

# The Reason Place Matters

## *Lessons from customary land tenure regimes in PNG*

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# **MAKING MOBILITY WORK FOR ADAPTATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES**

Results from the MECLEP global research

# Agenda

- 1) Research Questions & Methods
- 2) What is environmentally-induced migration?
  - *The Pacific and the need for Adaptation*
- 3) Customary Land Tenure in the Pacific
- 4) Overview of past and recent examples of environmentally-induced community relocation
  - *Case studies*
- 5) Conclusions

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- 1) **Research Questions & Methods**
- 2) What is environmentally-induced migration? Pacific and Need for Adaptation
- 3) Customary Land Tenure in the Pacific
- 4) Land Tenure and Environmentally-induced Migration: An Overview of Local Adaptation Strategies
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# Research question

- Considering some key cases of environment-related resettlement projects in the Pacific Islands Countries & Territories (PICTs), what lessons can we learn to implement planned relocations that **maximize resilience building** and **minimize negative outcomes** in the **long term**?
- To **what extent** are **customary land tenure** and **customary relationships** central to these outcomes?
- What can we learn from **community-based resilience and adaptation** strategies, and knowledge?

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# Community cohesion approach to *sustainable relocations*

**Defends predominance of need to preserve community cohesion above individual-centered**

Key points of protest:

- 1) Community desegregation and loss of access to community resources** are two of the eight main risks endangered by people displaced (Cernea, 1999)
- 2) Lack of consultation** with hosting and affected population when planning for relocation projects (World Bank; Martin, 2009)
- 3) Lack of consideration for local cultures** when planning for relocation (Olivier-Smith; de Sherbinin, 2014)

# Case studies

## Biausevu relocation

- Under Colonial era (1881)
- Relocation within same land tenure as facilitator

## Solodamu relocation

- Independent State (1970)
- Challenges of relocation within same Land tenure

## Manam relocation

- Recent example (2004- current) across land tenure boundaries
- Does land matter in current relocations?

## Narikoso relocation

- Recent example (2013)
- Does land still matter?



## Manam case study, PNG (2004 – present)

- **Case study:** 16 villages (now approx. 20,000 people), currently residing in “care centers” near Bogia, PNG following displacement from Manam island. Initial temporary relocation inadequate, large-scale resettlement planned
- **Type of relocation:** internal, outside of customary land boundaries (complex)
- **Cause of relocation:** volcanic eruption
- **Date:** initial ‘temporary’ relocation 2004; ongoing resettlement plan
- **Political Context:** provincial government-led care centers and resettlement plan



# Manam resettlement plan

- Major livelihoods questions
  - Many km inland – in virgin forest
- Approx. 20,000 Manam islanders to join the “host” community of 5,000
  - Provincial government negotiated with land owners
- Staggered resettlement planned
  - Limited consideration or involvement of women, children
- Multi-billion dollar resettlement plan – law recently reopened



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# Customary Land Tenure in the Pacific

- **80%** of PICTs is *customary* based
- Reflects **cultural & spiritual identity**
- Dictates **usage, conditions & “leases”**
- Defines **scale of economic development** but also **social harmony**
- **Legal & governance pluralism**
- **Modern systems** based on individual land rights **encounter great dispute** (collective land rights vs. individual land rights)

# Role of pluralistic governance

- ...or the absence of the post-colonial state?
  - Few safeguards in place
- Predominant role of customary chiefs
  - Government struggles to maintain authority
  - Little adherence to concepts of national identity and citizenship
- Relationship with government can be one of **suspicion, antagonism**



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# Indigenous knowledge & adaptation strategies

## Migration among **traditional** adaptation **methods**

- a) Maintenance of **food security** through surplus production, controls on consumption, crop diversity, famine foods, food storage and food preservation
- b) Inter- and intra-**community cooperation** (*taoa*)
- c) **Settlement patterns** and housing design (fortified settlements on ridges or increasing their high)
- d) Use of **traditional environmental knowledge systems**



# Lessons from Manam relocation



- Manam remains the social, cultural and political center of gravity
  - Expressions of place attachment
  - Non-insignificant number of returnees
- Challenges and conflicts with customary land owners are land-related:
  - Government gazetted colonial-held land now contested by customary owners
  - Access to natural resources
  - Population growth and sedentarization
  - Burial rites (and rights)
- Perpetuity of tenure is a key barrier to addressing perpetual displacement
  - Temporary relocation, permanent movement, or a second home?

# Effects of Manam displacement

- For **displaced** Manam islanders:
  - Economic inactivity
  - Increased substance abuse
  - Disarticulation from land:
    - Origin stories (Zaria's fire)
    - Customary system of land allocation and use
  - Political and social marginalization
  - Increased out-migration of youth
- For **returnees**:
  - Limited livelihoods options
  - Complete isolation (no transport)
  - Services essentially non-existent
- For the **community**:
  - Bifurcation of the community threatens cultural and social unity



# Community, place-bound resilience

- Customary **land- and trade relationship-based rituals**
  - Reciprocal *Buleka*: traditional safety net established with other clans
  - Gifting of Galip nuts
  - New Year's celebration – despite different location of stars
  - Mourning customary chief
- Unreported number of displaced hosted by *taoa* partners



## Limits to relocations as 'adaptation'

- Provincial boundaries v. trade and kinship partners (taoa) – a missed opportunity?
- Underlines the possibility of **inter-generational backlashes** between proponents of individual land rights (relying on formal deeds to own land) and proponents of collective land rights (relying mainly on oral ownership).
- Underlines **need to profoundly consider the long-term protection of the hosting communities' land rights** to avoid conflicts over land and to ensure the long-term security of tenure of relocatees

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# Conclusion

- **Debate over land rights** (individual vs. collective) in Pacific needs to be considered as key issue in planning [environmentally-induced] relocations
- Debate over land rights in the Pacific alerts us that international and regional governance should include appropriate forms of land management **including communal forms of land management**
- .... otherwise a **mismatch** between normative perspective and real-life processes is likely to occur.

## Recommendations - **Policy gaps**

- Strengthen governmental focus and regional coordination on land, migration and climate change issues
- More consistent *regional* dialogue on land related policies
- Identify interlinkages between secure land tenure, land governance, regional and global frameworks

## Recommendations – Policy approaches

- Clear government policies on climate change adaptation and relocation planning combining both modern and traditional approaches to address **insecurity of land tenure**
- Relocations should be based on a **participative approach** ensuring that affected communities have an **access to reliable information** at all stages of relocation process
- Emphasize **community cohesion** and the **preservation** of Pacific people's **identity, social and belief systems** linked to their **land tenure systems**

Can land tenure boundaries be the main borders to be considered when planning for relocations?



# Recommendations - Research Gaps

- **Impacts of non-economic losses** – non-economic losses are difficult to measure and quantify. **Land, culture, heritage and community assets comprise a valuable tangible and intangible component of the national economic capital.**
  - Identify and define the losses (quantify), and overcome issues of incommensurability.
  - The development of wellbeing indicators (as developed in Vanuatu) is an example of good practices
- International standards for capturing environmental and biodiversity (including their loss) contributions to national economies already exist; cultural and heritage aspects should be equally recognized.
  - Further research on **how land tenure associated non-economic losses can be accounted for in national systems of accounting** would be highly needed


Global Migration Issues 4

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# Migration, Risk Management and Climate Change: Evidence and Policy Responses



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

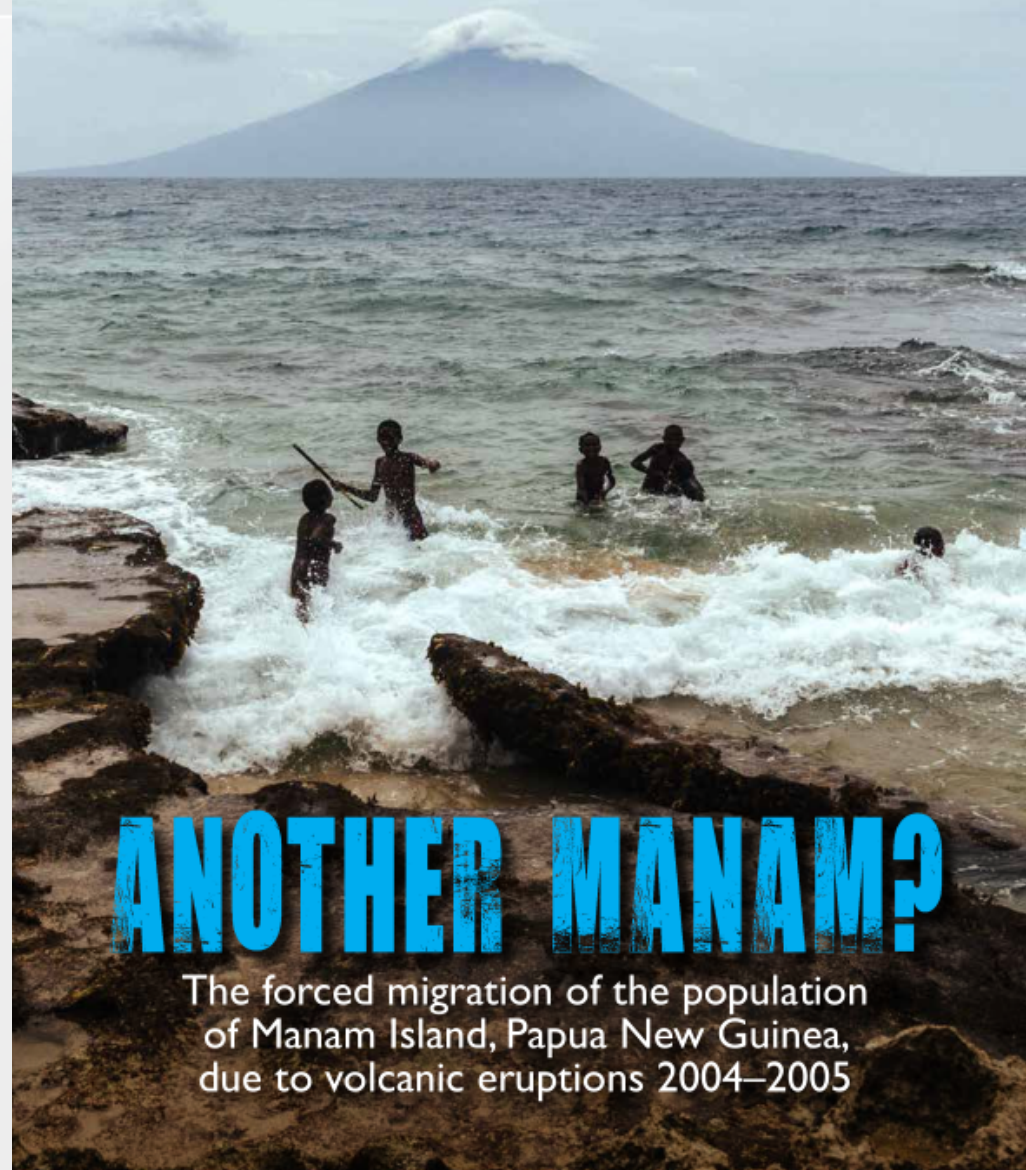
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## ANOTHER MANAM?

The forced migration of the population  
of Manam Island, Papua New Guinea,  
due to volcanic eruptions 2004–2005

Thank you!

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