



# 2022 PACIFIC UPDATE ABSTRACTS

28–30 JUNE, SUVA, FIJI  
#PacificUpdate

## TUESDAY 28 JUNE

### OPENING PLENARY

*Where is the Pacific as we near the halfway point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?*

Alison Culpin, Pacific Community

The Pacific region has achieved much since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016, including improvements in implementation, integration of SDGs into national planning, partnerships and stakeholder ownership, and data availability. Drawing on Pacific Island country indicator data, this presentation provides an overview of where we stand now across the 17 SDG Goals, highlighting targets where the Pacific is on track to meet the 2030 objectives, where accelerated progress is needed, and where the region is regressing. Data gaps continue to prevent the monitoring of progress against some targets and these will also be discussed.

### PANEL 1: GENDER EQUALITY

*Reporting on violence against women and girls: a critical discourse analysis of Pacific-based newspaper reporting*

Kate Power, The University of Queensland

Despite the active promotion of rights-based gender equality by Pacific women's movements since the 1980s, Pacific women and girls experience violence at a rate "more than twice the global average". Endemic violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the Pacific is often attributed to a widespread acceptance of violence as a legitimate expression of male power over women. One prominent approach to preventing VAWG involves media initiatives, because news genres can influence public opinion, create consensus, and affect individual behaviour. However, there has yet to be a systematic study of news reporting on VAWG across the Pacific. Notwithstanding the impressive range of media surveyed, the Global Media Monitoring Project's most recent Pacific reports examined only four countries. This paper presents a critical discourse analytic study of newspaper reporting on VAWG in leading English-language newspapers from

11 Pacific Island nations. Using content analysis, I mapped the relative frequency of reporting on VAWG and gender equality in 870 articles published between June 2017 and May 2019. I then examined how Pacific news reporting frames VAWG, and how VAWG-focused articles (n=744) use various forms of reporting long considered problematic, including downplaying violence and perpetuating rape myths. This study draws on an extensive body of research into VAWG reporting but documents for the first time how Pacific news reporting needs to change in order to challenge the norms underpinning VAWG in the region.

### ***Tracking period poverty in Samoa – the case study of manufacture and distribution of reusable menstrual pads in Samoa***

**Doris Tulifau, Vineta Pisia, Ramona Boodoosingh, and Annika Lemisio, Brown Girl Woke**

Adequate access to menstrual health and hygiene education, products and resources for sanitation and disposal remain a key concern for many women and girls around the world. Impacts include missing classes or work, financial distress, feelings of shame, and lack of awareness of what is normal or concerning. Cultural taboos or myths about discussing menstrual health and hygiene are tied to cultural taboos about discussing sexual and reproductive health. This presentation covers the efforts of a Samoan NGO – Brown Girl Woke to increase access to affordable menstrual products by the local manufacture and distribution of reusable menstrual pads free of charge. This was important as many families in Samoa were impacted financially due to the pandemic. Across different sub projects, under this thematic area, education was delivered via workshops/brochures, access through distribution at village, through other NGOs and at the school level, and employment and training of a sewing circle comprised of rural Samoan women. Over 1000 reusable menstrual pads have been distributed and five women seamstresses have been trained in small business management/book keeping. Challenges include supply chain interruptions for materials, access to sewing machines locally and attrition from the sewing circle. Feedback from users has been primarily positive, and Brown Girl Woke continues to seek funding to support continued manufacture and distribution.

### ***Balance of power: shifting gender norms through localised political economy analysis***

**Mereani Rokotuibau, Jennifer Kalpokas Doan, Wilson Toa, Epeli Tinivata, and Peni Tawake, Balance of Power**

The Balance of Power (BOP) program funded through the Australian Government, is deliberately led by Pacific Islanders who are intrinsically motivated to drive positive change in their own unique contexts, namely, Vanuatu, Tonga and Fiji, and are finely attuned to the deep-seated blockers and enablers of gender equality in their countries. The advantage of this locally led approach is that each activity designed and implemented by the program is based in a continuously fed, locally sourced and practice-based knowledge of strategic stakeholders, their networks, power bases and incentives. The initiative departs from conventional aid program approaches based on assumptions that it is a lack of ‘technical capacity’ that prevents Pacific Island countries from achieving their stated objectives of inclusive governance and leadership. Rather, it recognises that entrenched, culturally embedded norms, attitudes and behaviours around concepts of legitimacy and ‘rules of the game’ are the primary barrier to equality, particularly in the political sphere. Our panel of four representatives from Balance of Power in Fiji and Vanuatu will showcase the process by which BOP leaders use their understanding of the local political economy and mobilise their cultural capital and relationships to shift thinking around women’s leadership legitimacy. The panel will discuss the merits and successes of this approach, as well as some of the challenges in terms of personal risks and costs.

## **PANEL 2: AID EFFECTIVENESS**

### ***The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on aid effectiveness: the case of Vanuatu***

**Morgane Rosier, University of Ottawa**

This paper explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of international aid programming. In particular, the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness calls for the respect of three interrelated core principles: ownership (recipient countries define their own development policies), alignment (donors support these strategies) and harmonisation (donors coordinate their actions with each other). More than 15 years later, the implementation of these principles

has been disappointing, despite their potential to create a global framework based on more equal relations between countries. However, the context created by the COVID-19 pandemic, notably restrictions on international travel and the solidarity shown by the international community, may have the potential to change the way donors operate. Thus, I ask the following questions: How has the COVID-19 pandemic slowed or accelerated the application of the principles? How does it affect their relevance? I examine the case of Vanuatu, a highly aid-dependent country. Based on an analysis of academic and grey literature, as well as interviews with key actors, I find that the pandemic has created powerful incentives for compliance by donors and the government of Vanuatu to the non-binding declaration. It has reinforced pre-existing trends such as localisation efforts by donors to a certain extent, but also authoritarian drifts by the government. Thus, despite the change in context, the principles of ownership, alignment and harmonisation are still only imperfectly and partially implemented. This reveals the tensions between global frameworks and specific contexts, undermining the relevance of these frameworks in their current form.

***Collaborative research to benefit industry and academia: reflections on building a project***

**Aidan Craney, La Trobe University and Mema Motusaga, Samoan Ministry for Women, Children and Social Development**

Connections between research and industry are highly valued but generally follow a client-contractor relationship. Given the centrality of relationship building in Pacific cultures, co-designing research projects offers a path to greater mutuality and reciprocity. This paper reflects on the design process behind the Australian Research Council funded project, 'The future of the Pacific: Youth leadership and civic engagement'. We will discuss the challenges and strategies of collaboratively designing a research project between staff from the Pacific Community, The Asia Foundation, the University of Otago and La Trobe University with input from civil society actors. The challenges of bureaucracy, geographical distance and funding commitments notwithstanding, we show that building strong and trusting relationships can result in research with promise of broad benefits to industry, academia and Pacific societies.

***Conducting impact assessments of foreign aid projects in the community: a perspective from Vava'u, Tonga***

**Edgar Haak and Naohiro Nakamura, The University of the South Pacific**

The Paris Declaration of 2005 committed to aid adjustment reforms in order to improve aid effectiveness. Nevertheless, there has not been much evidence of aid effectiveness in recipient countries and the analysis on the impact of aid projects or programs, in particular on the local community, is still scarce. This research aims to assess the impact of foreign aid that has been delivered to Tonga's local communities, using the two project aids on Vava'u as case studies. For impact assessment of aid projects, we conducted observations and interviews with local community members. Our interview results show that the differences in the level of community members' satisfaction with the aid projects derive from the level of their involvement, in particular the decision-making process. Our findings also confirm that the community members generally wish to be involved in the project, or want their voices to be heard at least. Such local perspectives gained from impact assessment do function as factual evidence to evaluate the overall effectiveness of aid projects and this demonstrates the degree of implementation of the Paris Declaration principles. Local perspectives are also useful to identify how a future project can be implemented and if donors can include such findings from impact assessment in project evaluation, the justification to continue aid will become stronger.

**PANEL 3: FIJI ECONOMY**

***Fiji's debt crisis in the post COVID-19 recovery era***

**Sunil Kumar, Pacific Polytech, and Gyaneshwar Rao, The University of Fiji**

According to the 2022 IMF and the World Bank reports, governments around the world are desperate to rejuvenate their economies. For some, particularly small developing countries, the uncertainties have been exceptional. The policy makers are now grappling with the delicate task of scaling back the economic support measures (public expenditures) deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic despite the pressing need for creation of the conditions to restore economic activity and growth. Fiji's fiscal space, as of many other poorer countries, is on a

tight rope. Its public debt level is now reaching 90% of GDP and on the other hand, the prospects of economic growth remain dim. Despite successful in vaccinating a high percentage of its population, Fiji's hope to revive its international tourism does not seem very promising. Therefore, Fiji's economic recovery may depend more crucially on capturing and energising other sectors such as agriculture, basic industries and domestic services. This paper examines the debt trends, public expenditures in support of productive sectors, and tax revenues to analyse the prospects for Fiji's economic recovery. As per the lack of current fiscal space, Fiji's options to implement policies to revamp its productive capacities remain limited. Consequently, its ability to reduce debt levels in the near future also remain dim, most likely pushing Fiji into a perpetual debt in the shade of Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC).

### ***Tourism and economic growth linkages: economic responses and recovery in Fiji***

**Rukmani Gounder, Massey University**

Tourism sector development as a key development strategy adopted to enhance economic growth in Fiji focuses on stimulating business, investment, employment, and entrepreneurial activities. While the tourism sector has surpassed other sectors in its overall contribution to gross domestic product this sector has been affected by the political-economic events, climatic disasters, and the on-going risk of COVID-19 pandemic. This paper assesses these various impacts with the aim to understand economic responses and recovery phase. An analysis of Fiji's dynamic tourism-economic growth linkages is undertaken using a time-varying scenario and recently developed vector autoregressive spillover index and the rolling windows framework. The magnitude and direction based on monthly data over the period 1992M01-2020M02 ascertain whether tourism or economic growth is a net transmitter or recipient of shocks and the level of impact from the various adverse effects. The findings from the new dynamic spillover perspective highlight the extent of tourism and economic growth contributions, and to realise the socio-economic development policy outcomes in the case of Fiji.

### ***All in the same canoe: Impacts of cyclones on farmers' and fishers' livelihoods and income and strength of resilience in Vanua Levu, Fiji***

**Lau Viliamu Iese, The University of the South Pacific**

Krishnan Narasimhan, Jennifer Cisse, Jennifer Philip, Elisabeth Holland, Giulio Masasso Paunga, Filipe Veisa, Jioje Fesaitu, Otto Navunicagi, Timoci Koliyavu, Rahul Prasad, Salote Nasalo, Anamaria Tagicakiverata, Ratu Tevita Rokolutu, Jyoti Mala, Adi Davila Talemaimaleya, Maluseu Tapaeko, Mesake Volau, Epeli Waqa, Sereana Rabalotu, Sioata Lota, Nasoni Roko, Christopher Ward, Isireli Qionimua

To understand the impacts of cyclones and droughts on households that rely on agriculture and fisheries for livelihood, our research explored the details of impacts of climate change on 489 fishing and farming households in Vanua Levu, Fiji. Understanding options for Disaster Risk Financing and demand for insurance and different types of products were discussed with farmers and fishers. Farmers and fishers have diversified and rely on different commodities for their livelihoods, but the impacts on crops, livestock, fishing and therefore their livelihoods are similar. The diversity of actions they are implementing to cope and adapt are also the same – hence they are all in the same canoe. The loss and damage suffered by farmers and households are severe, despite different mechanisms employed to reduce risks on commodities. It takes about a year for households to recover from the impacts of cyclones or droughts. Households rely heavily on their own limited savings to respond and recover after an event. Most of the savings only lasted between one to three months. The savings were meant to improve education, health, food security of the households. After a cyclone or drought, the households divert limited savings to respond to the losses, leaving nothing for long term recovery, education and other important priorities for the household. Disaster Risk Financing Mechanisms (DRFM) such as insurance, credits and loans were highlighted as potential options to help farmers recover faster after disastrous events. More awareness on financing mechanisms and understanding of details of different DRFM options are needed at the household level in Vanua Levu.

### PANEL 4: ECONOMIC RECOVERY

*Financing for social protection: strategic pathways to sustainable investment in the Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste*

**Charles Knox-Vydmanov, independent consultant, Nikunj Soni, independent consultant, Sinta Satriana, Pacific Partnerships for Social Protection Program, and Stephen Kidd, Development Pathways**

Globally, social protection is acknowledged as not only a necessity in combating poverty but also a long-term investment for sustainable economic growth and social cohesion. In the Pacific, the COVID-19 crisis has shown the importance of social protection as a shock-response tool, while also exposing gaps in existing systems: countries with adequate social protection systems were able to leverage these to better respond to the crisis. Social protection is attracting more attention than ever before, but relatively limited attention has been paid to developing long-term systems. A critical question for policymakers is how to finance social protection systems. Social protection systems require significant recurrent expenditure, raising fiscal space concerns, particularly for Pacific island economies that tend to be narrow, with some countries already struggling to resource other key social sectors such as education and health. Against this backdrop, Partnerships for Social Protection (P4SP), commissioned by DFAT and implemented by Development Pathways, is working to better understand pathways to social protection financing across the Pacific and Timor-Leste. This presentation will share analysis and strategic reflections from P4SP, including: a regional overview of social protection expenditure; locating social protection within broader discussion of public finance and fiscal space in the region; unpacking the historical pathways through which social protection systems in the region have expanded over time; and presenting a costing exercise to consider potential allocations for social protection across Pacific Island countries.

*An investigation into differentiated disaster risk and discussion of potential implications for insurance solutions: a case study in Fiji*

**Alexandra Dudley, United Nations University, and Reginald Singh, United Nations Capital Development Fund**

Disaster risk is not experienced in the same way for all people. Disaster risk management strategies must account for people's different needs to be effective. In Fiji, research has revealed that disasters are prepared for, experienced, and responded to differently by people based on their gender, ethnicity, age, and disability status. This project aims to further explore gender- and ethnicity-based differentiated disaster risk through a photo elicitation study with people in Fiji working in agricultural value chains. Based on a prompt, participants took photographs which were then discussed in individual, semi-structured interviews. Based on the IPCC conceptualisation that risk is a function of hazard, exposure and vulnerability, interviews focused on assets of value to participants, which hazards cause loss and damage to these assets, and how participants cope and adapt. Aspects of access to and control over resources, hierarchy, and power were also discussed. The researcher employed an intersectional perspective during the data analysis to compare experiences of risk. This presentation will discuss preliminary results of this research demonstrating the different experiences of disaster risk for iTaukei women, iTaukei men, Indo-Fijian women, and Indo-Fijian men as described by the study participants themselves, and potential implications for climate risk insurance solutions. The benefits and challenges of utilising this creative research method will also be briefly discussed.

*Pacific Islands debt: financing post-COVID-19 recovery amid precarious sustainability*

**Roland Rajah and Alexandre Dayant, Lowy Institute**

In the Pacific, debt sustainability is a concern, and most countries are heavily reliant on development partners to meet their financing needs. COVID-19 has worsened the situation. Today, there is an important need for large-scale fiscal expansion aimed at keeping economies and societies afloat, and providing enough stimulus to enable the economic recovery thereafter. Yet most Pacific countries have little ability to finance such economic largess, and

development partner's assistance has only plugged the immediate fiscal and balance of payments financing gaps caused by drops in government revenue and external income. The direct financing gaps are being plugged via budgetary adjustments and redirected/ increased support from development partners. The true financing gap facing the Pacific, however, is the inability to mount the kind of large-scale public sector stimulus needed in order to limit the long-term economic and social damage from the pandemic. Importantly, the problems are more about liquidity than solvency. We estimate that a 'recovery package' of \$2.3 billion–\$3.5 billion from development partners provided over three years would allow the Pacific to make a full economic recovery from the pandemic crisis. This could be financed with semi-concessional loans without materially worsening the region's debt sustainability outlook. In Fiji, such recovery borrowing could actually improve its debt outlook on medium term. The key message is that unlocking greater upfront financing will be more important to the Pacific's economic recovery than simply erasing old loans or avoiding new debt.

## **PANEL 5: PNG ECONOMY**

### ***Financial inclusion in Papua New Guinea: neither a borrower nor a lender be***

**Laura Nettuno, Vanderbilt University, and Martin Davies, Washington and Lee University**

We contribute to the understanding of financial inclusion in developing countries by presenting a theoretical model of financial inclusion, building on the theory of the household and including intra-household bargaining. We then use a World Bank survey, in which both the male and female heads of each household were interviewed, to examine the effect of individual and household characteristics on financial inclusion in Papua New Guinea. We find that female headed households are more likely to be financially included, and that education is the strongest predictor of all measures of financial inclusion. Distance, location (urban or rural), and whether or not the individual speaks English are also significant predictors.

### ***The determinants of excess reserves in the banking system of Papua New Guinea***

**Thomas Wangi, Australian National University**

This study examines why profit-maximising commercial banks in PNG demand non-remunerated excess reserves. An ARDL model is employed to estimate the determinants of excess reserves using

time series data for the period January 2002 to December 2017. The model includes precautionary and involuntary factors that affect excess reserves in commercial banks. The findings suggest that discount rate, volatility of demand deposits and private sector deposits significantly contribute to the accumulation of excess reserves. In contrast, foreign exchange reserves, private sector credit and treasury bill rate effectively reduce excess reserves pressure in the banking system. However, the required reserve ratio is not effective in influencing the demand for excess reserves. The empirical analysis concludes that involuntary variables are the leading determinants of excess reserves in PNG. The study suggests that in order to address persistent excess reserves in the banking system, the central bank may consider potential policy interventions such as paying interest on reserves that commercial banks hold above the required limit and stimulating demand for domestic credit.

### ***Chinese companies' engagement in PNG***

**Huiyuan Liu and Sandra Kraushaar, The Asia Foundation, and Nikiunj Soni, independent consultant**

The Asia Foundation is leading a three part study on Chinese aid and investment in Papua New Guinea designed to deconstruct and demystify the 'China in PNG' landscape for PNG and DFAT stakeholders. In the past decade, China has developed into one of PNG's most important partners in trade, investment and aid, and much has been said about China's growing influence on the local society. While rhetoric about the China influence continues to heat up, recent data suggest investments by the Chinese companies has stagnated (even before the COVID-19 pandemic). The strong presence of Chinese companies is now mainly sustained by Chinese investment stock accumulated from previous investment inflows and aid projects supported by Chinese government and international donors such as the Asian Development Bank. While there has always been a need to understand how Chinese companies operate and engage in PNG, the need is even stronger now given their significant volume and changes in patterns. Using open source data, this study seeks to address this need by mapping the Chinese companies and examining the details of their specific operational activities, including contract signing and negotiation, project financing, operational constraints, and problem-solving mechanisms. We hope this research provides PNG stakeholders and decision makers with insights on how to engage and manage Chinese actors and activities.

## PANEL 6: SOCIAL PROTECTION

### *Tonga case study on skills development for the tourism and hospitality sector*

**Semisi Taumoepeau, New Zealand Tourism Research Institute, and Anna Addison, Auckland Institute of Studies**

In the region, tourism is the only economic sector to have seen sustained growth in recent years (excepting the pandemic COVID-19 years 2020-2022). Tourism makes a significant contribution to revenue and employment generation and is ranked highly amongst the economic priorities of Pacific Islands governments. The challenge for the people of the South Pacific and Tonga is how to manage and develop this industry in such a way that it can be a sustainable source of livelihood for future generations – at the same time not degrading their natural and cultural resources upon which it depends. This project incorporated certain cultural aspects and values authenticated, packaged as training modules and incorporated into the national qualification authority standards. The outcome is a series of Tongan training modules, approved and accredited to be taught to learners and tourism and hospitality stakeholders. The various methodologies came about from various industry surveys, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and consultation with key members of both the tourism and the education sector.

### *Exploring the impacts of climate change: experiences of the vulnerable populations in Solomon Islands*

**Hensllyn Pwe'a-Boseto, Ecological Solutions Foundation**

Climate change, a global security and threat to planet Earth; is one of the global topics of conversations. Developing countries such as Solomon Islands are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. This paper investigates experiences of four vulnerable groups of people in Solomon Islands as impacted by climate change. A qualitative research design was used in which participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Forty two participants were interviewed. The preliminary findings showed a general lack of specific knowledge on climate change. Different impacts of climate change as experienced were shared. Unpredictable weather patterns and saltwater intrusion affects water access and quality and food security; putting extra pressure on women

to work extra harder, making sure the family is fed. Impacts like king tides, floods and cyclones have imposed migration. Health issues like pneumonia, common cold, malaria, diarrhoea and skin diseases resulted from continuous rain. Traditional knowledge was used in adapting to the impacts of climate change. Implications for practice drawn from the data include the need for inclusion of women, youths, older persons and people with disabilities when discussing climate change adaptation and mitigation in relevant government policies such as climate change policy, women's policy, youth policy and the disability-inclusive development policy and at all levels of governance. This study suggests that there is a need to include women, youths, people with disabilities and older persons in all discussions relating to climate change adaptation and mitigation to ensure any adaptation measures are inclusive for all people.

### *Natural disasters, community, and giving*

**Emilia Tjernström, Monash University**

Social norms regarding altruism, giving, and other forms of pro-social conduct vary tremendously across societies and time. We study how household giving behaviour is influenced by past exposure to natural disasters and community composition. Our data come from incentive-compatible experimental games with 340 households from 34 different villages in Kadavu, Fiji. Specifically, we play several versions of the dictator game, in which respondents get the choice to allocate a sum of money between (i) themselves and the village community fund, and (ii) themselves and Oxfam. By combining their choices with detailed data on past natural disasters, household-level characteristics, and village-level characteristics, we find that private damage from environmental hazards (measured by fire damage on agricultural lands) is associated with a greater level of giving to the village fund, while past damage to the marine commons (measured by environmental shocks to marine resources) and past cyclone experience are correlated with more giving to Oxfam. Further, households in villages that derive a greater share of income from marine resources donate a greater average share, both to the village fund and to Oxfam.

# THURSDAY 30 JUNE

## – PACIFIC MIGRATION RESEARCH WORKSHOP

### OPENING PLENARY

#### *Mobile bodies in warming waters: climate futures for labour mobility in the Pacific*

**Yvonne Te Ruki-Rangi-O-Tangaroa Underhill-Sem, The University of Auckland**

Pacific people have long and complex histories of mobility underpinned by indigenous understandings of relationality – between people, non-human entities and natural environments. Climate change is rapidly transforming environments and bodies as are formal labour mobility schemes. This brief provocation asks how we can think more relationally about mobile bodies in warming waters, as the material realities of both climate change and labour mobility are more intensely felt.

#### *The future of labour mobility schemes in Vanuatu*

**Murielle Metsan Meltenoven, Ministry of Internal Affairs of Vanuatu, Gareth Priday, Action Foresight, and Anne-Sofie Gerhard and Marine Destrez, United Nations Development Programme Pacific**

For the past 12 years, Vanuatu has participated in the labour mobility program with Australia and New Zealand. Vanuatu is one of the largest sending countries in the Pacific region, with over 10,000 workers currently engaged. Labour mobility can be beneficial for both Vanuatu and the receiving countries. However, poor treatment of workers can leave workers underpaid, bullied, and tempted to abscond. Soon, there may be increased opportunities in higher-paid professions such as nursing, where the gap between demand and supply in countries like Australia is projected to increase. Low-skilled labouring work is projected to remain strong; however, this work is likely to become harder as the weather becomes more extreme. These jobs are at risk of being automated. The impacts of climate change in Vanuatu may make permanent migration more tempting, and the migration of skilled labour is part of the policy agenda for receiving countries. There is already a talent drain in some sectors, such as hospitality, where workers head overseas, which in turn limits the potential of the local tourism industry. If this were to extend across other high economic and social values sectors, like nursing, the impact

would be significant. How do we prepare the people of Vanuatu for these opportunities without creating a skills deficit at home? How can we engage with future-ready policy, technology, and new practices to ensure that workers' well-being is protected while away and reintegrating back into Vanuatu society? We explore the policy considerations and other possible interventions.

### PANEL 7: LABOUR MOBILITY IN A CHANGING REGION

#### *Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific through the lens of international human rights and labour standards*

**Angelica Neville, Sanushka Mudaliar and Carmen Voigt-Graf, International Labour Organization (ILO)**

This review of the seasonal worker programs in Australia and New Zealand, that are available to citizens of Pacific Island countries (PICs), was carried out as part of the project 'Enhancing Protection and Empowerment of Migrants and Communities Affected by Climate Change and Disasters in the Pacific Region'. One of the objectives of the project is that "migrants and communities in the Pacific Island Countries benefit from safe labour migration as a sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategy". To achieve this objective, the ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries commissioned a review of the seasonal worker programs in Australia and New Zealand to examine the schemes' alignment with international human rights and labour standards as well as the participation of women and marginalised groups. The review consists of two main components. The first component is a legal review of Australia's Seasonal Workers Programme (SWP) and New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme with respect to migration policies and laws governing the two schemes in light of human rights and labour standards, as well as the inclusion of women and marginalised groups. The second component is a review of the two schemes in practice, particularly from the point of view of the seasonal workers themselves.



## ***Climate change and labour mobility in the Pacific Islands – A Policy Brief***

**Carmen Voigt-Graf and Sabira Coelho, International Organization for Migration, and Angelica Neville, International Labour Organization**

Pacific Island countries experience critical climate change impacts that are likely to intensify the drivers of migration, displacement and planned relocation of their communities. Addressing the adverse impacts of climate mobility will depend on innovative policies and planning at all levels of governance, including innovative cross-sectoral approaches. In this regard, the PCCMHS program is working with Pacific Islands to develop a Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility. To inform this regional framework design, a consultative process has been underway over the last three years, which has also been supported with targeted research outputs. As highlighted in regional and national consultations to inform the regional framework, labour mobility schemes can boost the resilience of communities through generation of remittances, transfer of knowledge and skills and rise in entrepreneurship. To support greater understanding of how labour mobility fits into the climate change and mobility nexus, a policy brief has been produced which establishes the conceptual framework of this nexus and focuses on ways to harness labour mobility for climate resilience, income diversification, and skills development in the Pacific region. Other linkages can be drawn out from this such as labour market integration for displaced and relocated communities, green jobs, and labour exploitation risk in the context of climate change. Considerations from this policy brief are relevant to drafting labour migration and climate migration policies, national employment policies, research, and design of labour mobility schemes at national and regional level in the Pacific.

### ***The role of youth migration in transforming food systems in the Pacific: current knowledge and critical gaps***

**Marisa Mitchell (1), Patrick Smallhorn-West (1, 2, 3), Jacqueline Lau (1, 2), Philippa Cohen (1, 2), Andrew Song (4), Tiffany Morrison (1)**

1. James Cook University, 2. WorldFish, 3. Wildlife Conservation Society, 4. University of Technology Sydney

Governments and donors in the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICT) are now seriously committed to enhancing food and nutrition security of place-based marine and agricultural communities. At the same time, a substantial share of foreign aid

and sustainable development activity is directing young PICT people to seasonally migrate overseas for employment. These two interventions potentially intersect in important ways with implications for sustainable futures in the Pacific. Yet there has been little debate on how these different interventions intersect, and what that intersection might mean for sustainable futures in the Pacific. In this paper, we review and synthesise existing literatures on food systems and youth migration in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories to inform our understanding of how the nexus between food security and seasonal youth migration might be better considered in governance and policy. We first discuss food systems in the Pacific and how these are changing. We then explore PICT youth of today in the context of the current age of mobility and broader global transitions. We discuss the goals and design of two critical programs: the Australian Seasonal Workers Programme and the Tongan Special (Fisheries) Management program. Finally, we isolate the interacting challenges and opportunities of such programs for the long-term security and sustainability of local food systems and communities in the Pacific and highlight key knowledge gaps for future research.

## **PANEL 8: MAXIMISING DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS**

### ***The place premium: Evidence from three Pacific labour mobility schemes***

**Ryan Edwards and Nguyen Truong Toan, Australian National University**

This paper introduces the first wave of the Pacific Labour Mobility Survey for Tonga and uses it to estimate the earnings gains from participating in Australia and New Zealand's Pacific labour mobility schemes. First, we measure the differences between households and workers participating in these schemes and those who are not. Households are generally similar, but workers tend to be younger, male, and more likely to be single. Next, we estimate the counterfactual earnings of migrant workers back in Tonga had they not participated in the scheme, allowing us to compute the gains for the same people from working abroad. We find that all three schemes deliver significant earnings gains, but relative gains are largest for the Seasonal Worker Program and for Australia. We conclude by examining how these gains are distributed back to Tonga: how much is sent in remittances,

and how they are spent. Across all three schemes, remittances are most commonly spent on everyday expenses, education, and donating back to churches and schools.

### ***The role of remittance sending in connection to culture for the diaspora community***

**Vaoiva Ponton and Nicola Fa'avale, MANA Pasifika**

Migration is a global phenomenon, and an emerging global priority. In recent times, there has been an influx of Māori and Pasifika migrants into Australia, mostly via Aotearoa, New Zealand. Available data for the Pacific suggests the important role of migration. In Tonga, remittances take up a share of about 28 per cent of GDP, in Samoa about 22.3 per cent, placing these two countries amongst the top 10 remittance-receiving countries in relative terms. Little is known about the motivations, perceptions, experiences and perceived impacts of remittance sending for the diaspora community. Our research explored the perceptions and experiences of remittance sending for 30 Samoan community members who reside in Queensland. According to the 2016 Census, Samoan was the second-most spoken language (after English) in Logan City. Remittance sending for the participants was more than a financial transaction. Themes that emerged for the participants was that remittance sending provided the diaspora community a connection to culture and provided 1) a sense of belonging, 2) identity, 3) family and community support, 4) employment, 5) migration narratives and 6) inclusivity. This presentation discusses the role that remittance sending plays in connection to culture and the role it plays in how the diaspora community can impact regional political landscapes such as funding national elections or for natural disaster recovery. Through these findings are narratives of migration stories for Samoans living in Australia and their motivations, experiences and perceptions of both living in Australia and staying connected to the Pacific region.

### ***Constraints and opportunities of decentralisation in labour mobility: Reflections on Papua New Guinea***

**Natasha Turia-Moka, Australian National University**

Since Papua New Guinea established an independent Labour Mobility Unit within the Department of Treasury in 2019 (not at the Department of Labour and Industrial Relations) and shortly after joining Australia's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), more workers have arrived in

Australia. PNG practices a unique decentralised recruitment model through strong partnerships with sub-national level Governments known as Regional Recruitment Hubs (RRHs) to boost its participation in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) schemes. Few RRHs have been able to quickly maximise the opportunities presented through decentralisation such as the Motu Koitabu Assembly, Enga Province, Central Province, New Ireland Province, and Madang District. Interestingly, Enga Province is the only RRH to have also successfully mobilised female workers. Many of the decentralised recruitments have been for PLS engagements while only a very small number have secured Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) jobs. Why are there varying results across RRHs? PNG presents a case for analysis of the constraints and opportunities presented through decentralisation of labour people mobility in its own national efforts to create more employment and economic and social opportunities for women and men.

## **PANEL 9: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL IMPACTS**

### ***What happens to the learning outcomes of children left behind when parents work overseas? Evidence from Tonga***

**Vu Thu Trang and Daniel Suryadarma, Asian Development Bank Institute**

Parents have a large influence on their children's learning outcomes. When parents work overseas and leave their children behind, the impact on children could be positive or negative. The higher income could be used to further support their children's learning, resulting in a positive impact of working overseas on children's learning outcomes. In contrast, the loss of parental presence or the impact of alternative living arrangements could dominate, resulting in a negative impact. Tonga has a high share of their population working abroad with emigrants account for 50.6 per cent of the population. In this study, we utilise the Tonga Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey to estimate the impact of parents working overseas on the educational outcomes for two groups of children: under five and 5-17 years old. For children under five, we construct the Early Child Development Index from literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional, and learning domains. For children aged 5-17 years, beside using school participation and completion rate, we also construct the learning outcomes on

foundational skills in mathematics and reading. Our main identification strategy is using the historical district-level migration rates as an instrument. For children aged 5-17 years, our 2SLS results show that compared to children who reside with both parents, children with at least one parent working overseas have higher reading skills. The effect is significant for boys and for older children. They also score higher in the mathematics test. We find no evidence of impact on the school participation of left-behind children. For children under five, our findings show a positive impact on Early Childhood Education (ECE) attendance and Early Childhood Development Index.

***Lost in space (and time): implications of transnational family separation in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme***

**Matt Withers, Australian National University**

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme streamlines Australia's existing guestworker migration initiatives with Pacific Island countries (PICs) and Timor-Leste as short-term and long-term streams within a single program. Both streams provide temporary employment opportunities in rural and regional Australia, involving placements of up to nine months or up to four years respectively. They also do not allow for family accompaniment, which can mean prolonged periods of transnational family separation that may place strain on migrant workers' personal relationships, the care practices of migrant households, and the operational capacity of PIC governments mediating familial disputes. These issues remain an understudied aspect of the migration-development nexus that the PALM scheme claims to operate within: temporary labour migration is typically evaluated on the basis of remittance and skill transfers, with little consideration for the potential for transnational family separation to undermine sustainable development outcomes. This article draws on a combination of in-depth and semi-structured interviews with migrant workers (from Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu), their family members (in Vanuatu), and PIC government stakeholders (in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu) to explore the developmental and programmatic consequences of extended transnational family separation in the PALM scheme. Findings indicate that PALM participants frequently experience relationship breakdowns and other interruptions to family life that have financial and care implications; that the challenges of transnational family life differ considerably according

to the relative spatial and temporal experience of distance; and that social and family issues detract significantly from the operational capacity of PIC Labour Sending Units (LSUs).

***The gendered and social impacts of labour mobility in PICs***

**Kirstie Petrou, Ursula Casabonne, Matthew Dornan, and Dung Doan, The World Bank**

For more than a decade, Pacific labour mobility schemes have provided opportunities for tens of thousands of Pacific Islanders to travel to Australia and New Zealand. Despite their popularity however, the social impacts of participation in these schemes remain poorly understood. Furthermore, and while rates vary between PICs, men have uniformly dominated participation. Consequently, there is a strong demand from sending and host country governments to better understand and manage the social and gendered impacts of participation in the labour mobility schemes. As the first large scale qualitative study of Pacific labour mobility, this research draws upon more than 400 interviews with workers, their families and communities in rural and urban areas of Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu. In so doing, it considers the barriers and enablers that women face when participating in labour mobility and the influence of individual, household, community and institutional level factors on their participation. In addition, it examines the social impacts of men's and women's participation in labour mobility on their households and home communities and considers the benefits and challenges that have been associated with the schemes. The findings from this study will inform policy recommendations to reduce gender biases and constraints to participation and manage the social impacts of the schemes.