

# Global Migration Futures (GMF)

Pacific region: patterns, drivers and future scenarios of migration

International  
Migration  
Institute

IMI



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

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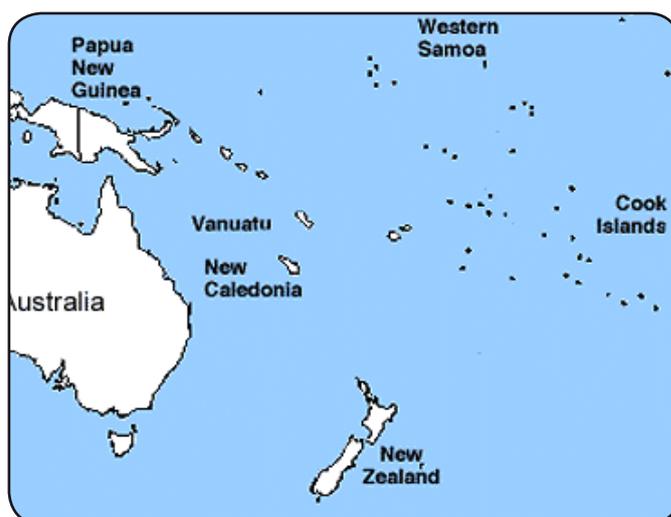
The UN Population Division estimates that in 2050 the Pacific region's<sup>1</sup> population will exceed 40 million, with more than 92 per cent living in urban areas in Australia and New Zealand and more than 52.5 per cent for island states, despite island governments' active discouragement of urbanization for more than a century. In the Pacific, migration is believed to be a primary driver of urban growth.<sup>2</sup> Hence, key questions for the future will include: What policies can cities adopt to ensure that migration to urban areas promotes national and regional development? How can urban planners minimize the potential negative impacts of migration such as environmental degradation, unemployment, and social tensions? How will demographic factors such as the size and education levels of youth cohorts in different areas affect mobility in the Pacific?

## Background

The International Migration Institute (University of Oxford) and the University of Waikato are leading a joint initiative, with support from the Department of Labour (New Zealand) – now the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment – and Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Australia), to examine potential future drivers of human mobility in the Pacific using an innovative scenario methodology developed by the International Migration Institute.

A recent report<sup>3</sup> for the Department of Labour (New Zealand) and Department of Immigration and Citizenship (Australia) suggests that if New Zealand is to reach its aim of promoting regional, sustainable economic development, it needs to build a good understanding of the potential future changes in human mobility within, to and from the Pacific. This is because migration can stimulate new economic opportunities and changing economic, political, social, and cultural conditions in

states can shape migration. The report suggests a new approach is needed to explore future mobility in the region. It notes that existing research on future migration patterns in the Pacific tends to focus exclusively on relatively certain trends, such as demographic changes (e.g. population ageing), urban growth, and natural hazards. Such studies disregard factors which are more difficult to predict and have a high degree of uncertainty, including technological, economic, social and political change. However, it is often the more uncertain factors which are likely to generate fundamental shifts for which policy makers and practitioners are least prepared.



**Scenarios** are tools that decision-makers can use to identify areas with the least amount of available knowledge, and to position themselves to be ready for **future eventualities**. Scenarios reveal the complex relationships between political, economic, demographic, social, technological, and environmental factors underlying migration drivers, patterns, and trends. They are not predictions or forecasts of future migration dynamics. None of the scenarios will depict 'ideal' or 'worst-case' futures; instead, they will present **plausible images** of migration patterns in the future.

1 Australia, New Zealand and the island nations that comprise Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia.

2 Connell, J. (2011) 'Elephants in the Pacific? Pacific urbanisation and its discontents', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 52(2): 121-35.

3 Bedford, R. and G. Hugo (2012) 'Population movement in the Pacific: A perspective on future prospects'. Report commissioned by the Department of Labour (New Zealand) and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (Australia).

## Methodology

IMI's scenario methodology combines scenario-building methods adapted from the business sector. These examine future international migration by building on the analysis of existing trends using traditional social science research methods, through the exploration of uncertainty - identifying important assumptions and imagining a world where these do not hold. A core feature of this methodology is its participatory nature, drawing on the experience and expertise of a wide range of stakeholders: entrepreneurs, policy-makers, community leaders, labour organizations, scholars, and migrants and their associations. These all possess valuable information on migration processes and trends and should be included in the research process, where possible. It therefore engages migration experts and stakeholders by making them active contributors to the production of knowledge through interviews and participation in key events, such as scenario-building workshops.

## Objectives

The initiative will:

- Improve understanding of the potential factors impacting regional migration and, in turn, the numerous possible impacts of migration on regional social, economic, and political factors
- Raise awareness of the importance of broader transformation processes (such as technological change, economic growth, and changing public perceptions of migration) in shaping international migration
- Develop scenarios that can be used by policy makers, members of civil society, business persons, and academics to question common assumptions and increase knowledge and awareness about future migration
- Encourage stakeholders to play a key role in knowledge production and gain a sense of ownership of the research process
- Generate continuous debate about policy responses to possible migration futures.

The **Project Team** comprises Hein de Haas, Oliver Bakewell, Ayla Bonfiglio and Simona Vezzoli from the International Migration Institute at the University of Oxford, Richard Bedford from the University of Waikato and Graeme Hugo from the University of Adelaide.

## Research activities

In October 2012, the project team will convene a scenario-building workshop with migration experts and stakeholders from governments, businesses, civil society, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations from the Pacific region. This workshop will consist of a series of group exercises that prompt people to identify their existing assumptions about international migration, distinguish what they believe to be certain and uncertain about migration, and develop a set of basic scenarios on future international migration in the Pacific.

The project team will also convene a short series of methodological workshops and meetings for experts and stakeholders to present the scenario methodology and explore approaches to long-term, innovative thinking about potential migration futures for New Zealand and the Pacific region. At the conclusion of the project, the team will carry out widespread dissemination of the key insights about future international migration gained during the research process.

