

FIJI'S CLIMATE RELOCATION OF COMMUNITIES TRUST FUND

INFORMATION BRIEF 1: An introduction to the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund for communities and the public



MAY 2023

Introduction

The Fiji Government is committed to protecting and assisting communities and groups that are currently experiencing or are at risk of experiencing severe disruption to their livelihoods and wellbeing as a result of the impacts of climate change. In Fiji, climate change impacts such as sea level rise, flooding, and coastal erosion, as well as the impact of climate change on disaster events such as cyclones, the increased risk of landslides due to extreme rainfall etc are increasing pressure on human settlements, livelihoods, and food and water security.

Due to the increased potential for sudden and slow-onset climate-related hazards to displace people and communities and in some cases, surpass the potential for adaptation measures to be effective, The Fiji Government developed Planned Relocation Guidelines in 2018, established a dedicated Trust Fund (the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund) to support relocation in Fiji through the passage of the Climate Relocation of Communities Trust Fund Act in 2019, and through the passage of the Climate Change Act in 2021 (The Act), which created a legal framework for guiding relocation efforts in Fiji. The Act establishes the legal mandate for the Minister Responsible for Climate Change, *'to allow for the orderly, respectful and dignified relocation of at-risk communities'*. To do so, the Minister, is supported by the 'Fijian Taskforce on Relocation and Displacement' established by the Act. The Act directs the Minister to develop 'Standard Operating Procedures' for the planned relocation of communities / informal settlements / groups. The Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation in Fiji (SOP) was endorsed by the Cabinet of the Government of Fiji in March 2023 and formally launched on 18 April 2023.

NOTE: This document provides introductory information on the Fiji Government's Planned Relocation policy framework. It is purposed to support public communications and advocacy and is intended for the use of community leaders, government and non-government community liaison officers, local/national non-government organisations, civil society organisations and groups and other stakeholders involved with the direct support of communities, informal settlements, and groups.

Overview information

Who is eligible to receive support from Government?

- Communities, settlements, and groups that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and lack adequate local adaptation options.
- People or communities that become displaced as a result of climate and/or disaster related events and require resettlement.

Who is responsible for overseeing planned relocation in Fiji?

The Minister responsible for Climate Change, with support from the Fijian Taskforce on Relocation and Displacement, is responsible for relocating and supporting at-risk communities and will allow for the orderly, respectful, and dignified relocation of at-risk communities/settlements/and groups.

- **Ministerial Oversight:** Planned relocation activities are overseen by the Minister responsible for Climate Change and the Office of the Prime Minister / Climate Change Division. The Minister responsible for Climate Change will provide final approval of relocation plans and the use of resources held by the Climate relocation of Communities Trust Fund (CROC Trust Fund). The financial management and financial reporting on the CROC Trust fund is conducted by the Ministry of Finance.
- **Fijian Taskforce on Relocation and Displacement:** Planned relocation activities are guided by the Fijian Taskforce on Relocation and Displacement (the Taskforce) which is made up of directors and senior officials from key government ministries. This Taskforce is responsible for providing recommendations to the Minister responsible for Climate Change. The Taskforce provides guidance following the consideration of risk assessments, relocation plans and other technical products described by, and developed, through the SOP and associated processes.
- **Taskforce Secretariat and the Relocation Projects Unit:** The secretariat for the taskforce as well as the 'Relocation Projects Unit' is based within the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management.
- **The Ministry of Housing:** The Ministry of Housing is the agency responsible for the relocation of informal settlements and will provide oversight of relocation operations involving informal settlements in close coordination with Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management.
- **Implementation Support:** All Government Ministries have a role to play in supporting relocation and the SOPs illustrate the range of expertise and technical capacity that will be drawn from Government Ministries and Agencies to support the successful delivery of approved relocation plans and the associated assessments and consultations required.
- **Implementation Partnerships and Post-Relocation Support:** The Planned Relocation Guidelines and the SOP recognise the importance of a wide range of partnerships with non-government organisations, civil society groups, faith-based organisations, and others in the delivery of planned relocation activities and the support required post-relocation (counselling services, livelihood diversification activities, monitoring and evaluation etc.)

All stakeholders involved in supporting planned relocation will contribute towards providing a minimum standard of protection and assistance to affected communities including the most vulnerable persons (noting the special needs and circumstances of persons living with disabilities, the elderly, sick, women and children).

Where does the funding for the Climate Relocation of Communities (CROC) Trust Fund come from?

Fiji's CROC Trust Fund was established as part of the national effort to support vulnerable communities, settlements and groups who are adversely impacted by climate change and seek assistance from the Government to assess relocation options. The Fiji Government contributes to this fund through the payment of 3% of the revenue raised through VAT on prescribed services, plastic levy, superyacht levy and income tax. This payment into the CROC Trust Fund provides a basis for supporting the operations of the Trust Fund. The Government of Fiji is actively involved with fundraising for this initiative and will secure additional international and bilateral contributions to scale up the fund over time.

Is planned relocation supported by the Government only offered to communities affected by sea level rise and other slow onset hazards?

Eligibility for support to relocate a community/settlement/group is not contingent on the experience of a particular event, impact, or type of event or impact. Relocation may be required due to vulnerability to both slow onset events (sea level rise, prolonged drought etc.) and sudden onset events (severe flooding, exposure to cyclones, landslides etc.) or a combination of both. The focus of efforts to assess whether relocation is required is centred around the ongoing circumstances experienced the group in question and the degree to which solutions to ongoing problems can or cannot be addressed through new or additional adaptation solutions.

How do I know if my community / settlement should consider support to explore relocation options?

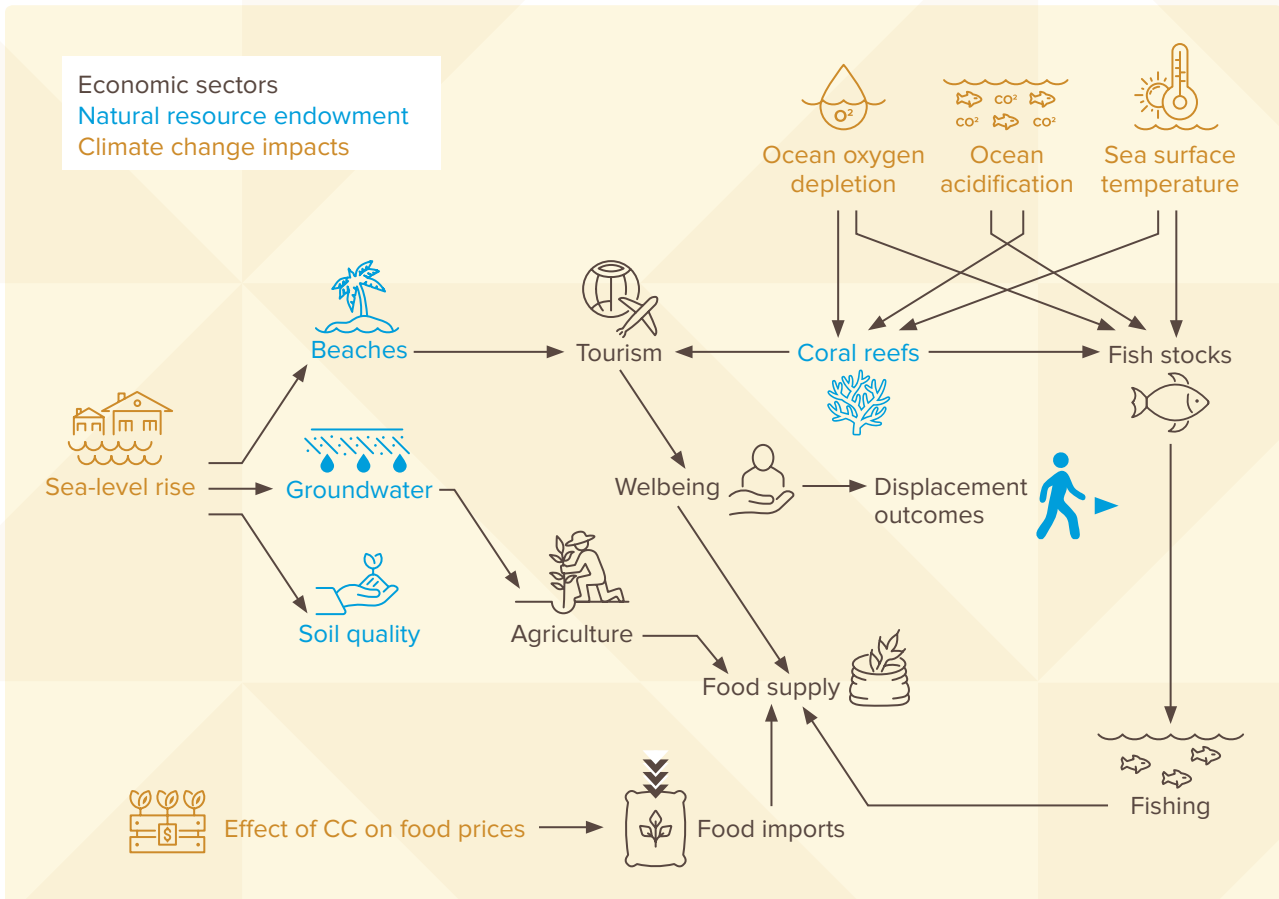
Significant scoping studies have been conducted to date by government to identify communities where relocation options need to be assessed. However, initial assessments may not account for new and evolving risks. If there is consensus amongst community/settlement members that frequent risks and/or threats to food/water/livelihood security are impacting wellbeing, it will be important to seek support from government to fully assess the situation in order to determine whether there are viable adaptation options that can be implemented to reduce risk or whether relocation is required.

What does the CROC Trust Fund provide funding for?

The Trust Fund has a broad mandate to support planned relocation assessments, activities, and investments and is legally permitted to fund:

- *Research, assessments, and studies into the circumstances which necessitate planned relocation;*
- *Activities or initiatives that assess the vulnerability of communities which may be at risk of being displaced due to the adverse effects of climate change;*
- *Activities or initiatives that identify viable locations where communities displaced by climate change may settle; and*

- Activities or initiatives which seek to ensure that relocated and displaced communities are provided the necessary infrastructure to guarantee an adequate standard of living and the rights and freedoms provided under the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.



This image provides an example of how various climate change impacts can create pressure on wellbeing and lead to circumstances that interfere with the ability to maintain access to basic human rights. – (adapted from IDMC, 2018)

In the event that a relocation proposal is developed following the necessary consultation, research and assessment, the approval of the proposal is not guaranteed and is contingent upon review by the Taskforce and Minister responsible for Climate Change.

The CROC Trust fund will not support the relocation of individuals or individual families as per the guidance provided by the Planned Relocation Guidelines. The CROC Trust Fund is not designed to fund adaptation measures required in the original site (in-situ adaptation), instead this fund is specifically purposed to support the range of activities, consultations, assessments, planning, land preparation, construction, logistics, and post-relocation needs-based support required and described by the SOP for planned relocation.

The CROC Trust Fund will also support necessary activities to support communities that are ‘displaced’ and awaiting relocation. These activities will be designed in accordance with need and with consideration of existing humanitarian support mechanisms.

How to start the relocation Assessment Process

Guidance for communities

Communities on iTaukei Land

- Communities on iTaukei Land who seek support to assess relocation options should convene a community meeting to discuss the challenges faced. The meeting should consider adaptation measures that may be possible to help minimise the risks as well as be an opportunity to discuss views on the potential importance of exploring relocation options. The *Turaga-ni-Koro* should ensure meeting minutes are recorded and if there is consensus to request support to assess relocation options, a copy of the meeting minutes along with a written request support must then be submitted to the relevant Provincial Office. The Provincial Council will then communicate details of the request to the Divisional Commissioner's Office to formally process the request.

Communities on State Land / Freehold Land

- Communities based on state or freehold land must ensure at least 90% of community members above the age of 18 years old agree that support to assess relocation options should be requested. If this consensus is reached, the community, through the appointed community representative must submit a written request to the relevant District Advisory Council.

Guidance for informal settlements and groups

- In the event that the members of an Informal settlement reach consensus to seek support to relocate due to high-exposure and vulnerability to risks through the agreement of at least 90% of the members of the settlement/group above the age of 18, a written request must be submitted to the relevant District Advisory Councillor as well as to the Ministry of Housing.
- In the event that the members of an at-risk informal settlement are given notice to relocate due to either the identification of a new site by the State or due to notice given by landowners/land title holders, relevant phases and methodologies of the SOPs will be applied in keeping with the principles and objectives of the Climate Change Act.

In all of the cases above, the initial submission made by the community/settlement/group in question will trigger the deployment of Government officers and relevant technical agencies who will engage with the community through talanoa sessions and technical field assessments. These initial engagements will help create the initial understanding required to assess next steps.

Timelines

The Government of Fiji developed the 'SOP for the purpose of managing processes and timelines involved with relocation activities. This guidance provides indicative timelines for each stage of the process. Communities, Settlements, or Groups that are assessed as requiring relocation, will be provided with ongoing guidance on the process and be provided with relevant contacts to support the coordination of consultations and planning workshops. Timelines are also informed by the availability of funding and the required management and sequencing of priorities.

Grievance Redress Mechanism

The SOP includes the establishment of a dedicated Grievance Redress Mechanism. This mechanism provides a means to raise any grievances that arise at any time during the planned relocation process and ensures that there is means to formally lodge complaints and issues that must be addressed and require resolution. Details of this mechanism are detailed in section 2 of the SOP.

Key Requirements

Planned Relocation as a measure of 'last resort'

The Government of Fiji will only progress efforts to relocate at-risk communities/settlements/groups when relevant and feasible (cost effective) adaptation measures and options have been exhausted. The Fiji Government will use the Comprehensive Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Methodology (CRVAM) and support community-led and inclusive consultations to help determine whether or not planned relocation is recommended as a measure of 'last resort'.

Consensus-based decision making and 'free, prior, and informed consent.'

Planned relocation in Fiji is community-led and will only be progressed with the full consent of communities/ groups/settlements. While the government will lead the technical progression of the process in keeping with the SOP, the process itself will be co-designed with communities, settlements, and groups. The Government of Fiji will support the relevant coordination mechanisms required to enable all affected stakeholders to participate in decision-making. Consultations with communities/settlements/groups will be 'gender responsive' and ensure methods of consultations are inclusive and designed in a way that allows all members of the affected group to participate.

Government-led consultations and approach

The Government of Fiji will consult with stakeholders to ensure sound understanding of rights, justification for decisions made in relation to relocation proposals, and the scientific basis of proposals and decisions. Minutes of all consultations / public hearings with affected communities/settlements/groups will be taken. The Minister responsible for Climate Change encourages the participation of vulnerable persons and groups to ensure that their views are considered. Planned relocation in Fiji is non-discriminatory and the Government of Fiji has committed, through the Climate Change Act to approaches to relocation which are human rights-based and human-centred prioritising the target community/settlement/group's needs. All efforts will be made to support the continuation of livelihoods post-relocation. Importantly, planned relocation activities will be conducted in a timely manner and by priority based on severity of needs and to avoid the further exacerbation of impacts and risks. Planned relocation will serve as a means to prevent displacement, where possible, before it occurs (i.e., a 'pre-emptive' approach).

Contributions expected by communities/settlements/groups

As stated by the Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation: *The affected community is expected to provide some contribution towards their relocation and other activities like adaptation measures and livelihood projects. Contributions are to be within their means and capacity and could include – building materials (like timber if they have the resource), skilled and unskilled labour, fundraising for community infrastructure (like church, kindergarten, dispensary), accommodation for officers and workers, and other contributions that the community can offer within their existing means. Since resources and capacities for each community differ, the type and scale of contributions will vary according to the status of community. This will be determined during the various community assessments and consultations. An agreement on the community contribution will be drawn up during the planning stage for the relocation. The agreement will only be signed following an inclusive and informed consensus-making process with the entire community. The agreement will be signed by the nominated authority in the iTaukei Village (Turaga- ni-koro or village committee chairperson) and the community chairperson or nominated representative of the other communities (including informal settlements).*

Identification of potential relocation sites

Suitable relocation sites will need to be identified through collaborative efforts and will benefit from a range of technical assessments and feasibility studies. Alternative sites must consider sites that are least vulnerable to climate change impacts and capable of supporting the current and future needs of the community/settlement/group in question. In some cases, relocation may involve relocation to inhabited sites in which a 'host community' is present. In such cases the rights and concerns of host communities must be considered and respected. The Fiji Government will conduct necessary validation activities to assess the boundaries of existing inhabited sites and confirm the individuals that have legitimate claims as current members of the community/settlement/group in question.

Useful Information

LINKS

Standard Operating Procedures for
Planned Relocation in the Republic of Fiji

SCAN HERE



National Climate Change
Policy 2018 – 2030

SCAN HERE



Planned Relocation Guidelines

SCAN HERE



Climate Change Act 2021

SCAN HERE



Climate Relocation of Communities
Trust Fund Act 2019

SCAN HERE



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