

Voices from the Village: The USP Climate Change & Migration Project

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House destroyed by storm surge, Marshalls

Coconuts claimed by the ocean, Ulithi, Yap



High tide inundation, Funafuti, Tuvalu

Life in Arorae, Kiribati

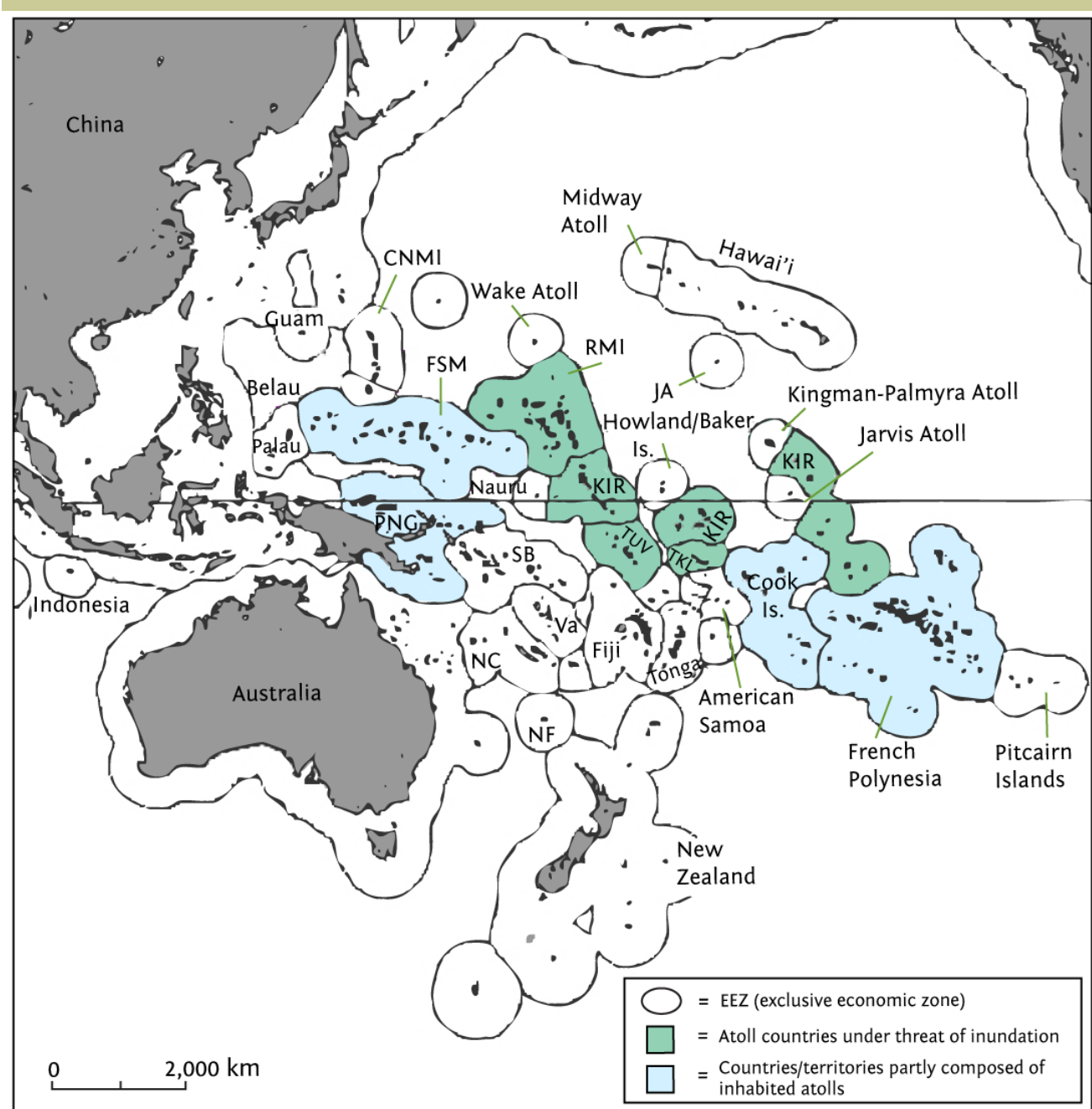
Abstract

This poster introduces the USP Climate Change and Migration Project. Project data analysis is still in the preliminary stages, so this poster does not present findings. It instead aims to bring this project to the attention of climate change researchers and practitioners and to build linkages with people who may be interested in collaborating with the team or receiving copies of research outputs when they become available.

Project background

As the map to the left shows a number of Pacific countries are fully or partially comprised of inhabited atolls. Whilst scholars from outside of the Pacific are beginning to address questions of how to deal with displaced populations, very little has yet been heard from Pacific islanders themselves on these issues, especially those outside government. This project aims to increase the presence of Pacific island voices in the discourse about climate change and migration.

Student researchers from the Federated States of Micronesia, Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands were trained in interviewing and conducting field research. The researchers visited 25 atoll communities in four countries from December 2010 to February 2011. They interviewed around 150 people, mostly using vernacular languages, about various issues relating to climate change, its impacts, their past experiences of migration and the prospect of future climate-induced migration.



Snapshots — sites & respondents

Micronesia (Yap State)

Communities visited:
Ulithi Atoll (Fadrai, Falalop, Asor, Mogmog)
Waab Island (Ruuq)
Fais Island (Falyuw, Lechuichui, Ilathow)

Citizen interviews: 33 Officials interviews: 14

29 year old female, Waab: **Rich and polluting countries have time on their side whereas we don't, we've already seen climate change impacts.**

61 year old chief, Asor when asked about Kiribati's 'migration with dignity' policy: **I will join that canoe... I would travel on that canoe.**

Republic of Marshall Islands

Communities visited:
Majuro Atoll (Laura, Rita)

Citizen interviews: 9 Officials interviews: 3

67 year old teacher, Rita: **People should not wait for disaster to strike. People should migrate when the time comes.**

Tuvalu

Communities visited:
Nanumea Atoll
Niutao Atoll
Funafuti:Atoll

Citizen interviews: 37 Officials interviews: 10

57 year old chief, Niutao: **There is no such thing as Climate change... the natural events are just part of nature.**

43 year old Nanumea resident: **Developed countries should help vulnerable countries because they are the ones responsible!**

Kiribati

Communities visited:
Arorae Atoll (Tamaroa, Roreti, Arorae, Taribo)
Tarawa Atoll (Antebuka, Bairiki)
Kirimati Atoll

Citizen interviews: 41 Officials interviews: 11

78 year old female, Roreti: **Migration will never happen. There is nothing to fear . . . God will not let this happen.**

65 year old male, Antebuka: **I do not want to migrate. I love to live in Kiribati... I will never migrate.**

Topics covered in interviews and scope of data gathered

Community

- Impact of climate change on communities
- Adaptation measures undertaken
- Knowledge of climate change
- Migration/movement history
- Preferences for migration
- Fears regarding migration
- Attitudes to government policy
- Opinion on responsibilities for climate change responses



Where to now for the Pacific's atoll communities?

Government

- Current plans, policies and institutional arrangements
 - Public involvement in developing plans
 - Progress in implementing policies
 - Preferences regarding migration
- Opinion on responsibilities for climate change responses
 - Opinions on migration with dignity
 - Future, post migration
- International negotiations to deal with migration



Staple food crops being grown in concrete container due to salt inundation, Yap

Upcoming research outputs

- Georgelina Reyuw, *Climate Change, Migration and Mainstreaming Adaptation Policy in Yap* (LLB dissertation June 2011)
- Abuera Uruaaba, *Assessing Migration with Dignity in Kiribati* (LLB dissertation June 2011)
- Conference session @ *Law and Culture 2011* 'Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific' (see <http://www.paclii.org/law-and-culture/>)
- Special Edition of the *Journal of South Pacific Law* Volume 1, 2012
- Book project: *Voices from the Village: Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific Islands* December 2011