

COMMITTEE GUIDE

UNHCR



United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Andrés Camacho and Isabella Ordoñez

2025

CCBMUN **XXIII**

Contents

1. Presidents' Letter

2. Topic 1: *Refugee crisis amidst Sudan's Civil War*

- I. History/Context
- II. Current Situation
- III. Key Points of the Debate
- IV. Guiding Questions
- V. Bibliography

3. Topic 2: *Safeguarding Climate Refugees in Pacific Island Nations*

- I. History/Context
- II. Current Situation
- III. Key Points of the Debate
- IV. Guiding Questions
- V. Bibliography



1. Presidents' Letter

Dear Delegates,

First and foremost, we would like to welcome each one of you to this enriching experience, best known as Colegio Colombo Británico Model United Nations (CCBMUN). We are Isabella Ordóñez and Andrés Camacho, currently in 11th and 9th grade in Colegio Jefferson and Colegio Bolívar. We are honoured and excited to be your chair during this model for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and we'll be looking forward to observing as your ideas, passion, and leadership take shape throughout this 3-day conference.

This model is more than resolutions or debating. Instead, it's an opportunity to understand how the world works and how, by putting ourselves in the shoes of world leaders, we can learn about the broader scope of international relationships, and to find out how to build real-world solutions. You will not only be mastering your public speaking and negotiation skills through your participation in this committee, but also developing empathy and appreciation toward differences in points of view.

UNHCR is a crucial United Nations entity that is committed to promoting the safety and care of refugees, forcibly displaced and stateless people everywhere. The UNHCR committee uses the principles of neutrality, impartiality, freedom and humanity when working towards making a future where no one would need to seek asylum elsewhere. Delegates in this have the task of handling some of the world's most pressing humanitarian crises in our current era.

As you prepare for the conference, we encourage you to learn about your assigned country's policies on safeguarding refugees, international law and human rights. An understanding of not just your country's stance, but also the humanitarian concerns at their foundation, will help you build better arguments and solutions. We expect every delegate to have a complete portfolio, to get familiar with the basics of MUN procedure, and to be ready to discuss viewpoints respectfully and decisively with your fellow delegates.

We know that MUN can feel intimidating at first, and that you may even be having second thoughts about participating, but trust us that your chair will always be fully engaged to ensure an open and secure space for every voice. This is a space for growth, creativity and critical thinking. Whether you are an experienced delegate or this is your first conference, you will be welcomed and respected here, and we cannot wait to see the impact you will make on the committee. Please write to us at the email address below if you need any help before or during the conference. We are here to help and support you.

Andrés Camacho and Isabella Ordóñez
UNHCR Chair (unhcr@ccbcali.edu.co)



Topic 1: *Refugee crisis amidst Sudan's Civil War*

I. History/Context

Sudan is a country in northeast Africa with a population of just under 58 million people. It has seen a great deal of political turmoil since gaining independence from the joint British-Egyptian administration in 1956. Becoming independent meant that Sudan gained full sovereignty over its government for the very first time, but that was only the beginning of a long series of domestic issues. Sudan experienced three civil wars, totaling approximately 40 years of conflict: the First Sudanese Civil War (1955–1972), the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983–2005), which led to the creation of South Sudan, and the Sudanese civil war (2023–present).

These conflicts have caused one of the greatest human crises in recent times, among them a refugee crisis that is worsening on a daily basis. The original conflicts were between the richer Muslim north and the poorer Christian south of the country.



Figure 1: Sudan's flag raised at independence ceremony by the Prime Minister Isma'il Alazhari and opposition leader Muhammad Ahmad Mahgoub on 1 January 1956 (Wikipedia, 2025)

After years of failed governments and conflict between the Muslim north and Christian south, Omar al-Bashir took power in 1989 and ruled as dictator for 30 years. He strictly enforced Sharia law, with morality police limiting personal and political freedoms. Opposition parties were banned, elites grew rich, and government crimes went unpunished. From 1983 to 2005, Sudan went through a second civil war, and in 2011 South Sudan became independent. Still, peace did not last in Sudan.

People in Sudan were angry with Omar al-Bashir, the country's dictator. In 2019, two military groups—the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)—removed him from power. After that, a temporary government was created. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan became the leader, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (called Hemedti) was his deputy, and Abdalla Hamdok, an economist, was chosen as prime minister. They promised to lead Sudan toward democracy.



Figure 2: Gen Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, at a rally in Abraq village, outside Khartoum, in June 2019. (Savage, 2024)

However, the agreement between these three leaders soon came to an end. Prime Minister Hamdok wanted more democracy and less military control. The army leaders, Burhan and Hemedti, did not like this. In October 2021, they took over the government, and Hamdok quit in early 2022. Burhan then became Sudan's main leader, while Hemedti wanted to be treated equally and asked for the RSF to join the army. Since there was no clear plan, the two men began to distrust each other.

In April 2023, fighting broke out. RSF soldiers took over the center of Sudan's capital, Khartoum, while the SAF controlled the areas around it. On April 15, explosions and shootings began in the city. No one knows for sure which side fired first, but both groups were blamed. This quickly turned into a major war inside the country.

Other countries involved in the conflict

This national conflict has drawn in several foreign countries, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Turkey, and Iran. The UAE has been implicated in backing and equipping Hemedti and the RSF, ultimately helping the RSF capture the majority of the country's territory, including most of Darfur and the main access to the Red Sea via Port Sudan. On the other hand, countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Iran have supported the Sudanese military, the SAF; they have been accused of providing military aid, intelligence, training, and even political backing.

Consequences of the Fighting

The fighting has created a dire humanitarian crisis that involves daily violence, famine, and interference with the normal services that civilians rely on. This has forced millions to flee their homes. While some are displaced within the borders of Sudan, others have migrated to the adjacent states of Chad, South Sudan, and Egypt - countries with overcrowded refugee camp services.

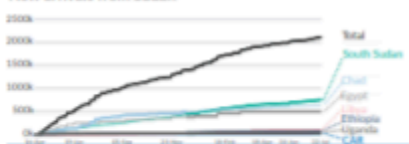
OVERVIEW: There are now 10.1 million forcibly displaced due to the outbreak of conflict in Sudan since April 2023, including 7.8 million internally and 2.1 million in neighbouring countries. Sudan and neighbouring countries were already hosting large refugee populations before this new emergency and require additional support to provide protection and critical life-saving assistance, including for those who have been secondarily displaced within Sudan. Urgent needs include water, food, shelter, health, and core relief items. The current priority activities are the registration of new arrivals, relocation away from border areas, identification of especially vulnerable families and persons with specific needs, and putting mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and ensure alternative care services for unaccompanied refugee children.

10,130,401 Forcibly Displaced
7,794,480 New IDPs in Sudan
2,116,395 Newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers and returnees
219,526 Self-relocated Refugees in Sudan

Arrivals by population and estimated gender type



New arrivals from Sudan



UNHCR EHAGL DIMA | dimahag@unhcr.org

Published 22 July 2024

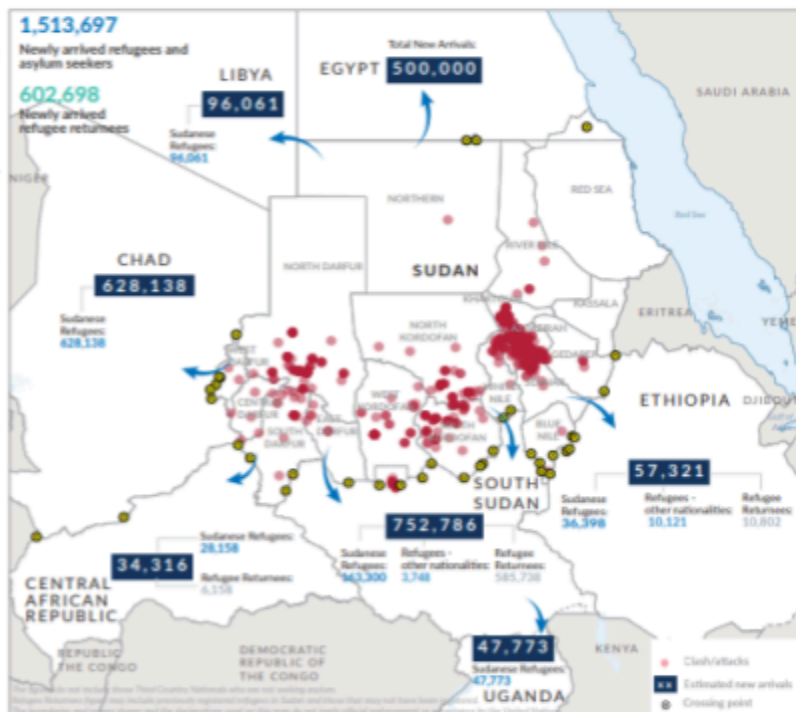


Figure 3: Sudan refugee crisis in 2024 (Sudan, 2024)

Sudan itself cannot even provide basic necessities for its citizens anymore. Hospitals are either destroyed or taken by the armed forces, schools are closed, and food is extremely costly. The United Nations and other international bodies are trying to bring in relief, but perpetual conflict makes it too unsafe for them to work effectively in most areas.

The Sudan refugee crisis is not only a Sudanese crisis. It has also impacted neighbouring nations, which cannot cope with the numerous refugees flowing through their borders.

II. Current Situation

Since the warfare erupted on 15 April 2023, the United Nations has categorised the situation in Sudan as the world's worst humanitarian and displacement crisis, with over 30 million civilians requiring urgent help. This consists of almost 12.5 million internally

displaced persons (IDPs) and over 3.3 million refugees displaced across borders. Critically,



Figure 4: The damage to the Al-Shaab Teaching Hospital in Khartoum (Human Rights Watch, 2025)

almost 25 million Sudanese are facing acute starvation, with famine confirmed in a couple of areas, including North Darfur and the Nuba Mountains. Conflict blockades prevent food and medical aid from reaching communities, while attacks on farms and markets worsen shortages.

Children, mainly under 5, are the community mostly affected by the conflict, with 5 million acutely malnourished and 16 million youngsters in need. 90% of school age children

currently are receiving no education. Women and girls face high levels of violence.

The conflict has also destroyed the healthcare system: over 80% of hospitals in war zones are non-operational, and new outbreaks of infectious diseases, especially of cholera, have claimed hundreds of lives. Over 60% of the population lack access to healthcare. Disease, starvation and environmental concerns are exacerbating the problem, as is the destruction of major infrastructure such as roads and bridges. The UN has warned that tens of millions more will be driven deeper into suffering if the problems are not addressed.

A climate crisis in some parts of the country is also adding to the problems. Heavy, unpredictable rains have damaged dams, bridges, and sanitation systems. Water has become scarce, and more people are being displaced.

Military Situation

The SAF took control of important places like airports and bridges. This helped them move into western Sudan, where the RSF is still very strong. By holding the eastern side of the Nile River, the SAF gained a base to plan future attacks.

The RSF still has power in western and southern Sudan, especially in Darfur, West Kordofan, and South Kordofan. Heavy fighting is happening in El Fasher, the main city of North Darfur, as both groups fight for control.

The UN and human rights groups say the RSF has attacked people from non-Arab communities because of their ethnicity. Hospitals and homes have been looted, and both the RSF and SAF have stopped aid from reaching people in need.

The RSF also made its own political move by declaring a “Government of Peace and Unity.” In February 2025, it signed an agreement in Nairobi, promising to create a federal country with democracy, no religious rule, and one national army.

In March, the RSF made a new constitution to try to look like a real government and get support from Gulf countries. Some groups supported it, but many said it could break Sudan apart. Countries like Algeria, China, Egypt, India, and Jordan warned it would cause more division. Sudan then pulled its ambassador from Kenya and stopped trade with Kenya, adding to the country’s problems.

Effects on citizens

The effects of this long-term conflict on civilians have been devastating. RSF perpetrated massacres in the El Geteina locality of White Nile State in mid-February 2025, where 200-433 civilians were reported killed within a few days. It is feared that ethnically-motivated violence is out of control in areas of conflict, largely affecting



Figure 5: The situation in the refugee camps in Chad (Gbadamosi, 2025)

unarmed rural populations. This has caused further displacement into border states that are already suffering with the previous influx of refugees.

Health and sanitation levels are rapidly deteriorating. Cholera outbreaks have spilled across Sudan's borders into refugee havens in Chad. The epidemic is found to be linked to RSF attacks on major water and sanitation facilities. There were 68 deaths and nearly 1,860 cases recorded

within days at Rabak and Kosti during a reported epidemic, and the vaccine coverage was just functional at 67 percent. Access to basic healthcare remains highly affected, therefore complicating control of the outbreak.

Humanitarian access is patchy in general across the conflict area as there are many blockades, and frontline towns across Darfur and Kordofan remain cut off because of ongoing hostilities and chronic security threats. At the same time, RSF and SAF obstructed convoys of humanitarian aid on a number of occasions, either administratively or through simply confiscating the goods and food.

The RSF is trying to use humanitarian aid for military and political purposes, while also acting like a separate government. Because of this, UN agencies are pressured to remain neutral. UNHCR must carefully manage resources, talk to both sides, and provide aid across conflict lines without appearing to take sides.

Effects on surrounding nations

The Sudan crisis also has regional implications that impose pressures on the surrounding nations such as Chad, South Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, Libya and Uganda. Chad is already experiencing a sudden refugee influx, overstressing health services, markets and community services. South Sudan, which is suffering its own internal conflict, will also have to contend with new refugees from the north. Sudan itself hosts refugees from South Sudan, which is suffering its own internal conflict, and these refugees are now also in danger.



Figure 6: Many people have fled the country (Human Rights Watch, 2024)

Host countries, already struggling with low resources, have been overwhelmed by the number of Sudanese refugees and by the security risks the Sudanese conflict causes at their borders.

Foreign involvement is worsening the crisis. Both sides have received help, including weapons and

drones. There is evidence that Russia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Iran have supplied weapons, whilst it has been alleged that Kenya, Ethiopia, China and Eritrea are involved in some way. Evidence shows that Iran, Egypt and Turkey have backed

the SAF, whilst UAE backed RSF. Russia has provided weapons to both sides of the conflict at different times.

Mediation efforts are failing as distrust grows between the SAF and RSF. Peace talks, including those led by IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development), are stalled over questions of legitimacy. Regional players like Kenya and Uganda are also divided, especially after the RSF's Nairobi charter. Sudan has taken legal action by filing a case at the International Court of Justice against the UAE, accusing it of complicity in genocide. All these legal and diplomatic battles make it harder for the UNHCR to coordinate aid, security, and humanitarian efforts.

According to Reliefweb:

"As of July 2025, an estimated 3.2 million Sudanese had fled the country and sought protection abroad. Another 500,000 or so are believed to have left to join family members in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman. At the same time, Sudan has long been a regional hub for refugees from other countries; amid the current crisis, more than 813,000 left to return to their origin countries, with thousands departing Sudan every month." (Eldin, 2025)

III. Key points of the debate

- Conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), following the 2021 military coup
- Number of people affected both internally displaced and refugees across borders
- Worsening famine, healthcare collapse, and disease outbreaks due to conflict, economic instability, and obstruction of humanitarian access
- Strain and security risks on neighbouring host countries (e.g., Chad, South Sudan, Egypt)
- Challenges in securing safe humanitarian corridors and ensuring protection for vulnerable populations during ongoing conflict
- The role of UNHCR and the international community in coordinating aid, ensuring legal protection, and developing durable solutions for displaced Sudanese



IV. Guiding questions

1. Does your country have any legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention? If so, what are these obligations? If not, why not?
2. Does your country have any programmes to help refugees fleeing from conflict? What sort of support has your country offered to refugees in the past or at present?
3. How has your nation been involved in negotiations for a ceasefire agreement or peace intervention in the Sudan conflict, if at all?
4. How has your nation responded to the crisis so far in terms of humanitarian aid, diplomacy or resettlement programmes? If it has not responded so far, what kind of support is it willing to contribute?
5. What limitations does your nation face in terms of housing asylum seekers from Sudan?
6. What ideas has your government proposed to end the refugee crisis in Sudan?

V. Bibliography

Center for Preventive Action. (2025, April 15). Civil War in Sudan. Global Conflict Tracker.

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/power-struggle-sudan#RecentDevelopments-1>

Eldin, A. G. (2025, July 17). Forgotten and Neglected, War-Torn Sudan Has Become the World's Leading Displacement Crisis - Sudan. ReliefWeb.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/forgotten-and-neglected-war-torn-sudan-has-become-worlds-leading-displacement-crisis>

Global State of Democracy Initiative. (2025). Sudan - February 2025 | The Global State of Democracy.

Idea.int. <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/report/sudan/february-2025>

Institute for the Study of War. (2025). Institute for the Study of War. Institute for the Study of War.

<https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/africa-file-march-27-2025-saf-liberates-khartoum-burundi-and-rwanda-tensions>

International Rescue Committee. (2023, April 17). Crisis in Sudan: What is happening and how to help | International Rescue Committee (IRC). www.rescue.org.

<https://www.rescue.org/article/crisis-sudan-what-happening-and-how-help>

Magdy, S. (2025, February 23). Sudan's military breaks paramilitary group's siege of crucial city. AP News.

<https://apnews.com/article/sudan-war-military-rsf-cholera-e391c3829be71d10b4f9f070732b00a3>



Ochieng, B., Chibelushi, W., & Booty, N. (2021, October 25). Sudan war: A simple guide to what is happening. BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59035053>

Sudanese American Physicians Association. (2023, December 7). Sudan Civil War: A Deep Dive into History and Implications. SAPA-USA. <https://sapa-usa.org/sudan-civil-war/>

Tyson, K. (2025). Africa File, March 13, 2025: Looming Civil Wars in Ethiopia, South Sudan Threaten to Plunge Horn into Crisis; Renewed Peace Talks in DRC as M23 Advances. Critical Threats. <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/africa-file-march-13-2025-looming-civil-wars-in-ethiopia-south-sudan-threaten-to-plunge-horn-into-crisis-renewed-peace-talks-in-drc-as-m23-advances>

UNHCR. (2025, May). Sudan emergency. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/emergencies/sudan-emergency>

World Food Programme. (2024). Sudan Emergency | World Food Programme. Wwww.wfp.org. <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/sudan-emergency>

IMAGES

Figure 1: Republic of Sudan (1956–1969). (2025). Wikimedia.org. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/1/10/Sudan_independence_2.png/330px-Sudan_independence_2.png

Figure 2: Savage, R. (2024, March 22). What caused the civil war in Sudan and how has it become one of the world's worst humanitarian crises? The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/mar/22/what-caused-the-civil-war-in-sudan-and-how-has-it-become-one-of-the-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crises>

Figure 3: Sudan. (2024). Sudan Situation Map Weekly Regional Update - 22 Jul 2024. UNHCR Operational Data Portal (ODP). <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/110107>

Figure 4: Human Rights Watch. (2025, April 14). Sudan: After 2 Years of War, Global Action Needed. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/04/13/sudan-after-2-years-war-global-action-needed>

Figure 5: Gbadamosi, N. (2025, July 2). What Foreign Aid Cuts Mean for the World's Worst Displacement Crisis. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/07/02/sudan-refugee-crisis-foreign-aid-cuts-un-world-food-program-hungry-risk/>

Figure 6: Human Rights Watch. (2024, December 18). World Report 2025: Rights Trends in Sudan. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/sudan>



Topic 2: Safeguarding Climate Refugees in Pacific Island Nations

I. History/Context

Over the centuries, Pacific Islanders have relocated for different reasons, which might be social, economic or environmental reasons. For example, Banaban communities were forcibly relocated from Banaba (Ocean Island) to Rabi Island in Fiji in 1945 so that the British Phosphate Commission, with the support of the British colonial government, could set up mines on the islands. Relocation occurred with little consultation and resulted in severe culture and economic dislocation. It was difficult for the Banaban people to adapt to their new island, and the relocation caused many problems with respect to land rights and citizenship.



Figure 1: Banaba, before and after mining.
Arundel, L., & Taonga, N. Z. M. for C. and H. T. M. (n.d.).

A few years later, some of the people who lived in Tuvalu decided to buy an island in Fiji. They worried their islands might sink because of rising sea levels. Some of them decided to buy land in Fiji so they would have a safe place to live.

During the 1960s, similar relocations happened across the Pacific, especially in the Phoenix and Solomon Islands. These movements were sometimes started by the local communities themselves for social or political reasons, or were caused by environmental changes. However, they were not protected by any legal rules or migrant rights. These early migrations highlighted the need for clear processes around decision-making, consent, and preserving culture during relocation.

Residents of the Phoenix and Solomon Islands migrated in the 1960s. They were moved owing to a range of factors, including environmental change, economic opportunities and social pressures. While their movements were not forced like those of the Banabans, they were only partially voluntary. They traveled freely to better their standard of living or work. Though conditions varied, both movements were underplanned and underfunded, which meant that settlers lacked adequate housing, schools, and health services, and received little long-term government support. Without these basic foundations, they struggled to establish stable livelihoods, preserve their community institutions, and

maintain cultural traditions. This led to a loss of identity and social cohesion in their new environments over time. As a result, they could not integrate well or sustain their culture.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Pacific governments became concerned about the increasing risk of climate change to their countries due to rising sea levels, more intense and frequent weather-related hazards, and changing ecosystems. Pacific leaders responded quickly to these threats. In 2010, Kiribati held the Tarawa Climate Change Conference, with the objective of making the international community aware of the threat that low-lying nations were facing due to climate change. Pacific leaders also signed the 2013 Majuro Declaration, which urged a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and the 2018 Boe Declaration, which added climate change as a security issue due to the particular situation of the islands.



Figure 2: Kiribati Climate Action Network (CAN International, 2011)

In 2015, an important step was made in international law. Norway and Switzerland started the Nansen Initiative, which created the “*Protection Agenda*.” This report asked countries to work together to help people who must cross borders because of disasters. Later, the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) continued this work and pushed countries to add these ideas into their laws and policies.

That same year, a man from Kiribati, Ioane Teitiota, asked New Zealand for asylum because rising seas threatened his life. Even though Teitiota’s request was denied for legal reasons, the case became very important in studying climate migration.

To deal with the effects of global warming, Pacific Island countries started making policies for people forced to move by climate change. Kiribati made a policy called “*Migration with Dignity*” (2014), which helped people gain skills so they could migrate voluntarily and with dignity. New Zealand created the Pacific Access Category visas to give Pacific Islanders a legal way to move there.

In 2016 it was discovered that 5 former Solomon Islands had disappeared since the mid-20th Century (Klein, 2017). However, similar studies noted that not all islands disappear at the same rate, and that certain features, such as mangrove swamps help to



protect islands from erosion. By 2019, 30,000 citizens of the Marshall Islands had migrated to the USA because of climate change.

In 2019, Fiji set up *Standard Operating Procedures* (SOPs) and a *Climate Relocation Trust Fund* to plan and pay for the relocation of people affected by climate change. This was considered to be a proactive step, as it meant that Fiji was preparing in advance instead of waiting until problems started to happen.



Figure 3: Marshall islanders are affected by more severe tropical storms (Ramirez, 2021)

II. Current Situation

In 2020, the UN Human Rights Committee ruled in the *Teitiota* case that climate change could seriously threaten the right to life and, in some situations, might prevent people from being sent back to unsafe places. In 2023, Pacific Island countries formally endorsed the *Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility*, developed under the Pacific Climate Change Migration and Human Security (PCCMHS) programme. The framework highlights people-centered values and promotes collective regional action on protection, planned relocation, and migration.

Marshall Islands

According to a recent report, people on the Marshall Islands are facing many challenges due to climate change including:

“Sea level rise threatens infrastructure, food and water security, and important ecosystems and cultural sites. Frequent and extensive flooding, coastal erosion, and saltwater contamination of groundwater are expected as sea level rise accelerates, threatening the long-term habitability of the atoll nation.

Ocean changes disrupt fisheries and cause coral loss. Coral reefs are key to the Marshall Islands’ fisheries and protection from coastal flooding. Fisheries changes and extensive coral loss are possible within the next few decades if current trends in rising ocean temperatures continue.

Hotter days and nights and stronger storms affect human health. Temperatures have risen, and heat waves stress water supplies and exacerbate a range of pre-existing health issues. More intense tropical cyclones mean a greater potential for flooding and associated public health and safety risks.” (Pacific RISA, 2025)

Tuvalu

Tuvalu has experienced a 15 cm rise in sea levels. In 2023, Tuvalu changed its Constitution to guarantee that it will remain a state forever, even if rising seas cover its land. This also protects its ocean borders and national identity. In November 2023, Australia and Tuvalu signed the *Falepili Union Treaty*, the world’s first climate mobility agreement. It allows up to 280 Tuvaluans each year to move to Australia if their islands are threatened by climate



Figure 4: Tuvalu is suffering from climate change (TCAP, n.d.)

change. The treaty also promises to protect Tuvalu’s sovereignty, provide money for climate adaptation, strengthen security, and preserve Tuvaluan culture.

However, some leaders, like former Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga, have criticised it, saying it could

reduce Tuvalu’s independence. The opposition raised concerns about Article 4 of the agreement, which forces Tuvalu to consult with Australia on matters of foreign policy and security. This could mean that Tuvalu would not be able to independently negotiate treaties, have initiatives in international alliances, or take diplomatic positions without Australia’s supervision. This would ultimately limit Tuvaluan sovereignty.

Some Tuvaluan civil society groups worried that the treaty reduced Tuvalu’s independence and left its future in the hands of a stronger neighbour. Others feared it was a form of “managed depopulation,” where rich countries create migration pathways instead of seriously addressing climate change. However, the programme was popular among Tuvaluans. When applications opened in 2025, more than 3,000 people applied. This is a huge number considering Tuvalu’s population is only about 11,000, showing how urgent the situation had become.

Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands

By comparison, countries like Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands have undertaken mangrove replanting, seawall installation, elevation of homes, and in-place resilience with support from organizations like the Pacific Community (SPC) and international donors. The measures will slow the impact of climate change but cannot reverse it. Vanuatu also established full village relocation from highly exposed coastal zones to secure inner areas, especially after frequent loss of residences due to storm surges.

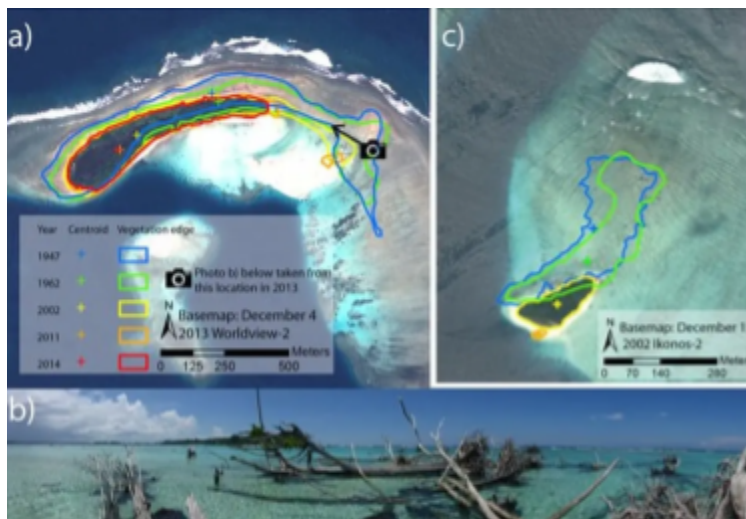


Figure 5: Disappearing Solomon Islands (BBC, 2016)

Nauru



Figure 6: Nauru's "Golden Passport"
(La Vida Golden Visas, 2022)

Nauru, already heavily impacted by decades of phosphate mining that left much of its land barren, launched a “golden passport” or citizenship-by-investment programme in 2025. Foreigners can apply for Nauruan citizenship for about US\$105,000 each (for single applicants), with additional pricing for families. The government says the funds will help with climate adaptation, including relocating residents threatened by rising seas. While the plan is novel and has supporters, some observers have expressed concern about the fairness and oversight of the programme and whether it truly addresses the root causes of climate threats.

Kiribati

Kiribati, which consists of 33 reef islands and atolls, has been campaigning for many decades to get the rest of the world to accept “climate mobility” as a basic human right. Kiribati, Vanuatu, the Marshall Islands, and Fiji, all came together in 2024 to develop the *Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility*, a regional effort to achieve legally definitive

commitments on planned relocation, cultural preservation, and the rights of migrants. The framework acknowledges the serious reality that, for certain islands, adaptation is not an option anymore. Rather, planned relocation is the most efficient option.



Figure 7: Ponds of polluted water, Kiribati (Mitchell, 2017)

Climate refugee support from Australia and New Zealand

Australia, the wealthiest Pacific partner, has taken the lead through the Falepili Union Treaty with Tuvalu and the new Pacific Engagement Visa, which offers 3,000 places each year for citizens of Pacific Island countries such as Kiribati and Vanuatu. These steps show that Australia recognises climate migration is unavoidable, although its overall immigration policies are still criticised as too strict.

New Zealand, a long-time supporter of Pacific Islanders, expanded its Pacific Access Category visa in 2024 and funds programmes that help Pacific nations build legal and scientific capacity to cope with climate change.

However, neither Australia nor New Zealand has recognized climate migration under international asylum law, which would require reinterpreting the 1951 Refugee Convention that currently only protects people fleeing persecution or war.

Climate refugee support from USA and Europe

Under the Biden administration, the United States supported Pacific nations through its Pacific Pledge and technical assistance with disaster planning, but it has not created a migration pathway for climate-affected Islanders. The European Union, by contrast, has invested in climate adaptation through the Green Climate Fund, but its projects have mostly focused on regions closer to Europe rather than the Pacific.

Climate refugee support from the UN

The United Nations (UN) has warned that climate change could force many people to leave their homes, but it has not yet created strong rules to protect them. Since 2024, groups like the International Organization for Migration and the UN Human Rights Council have pushed to make this issue a bigger human rights priority. Pacific Island leaders have spoken at big meetings like COP27, COP28, and COP29, asking for a new refugee category for people displaced by climate change, but more developed countries have slowed this progress.

The UN has also helped with real projects, like the Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project, which built seawalls, reclaimed land, and made storm-proof buildings in Tuvalu's capital, Funafuti. It also worked to save Tuvalu's land records and culture digitally, so even if the islands sink, Tuvalu's identity and sovereignty will continue.

Planning for the future

Climate change is putting the survival of some Pacific Island nations at risk. Their low land makes them especially vulnerable to rising seas, salty water ruining crops, and stronger severe weather events. This has led to new policies, debates, and global discussions about sovereignty, fairness and migration. In the future, the problems that are currently being faced by Pacific Islanders will be faced by other coastal nations.



Figure 8: Inhabitants of Tuvalu face precarious living conditions due to rising sea levels (UNHCR, 2023)

It is important to keep in mind that this committee concerns refugees, so the debate should be about what can be done to help people who find themselves without a home due to climate change, and not about how to stop or slow down climate change. It should also be taken into account that, presently, the number of climate refugees from Pacific islands is extremely small compared to the number of economic migrants, people who simply want to move to countries where they think there are better opportunities.

III. Key points of the debate

- Recognition of climate-displaced persons as refugees
- Rising sea levels in low-lying Pacific nations (e.g. Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands)
- Lack of legal protection and long-term resettlement pathways for individuals displaced by climate change impacts
- The role of international frameworks and regional agreements in facilitating safe and dignified migration (e.g. 2023 Pacific Agreement, Falepili Union between Tuvalu and Australia).
- Sovereignty concerns: how to preserve statehood, maritime borders, and national identity if land becomes uninhabitable or submerged
- Responsibility of more developed nations to accept climate refugees
- The role of UNHCR in advocating for legal recognition, durable solutions, and coordinated humanitarian responses for climate-displaced persons

IV. Guiding questions

1. Has your country been directly affected by climate displacement or sea-level rise? If so, how has it responded?
2. Does your government currently consider climate-displaced individuals as refugees or give them any legal protection? What is your government's position on



applying the 1951 Refugee Convention to those displaced due to environmental causes?

3. Has your nation collaborated with other governments or regional organisations on climate mobility frameworks or agreements (e.g. relocation schemes or bilateral arrangements)?
4. If your nation is affected by rising sea levels, what steps has it taken to tackle the problem?
5. What intention does your nation have to accept climate refugees, if any?
6. How is your nation contributing (in terms of finance, diplomacy or logistics) to international efforts led by UNHCR or related agencies to tackle displacement caused by climate change.
7. What specific recommendations does your delegation have for the legal protection of climate refugees and resettlement mechanisms?
8. What is your government's position on giving permanent statehood to disappearing island states?

V. Bibliography

Barnett, J., Farbotko, C., Kitara, T., & Aselu, B. (2024). Migration as Adaptation? The *Falepili Union* Between Australia and Tuvalu. *WIREs Climate Change*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.924>

Cantieri, J. (2016, March 10). *A History of Displacement, Remembered in Dance*. *News.nationalgeographic.org*. <https://news.nationalgeographic.org/a-history-of-displacement-remembered-in-dance/>

Earth Refuge. (2023, November 15). *What Does the World's First Bilateral Climate Mobility Treaty Mean for Tuvalu?* | *Earth Refuge*. Earth Refuge | the Planet's First Legal Think Tank Dedicated to Climate Migrants. <https://earthrefuge.org/what-does-the-worlds-first-bilateral-climate-mobility-treaty-mean-for-tuvalu/>

Guardian staff reporter. (2025, February 26). *Nauru sells citizenship to help fund relocations as sea levels rise*. *The Guardian*; *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/26/nauru-climate-citizenship-golden-passport>

Jackson, L. C. (2025, June 20). *A climate crisis, a ballot, and a chance at a new life in Australia*. *The Guardian*; *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/20/tuvalu-climate-crisis-australia-visa-ballot>

Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Fiji. (2023). *Standard Operating Procedures for Planned Relocation in the Republic of Fiji*. https://www.giz.de/de/downloads/Fiji_SOP_Planned_Relocation_March2023_FINAL_web.pdf



Pacific Island Forum. (2024). *Pacific Regional Framework On Climate Mobility Credit*: IOM/Mohammed Muse. <https://forumsec.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/2024%20Pacific%20Regional%20Framework%20on%20CM.pdf>

Pacific RISA. (2025, May 14). New Report Details Climate Change Challenges and Adaptation Strategies for the Marshall Islands. Pacific RISA - Managing Climate Risk in Pacific Islands. <https://www.pacificrisa.org/2025/05/14/new-report-details-climate-change-challenges-and-adaptation-strategies-for-the-marshall-islands/>

Platform on Disaster Displacement. (2019). *Disaster Displacement – Towards a Protection Agenda for people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change*. Disasterdisplacement.org. <https://disasterdisplacement.org/>

Reuters. (2024, March 26). Tuvalu accepts security and climate pact, says Australia's Pacific minister. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/27/tuvalu-accepts-security-and-climate-pact-says-australias-pacific-minister>

Scopp, M. (2025, February 5). *Climate-Induced Displacement: Establishing Legal Protections for Climate Refugees*. HRRC. <https://www.humanrightsresearch.org/post/climate-induced-displacement-establishing-legal-protections-for-climate-refugees>

THE NANSSEN INITIATIVE. (2015). *Agenda for the Protection of Cross-Border Displaced Persons in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change Volume I*. https://disasterdisplacement.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/FN_Protection_Agenda_Volume_I-low_res.pdf

IMAGES

Figure 1: Arundel, L., & Taonga, N. Z. M. for C. and H. T. M. (n.d.). Banaba, before and after mining. Teara.govt.nz. <https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/24245/banaba-before-and-after-mining>

Figure 2: CAN International. (2011, August 11). My Kiribati Experience - Climate Action Network. Climate Action Network. <https://climatenetwork.org/2011/08/12/my-kiribati-experience/>

Figure 3: Pacific RISA. (2025, May 14). New Report Details Climate Change Challenges and Adaptation Strategies for the Marshall Islands. Pacific RISA - Managing Climate Risk in Pacific Islands. <https://www.pacificrisa.org/2025/05/14/new-report-details-climate-change-challenges-and-adaptation-strategies-for-the-marshall-islands/>

Figure 4: TCAP. (n.d.). Climate change. Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project. <https://tcap.tv/climate-change>

Figure 5: BBC. (2016, May 10). Five Pacific islands disappear as sea levels rise. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36255749>

Figure 6: La Vida Golden Visas. (2022). La Vida Golden Visas. Facebook.com. <https://www.facebook.com/lavidagoldenvisas/posts/looking-for-one-of-the-fastest-ways-to-gain-a-second-passport-with-naurus-citize/1084476620498929/>

Figure 7: Mitchell, C. (2017). The angry sea will kill us all. Interactives.stuff.co.nz. <https://interactives.stuff.co.nz/2017/10/kiribati-the-angry-sea-will-kill-us-all/>

Figure 8: UNHCR. (2023). Pacific islanders face the reality of climate change . . . and of relocation | UNHCR. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/pacific-islanders-face-reality-climate-change-and-relocation>

