

## **Climate Change-Induced Relocation: Problems and Achievements—the Carterets Case**

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### **Abstract**

In Pacific Island Countries, the planned relocation of island communities affected by climate change is increasingly being discussed as an adaptation measure of last resort. While some planning is proceeding, there is as yet little actual resettlement activity. However, this is set to change in the not-too-distant future. This Policy Brief presents one prominent case of resettlement – relocation from the Carterets atoll, part of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, to the main island of Bougainville. The paper focuses on the Carterets Integrated Relocation Programme and Tulele Peisa (‘Sailing the waves on our own’), the NGO implementing the programme. This case encompasses a broad range of issues that will be of relevance for future relocation endeavours elsewhere in the region, for example: relations between settlers and host communities, relations between state institutions and civil society, the complexities of the land issue, and the link between local agency and external support. Communities, practitioners, policymakers, civil society organisations and international stakeholders will be well advised to heed the lessons learned from the Carterets case.

### **Introduction**

The effects of climate change force governments and people in Pacific Island Countries (and elsewhere) to think about, plan for and implement a variety of adaptation measures. Planned relocation of particularly affected island communities is increasingly being discussed as such an adaptation measure in cases where islanders are confronted with severe challenges to land security, livelihood security and habitat security (Campbell 2014, 4-5). Land security is under threat due to sea level rise, coastal erosion and inundation, livelihood and habitat security due to reduced quantity and quality of water supplies and loss of food production. These losses affect atoll communities in particular, where fertile soils are scarce and sea water intrusion causes soil salinization and contamination of freshwater lenses which provide people with water for drinking and agriculture. Most people living on atolls and low-lying islands in the Pacific depend on traditional subsistence agriculture, supplemented by some cash cropping. This is the basis of their way of life. It is under growing pressure as yields from gardens and freshwater supplies decline. As a consequence, food

security and water security are threatened, and increasing numbers of people become more and more dependent on aid from outside.

People try to adapt to changing conditions. But often options for *in situ* technical adaptation<sup>1</sup> - such as planting mangroves in order to reduce coastal erosion, building seawalls in order to contain storm surges and king tides, setting up rainwater tanks to improve fresh water supply - are limited. Often they are technically not feasible or too costly, and sometimes they only work as interim measures. Consequently, migration or resettlement to locations that are less exposed might be the better - or even the only - option of long-term sustainable adaptation (Boege 2018). In “some extreme circumstances it is likely to be the only option left when the life-support systems (land, livelihood, and/or habitat security) of a community’s territory fail. In such cases, the migration becomes forced, and the movement may involve whole or large portions of communities” (Campbell 2014, 7).

Such community relocation “may be considered the most extreme form of climate migration and is considered by many to be a last-resort adaptation option” (Campbell 2014, 11). It is different from previous resettlement of communities (which has occurred in Oceania on many occasions in the past); under conditions of climate change it will become much more widespread and, even more importantly, there will be no return option. You cannot return to a sunken island or an island that has become uninhabitable. But there will be time for relatively long-term planning, at least with regard to the slow-onset effects of climate change. Such planned relocation is caused by the insight that there are no other options left, at least not long-term, and thus there is an element of ‘forced’ to it. On the other hand, planned relocation is largely ‘voluntary’, people or their political leaders take decisions regarding relocation under terms and conditions that they can influence themselves, at least to a certain extent; they are not just victims of forced displacement.

Today there is a lot of talk in Pacific Island countries about the need to relocate, often rather alarmist and sensationalist. But there is much less planning for relocation, and even less actual relocation happening (Boege 2018). Arguably one of the most advanced (and widely publicised) climate-related relocation programmes in the South Pacific to date is the resettlement of Carterets Islanders from their atoll to mainland Bougainville in Papua New Guinea (PNG). In this Policy Brief we will take a closer look at this programme, because this case encompasses a broad range of issues which will become relevant for other relocation endeavours elsewhere and in the future. It can be seen as a paradigmatic case. Communities, practitioners, policymakers, civil society organisations and international stakeholders, including donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), are well advised to heed the lessons learned from the Carterets case.

The Policy Brief is structured as follows: first, a brief overview of the current situation on the Carterets Islands is given. This is followed, secondly, by the presentation of the Carterets Integrated Relocation Programme and its implementation. Thirdly, the highly important land issue is given particular attention. The fourth section of the Brief addresses the (lack of) external support. This is, fifthly, followed by a discussion of a range of problems associated with previous and current state-led relocation attempts, and associated concerns and

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<sup>1</sup> Adaptation is the “process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities” (World Bank 2018, vii). Adaptation and adaptive capacity is not only a technical issue, but has also political and social dimensions (Petzold and Ratter 2015, 36).

expectations of affected people. Finally, conclusions are drawn, and, flowing from that, a couple of general and some more specific policy recommendations are made.

## The Carterets Islands

The Carterets atoll comprises six low-lying islands (Han, Huene, Iangain, Yesila, Yolasa, Piul), with a combined land area of just 0.6 square kilometres, inhabited by approximately 3000 people. This makes the Carterets the island group with the highest population density in PNG (Edwards 2013, 71). The islands belong to the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARoB), which is part of PNG.<sup>2</sup> The Carterets are located 86 kilometres northeast of the main island of Bougainville, a four hour ride by banana boat.

With a maximum elevation of 1.2 metres above sea level and due to their high ratio of coastline to surface land area, the islands are particularly vulnerable to sea level rise, high tides and storm surges. Coastal erosion affects shorelines. King tides have become a regular occurrence and are becoming more and more dangerous. In February 2018 a king tide swept over Yesila Isle, right through family homes and food gardens. The people have great difficulties maintaining their subsistence economy, which is based on fish, bananas, taro and other vegetables, grown in food gardens. Swamp taro, which used to be the main staple food crop, cannot grow any more due to salt water intrusion and salinization of soil and water. Today, only banana and coconut can grow on the islands (Edwards 2013, 73). Hence the “Carteret Islanders story is an ‘early warning’ to all of the threat posed to food supplies by climate change” (Caritas 2018, 39). Soils become more and more swampy, providing breeding grounds for mosquitos; as a consequence, malaria becomes more frequent (Edwards 2013, 74). Freshwater wells have been contaminated by saltwater, making freshwater more and more scarce. Food and water security are threatened (Tulele Peisa, no date; Rakova 2014). The export of farmed seaweed to Asian markets and the capture of bech-de-mer (sea cucumber) provide some cash income for the islanders, and some families receive remittances from relatives working on Bougainville or elsewhere in PNG (UNDP 2016, 5; Edwards 2013, 68).<sup>3</sup>

People are becoming increasingly dependent on food aid shipped in from mainland Bougainville (Edwards 2013, 73); the diet, however, is unhealthy (rice and flour) and the shipments are irregular and unreliable. Travelling between the islands and mainland Bougainville is getting more dangerous as there are more and more severe storms, happening almost all year round (Caritas 2018, 25). Other atolls in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville are in a similar situation, namely Tasman, Mortlock and Nugeria, which have a total population of about 2,500.

*In situ* adaptation is difficult and only modestly successful: raised bed gardens (supsup gardens), mangrove (reforestation) seed planting, water tanks, and seawalls. Seawalls on Han Island are broken. Mangrove roots cannot grip and hold as the sea currents are very strong

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<sup>2</sup> The ARoB comprises the main island of Bougainville, another major island – Buka -, and several small islands and atolls. Geographically, Bougainville is part of the Solomon Islands archipelago in the Southwest Pacific. It is approximately 9000 sq km in size (the size of Cyprus) and has approximately 300,000 inhabitants.

<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that around 300 Carteret Islanders live elsewhere in PNG, mainly in Buka Town, the administrative centre of the ARoB (Connell 2018, 81-82).

and continuously remove the mangrove sediments from protecting the shorelines (Connell 2018).

Given these conditions, relocation to the main island of Bougainville is another adaptation option for the Carterets Islanders.

### **Relocation: Tulele Peisa and the Carterets Integrated Relocation Programme**

Bougainville is currently in a difficult stage of its history. For almost ten years (1989 to 1998) it was the theatre of a war of secession between the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the security forces of the national government of PNG (and Bougainville auxiliaries). The war was the longest and bloodiest violent conflict in Oceania since the end of World War Two. Over the last two decades Bougainville has undergone a comprehensive process of post-conflict peacebuilding, which has been relatively successful. Currently Bougainville is an autonomous region within PNG, with its own constitution and its own government, the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG). Bougainvilleans today face the challenge of building a polity which is effective and legitimate in maintaining sustainable peace and order. They are approaching a critical phase in this process, with a referendum on independence scheduled for June 2019, as provided for in the Bougainville Peace Agreement (BPA) of August 2001. Currently, the focus of the ABG and the general public in the AROB is intensely on preparations for the independence referendum. For the time being, all other issues, including the effects of climate change and the need for relocation of climate change affected communities, have been put on the back burner. The government and the people have to work hard to secure a peaceful referendum and a peaceful transition phase after the referendum. The situation is still volatile in parts of the island; there are issues with regard to weapons disposal, localised violence, and governance problems like corruption etc. Land is scarce on Bougainville, and conflicts over land are common.

Despite this fragile situation on Bougainville, Carterets Islanders intend to resettle there. Due to the effects of climate change they do not see a future for themselves and their children on their home islands. People from the Carterets themselves took the initiative to develop a relocation plan. After a series of community meetings which discussed the worsening situation on the atolls, the Carterets Council of Elders (CoE), the local governing body on the islands, in late 2006 decided to form an NGO to organise the resettlement. The organisation was named 'Tulele Peisa', which in the local halia language means 'sailing the waves on our own'. "This name choice reflects the elders' desire to see Carteret Islanders remain strong and self-reliant" (Rakova 2009, p. 2). Tulele Peisa elaborated a detailed 20-step relocation plan, the Carterets Integrated Relocation Programme (CIRP) with the aim of voluntary relocation of approximately 1700 Carteret Islanders to several locations on mainland Bougainville: Tinputz, Tearouki and Keriaka gifted by the Catholic Diocese on humanitarian grounds, and Wakunai and Tenapo being family plantations privately owned by two Carterets families. Negotiations are underway to legally acquire Wakunai and Tenapo from the families to relocate more Carterets families (Rakova 2014). Resettlement land at the first three sites was provided by the Catholic Church (talks with landholding groups in North and Central Bougainville about the provision of land for Carterets relocatees had led nowhere). This came after the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Bougainville had visited the Carterets for two weeks in January 2007 and had "witnessed for himself the dire straits of the climate change and rising sea levels on the Carterets" (Rakova 2014, 274). Following the Bishop's visit, a partnership between Tulele Peisa and the Catholic Church was established.

Tinputz became the first relocation site. Here the Catholic Diocese gifted 71 hectares of church land (Edwards 2013, 66).<sup>4</sup> In 2007 the Carterets/Tinputz Relocation Task Force Committee was established, comprising representatives of Carterets Islanders, Tulele Peisa, the Catholic church and the host community. Community profiles were elaborated, counselling sessions conducted and community meetings and awareness raising on the relocation from the Carterets to Tinputz carried out. In April 2009 the first wave of families from the Carterets arrived on Bougainville, the heads of five families and their sons. They were to pave the way for the others (around 100 members of extended families). They had to work hard clearing the bush and making gardens. Adjusting to the conditions in the new environment was difficult, and there were also arguments with local landowners. Three of the initial settler families got home-sick or distressed and returned to the Carterets.<sup>5</sup> They were replaced by others who were prepared to carry out physical work (Rakova 2014). Each family is allocated one hectare of land for food crops, cash crops and family housing. Currently (2018), ten families of approximately 103 heads live in Woroav village, at the Tinputz relocation site. Due to limited space, not more than ten families can be accommodated at the Tinputz site. The Woroav relocation site is a pilot project and Tulele Peisa has initiated this as a learning site to be replicated in Tearouki, Wakunai, Tenapo and Keriaka.

The resettlement plan does not only address issues such as constructing housing and infrastructure for the settlers, but also envisages the implementation of agricultural and income generation projects (mainly around cash cropping of coconuts and cocoa) and to support and help improve existing facilities such as health and education in the host communities: the development of additional education and health facilities as well as community development training programmes which will support the settlers in adjusting to their new home environment economically and socially (Tulele Peisa, no date). A series of workshops and trainings has been conducted over the last years, addressing issues such as food security, forestry rehabilitation and land use management (Rakova 2014, 282).

The plan also takes into account the needs and interests of the target communities so as to “ensure that these host communities will also benefit through upgrading of basic health and education facilities and training programmes for income generation” (Tulele Peisa, no date, p. 5). The reason for this is to avoid preferential treatment of relocated newcomers because this could cause resentment, frustration and animosities from the side of host communities. Tulele Peisa has put a lot of reflection and effort in to this problem, trying to establish sustainable bonds between newcomers and recipient communities, and developing inclusive programmes which are of benefit for both settlers and hosts. Particular attention has to be paid to equity issues so as to avoid situations in which newcomers are better (or worse) off than the members of host communities, as this can easily spark resentments and conflicts. For example, Tulele Peisa is very anxious to make sure that settlers do not end up with bigger and better houses than their Bougainvillean neighbours. Moreover, the resettlement plan envisages “exchange programs involving chiefs, women and youth from host communities and the Carterets (...) for establishing relationships and understanding” (Rakova, 2009, p. 2). Several such programmes have been actually carried through: chiefs and elders exchanges and learning visits between the Carterets and the resettlement site in Tinputz, in

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<sup>4</sup> The church intends to give formal land rights to the settlers for 30 hectares. So far this has not happened, hence rights to the land are not guaranteed (Edwards 2013, 68). But Tulele Peisa is currently working together with a law firm on a land deed to transfer the leases to the families, under the women’s family names, because according to Carterets custom it is the women who hold the custodianship of the land.

<sup>5</sup> Post Courier Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2009. Islanders return to Bougainville atolls. By Gorethy Kenneth.

Tearouki and Manetai, and Young People Environmental Speaking tours. In the speaking tours, Carterets youth “meet with their counterparts in Bougainville to discuss the context of their relocation, the pressures of climate change, and the ways they can work together to make the most of the relocation reality” (UNDP 2016, 9).

Tulele Peisa deliberately promotes intermarriages as a means of relationship-building, with intermarriage seen as “a bonding cultural tie which is also a tool for preventing conflicts, resentments and jealousies” (Rakova 2014, 276). It is “a peace initiative and an avenue of building lasting relations between the relocated families or community with the host community of Tinputz (...) when the relocated families marry their sons and daughters into the host community, it further builds confidence and a sense of truly belonging as this signifies human interaction and connectedness” (Rakova 2014, 285). While some settlers agree with this approach, others are opposed to intermarriages, arguing that intermarriages will be destructive for the maintenance of one’s own culture (Lange 2009, 90).

Resettlement was accompanied by custom ceremonies which farewelled people on the Carterets and welcomed them to host communities on Bougainville. This included the exchange of shell money, pigs and food with the Catholic Diocese and the landowning clans in Tinputz (the Naruen and Nakaripa, Naboin, Natasi, and Nakas) (Rakova 2014, 287). As both the Carterets Islanders and the Bougainvilleans are Melanesians, they share a common cultural background which makes building relationships and mutual understanding relatively easy. Furthermore, clans on the Carterets have long-standing kinship ties to clans on the mainland. Things will be more difficult for people from the other atolls in the ARoB (Mortlocks, Tasman, Nuguria) as they are Polynesians who do not have such kinship ties with people on mainland Bougainville or the adjacent island of Buka.

Substantial work has been completed or is underway in the Tinputz resettlement site (Woroav village): clearing of the site, establishing food gardens (for own consumption and sending surplus back to the Carterets), planting taro, learning how to grow cocoa trees and ferment and dry cocoa beans for income generation, building houses, planting trees, setting up water tanks. Houses were built by the settlers themselves, with the support of carpenters and workers from the host communities and with local building materials. This provided a new source of income for host communities, and it also “creates a sense of ownership and pride for the local community to contribute and showcase their tradesmanship” (Rakova 2014, 281). Each home has a 9,000-litre rainwater tank. Stored water carried the relocatees “through a longer-than-normal two-month dry season” in 2018 (Caritas 2018, 33). By now, the gardens which have been established by the settlers “produce enough food for relocated islanders to meet their subsistence needs, to earn a living from selling cash crops, and to send back food to relatives remaining in the Carterets” (UNDP 2016, 10). Tulele Peisa runs a ‘Mini Food Forest’ project: more than 34,000 trees including hard and soft wood, fruit and nut trees and five varieties of palm trees, with cassava, bananas and swamp taros planted inside the forest. The plan is to replicate this initiative at the three other relocation sites. Tulele Peisa also runs a small agricultural research station (holding over 20 different species of yams), and it owns two and a half hectares of land with over 2500 hybrid cocoa and 500 cocoa clone trees which provide some cash income for the organisation. Cocoa farming is envisioned as the future basis of sustainable livelihoods for resettled Carteret Islanders. Tulele Peisa established Bougainville Cocoa Net in 2009, a collective business enterprise, as an income generation device for relocated families as well as local cocoa producers from the host communities (Pascoe, 81). Fifty farmers are directly involved in the Tulele Peisa cocoa

project, and around 1500 farmers are members of Bougainville Cocoa Net. So far, Bougainville Cocoa Net has rehabilitated 8,950 hybrid cocoa trees over 14 hectares in Woroav and 50 hectares of cocoa plantations around the Iris Village Assembly area in Tinputz and exports cocoa to overseas buyers, e.g. in Hamburg, Germany. Tulele Peisa is committed to sustainable natural resource management at the relocation sites (Rakova 2014).

Tulele Peisa is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, two of whom are the Chairmen of the local governing bodies in the Carterets and in Tinputz respectively. This placement of the Chairmen on the Board is “a key mechanism to ensure that local voices are represented in the leadership of the organization” (UNDP 2016: 7). Tulele Peisa currently has six people on its staff, led by the Executive Director (Ursula Rakova). Other staff members are the Program Manager who is also female, the Relocation and Community Development Co-ordinator (female), the Climate Change & Adaptation Co-ordinator (male), the Finance & Administration Manager (female) and the Fundraising & Marketing Co-ordinator (male).

### **The Land Problem**

Securing more land for the people who want to resettle will be the most important and most difficult issue. Tulele Peisa is planning to have four more resettlement sites in addition to Tinputz, namely Tearouki, Wakunai, Tenapo and Keriaka. Land is scarce on Bougainville, and traditional land tenure in Bougainville societies does not easily lend itself for accommodation of newcomers. The vast majority of land on Bougainville (95 per cent) is covered by customary land tenure (Pascoe 2015, 78). Only small portions are alienated land which, at some stage in colonial times, was bought or expropriated by outsiders - churches, white plantation owners or the colonial administration. It is no wonder that the settlers from the Carterets were relocated to land in the possession of the Catholic Church. This land – 71 hectares in Tinputz, 295 hectares altogether at the four relocation sites - is by far not enough. According to the resettlement criteria developed by TP, some 1,500 hectares of land will be required to accommodate all the 1500 families who intend to resettle (one hectare of land for every relocated family). It will be extremely difficult to negotiate the acquisition of customary land between Carterets Islanders and communities on Bougainville and to obtain clear legal title to land. Respective negotiations with landholders in resettlement sites have started in 2007 and are continuing. Securing the funds for land purchase is another critical issue. Tulele Peisa estimates that 14 million Kina (approximately 5.3 million USD) is needed to relocate all of the families who wish to move (UNDP 2016, 13). Hence, “financial constraints remain a major challenge for the relocation efforts” (Pascoe, 81).<sup>6</sup>

Members of the Carterets Relocation Task Force Committee are in continuous dialogue about the thorny land issue with the elders, chiefs and church leaders of the host communities. Preparations for relocation to Tearouki (which is in the vicinity of Woroav village, the Tinputz relocation site) were furthest advanced, with the establishment of a Tearouki Relocation Committee in November 2013 and community resource mapping and land surveys underway. However, local Tearouki settlers from inland communities have since moved into the Church plantation land claiming to rent the land which had been set aside to be settled by the Carterets Islanders in Tearouki. Currently discussions are being held with

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<sup>6</sup> A proposal for a significant expansion of the Tulele Peisa relocation project was handed in to New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in June 2018. Unfortunately, it was unsuccessful in a competitive funding round (Caritas 2018: 52). Tulele Peisa is continuing to seek funding for its programme from external donors.

the Bougainville Lands & Physical Planning Department on the issuance and clarification of the land title to enable the lawyers to continue in the drafting of the land deed to be signed between the Catholic Church and Tulele Peisa.

But getting access to land on mainland Bougainville is not the only land-related problem. Leaving their own land behind is also problematic for Carterets Islanders. In fact, to have to leave their own land is a shocking prospect. They are afraid of losing their cultural heritage, their identity and dignity which are closely linked to the land (Pascoe 2015, 76; Edwards 2013, 67). People “have a special, emotional bond to the *tsitsiki*, or land. Owning land gives islanders an identity and a sense of belonging” (UNDP 2016, 5). Abandoning one’s land and thus the ancestors is a traumatic experience. Chief Paul Maeka from Han island in the Carterets explains: “The hardest thing will be to lose our sacred places, our *tambu* places” (quoted from Pacific Institute of Public Policy, 2009, p. 2). This is why there are still people who do not want to leave (Connell 2018, 87), and why some people who do move suffer from mental health problems (Edwards 2013, 74). It is particularly the elderly who do not want to move, while members of the younger generation are more willing to do so with the outlook of building a sustainable economic base for their young families.

More practical issues matter too. Atoll islanders have problems to adapt to other environments (Edwards 2013, 70). They have to learn new agricultural techniques, getting used to other food crops and to planting cash crops, to living detached from the sea, further inland or even on high ground, without the fishing opportunities they grew up with. For relocated Carterets Islanders in Tinputz, for example, it is a major problem that they now live a little bit far away (several minutes walk) from the beach on a hillside, and they cannot go fishing because they do not have a boat, and they have to adjust to growing and eating unfamiliar food (Edwards 2013, 74). Therefore, a risk “that comes with displacement and relocation is that traditional knowledge is lost or becomes irrelevant in new surroundings, creating feelings of isolation and, more pragmatically, threatening the potential of relocated people to provide for their own material needs” (UNDP 2016, 5).

Resettlement poses particular challenges for women. On the Carterets and in most parts of Bougainville, communities are matrilineal, which means that land is transferred from the mothers to their daughters. The loss of land is a traumatic experience for the Carterets women as the chain of land transfer will be broken. On the other hand, the women realize that their land cannot sustain the families any longer. They are torn between the desire to stay and the need to move if they want to secure a future for their children.

Tulele Peisa is trying to take these emotional and psychological factors into account as far as possible; in Woroav the 1 hectare of land is in the hands of the mothers of the families, trauma counselling is provided, and the resettlement plan envisages the establishment of a regular sea transport service for freight and passengers in order to maintain links between relocated people and those who will stay behind. The establishment of a Conservation and Marine Management Area around the Carterets is also envisaged so as to maintain the area as customary fishing ground and thus keep the links to the ancestral land (Tulele Peisa, no date, p. 6). Currently, Tulele Peisa is advocating for the Carterets to be declared a marine protected area (MPA) under national law of Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMA) (UNDP 2016, 11).



The fears and concerns of the Carterets Islanders are a strong reminder that resettlement is not only a technical issue concerning mainly material problems, but also has a highly important cultural, psychological and even spiritual dimension. Tulele Peisa is fully aware of this dimension; one of its objectives is to “assist Carterets people to overcome fear, anxiety and trauma associated with the need to leave their homeland” (Tulele Peisa, no date, p. 8).

### **External Support (or the Lack of It)**

The plight of the Carterets Islanders has drawn considerable international attention. They were presented as being at ‘the frontline of global climate change’ and dubbed the world’s first ‘environmental refugees’, and their relocation was presented as “one of the first organised resettlement movements of forced climate change migrants anywhere in the world” (Displacement Solutions 2008, 2). In fact, the Carteret Islands achieved “iconic status” in the international public discourse on climate change and migration (Connell 2018, 73). More than two dozen film crews, news networks and freelance media teams have visited the Carterets over the last few years and have spread the Carterets message to the outside world (critical on this: Connell 2018). In fact, so many media people have visited that they have become a burden and locals have banned them from entering the islands. Representatives of Tulele Peisa have been on speaking tours to Australia, New Zealand, North America, Europe including England and Germany. “International climate conferences, seminars, and workshops have put the group and the plight of the Carterets people on the radar of international climate scholars, policymakers, and activists” (UNDP 2016, 12). So far, however, all this international public attention has not translated into substantial support or benefit for the Carteret Islanders. The current resettlement programme which is conducted by Tulele Peisa is dependent on the resources and ingenuity of the Carterets Islanders themselves, plus modest support from donors and international civil society especially the Finland Embassy in Canberra and church organisations in Germany, the United States and Australia.

Tulele Peisa was successful in building linkages with international civil society and other indigenous communities in other parts of the world which are affected by climate change similar to the Carterets people. Partnerships exist e.g. with the international network of Climate Wise Women, with Friends of the Earth Australia, Oxfam New Zealand, Australian Conservation Foundation, Caritas New Zealand and Caritas Australia, the Christensen Fund - and with the Newtok Community in Alaska and the Ahus Community on Manus Island in PNG. Native Americans from Newtok and fellow citizens from Ahus even visited Tulele Peisa, Woroav and the Carterets.<sup>7</sup> This “visit by the Alaskans and Manus Islanders was an eye opener for the visitors as well as the Carteret Islanders as they learnt that there are other people in the world who are suffering the same fate of impacts of climate change” (Rakova 2014, 287).

Support from the side of the state of PNG and the ABG so far has been very modest. State institutions acknowledge the problem and the need for action, but things on their end move very slowly. In October 2007 the PNG government allocated 2 million Kina (800,000 USD) for an official ‘Carterets Relocation Programme’. But none of this money was given to the Tulele Peisa programme. Instead, the ABG set up its own state-led relocation programme. So far an office in charge of relocation has been set up by the ABG in the ABG administration

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<sup>7</sup> The National, Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Alaskans to assist people of Carteret.

centre of Buka, and the ABG adopted an 'Atoll Integrated Development Policy' (AIDP) in 2007 and formed a multi-sectoral 'AIDP Steering Committee' (Lange 2009, v). This means that the ABG is not only planning for the relocation of Carterets Islanders, but also the inhabitants of the other atolls in the ARoB (Mortlocks, Tasman, Nuguria). In 2009, after lengthy consultations with local landowners, resettlement land was secured on Buka (Karooa Plantation, a former copra plantation of 600 hectares),<sup>8</sup> and an 'AIDP Ground Committee' was formed with participation of representatives from local communities (Lange 2009, v-vi). The plan was to resettle 40 to 60 families at the Karoola plantation.<sup>9</sup> In the following years several rounds of surveys and social impact studies of the Carterets Islanders and of host communities were conducted (Edwards 2013, 64), asking atoll islanders about their concerns, needs and aspirations regarding resettlement. Workshops and Focus Group Discussions were held, interviews carried out, expectations raised, but so far no actual resettlement in the context of the state programme has taken place. It is not clear how much of the money has been used already for preparatory work, and how much is left for actual resettlement. Funding for actual relocation still seems to be a major problem.<sup>10</sup> More recent initiatives like the establishment of a Bougainville Climate Change Office and the launch of the 'Building Resilience for Climate Change for Bougainville' programme as part of the PNG-wide national Climate Change Programme in May 2018 so far have not led to actual progress either.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, relations between Tulele Peisa and the ABG are difficult. The ABG attacked Tulele Peisa for running a parallel relocation programme to the ABG's programme and refused to support Tulele Peisa. Relationships between some Carterets Islanders who occupy high-ranking positions in the ABG and the Bougainville public service on the one hand and the leadership of Tulele Peisa on the other are strained. Carterets Islanders reconciliation and unification ceremonies which took place in Buka and on the islands from June 2018 onwards are supposed to initiate a 'Carterets unification process' so as to overcome divisions in the community and between leaders.<sup>12</sup> Such unification would be highly welcome in the interest of the people of the Carterets Islands. A major step forward in this regard was made only very recently. On November 23, 2018, a major reconciliation involving more than 2,700 islanders, and witnessed by some World Bank representatives, ABG politicians, including the Vice President who is also from the Carterets, and senior Carterets Public Servants, took place on the Carterets. This reconciliation addressed all the outstanding cases from the time of war. It was a full success. It also established collaborative partnerships between the ABG Administration, the Carterets community and its local level government and Tulele Peisa. This is in recognition and appreciation of each other's efforts and for the betterment of the islanders as a whole. Tulele Peisa today is working together with some ABG departments, especially the Lands Department. More recently, Tulele Peisa has

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<sup>8</sup> There are serious problems with Karoola plantation land: it is contested, it is swampy, difficult to access by road, and with difficult access to the sea.

<sup>9</sup> New Dawn on Bougainville 03/09/13. Resettlement of Carterets Islanders soon to start. By Aloysius Laukai. In 2013 it was announced that relocation to Karoola plantation was imminent, but "relocation to Karoola Plantation in 2014 did not eventuate because of no funding". Gorethy Kenneth, Post-Courier Tuesday, December 8, 2015.

<sup>10</sup> New Dawn on Bougainville 29/12/17. Climate change funding slow. By Aloysius Laukai.

<sup>11</sup> New Dawn on Bougainville 16/05/18. Climate Change affecting all islands.

<sup>12</sup> New Dawn on Bougainville 03/06/18. Carteret Unification Effort acknowledged.

been asked to be involved in elaborating ABG policies, and there is the possibility that the organisation will be involved in the elaboration of the ABG's climate change policy.

### **Expectations and Concerns of Relocated People**

From the surveys and community consultations conducted in the context of the ABG's AIDP, a number of important issues regarding relocation governance become obvious.<sup>13</sup> People have high hopes and expectations, but they also voice serious concerns and fears, and they have very specific demands and proposals regarding the planning process and the implementation of relocation.

People expect from relocation: food security, better access to services, in particular health and education, better opportunities for income generation (jobs, cash crops) and useful exchanges of skills and knowledge with host communities.

People are concerned about: the loss of traditional lifestyles (based on close ties with the sea) and traditional culture (due to abandonment of the land of their ancestors and interaction with host communities and an 'alien' society), loss of local language and changes in religious practices. They fear for their safety due to land disputes and conflicts with host communities (including fear of sorcery); there is also fear of changes in the status and role of women and youth and fear of an increase in alcohol and drug consumption due to the availability of cash. The Polynesian relocatees additionally are afraid of racism by the Melanesian majority on Bougainville.

People have long lists of demands regarding planning and implementation of relocation, including: the continuous involvement of communities via regular consultations with community leaders/chiefs; establishment of all essential infrastructure, services and facilities at the resettlement site before actual relocation (schools, churches, health posts, police stations etc.); permanent housing reflecting the traditional village layout; allocation of sufficient land for agriculture; improved transport between atolls and mainland; separate sites for the different island communities so that they can maintain their culture and feel safe; security provision; guarantees for the maintenance of the clan system of islanders (resettlement of entire clans in one site) and of their traditional leadership system.

Concerns of (potential) relocatees very much revolve around the question of how relationships with host communities will play out: will they be hostile or friendly? Anxieties about (Lange 2009, 139), and experiences of relocatees often confirm initial concerns. Some of the settlers from the Carterets were re-relocated to their home islands because of bad experiences with their neighbours. Most difficult are the cases where relocatees have to negotiate access to customary land, and even if the resettlement land is formally legally free (so called alienated freehold land) and thus in principle available for resettlement, in most cases there are people already there, dwelling there, gardening there, or hunting – 'illegally' perhaps according to state law, but with reference to long-established customary rights of usage. This is the case with Karoola plantation land on Buka. Karoola plantation is legally freehold land, but nevertheless the ABG had to negotiate access with the neighbouring communities

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<sup>13</sup> For the following see Lange 2009, in particular the summary 139-142.

whose members have used this land for a long time. The host-settler relationship is conflict-prone.

Planned relocation can lead to local conflicts between settlers and recipient communities. This was the case in two previous state-led Carterets-Bougainville resettlement endeavours from the early 1980s and the late 1990s which both failed because of such conflicts (Edwards 2013, 63-64). The first, the Kuveria programme, called the Atolls Resettlement Scheme, commenced in 1982. The plan was to resettle a total of 40 families. The resettlement site at Kuveria on Bougainville, however, turned out to be inappropriate; it was adjacent to the provincial correctional facility, and with an unwelcoming host community that denied the resettled families fishing rights and access to land. Only 15 families moved to Kuveria. Soon, “differences and feuds often flared up between the settlers and the traditional landholders” (Rakova 2014, 275). Consequently, after a few years “the resettlement attempt failed and the majority of settlers returned to the Carterets” (UNDP 2016, 6).

The second state-led endeavour had a similar fate. In 1997 the Bougainville Administration relocated 30 Carterets families to the Hanahan area in the northeast of Buka island. But most of them “returned to the Carterets as a result of land disputes (...) there was a failure to integrate the new arrivals into the receiving community and the government withdrew its support for the resettled families after the initial relocation period” (UNDP 2016, 6). Relocates complained about “a lack of ‘unity’ with the host community” (Lange 2009, 103), with ongoing conflicts over land use and fishing rights. Relocates were the target of hostilities from their neighbours who destroyed their houses and food gardens or their produce when they took it to the market or attacked their young people or raped the women (Lange 2009, 104). As a consequence, “many families returned to the Carteret Islands due to difficulties integrating with the host community” (Lange 2009, 104).

UNDP summarises the causes of the failure of these unsuccessful resettlement schemes as follows: “Reluctance on the part of relocating communities to move, a lack of local voices in the design and execution of resettlement – including location choice – lack of suitable land, and insufficient attention to social integration with host communities” (UNDP 2016: 6).

## Conclusion

The Carterets Islanders’ case illustrates that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between ‘forced’ and ‘voluntary’ instances of migration related to climate change and its effects. Tulele Peisa stresses the point that it organises ‘voluntary’ resettlement. On the other hand, people feel ‘forced’ off their homeland. They would not leave if the atolls were not to become uninhabitable. “The line between voluntary migration and forced displacement from climate change (...) is difficult to determine” (UNDP 2016, 4). Instead of getting too occupied with debates about the ‘voluntary/forced’ problem – and the legal implications that come with it – it therefore might be more advisable to focus on the opportunities for long-term planned resettlement in cases where it can be predicted that people will have to move sooner or later. Planning – and implementation of plans - should start early so that people have the opportunity to relocate voluntarily in a well organised manner sooner, rather than being forced into a hasty, disorganised move later. To make this option a reality is exactly what Tulele Peisa is trying to do.

Long-term planning is a must – and it is possible. ‘When it comes to sea-level rise in particular, there is no need to wait for extreme weather events to strike and islands and coastal

regions to be flooded. All areas that cannot be protected through increased coastal defences for practical or economic reasons need to be included early in long-term resettlement and reintegration programmes that make the process acceptable for the affected people' (Biermann & Boas, 2010, p. 83).

As the Carterets case demonstrates, in order to make processes 'acceptable for the affected people', comprehensive community participation is vital. In fact, at "the core of Tulele Peisa's work is the active promotion of community self-reliance and ecologically and culturally sustainable relocation" (Pascoe 2015, 78). This is why UNDP is of the view that Tulele Peisa's "community-based approach to relocation offers a positive relocation model for other atolls in the region" (UNDP 2016, 3).

It is indeed admirable that the people from the Carterets have not waited for the state and others to come to their assistance, but have taken their fate into their own hands, and in doing so have shown considerable capabilities and ingenuity. The people on the ground have agency of their own; they are not just passive victims of climate change. On the other hand, local agency should not be used as an excuse for inaction of international or regional organisations and of governments and state institutions (Pascoe 2015, 85). One should not let international organisations and national governments off the hook.

In the Carterets case, it is obvious that there are problems in the relations between state institutions and communities. The state has not delivered yet, and Carterets Islanders have taken things into their own hands, largely detached from state institutions. On the side of the state there are serious governance deficiencies. Lack of capacities and ensuing lack of effectiveness in dealing with the effects of climate change, in particular climate change – induced migration, diminishes the legitimacy and trustworthiness of state institutions in the eyes of the people on the ground, and lack of legitimacy on the other hand makes it more difficult for state institutions to effectively implement adaptive measures, including planned relocation.

In a post-conflict situation like in Bougainville, states are often relatively weak and fragile; they have problems functioning effectively and delivering services to their people. In such fragile situations, it is of particular importance that state institutions and international donors work closely together with non-state actors: civil society actors like NGOs and community-based organisations, but also customary local networks and traditional authorities. One has to keep in mind that traditional authorities – chiefs and elders, tribal leaders, religious authorities, healers, wise men and women etc. – are of major importance for the organisation of everyday life in the weak states of Oceania and in so-called fragile states in the Global South in general. They are in charge of the governance of communities, natural resources and the environment; they have to be taken into account when it comes to the management of the effects of climate change, including resettlement measures. Resilience of communities and adaptive capacity very much rest with these customary actors and institutions and the indigenous traditional knowledge of which they are custodians (Boege 2018). They can and do play an important role in planning, decision-making and implementation of resettlement programmes, as the example of Tulele Peisa demonstrates. The interesting thing about Tulele Peisa is that it is not just an NGO or civil society organisation in the Western understanding of the term, but is closely linked to non-state actors who do not fit neatly into the Western 'civil society' category. Tulele Peisa was set up at the request of the local Council of Elders, that is, traditional authorities from the customary sphere of societal life. Tulele Peisa thus can be seen as an example of a "bridging organisation" (Petzold

and Ratter 2015, 40), which tries to connect local customary life-worlds and the 'outside' world of state and civil society.

## Policy Recommendations

Flowing from these conclusions a few generic policy recommendations can be drawn. Most importantly, what is needed is

- a holistic and integrated approach to climate change adaption, in particular to climate change – induced resettlement. This comprises different dimensions:
- integrating the activities of stakeholders from different societal spheres - state institutions, local customary as well as civil society institutions. In particular, the potential of local traditional actors and networks must not be left untapped. Engaging their capabilities, however, requires respect for their ways of operating and their worldviews, and this means
- acknowledging the cultural and spiritual dimension of climate change and resettlement and the significance of local indigenous traditional knowledge, consequently
- integrating traditional indigenous knowledge and 'Western' climate science, and
- understanding and addressing climate change resettlement in a holistic way, encompassing socio-economic, political, psychological, cultural, philosophical, spiritual, material and immaterial aspects, in particular
- taking note of the conflict potential inherent in resettlement and conducting it in a conflict-sensitive way. This first and foremost means
- taking account of the needs, interests, expectations of both resettlement communities and host communities, as well as other social groups and stakeholders affected by resettlement, and addressing them in an integrated approach;
- making sure that both settlers and host communities are meaningfully included in and participate fully in each and every stage of the resettlement process, based on continual dialogue with all parties;
- building linkages between different levels of relocation governance, from the international to the local;
- giving particular support to bridging institutions which have the capacity to bring together stakeholders from different governance levels, from different societal spheres, from different localities, and of different worldviews.

### **Recommendations with regard to the Carterets case in particular are:**

- enhance efforts for Carterets reconciliation, in particular including Tulele Peisa and the ABG (responsible: ABG, Tulele Peisa, Carterets communities and their leaders, churches);
- build linkages between the ABG resettlement programme and the Tulele Peisa programme so that they become mutually supportive (instead of just being pursued in parallel or even in competition) (ABG and Tulele Peisa, with third party mediation and facilitation);
- support the implementation of the Carterets Integrated Relocation Plan, in particular funding for more housing (government, donors, INGOs);

- expand and support the economic activities of Bougainville Cocoa Net Limited (Tulele Peisa, cocoa farmers, ABG, donors); and the Carterets Islands Investments (CII)<sup>14</sup>
- negotiate access to additional land for Carterets Islanders willing to resettle, and secure formal land titles (Tulele Peisa, ABG, Catholic Church, host communities);
- establish regular and reliable transport to and from the Carterets (ABG);
- establish a marine protected area (MPA) under national law for the Carterets (PNG government, ABG).
- Pay special attention to the most important aspects that have made Tulele Peisa significant in piloting the CIRP in Tinputz; these are: recognising the principal rights of the relocated families to land security and land use management, their rights and dignity to safe and secure homes and property ownership, that is family blocks or plantations.

## Acronyms

ABG	Autonomous Bougainville Government
AIDP	Atoll Integrated Development Policy
ARoB	Autonomous Region of Bougainville
BPA	Bougainville Peace Agreement
CII	Carterets Islands Investments
CoE	Council of Elders
CIRP	Carterets Integrated Relocation Programme
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LMMA	Locally Managed Marine Areas
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PNG	Papua New Guinea
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

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<sup>14</sup> CII is the coordinating body for all business and economic activities on the Carterets.

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**Ursula Rakova** is an environmentalist and climate change activist from Papua New Guinea. In 2008, she received the Pride of PNG award for her environmental contributions to the development of her country. As Executive Director of the not-for-profit organisation Tulele Peisa, she is responsible for organising the relocation of the inhabitants of the Carteret Islands to the mainland of Bougainville Province. The islands are expected to be uninhabitable by 2040, rendering Rakova's people the world's first climate refugees. In 2005, Ursula established a community schooling system in Bougainville as an alternative to the failed public school system. She coordinated a landmark legal case whereby the Wa-

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