

GLOBAL OR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific: Policy Perspectives

9 July, 2009

Adrian Macey, New Zealand Climate Change Ambassador

OUTLINE

- Definition and attribution
- Role of the UNFCCC
- What is the international community already doing?
- Consideration of regional / international frameworks
- New Zealand response



DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

“Climate change and sea-level rises are not unique contributors to the vulnerability of small islands. Other factors include socioeconomic conditions, natural resource and space limitations, and the impact of natural hazards such as tsunamis and storms. In the Pacific, vulnerability is also a function of internal and external political and economic processes which affect forms of social and economic organisation that are different from those practiced traditionally...”

~ *IPCC Working Group II, 2007.*



- Risk to peoples in fragile environments is intensely felt especially in countries (including in the Pacific) which are on the front line of climate change impacts.
- Climate change **exacerbates existing challenges** rather than creating a distinct new set of issues
- there are **numerous push- and pull-factors in a decision to migrate**, and climate impacts are often linked with other drivers (e.g. development, livelihood)



A “REFUGEE” BY ANY OTHER NAME

- Words are important – convey ideas and protections – got to get it right
- Increasingly widespread rejection of “refugee” label – incorrect at international law, and rejected by the governments (and communities) in question;
- Doesn’t provide protections - overlooks the large numbers who will not cross international borders
- McAdam / Loughrey study reports communities find label “at best pre-emptive and at worst offensive”.
- UNHCR rejects the use as well



Role of the media...

- Sensationalist / incorrect / misleading media reporting does not help.
- Oversimplifies the situation, and suggests displacement on massive scale without adequate justification. Does not do justice to the serious and complex situation faced.
- Draws attribution with a solely to climate change – overlooks complexities
- Any response needs to be rational and based on real evidence.



ROLE OF THE UNFCCC

“The ultimate objective of this Convention ... is to achieve... stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a timeframe sufficient **to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development in a sustainable manner.**”

~ Article 2, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



Climate opportunism...(?)

- Overloaded “climate change and...” agenda
- Climate induced migration joins these
- UNFCCC is struggling with its core mandates
- Extra ones pose risk –
- Where we can, try to deal with elsewhere, and link



Whose role?

- UNFCCC must acknowledge. Gives political recognition at a high level.
- But in terms of policy prescriptions need to consider:
 - a) whether **solely** attributable to climate change
 - b) risk of **duplication** of work by other international organisations
 - c) **existing** international responses



EXISTING RESPONSES

	Disaster	Slow Onset	“Non-viable state”
Internal Displacement	Humanitarian (cluster) response	Adaptation Development support	N/A
External Displacement	Humanitarian (cluster) response	Existing migration framework	Statelessness Convention? Law of the Sea?



INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

Current international frameworks addressing the issue:

- UN General Assembly
- UN Human Rights Council
- UN Security Council
- IOM consideration



FUTURE CONSIDERATION

- Empirical evidence needs to form the basis –
 - **who** is or will be migrating,
 - **from** where,
 - **to** where,
 - for **how long**,
 - And ***why?***



NEW ZEALAND RESPONSE

- Focus on **the Pacific**
- **Focus on mitigation and adaptation** so as to minimise need for migration scenarios in the first place
- First principle = Pacific identified responses. Note express **desire of Pacific peoples to remain in their own homes** where possible.



POSSIBLE POLICY RESPONSES?

- **Recognise the complexity of the issue** - further analysis will be required
- Proactively **cover policy gaps**
- Many argue that **some forms of migration** may lie at one end of the adaptation continuum
- Could current immigration policy settings be sufficiently flexible to provide **a platform for a future response ?**

