". Fry and Tarte (2015) have captured the essence of this 'new Pacific diplomacy' in a very useful collection of essays by Pacific scholars and leaders which has the potential to impact significantly on the way researchers understand the region in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in much the same

way Hau'ofa's writing in the 1980s and 1990s reshaped thinking about the region in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Fry and Tarte (2015, p.3) state in their introduction: "It is not, in our view, too dramatic to see this as a time of transformation of the regional diplomatic culture equivalent to the move from the colonial to the postcolonial era, a time that represents a transformation of regional order".

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND THE 'NEW PACIFIC DIPLOMACY'**

The 'new Pacific diplomacy' has been very visible recently in addressing one of the greatest challenges that all countries in Oceania will face in the coming decades: how they cope with changes in the climate and sea levels if the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) forecasts of global warming become reality. It is worth recalling that in Hau'ofa's (1993) view it was issues to do with the environment, especially the sea, that tended to bring forth more creative, coherent, collective responses from the region's leaders. The Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Papua New Guinea in September 2015 brought tested this tendency when the leaders of the island states parted company with New Zealand and Australia in terms of the substance of their respective declarations on climate change for the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21) later in the year.

The leaders of the Pacific island states were very disappointed with the weak commitments that the New Zealand and Australian governments were making to strategies to reduce carbon emissions. The Pacific leaders agreed unanimously to adopt a very challenging target of containing global temperature change to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above what it was in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – a target that was more ambitious than the frequently cited 2 degrees Celsius that features prominently in the literature about climate change (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2015). Their collective stand on this issue at the Paris Climate Change Conference, and their strong lobbying of delegations from all the major countries with high carbon emissions, saw their target adopted as an aspirational one for the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the final declaration of COP21. This was a remarkable achievement and one that reflects an interesting history of Pacific diplomacy on the issue of climate change as Carter (2015) has shown in his useful review of a Pacific voice in climate change negotiations.

The only country in Oceania to date that I am aware of that has made specific reference at a major international meeting on climate change to providing a new home for people in the region who are forced to leave their island homes if they become uninhabitable as a result of climate change, is Fiji. As early as the Copenhagen Climate Summit (COP15) in December 2009 Fiji's interim Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, announced that Fiji would consider taking "climate change refugees (sic) from Tuvalu and Kiribati in the future" (Radio New Zealand, 2009; Bedford and Bedford, 2010).

While acknowledging that Fiji did not yet have an official policy on admission of migrants displaced by progressively worsening environmental conditions due to climate change, Ratu Kubuabola went on to say in Copenhagen that: "Because we have historical ties with both these two countries, and also Fiji is the gateway to these two countries ... you can understand we have a number of ties. A number of Tuvaluans live in Fiji and also Kiribati people" (Campbell and

Bedford, 2014). This assurance was given again soon after Fiji's elected government, led by Prime Minister Bainimarama, took office in 2014 (Campbell and Bedford, 2015).

There are strong historical ties between Kiribati and Tuvalu on the one hand and Australia and New Zealand on the other but to date neither of the governments in these countries has stated officially that they will provide new homes for I-Kiribati and Tuvaluans in the event of destruction of the fragile fresh water lenses that are essential for the survival of their societies and economies. This remains an unresolved policy issue in both countries, shelved for future governments to address in a reactive way when people are forced to leave their island homes because they cannot derive livelihoods there any longer. Promotion of voluntary migration as a strategy of adapting to changing environmental conditions in Kiribati and Tuvalu is something that has been advocated by researchers for some time now using, where possible, existing policies which have been adjusted to allow for larger numbers from atoll territories to enter for temporary as well as long-term residence (Bedford and Bedford, 2010, Bedford and Hugo, 2012, Burson and Bedford, 2013, Campbell and Bedford, 2014 and 2015).

In the early 1960s, when I was studying resettlement as a solution to economic and social problems in Kiribati and Tuvalu (then the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony), the Resident Commissioner of the day, a New Zealander, was approaching governments through out the region, including New Zealand and Australia, about the possibility of resettling I-Kiribati from drought-prone islands in the southern part of the Gilbert Islands archipelago (Bedford, 1967; Bedford and Bedford, 2010). There were concerns at the time about the rapid growth of Polynesian and Micronesian populations, and the pressure this growth was placing on limited fresh water supplies as well as limited land for cultivation in what were still essentially rural societies. At the time the New Zealand government was involved in the resettlement of several hundred Tokelauans, and there was no response to the Resident Commissioner's request. This example is one amongst several that could be cited to illustrate that some sort of regional response to migration in the face of changing environmental conditions in the Pacific is not a new one.

## **CONCLUSION**

Are there ancient solutions to contemporary challenges and problems associated with the mobility of Pacific peoples? In Hau'ofa's (1993, 1998) view, there are and the key solution is to allow for greater freedom of movement across those invisible lines that demarcate boundaries between countries that never existed until 150 years ago. In a contemporary world setting, Hau'ofa is not asking for much more than what the privileged passports for those from Australia, New Zealand, North America and most European countries currently allow. It is hardly a major ask, especially of those who are part of his inclusive definition of Oceania; it is what many of the Pacific people who have managed to acquire an Australian or New Zealand passport actually have.

In the interests of promoting a regional identity to complement the range of other identities Pacific people have in a world where small places will need to present a much more united front to protect their essential heritages in the future, opening up options for greater circulation of all of his Oceanians would be a very constructive move that would go a long way towards easing current tensions and anxieties in the region. Notwithstanding the challenges of negotiating



regional approaches towards futures for a very diverse group of small island states and their southern neighbours in Oceania, there remains a very strong commitment to strengthening the ancient bloodlines that Hau'ofa considered were still critical for defining personal as much as regional identities in this part of the world. A commitment to regional integration remains a defining feature of 21<sup>st</sup> century Oceania, albeit with quite different links to a wider world than those that defined the colonial era, coupled with a realigned balance of power between participating partners in the Pacific Islands Forum, as articulated in the new Pacific diplomacy.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This is a revised and updated version of a keynote address delivered at the University of the South Pacific's International Conference "Future Challenges, Ancient Solutions: What can we Learn from the Past about Managing the Future in the Pacific", Laucala Bay, Suva, 29 November – 3 December 2010. I am grateful for the constructive feedback on the original paper received from several participants at the conference and for the encouragement Greg Fry and the editors of this special issue gave me to update the paper. I have not tried to review comprehensively the literature relating to the themes discussed in the paper – rather it contains some personal reflections on the impact of the writings of the late Epeli Hau'ofa on a geographer's perspectives on migration in the region that he defined as "Oceania".

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## **Review of the New Pacific Diplomacy**

*Robert Nicole*

[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-8](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-8)

The basic argument advanced in this fine book is that since 2009 and Fiji's suspension from the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), there has been a "paradigm shift" in the way that Pacific Island states engage with regional and world politics – a "new Pacific diplomacy". The contributors represent an impressive range of Pacific leaders, senior diplomats, scholars, civil society leaders and other intellectuals, whose work is brought together by two of the region's most seasoned diplomacy scholars, Greg Fry and Sandra Tarte.

In their introduction, the editors advance the provocative assertion that the new diplomacy is as cataclysmic as the creation of the Forum in 1970 and as significant as the transition from the colonial to the postcolonial era. It comes at a time when Island states are making unprecedented efforts to unite and heighten a collective Pacific voice in global affairs and thereby wrest control of the political agenda and negotiations from foreign domination.

Most contributors point to the stultifying influence of Australia and New Zealand as a key factor in causing this shift in diplomacy. They argue that the two neighbours have made it increasingly difficult for PICs (Pacific Island Countries) to pursue joint regional positions on important collective interests such as climate change or to form alliances of interests with other South-based organisations. Yet, the book is less about resistance to foreign domination than it is about revealing the new arenas and channels that Pacific countries are using to create opportunities and avenues for themselves to influence regional and global diplomacy.

The first of the book's seven sections focuses on recent developments in the regional diplomacy. It begins with an address by former President Anote Tong of Kiribati in which he indirectly evokes Epeli Hau'ofa's Oceania essays and declares that "we are large ocean states". This sets the scene for the rest of the book and the view that Pacific countries are strong and can be influential provided they remain steadfast in their pursuit of self-determination and continue to be creative and strong in their solidarity.

President Tong's powerful call for Pacific leadership in international relations is followed by a proposal for a new regional architecture by Kaliopate Tavola, one of the Pacific's most accomplished diplomats. Tavola argues that the PIFS-led status quo has failed to deliver on long promised but long under-delivered benefits of regionalism. The all PSIDS (Pacific Small Islands Developing States) Forum that he proposes instead would free up PSIDS to push their island-specific issues in global forums and grow stronger South-South partnerships. It would keep Australia and New Zealand at arm's length and yet retain their goodwill and generosity by way of a formally negotiated inter-regional agreement similar to the EU's Cotonou Agreement ACP countries. This proposal will generate important discussions in the national capitals of the Pacific.

Amidst a chorus of discontent about the "old" Australia-New Zealand and PIF led regional

diplomacy, Dame Meg Taylor (current secretary-general of PIFS), is given the opportunity to position the institution in relation to the Pacific's fast changing diplomatic landscape. She lays out the philosophy of PIF's Framework for Pacific Regionalism which she views as a major shift in the development paradigm. She speaks of a 'deeper regionalism' in which Forum leaders determine the region's priorities primarily through an open public process. The outcome of the 2015 Forum meeting in PNG suggests that the new PIFS paradigm has yet to take effect. This was manifested most dramatically on the critical issue of climate change, where Australia and New Zealand again effectively prevented any change to the status quo.

Two hard-hitting articles follow from Dame Meg's chapter. Claire Slatter and Maureen Penjueli unpack the PIF framework and assess whether it is likely to lead to anything new especially in relation to (i) its development model built on free trade and economic integration and (ii) its consideration of the views and ideas of civil society groups. On economic policy, they see the Forum's neoliberal model of development as fundamentally flawed. The stubborn persistence with this model means that like the Pacific Plan before it, the Forum's new framework is likely to fail. On PIFS' promise to be more inclusive, both contributors point to the Forum's long history of shutting out NGO participation in regional decision-making. They are sceptical that the new framework will bring about the kind of robust permanent process that is necessary to bring the strength and diversity of NGOs into the inner mechanics of regional decision-making.

Sandra Tarte's chapter is a useful overview of the context, processes and outcomes of the inaugural meeting of PIDF (Pacific Islands Development Forum) in 2013. PIDF is presented as the expression of a profound disillusionment with the current regional order. It reflects a consensus among Pacific leaders that new approaches must be developed to meet the challenges posed by a myriad of social, economic, and environmental problems. By accommodating non-state actors as full members of the process, PIDF has mounted a significant challenge to the donor-dominated CROP system. Yet, the chapter leaves the reader with a sense of the enormity of the task that still lies ahead as PIDF embarks on the difficult path to fulfil its promise.

In her refreshing study of Pacific collaboration in global diplomacy, Fulori Manoa attributes recent successes to PSIDS working innovatively together in New York and doing so independently of Australia and New Zealand. Among the group's achievements are French Polynesia's re-inscription on the list of non-self-governing territories and achieving stand-alone SDGs on oceans and climate change. None of these successes, she writes, would have been possible without asserting significant autonomy from the Australian and New Zealand positions. Smallness and lack of resources, she concludes, are not synonymous with helplessness.

The Fiji section of the book begins with a chapter by the country's roving ambassador, Litia Mawi, that extols her government's recent diplomatic achievements. She credits Fiji for pioneering a new era in Pacific diplomacy through its "look north" policy, a plethora of new diplomatic ties, stronger South-South cooperation, and the establishment of PIDF with its focus on problem-solving, green growth, and inclusivity. Makareta Komai complements Mawi's chapter. Both authors conclude that through a combination of necessity and astute stratagem, Fiji has moved beyond Australia and New Zealand and now looks to the world to reclaim its position as an influential regional leader and catalyst for change.

The third section examines the manoeuvrings of powerful forces from outside the island Pacific. Michael O’Keefe, for instance, argues that China and Russia’s growing assertiveness is disrupting US hegemony. This competition presents opportunities for Pacific diplomacy. In her chapter on Australia and New Zealand, Nicola Baker uses an interesting array of sources (including archival sources and references to WikiLeaks) to unsettle the appearance of Australian leadership and trans-Tasman unity in Pacific regionalism. New Zealand – particularly under the formidable leadership of Helen Clark – has provided much of the intellectual leadership as well as a nuanced, moderating, and sophisticated alternative to Australia’s assertive interventionism (especially in the 1990s and 2000s). She cautions though, that New Zealand’s belated managerial style is threatening to tarnish its hard-earned reputation and make it indistinguishable from its Australian bigger brother.

The section on sub-regionalism begins with Tess Newton-Cain’s overview of the achievements, challenges and opportunities of the MSG (Melanesian Spearhead Group). Amidst its many achievements, the thorny issue of West Papua and future referendums in New Caledonia and Bougainville loom large as potential turning points in the configuration of the group. In spite of these risks she suggests that the MSG is sufficiently flexible to accommodate major differences of national interest and to continue to play a primary role in regional affairs. Marawa – a former Fijian Director of Trade – views the Melanesian free trade agreement as a positive outcome of Melanesian diplomacy. This is manifested in the increased movement of labour and goods between Fiji and PNG. Whether the resulting economic growth is equitable or merely strengthens those groups and economies in the MSG that are already strong (Fiji and PNG) are debates that will demand pursuing particularly in view of Slatter and Penjueli’s chapters. The chapter by Gallen accounts for the obstacles that hinder sub-regional cooperation among small island states in the North Pacific and between the North and South Pacific. She suggests that “Micronesia needs to look South” rather than to pursue its current orientation towards North America. How to cultivate this relationship between the North and the South of Oceania is left unanswered but is worthy of further discussion.

The last third of the book examines four key areas in which the Pacific’s new diplomacy is being deployed: climate change, fisheries, trade, and decolonisation. On climate change, Goulding and Carter examine the Pacific’s efficacy at influencing global negotiations. Frustrated by the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) processes, they explain that some Pacific states have broken rank with traditional Pacific allies to join “state clubs” or “coalition blocs” that they think will better advance their interests. While Goulding sees such clubs as a fragmentation of and threat to regional solidarity, Carter argues that the emergence of PSIDS and the Coalition of Atoll Nations is bringing some cohesion back into the Pacific’s climate change activism and generating significant global attention. While Goulding questions the ability and willingness of Pacific states to achieve a cohesive platform on climate change, Carter suggests that as climate change negotiations have evolved and processes matured, so too have the diplomatic capabilities and effectiveness of Pacific states. This difference of opinion between the two young scholars will generate interesting debate.

Tuna negotiations in the Pacific are a David versus Goliath battle in which the Pacific has

used smart negotiations to overcome the divisive and heavy-handed bargaining power of the most powerful trading blocs in the world: the US and EU. Transform Aqorau explains that the PNA (Parties to the Nauru Agreement), as a sub-regional group, has transformed regional tuna negotiations and strengthened the negotiating hand of its members. Tarai's chapter shows that the PNA's success has had major implications beyond its membership, particularly in the region-wide tuna negotiations with the United States. The skilful but non-negotiable imposition of the VDS (Vessel Day Scheme) championed by the PNA, has led to a final settlement in 2014 that doubled the US government original "take it or leave it" offer. PICs have also exploited rivalries between China and the US to swing negotiations in their favour. Thus, PICs have used internal and external leverages to effectively swing trade in tuna to their own advantage.

Morgan argues that PICs have more agency in international trade negotiations than is commonly understood. In his view, Pacific officials have been tough negotiators who have driven a hard bargain with the EU on the EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement) and with Australia and New Zealand on PACER Plus (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations). This has broadened the agenda of negotiations in the island countries' favour. He cites the tariff-free access to the EU for Pacific fish and the seasonal employment scheme in Australia and New Zealand as indicators of success. These are marginal gains for Pacific negotiating schemes and suggest that in spite of Morgan's optimism, trade will remain an ongoing terrain of struggle for Pacific diplomacy.

Nic Maclellan's chapter on decolonisation is packed with engaging information. He argues that while PICs have achieved some success, significant challenges remain. With PIF no longer acting as a viable platform to support independence movements in the region, Maclellan writes that PICs have sought other spaces such as the MSG and PSIDS. Among the successes, Maclellan notes the historic decision in 2013 by the UN General Assembly to reinscribe French Polynesia on the UN list of non-self-governing territories. The West Papuan case, however, has been more challenging. Maclellan observes that while Pacific governments have been happy to criticise the French government over its Pacific colonies, they are less keen to attack Indonesia in spite of its appalling human rights record in West Papua. But as the West Papuan leader Octo Mote evokes, West Papua is "a nation in waiting" and the issue will not go away. Maclellan documents the rift between those (Vanuatu and FLNKS) that support the West Papuan right to self-determination, and those (Fiji and PNG) who support greater engagement with Indonesia. He thus shows that while many of the failures of Pacific regionalism can be attributed to outside forces, they are also caused by problems, such as narrow national interests, that are endemic to Pacific Island states.

The book ends with two reflective pieces from Henry Puna (current Prime Minister of the Cook Islands) and Sir Michael Somare (former Prime Minister of PNG). While the first follows in Eveli Hau'ofa's wake and calls for a re-imagining of the Pacific, the second emphasises the importance of an open yet self-determining MSG that is responsive to the welfare of all Pacific peoples – not just its Melanesians inhabitants.

Like the shift in diplomacy it examines, this book will mark a turning point in the way that people understand Pacific regionalism. Policy-makers in the capitals of Pacific nations as well as Canberra, Wellington, Brussels, and New York will find provocative ideas with significant implications for future negotiations as well as radical ideas about the future architecture of



Pacific regional cooperation. Academics and students will find in it new thinking to inform undergraduate and postgraduate courses in diplomacy. Its twenty-one are highly readable and represent the most complete and current book available on Pacific diplomacy. USP – as a centre of research for thinking about the critical Pacific issues of our time – and the ANU press, can both be justifiably proud of producing a book of such quality. My only reservation is that while it is very upbeat about the shift in diplomacy, the book leaves very little room for critiques of this new diplomacy. No doubt, now that the book exists, these critical perspectives will soon proliferate and thus continue to breathe new energy and rigour into our collective thinking about this region and the welfare of its people.

## Oceanian Journeys and Sojourns. Home thoughts Abroad

Andreea R. Torre

[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36\(1\)-9](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2016.36(1)-9)

While clearly initiated with the intent of celebrating Murray Chapman and the legacy of his work in the fields of human geography and mobility in Oceania, this theoretically and methodologically inspiring volume greatly contributes to the current literature on migration in the Pacific region and globally in more general terms. The collection strongly advocates for what Chapman himself called the need for “alternative manners of thinking” (Chapman, 1995, p.254) about Pacific Islanders’ practices of internal and/or international mobility. An alternative thinking which should centre around the idea of movement as an *embodied experience* and incorporate *local knowledge* and *socio-cultural relations* within its investigation of the determinants and implications of migration in Oceania.

As such, human experience is the thread that weaves together narratives and analytical enquiries within the different chapters of the *Oceanian Journeys and Sojourns*. Most chapters in the volume include authors’ ethnographic observations and encounters while conducting fieldwork in their own societies or communities they have longstanding connections with, as well as their personal reflexive journeys revolved around understanding and voicing local knowledge and ways of knowing and learning in Oceania.

Without attempting at providing a summary of each chapter, as this would not give justice to the richness and depth of the analysis developed by the contributors, this review mainly focuses on the core theme of the book, mobility in Oceania, that also constitutes the object of inquiry of the present Special Issue of the Journal of Pacific Studies. Judith Bennett’s introduction, *Seeking the heart of mobility*, besides tracing Murray Chapman’s intellectual journey and providing a comprehensive portrayal of his approach to people’s mobility as inclusive of a “better articulation of the context” (p.11), introduces the ten different contributors to the collection and their articles. Six of the authors are women and seven of them are Oceanian themselves and they have all been somehow influenced by Chapman’s work in their research. Despite the thematic differences between the two main sections and within Part Three itself, the introduction succeeds in creating a narrative thread that holds contributions for the following two parts of the book together. Chapter two in this first section, which consists in a transcription of a conversation between David Gegeo and Chapman himself, also helps in this intent. Besides giving more insights on Chapman’s work and how his methodological interest in narratives and understanding of mobility via personal stories developed, it also provides a way into Part Three of the volume through the discussion around Solomons’ “intellectual revolution” (p.64) closely tied to its long and tortuous independence journey.

The core and the strength of the collection stay with Part Two, *Pacific People in Movement*. Essays in this section jointly argue for the incorporation of an emic perspective to explain migratory behavior based on valuing the meanings migrants themselves attach to their own journeys – be them long term journeys and across great distances, or short term, circular movements and/or to

nearby locations. To use Lola Quan Bautista's words, the discussion carried out by the authors in this volume builds on "nuances and sensitivities of many small acts" (p.125) as well as on *atoll epistemologies* to capture ways in which subjects conceive mobility and their own positionalities.

One feature of this book that certainly needs to be highlighted is the plight for greater attention to the multiplicity and diversity of socio-culturally mediated reasons for movement which are tied to gendered social and spatial relationships as well as to life stages of those who move and those who stay. This implies also a high degree of articulation of the context within which mobility takes place, including a socio-political understanding of household (Lilomaiva-Doktor's analysis) and extended family ('aiga') dynamics and practices of reciprocity, as well as situated and relational interpretations of work, and mobility for work, beyond its functionalist explanation through concepts of "commoditised service and transactions" (Asenati Liki's chapter).

Furthermore, essential to the collection is also an emphasis on the need to think about *malaga* or journey/movement/migration "more socially and less geographically" (Lilomaiva-Doktor's, p.82). From this perspective, the act of moving, acquires tight links to life-cycle ceremonial activities, relational practices and routine activities which are all strongly mediated by their cultural meanings. The significance of territorial boundaries acquires a certain degree of relativism while migration away from your "home country" becomes an activity aiming at "enlargement of the homesite" and to processes of "establishing and re-establishing relations" within the metaphorical, relational and therefore fluid context of the *va* (social space).

Raymond Young contribution enriches this conversation with its conceptualization of the "embodied geography of movement" (p. 165). Within this framework, "the focus is on the mover" (Liki 1997 cited by Young) while migrants' everyday and lived experiences in the wider social universe of home and diaspora become central features of the research. Migrants' relationship with kin through blood and land are emphasized as culturally defined conceptions of belonging. Rootedness in the home place and kin connections – the maternal clan as in the case of Tearcisious Tara Kabutaulaka – are therefore essential identity markers. Yet journeying and sojourns in places other than "home", and *forced movements* and returns (Jully Makini's essay on the impact of the ethnic tensions in Solomon Islands) enact new connections enabling new and multiple identities, while imparting appreciations for relationships beyond blood ties and genealogical claims to ancestral lands.

While dealing with topics only partly related to mobility, Part 3 usefully complements the volume. Chapters develop insightful discussions about "the meaning of culture" (p.10) by looking at the interconnections between gendered practices of knowledge and their emancipatory and empowering potential for Oceanian women (Yvonne Underhill-Sem's contribution), the journey of indigenous material culture in colonial and post-colonial times (Judith Bennett's chapter), and the challenges of reclaiming the value of indigenous epistemologies and of conducting institutional research in unfriendly environments lacking a research culture as well as the political will to developing one (Gordon Nanau's and Eric Waddell's essays).

*Oceanian Journeys and Sojourns* therefore helps our appreciation of the complex character of social practices and experiences embedded within Oceanian migration processes. A comprehensive

reading of those processes calls for a shift in the researcher's habitual standpoint allowing her to grasp the cultural and embodied meanings of migration which too often scholarly accounts, focused on economicistic perspective over internal and international mobilities, have excluded. Yet, as Jully Makini in this volume reminds us, events and dynamics happening in Pacific Island countries are "very much part of a global village" (p. 221), and despite, their cultural differences, they may be experiencing also similar processes and "trouble" (ibid.) as other parts of the world. I share this view as I note in the introduction of this Special Issue that the researcher needs to be able to "move between a sensitivity to context and culturally embodied lived experiences and global pressures [...] while being attentive to complex interactions among social, economic, and political forces" (Cangiano and Torre, see in the Introduction to this Special Issue).

As an ethnographer with training in literature, social anthropology and migration studies who works in the field of transnational migration and more recently migration and development in Oceania, I very much welcomed the collection's conceptual approach to research on human mobility. Yet what I felt missing from this collection, at least in its slightly long-winded introduction, was some, even brief, discussion around the impacts the transnational migration and transnational families scholarship which, since the beginning of the '90s has also contributed (and not only in "western research") to shifting the focus from a macro and purely economic way of looking at mobility to a more nuanced and diverse socio cultural analysis of transnational communities that inhabit the "home", "away", and the multi-directional social fields in-between. Through a multi and interdisciplinary approach, the transnational migration literature has built on the intersection of knowledge, perspectives and belonging of researchers who have imploded precisely that dichotomy between the emic and the etic, and have revealed the limitations of "methodological nationalism" by shifting the focus from the country of arrival to the *transnational social space* and situating the analysis within the lived migratory experiences. Use of ethnography, narrative and life history methodologies as well as the ability to move between disciplinary boundaries has allowed for the exploration of questions of cultural values and identity, intergenerational and kinship transformations through mobility, of cross-border exchange, within regular transnational gendered family networks, of wealth and ceremonial possessions as well as social and cultural remittances. Certainly the growing attention to indigenous epistemologies and work by indigenous academics have greatly contributed this literature, yet there is still much scope for an integrated disciplinary approach which can "enrich a variety of disciplinary methodologies", as the editor of this collection briefly mentions on page 21, and for the indigenous approaches and transnational studies of migration to fertilise each other without remaining encapsulated within the "boundaries" of their own thinking. While Teaiwa (2006: 83) warns us against the "tempting rhetoric of Pacific exceptionalism", Eric Waddell also concludes the journey of this volume with a plea for creatively benefitting from synergies of research and learning in this interdisciplinary context.

Ultimately, the richness of insights into the diversity of cultures and social practices of Pacific Islanders, makes this volume appealing to readers not only in human geography, Pacific Studies and cultural studies in more general terms, but also in anthropology of migration, of material culture, as well as political science for those interested in colonial and postcolonial socio-cultural dynamics of the region.

**REFERENCE**

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## INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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