



MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

June - July 2020





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Introduction

This weekly update aims to highlight recent news on climate change, migration, and the Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

Prepared as a part of the CLI_M_CO2 project, undertaken at the World Trade Institute, University of Bern, Switzerland.

01-15 June 2020

Organisations update

UNEP, UN Women, UNDP, UNDPPA

A new report – Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change – by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Women, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (UNDPPA) reveals the close links between gender, climate, and security, and shows that women on the frontlines of climate action are playing a vital role in conflict prevention and sustainable, inclusive peace.

The report is available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/gender-lens-essential-addressing-linked-climate-change-and-security>

High Level Discussion to Resolve Internal Displacement

Humanitarian and human rights leaders convened to explore durable solutions for the world's internally displaced persons (IDPs) as well as the host communities and governments affected by internal displacement.

The International Organization for Migration joined the virtual high-level panel discussion, which showcases efforts by the international community to pursue concrete solutions through the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement launched in February, as part of the week-long Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

By the end of 2019, the total number of people internally displaced due to conflict, violence and disasters reached a record high: 50 million. More than 33 million were newly displaced over the course of the year.

"As if the challenges we faced to finding concrete solutions to internal displacement were not enough, we must now also consider a pandemic on a scale the world has not seen in generations," said IOM Director General António Vitorino.

The dire circumstances in which most IDPs live – often characterized by crowded and unsanitary living conditions where jobs and services are few – have worsened due to the health risks and socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

Vitorino highlighted the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN) to address the destabilizing impacts of COVID-19 on IDPs by strengthening local capacities in humanitarian and health responses and ensuring socioeconomic recovery.



IOM is one of the largest agencies responding to internal displacement. The Organization assisted 21 million IDPs and six million people living in affected/host communities in 2019.

“IOM is present before, during and long after displacement situations are resolved giving us a unique expertise and role in operationalizing the nexus,” DG Vitorino said.

“Our operations span the full displacement continuum – from preparedness and risk reduction, to humanitarian response, transition to longer-term solutions, and development.”

Since the onset of COVID-19, the Organization has remained on the frontlines – adapting its operations to continue to meet the needs of IDPs affected by the virus and “make IDPs part of the solution” for sustainable recovery and development.

The discussion was entitled Mobilizing action to improve humanitarian assistance for internally displaced persons and achieve durable solutions. It was chaired by H.E. Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, and Vice-President of ECOSOC and moderated by the Head of the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock.

<https://www.iom.int/news/internally-displaced-persons-must-be-agents-their-own-solutions-iom-joins-high-level-discussion>

IOM and UNODC

Intelligence-led operational decision-making and increased cooperation is imperative to address irregular migration and protect vulnerable migrants.

Which is why, Dr. Nnette Motus, the Regional Director for the International Organization for Migration’s Asia and the Pacific Region and Mr. Jeremy Douglas, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s Regional Representative for South East Asia and the Pacific affirmed the two organizations’ joint initiative to counter migrant smuggling and address irregular migration within the Asia Pacific region.

The joint initiative will enhance collaboration between the two United Nations agencies to improve evidence-based research on current and new smuggling trends by sharing information, particularly in relation to travel documents and identity fraud and also build capacities of law enforcement agencies in the region. This initiative is guided by the well-established 2012 Cooperation Agreement and the 2018 Joint Platform on Countering Migrant Smuggling between the two agencies. The signing of these exchange of letters falls a few months before the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and related two protocols against trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling.

<https://www.iom.int/news/iom-unodc-strengthen-cooperation-counter-migrant-smuggling-and-address-irregular-migration-asia>



Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Australia

Australia, through its Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) have signed a 3-year agreement to support the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Geneva Office.

The agreement confirms support for USD 1.8 million (AUD2m) for the year 2020-2021, a two-fold increase from Australia's initial annual grant to the Geneva Office, of USD 700,000 (AUD 1 million) for the last three years.

The PIF Geneva Office provides an important base for Pacific Trade and Invest (PTI) Europe, and supports Forum Island Countries to engage effectively at the World Trade Organisation as well as other UN bodies and international organisations based in Geneva.

<https://www.forumsec.org/2020/06/10/australia-doubles-support-to-pacific-islands-forum-geneva-office/>



16-30 June 2020

Organisations update

UNEP

This year's Desertification and Drought Day on 17 June focuses on the links between consumption and land. How does consumption affect the health of landscapes? What are the main drivers of land degradation in sub-Saharan Africa?

COVID-19 underscores the relationship between human health and nature and reveals a fundamental problem: humans have unlimited needs, but the planet has limited capacity to satisfy them. Often, land degradation is caused by unsustainable human consumption and needs.

For example, one of the key drivers of land degradation, that continues to attract very little attention, is agricultural expansion to help feed a rapidly growing population. Agricultural expansion involves land clearance and tree felling. Poor land use planning, poor access to agricultural inputs and technologies, and in some cases corruption, are also driving "slash and burn" agriculture. Under this system of cultivation, woody biomass, fodder and other resources are exploited in an unsustainable manner, causing land to degrade.

Another driver is charcoal use. People who can't afford to cook with gas or electricity turn to firewood or charcoal for energy. Making charcoal also requires the felling of trees, leading to land degradation.

Climate change exacerbates the problem with more frequent floods, droughts and, of late, locust swarms destroying crops. Farmers never know how long their growing season will be. All this is leading to greater rural poverty which, in turn, exacerbates coping strategies like "slash and burn".

<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/protect-landscapes-protect-humanity>

UN Network on Migration

Statement by the United Nations Network on Migration

"COVID-19 and its impacts have had far-reaching consequences and exacerbated inequalities. For the 800 million people reliant on migrant family members sending money home – money that many can no longer receive – COVID-19 is more than a deadly virus; it constitutes a devastating and immediate blow to their development, imperiling their access to health, education, housing and nutrition.

As we mark the International Day of Family Remittances, the UN Network on Migration calls on public authorities, service providers, the international community and stakeholders to together address the damaging impacts wrought by COVID-19 on remittances. In the policy guidance on the Impact of COVID-19 on Family Remittances, the Network urges States to intensify efforts to implement their commitments to promote a faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster the financial



inclusion of migrants made in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). It reiterates the need to work across sectors, bringing together actors ranging from government ministries to financial regulators, postal services, remittance service providers, migrant communities, diaspora organizations and local authorities.

In 2019, remittances were valued at an estimated US\$554 billion. They are vital to the support of 800 million relatives living in more than 125 countries. With mobility and employment restrictions resulting in a projected 20 percent decline in remittances, many children and families stand to lose a lifeline as a result of COVID-19 and measures put in place to reduce its spread.

The Network's policy guidance, developed under the leadership of IFAD with support from IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF and UN Women, and the World Bank highlights measures needed for an effective response to reduced remittances flows. It recommends that the provision of remittances is declared an essential service; taxes for remittance senders and recipients are waived; collaboration is promoted between public authorities and diaspora groups; the use of digital channels for sending and receiving remittances is encouraged and capacity for this built; and that migrants and remittance families are included in economic stimulus packages, cash assistance and social protection responses to COVID-19, independent of migration status.

Responding to the call by the UN Secretary-General for global solidarity, on 24 March 2020, a Remittance Community Task Force has been formed with over 35 organizations representing international agencies, inter-governmental bodies, industry and private sector groups, diaspora networks and international experts. Recommendations by the Task Force will provide an annex to the policy brief launched today by the Network. The brief complements the Secretary-General's recent guidance on COVID-19 and People on the Move, which recognises the heightened vulnerabilities of migrant workers and their families to the immediate and long-term socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis; and urges that their inclusion in COVID-19 responses will be critical to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, its recommendations align with the UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 and the Financing for Development strategy set out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda together with other initiatives such as the call to action Remittances in Crisis: How to Keep them Flowing.

The United Nations Network on Migration was established to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States in their implementation, follow up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. While the Network's mandate is limited to migration and provides the context in which this policy brief has been written, the Network calls on States to also implement these recommendations where they apply to refugees and asylum-seekers and to protect the human rights and health of everyone equally, regardless of migration status."

<https://www.iom.int/news/international-day-family-remittances-global-pandemic-highlights-crucial-role-remittances>



Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

New Zealand

A new research centre in New Zealand has been launched in anticipation of an increase in climate change forced migration.

The issues facing people forced out of their homes due to conflict or climate change is the focus of the Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies at the University of Auckland.

The centre's Professor Jay Marlowe said both environmental change and persecution was creating unprecedented numbers of displaced people.

"In particular what we are wanting to do was to one continue to respond to the crises associated with conflict induced displacement but also to recognise the impact of climate and climate change and how human-induced mobility through, particularly high impact weather events, is something that we will need to continually and increasing respond to."

Marlowe said close to 25 million people around the world were displaced last year due to severe weather events.

He also said seven of the top 20 most at risk countries to such disasters were in the Pacific.

This was the reason Marlowe saw as it as important to partner with Pacific people when helping the plight of those who were displaced.

The professor said the aim was for their work to make tangible differences in the lives of forced migrants.

"Knowing the world isn't enough, you also have to look to change it," Marlowe said.

"So the Māori name for our centre is 'Tāwhārau Whakaumu', which translates to 'centre of transformation'.

"So really what we are looking to do within that endeavour is to ensure that the people in these specific areas or communities are very much at the centre of that work."

Marlowe said the centre would partner with NGOs, governments and academic institutions across the region. The centre would be approaching their work from a multi-disciplinary approach.

"Some of the stuff...obviously requires legal expertise. There will also be implications in respect to education and health and housing," Marlowe said.

"Working with economists trying to figure out how all these things work."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/422160/research-centre-created-in-anticipation-of-climate-induced-migration-in-pacific>



01-15 July 2020

Organisations update

UN Committee on Migrant Workers and UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants

Joint Guidance Note on the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Human Rights of Migrants is available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/CMWSPMJointGuidanceNoteCOVID-19Migrants.pdf>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

Fiji

The International Labour Organisation, or ILO, is calling for a review of Fiji's national employment policy. ILO director for the Pacific, Matin Karimli, said this was to help the government create sustainable jobs amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr Karimli said according to an ILO assessment, five industries had been severely affected including the wholesale, retail and tourism sectors.

He said 66 percent of the 84,000 Fijian workers surveyed were on reduced hours or working days.

"What we've observed and according to our findings, we think that there should be a comprehensive institutional work that would support businesses and workers during this kind of crisis."

Karimli said the ILO could offer technical expertise and guidance notes to Fiji, based on its experience in other countries.

He said the plight of thousands of workers either laid off or on reduced hours had affected business operations.

He urged employers to work with the Employment Ministry and relevant stakeholders on ways to help workers.

Karimli said the ILO survey also showed a need for workers to acquire skills such as management, administration, safety, hygiene and diversification to help build the economy during the pandemic.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/421888/ilo-wants-review-of-fiji-s-employment-policy>



New Zealand

New legislation in New Zealand is poised to address the poor pay equity experienced by many Pacific women in the workplace.

Parliament passed the Equal Pay Amendment Bill on Friday.

A government MP, Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki, welcomed it as a sign of progress in fighting the gender pay gap disproportionately affecting Pacific women.

She said Pacific women in New Zealand had been the lowest income earners.

It was expected that the bill would help make it easier for employees to raise a pay equity claim and encourage collaborative mediation before issues were escalated to a court process.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/422067/nz-equal-pay-amendment-bill-said-to-help-pacific-women>

16-31 July 2020

Organisations update

UNFCCC

The UN Climate Change Secretariat has presented three new climate technology publications that document the climate technology “journey” - the pathway from the identification of technology needs to the full implementation of technologies that are required for countries to green their economies and build resilience to climate change.

Zooming in on different aspects of the journey, the publications highlight how best to respond to countries’ technology needs, the important role of innovation in speedy technology implementation and new technology approaches for increasing resilience in coastal regions.

To access the first publication, titled “Enhancing Implementation of the Results of Technology Needs Assessment”, is available at: <https://unfccc.int/ttclear/tec/brief13.html>

The second publication, titled “Innovative Approaches to Accelerating and Scaling Up Climate Technology Implementation for Mitigation and Adaptation”, is available at: <https://unfccc.int/ttclear/tec/innovativeapproaches>

The third publication, titled “Policy Brief: Technologies for Averting, Minimizing and Addressing Loss and Damage in Coastal Zones”, is available at: <https://unfccc.int/ttclear/coastalzones/>

Pacific Island Countries & Territories news update

French Polynesia

The French nuclear compensation commission, CIVEN, says it has paid out \$US30 million to victims of France's nuclear weapons test since 2010.



In a report, the agency said the money was paid out to a total of 362 individuals for ill-health caused by the weapons tests in Algeria and French Polynesia.

In 2019, a further 96 people in French Polynesia applied for compensation, raising the total to almost 1,600 applicants.

Last year, CIVEN accepted 62 compensation claims lodged in French Polynesia while in the period from 2010 to 2017, only 11 were accepted.

France claimed that its tests were clean and caused no harm until 2010 when a compensation law was passed.

However, after a high rejection rate the compensation criteria were loosened in 2017 but again tightened in a reform approved last month.

France tested its atomic weapons in French Polynesia from 1966 to 1996.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/421743/france-details-nuclear-compensation-efforts>

PNG

"The Papua New Guinea government is denying a claim on social media that it's recruiting Fijians to work in PNG.

The post claimed PNG's Public Service Minister, Soroi Marepo Eoe, met last week with Fiji's High Commissioner to PNG, Mosese Tikoitoga, to discuss the recruitment drive.

But while Mr Eoe did meet with Mr Tikoitoga, it was to establish if a PNG national recruiting labour in Fiji was working in an official capacity.

The Fiji Times reported the minister told Mr Tikoitoga his office was not involved in recruiting any Fijians to work in PNG's Ihu Special Economic Zone project in Gulf Province's Kikori district.

The minister, who is also the member for Kikori Open Electorate, said the recruiter, who is asking for high deposits of about US\$1400 from Fijians, is "highly suspicious and misleading".

Fiji's employment ministry is investigating as the man needs a licence to recruit in the country."

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/421708/png-denies-recruitment-of-fijian-workers>