SR Migrants, report to the GA on the impact of climate change and the protection of the human rights of migrants (deadline May 16): <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/calls-input/report-impact-climate-change-and-protection-human-rights-migrants>

1. **Please provide information, where applicable, on how existing national efforts to address internal displacement in the context of climate change contribute to minimize drivers compelling people to migrate. Please include any measures taken to protect, assist and provide durable solutions to persons, particularly women and children and other individuals with specific vulnerabilities, who have been internally displaced due to the adverse effects of climate change, and effective climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as measures to address loss and damage associated with impacts of climate change. Please also describe any protection gaps that have been identified in this context.**

Vanuatu has undertaken a number of steps to address internal displacement issues. From a broad development policy perspective, the country’s National Sustainable Development Plan (2016 – 2030) provides the generic guidance relative to the definition of human security and well-being, including cultural and social indicators of well-being specific to Vanuatu’s cultural context. The NSDP however does not specifically address human mobility issues as linked to climate change. Distinctively, the National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster Induced Displacement sets out to address different aspects of climate related mobility – migration, displacement and planned relocation. The Displacement policy emphasizes the approach of durable solutions.

Moreover, Vanuatu’s Labour Mobility Policy from an economic standpoint, focuses on labour mobility as a positive and temporary form of mobility, to resilience of ni-Vanuatu households and the economy.

Given Vanuatu’s exposure to a range of climate related impacts, gender issues (namely related to women and children) are particularly more profound during times of disasters or sudden onset climatic hazards such as cyclones. Sexual and gender and gender-based violence against women and girls has been shown to escalate in the aftermath of a disaster. Country policies such as the National Gender Equality Policy and the Displacement Policy place the critical themes of protection at the heart of their respective strategic priorities. Additionally, Vanuatu has establised a Gender Protection Cluster within the Ministry of Justice and Community Services serves to ensure the needs to vulnerable groups are addressed during instances of internal displacement. The cluster has been active in mainstreaming and providing sector specific protection related guidelines and messages that are relevant for internal displacement.

Labour mobility program is also without its’ negative impacts especially on families that are separated. The “Family Ready” program, initiated in 2021 is a pre-departure program that seeks to prepare labour migrants for overseas work, covering areas such as maintaining healthy relationships while apart, reducing gender-based violence risks, nutrition, financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

Vanuatu is currently in the process of requesting from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) an advisory opinion seeking clarification on the duties of states under international law to respond to climate change in order to protect the rights of present and future generations. Climate related displacement is one that has human rights infringement elements. Therefore, legal clarity on the juxtaposition of these issues will further enhance and enrich measures to address protection issues.

1. **Please provide information on climate change-related cross-border movements observed in your country and/or region, including information on the main challenges, impacts and key human rights concerns. How has climate change exacerbated other migration drivers?**

In Vanuatu, the effects of climate change are already being felt in terms of impacts on fishing, ecosystem health, saltwater inundation of freshwater, coastal areas and groundwater, compromised food security, pest and disease outbreaks, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of sudden and slow-onset disasters. These impacts are placing existing environmental systems, governance and social structures under stress and are also increasing the drivers of internal migration within Vanuatu, as people increasingly move towards urban centres.

Comprehensive information on climate related mobility are far and few in between. Disasters (all hazards) generally have triggered almost 175,000 displacements in Vanuatu since 2008[[1]](#footnote-1). Storm surge represent Vanuatu’s highest displacement risk. There is a 64 per cent probability that one will displace 10,900 people in the next 50 years. Cyclone Pam, which struck the country in March 2015, represents more than 37 per cent of the total displacement. Tropical Cyclone Harold, which devastated Sanma and Penama provinces more recently in 2020 represents46 per cent of the total displacement.

For Vanuatu, general climate change impacts and human rights especially raise concerns related to human security. These human security elements are encountered particularly in the dimensions of:

* Cultural security: Impacts to and loss of culture, cultural identity and languages through displacement in Vanuatu.
* Environmental security: Pressures on natural resources and an increase in environmental degradation as a result of slow and sudden-onset events.
* Physical security: Coastal erosion is causing the recession of land in some communities across Vanuatu impacting housing, general land and community assets, such as graveyards.
* Water security: Due to extended dry periods, impacts on drinking water quality and quantity is starting to impact dry parts of islands and islands without large water catchment areas, such as atolls.
* Food security: As a result of issues such as water insecurity, impacts on soil health and increasing ocean acidification, there are increasing pressures on fish stocks for Vanuatu’s many coastal communities, and terrestrial food security and related livelihood options.
* Economic and livelihood security: Loss of potential livelihoods (largely agricultural-based) leading to mobility away from rural areas to urban centres
* Land security: The potential loss of tenure, as well as insecurity of tenure due to customary land issues in potential new locations.
* Personal security: Particularly to women and other vulnerable groups were recognised by participants as occurring when environmentally-induced displacement and mobility occurs in Vanuatu.
* Educational security: Attention was given to impacts on schools (physical building damage as well as emotional trauma for children) in the aftermath of climate-induced hazards, such as large Category 5 cyclones.

The combined effect of the interaction of different hazards simultaneously (e.g. exacerbated impacts from climate change such as drought, coupled with volcanic ashfall can exacerbate pressures and force movement) raises the potential for migration. In addition, environmental degradation from inappropriate land use in some areas has increased the risk that climate change is predicted to have on natural resources and community economies. The combined impacts of simultaneous exposure to multiple hazards may become more exacerbated with increasing temperature rise, impacting human security from several angles.

1. **Please indicate how relevant State obligations under international human rights and refugee law are respected at the national level in addressing climate change-related international migration and providing protection to persons crossing international borders in response to the adverse effects of climate change. More specifically, please explain to what extent the impacts of climate change are recognized as a possible ground for admission and stay in national migration laws and policies, as well as asylum procedures and other procedures, including for temporary and long-term protection and return procedures. Please include information on any concrete mechanisms put in place to grant admission and stay and ensure protection to people fleeing the adverse effects of climate change.**

States play a critical role in ensuring national laws address climate change where international rights and refugee laws are concerned. Whilst Vanuatu has policies or laws addressing climate change, human rights and migration, these issues are not explicitly linked or cross referenced. The Displacement policy generically addresses climate mobility issues although specific legal provisions to accommodate cross international border matters or procedures are largely absent.

Vanuatu has further taken the step to seek legal clarity on the obligations of States with respects to climate change and human rights from the international courts of law. It is envisaged a legal opinion will enhance procedures and mechanisms in the arena of international climate mobility.

1. **Please share examples of national and regional solutions to expand and facilitate pathways for safe and regular migration for people who are compelled to leave their countries in the context of climate change. Please indicate whether your country has adopted any bilateral, subregional, regional, international mechanisms, agreements, frameworks or programs, to facilitate safe, orderly and regular movements for migrants in the context of climate change.**

Vanuatu’s Displacement Policy was formulated with the facilitation of well managed and safe migration for internal migration with dignity as one of its’ aims. Additionally, the country is engaging in the development of a regional climate mobility framework for the Pacific. This regional framework is set to shape relevant pathways for safe and regular migration for people forced to migrate or relocate from their countries in the context of climate change. It is expected that such a regional climate mobility framework will be endorsed by Pacific island leaders this year 2022.

1. **Please share examples of good practices that your country or region have adopted to promote a human rights-based approach to international migration in the context of climate change and to ensure the protection of the human rights of persons crossing borders in the context of climate change. Please indicate any specific challenges that your Government has encountered, or any protection gaps that have been identified, in ensuring the effective enjoyment of human rights of migrants, particularly women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, minorities and other persons, groups and peoples with specific vulnerabilities, affected by climate change.**

The Vanuatu National Policy on Climate Change and Disaster-Induced Displacement pays attention to rights and equity, but it is more focused on how existing policy frameworks and actors can integrate mobility arising from climate change and disasters into their existing planning and processes. The policy revolves around 12 Strategic Priority Areas (SPA). The first four are focused on system-level interventions and include: institutions and governance; evidence, information and monitoring; safeguards and protections; and capacity-building, training and resources. The final eight are focused on sectoral-level interventions and include: safety and security; land, housing, planning and environment, health, nutrition and psychosocial well-being; education; infrastructure and connectivity; agriculture, food security and livelihoods; traditional knowledge, culture and documentation; and access to justice and public participation. Broader guiding principles are also identified – for instance, gender equity, protection of traditional knowledge and respect for custom, as well as adherence to human rights protections.

Vanuatu is a substantially patriarchal society. Decision making and leadership are namely accorded to men. Often issues related to women and girls are not given high priority in a community setting. Therefore, there remains gaps where the protection of women and girls is concerned across many development sectors or within various facets of societal norms.

Further general awareness and information related to climate induced migration is fairly low. There is still the need to elevate knowledge and awareness with respects to climate related migration issues across multiple governance levels.

1. **Please provide information on measures taken by your country to support and facilitate the integration of arriving migrants in the context of climate change-related migration and highlight any contributions of migrants to the host communities.**

There are yet to be any specific line of work on that issue. It is envisaged that the finalization of the Pacific climate mobility regional framework will greatly assist Vanuatu to both integrate and harmonize approaches relative to climate change related migration.

1. **Engagement with civil society organizations, national human rights institutions, and other stakeholders: please provide information of concrete initiatives, actions and programs relating to migration and climate change that have been developed by civil society organizations and other stakeholders in your country. Please explain to what extent the work of civil society organizations and other stakeholders on migration and climate change is taken into account to inform national policies.**

Various stakeholders are engaged in the climate change and migration space. With the rising migrant numbers of Vanuatu citizens in labor mobility scheme, organizations such as World Vision and Oxfam in the “Family Ready” program, a preparedness initiative that targets migrant workers.

The Gender and Protection Cluster receives considerable support from Save the Children and CARE International being the non-government co-leads. The Cluster has produced resources and tools such as the code of conduct, GBV referral pathway and cards, and deployment packs for emergency responders. It has also delivered awareness training on protection issues in emergencies and prevention of GBV to women, children, church leaders, disaster-affected communities and community disaster and climate change committees (CDCCCs);

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is another key stakeholder that has provided extensive technical support to the Vanuatu government especially in areas such as the formulation of the National Displacement Policy, roll out of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), co-leads the Displacement and Evacuation Center Management Cluster and support to Vanuatu with work related to the development of the Pacific regional climate mobility framework.

1. **Please provide information on any specific or additional challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.**

The main challenge in these respects have been the ability to fully access technical assistance for specific areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation especially where there are limited capacity in a number of critical development sectors such as energy, health, urban management or telecommunications.

From a more displacement specific scenario, the experience of facing other compounding disasters such as Cyclone Harold in 2020 resulted in having to violate COVID-19 protocols in a lot of evacuation center facilities.

1. **Please include any other information relating to the impacts of climate change on migration and the human rights of affected populations.**
1. https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/21\_0907\_IDMCVanuatuRiskprofile.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)