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1 **Climate Change Adaptation as a Development Challenge to Small Island States: A Case**  
2 **Study from the Solomon Islands**

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21  
22 **Abstract**

23 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are known to be particularly vulnerable to climate change, which  
24 poses a challenge to their economic and social development, and is a cause of hardship to their  
25 populations. This vulnerability is expressed in several ways, from exposure to sea level rises, to salt  
26 intrusion, and extensive droughts in some areas. Despite this rather negative trend, there are examples  
27 of initiatives where the vulnerability of SIDS can be reduced, and their resilience may be increased.  
28 Based on the paucity of the literature on concrete examples of successful climate change adaptation  
29 initiatives on SIDS, this paper presents an overview of pertinent challenges faced, and introduces two  
30 case studies from the Solomon Islands, which illustrate how much can be achieved by systematically  
31 pursuing adaptation strategies. The novelty of this paper resides on the fact that is one of the few pieces  
32 which have attempted to focus on successful climate change adaptation initiatives on Solomon Islands  
33 (a nation seldom represented in the literature). The paper not only presents an overview of pertinent  
34 challenges faced, but also introduces two case studies from the Solomon Islands, which illustrate how  
35 much can be achieved by systematically pursuing adaptation strategies. The lessons learned from these  
36 case studies are outlined, and some useful insights are provided, which may help SIDS to better foster  
37 the development opportunities with climate change adaptation offers to them.

38

39 **Keywords:** Climate change; Adaptation; Solomon Islands; Development; Migration

40

41

42 **1. Introduction: an overview of climate change in Small Island Developing States and**  
43 **stressors and development barriers on the Solomon Islands**

44  
45 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are known to be vulnerable to climate change due to a  
46 combination of factors (Nurse et al 2014). Impacts of climate change to island nations are manifold and  
47 may include areas as varied as:

- 48 • Human Systems
- 49 • Island Settlements and Tourism
- 50 • Human Health
- 51 • Relocation and Migration
- 52 • Economic development
- 53 • Structure of coastal areas

54 (Nurse et al 2014, Leal Filho 2019)

55  
56 According the 5th Assessment Report produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate  
57 Change (IPCC) SIDS are prone to be affected by sea level rise (IPCC 2014). The Report "Global  
58 Warming of of 1.5 °C" has stated that increases in temperature may exacerbate sea level rise and put  
59 island nations at a greater risk (IPCC 2018). Figure 1 presents a schematic view of how climate change  
60 influences SIDS.

61  
62 **Figure 1- Some of the influences of climate change to SIDS**

63  
64 The Pacific region offers no exception and suffers similar influences. There is also a multitude of  
65 climate change-related risks and impacts which affects the region as a whole (Leal Filho 2017) and  
66 coastal communities in particular (Leal Filho 2018), including the Solomon Islands, the country studied  
67 on this paper.

68 The Solomon Islands is a small island developing State (SIDS) located in the Southwest Pacific  
69 about 1,900 km northeast of Australia (Figure 2), with 996 islands stretching in a 1,450-kilometer chain  
70 southeast from Papua New Guinea (Coleman & Kroenke 1981).

71  
72 **Figure 2: Pacific Island countries and Territories**

73  
74 The country has a population of around 537,000 inhabitants who share a total land area of  
75 approximately 27,500 km<sup>2</sup>. Its nominal GDP was estimated by the World Bank in 2017 at approximately  
76 US\$1.202 billion (Ozturk et al., 2016). The country's undeveloped mineral resources include lateritic  
77 bauxite, lead, nickel, and zinc (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Manufacturing primarily involves the  
78 processing of coconut and other vegetable oils and of cocoa on the islands. Traditional handicrafts,

79 including woodwork, shell inlay, mats, baskets, and shell jewellerys, are made both for the tourist  
80 market and for export. The Solomon Islands Dollar (SBD) is the official currency, which currently is  
81 weighted SBD\$7.60 against USD\$1. Tourism has been developed but is not a major source of income  
82 (World Bank, 2010). The country's main resources, fish and timber, have been exploited excessively,  
83 which has resulted in their progressive depletion (Foster & Laracy, 2017). Its other export products are  
84 derived from plantation crops: palm oil, copra and cacao (the source of cocoa). China and Australia are  
85 the major recipients of these exports. The chief imports are machinery, fuels, manufactured goods, and  
86 food, with Australia, Singapore, and China constituting the main suppliers.<sup>1</sup>

87 About 85 per cent of the population live in rural villages located within 1.5 km from the coastline  
88 (Gagahe, 2011) and derive their livelihoods directly from the environment. Like other Small Island  
89 Developing States (SIDS), the Solomon Islands are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change  
90 (Barnett, 2011) and are heavily dependent on aid money for most development programs. This  
91 exemplifies the fact that climate change poses a barrier to their economic development and social well  
92 being. Extreme climate events like tropical cyclones and associated storm surges, changing rainfall  
93 patterns, droughts, rising sea levels, salt water inundation, heat stress and ocean acidification threaten  
94 people's livelihoods and affect all sectors of the country's economy (Lal et al., 2009). They also act as  
95 barriers to economic development. Further, sea level rise (SLR) in the Solomon Islands averages  
96 between 7-10 millimetres, three times the global average of 2.2 millimetres (Nunn 2013). Human  
97 resilience and survival in the face of climate change impacts largely depends on effective mitigation and  
98 adaptation strategies (Costello et al., 2009; IPCC, 2014). Adaptation has been practiced among  
99 communities in the Solomon Islands for decades through the implementation of numerous adaptation  
100 approaches and using various tools. Some approaches have been disjunctive and reactionary, while  
101 others have been anticipatory, integrated and holistic, building on traditional and cultural practices,  
102 including the *wantok* system<sup>2</sup> (Handmer, 2003).

103 The country's climate is tropical oceanic, i.e., hot and humid but relieved by cool winds and  
104 abundant, year-round rainfall. Temperatures seldom exceed 32°C, and rainfall generally averages 120-  
105 140 inches (3,000–3,500 mm) year around (Ogo et al. 1987). Heavily wooded, mountainous terrain is  
106 characteristic, and, although there are extensive plains, only those on the northern side of Guadalcanal  
107 have been developed for large-scale agriculture (Foster & Laracy, 2017).

108 As alluded to above, SLR constitutes one of the main risks facing people in parts of the Solomon  
109 Islands (Nunn, 2013). Resultant salt water intrusion can have numerous negative impacts on coastal  
110 communities. For example, parts of Malaita Island, including its atoll islands where people live in  
111 immediate proximity to the sea, face food security crises and have recently taken cautionary adaptive  
112 measures (Birk, 2012). Similar pressures exist on the Tulun Atoll where SLR related problems have

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<sup>1</sup> OEC, Observation of Economic Completion: <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/resources/about/> accessed 10/10/2017

<sup>2</sup> According to the Solomon Islands Historical Encyclopedia, “[t]he *wantok* system or *wantokism* is derived from the Solomons Pijin term for ‘one talk’, meaning from the same language, and implies giving preference to kin in the expectation of a series of reciprocal obligations being fulfilled.” (SIHE, 2013, para 1).

113 precipitated a range of adverse impacts (Luetz & Havea 2018). Importantly, the so-called Ghyben-  
114 Herzberg or freshwater lens is prone to salinity pollution by rising sea water (Figure 3), which in the  
115 context of sustained SLR constitutes a cogent vulnerability that tends to progressively render a low-  
116 lying island uninhabitable long before its ultimate submersion (Barnett & Campbell 2010, p. 172).

117

118 **Figure 3:** Schematic representation of island subsistence (normal sea level) and progressive island submergence  
119 (rising sea level). (Illustration © World Vision, quoted from Luetz & Havea 2018, p. 3; adapted from Aung et al  
120 1998, p. 97)

121

122 The Langa Langa Lagoon people depend heavily on marine resources for their livelihoods, and  
123 resort to unsustainable and illegal methods of fishing (Ha’apio et al., 2014). There is no fertile land  
124 available for home gardening, thus leading and/or contributing to a situation which perpetuates these  
125 illegal fishing methods for livelihood support. The limited land available for their cultivation (Bennett,  
126 1987) was already inundated by increasing salinity due to continuing SLR, coastal inundation and  
127 erosion.

128 Other parts of the country such as the Western and Temotu provinces have also experienced severe  
129 SLR (Albert, et al., 2016; Birk, 2012; Birk, & Rasmussen 2014). In this context, five (5) islands within  
130 the Western province have already been submerged. The missing islands ranged in size from 1 to 5  
131 hectares (2.5-12.4 acres) (Albert et al., 2016). The submerged islands were in a part of the country,  
132 which over the last two decades had seen annual sea levels rise by as much as 10mm (0.4in). Although  
133 these islands were not inhabited, people depended on their resources and have therefore since lost their  
134 sources of livelihood support. Further, researchers found that in the same province there were six (6)  
135 bigger islands that had large swaths of land washed into the sea, and on two of those, entire villages  
136 were destroyed and people forced to relocate (Albert et al, 2016).

137 In the literature, the benefits of early disaster preparedness planning, including anticipatory  
138 migration, are quite well established, and are also recognised by the UN in respect of proactive climate  
139 change adaptation: “[h]oping—and working—for the best while preparing for the worst, serves as a  
140 useful first principle for adaptation planning” (UNDP 2007, p. 198; cf. Luetz 2008, Blanco et al. 2009).  
141 Further, in terms of adaptation outcomes, the literature also seems to favour anticipatory and voluntary  
142 migration over *ad hoc* reactionary and forced migration responses (Foresight 2011; Luetz 2013, 2018).  
143 For example, UNHCR (2009) advocates that “early preparedness could also help avert a humanitarian  
144 catastrophe by promoting orderly movements of affected populations and increasing the viability of the  
145 move” (p. 3; see also Leighton 2012, pp. 703, 718). For example, research in the Maldives has found  
146 that “[w]hile natural disasters and environmental change can swiftly overwhelm communal coping  
147 capacities, triggering rapid and uncontrolled migration responses which are lacking in critical  
148 coordination, preparation and funding support, policy maker foresight and anticipatory preparedness can  
149 enable more benign migration processes.” (Luetz 2017, pp. 61-62). In marked contrast, pilot research  
150 conducted on the Tulun Atoll to the northeast of Bougainville, the largest island of the Solomon Islands

151 archipelago,<sup>3</sup> has found that early migration initiatives were persistently hampered due to local  
152 conditions that thwarted the timely implementation of anticipatory community relocation measures  
153 (Luetz & Havea 2018).

154 In summary, it is the position of this paper that forward-looking migration initiatives represent a  
155 formidable opportunity for adaptation to climate change, which may be leveraged for human wellbeing.  
156 This position emerged ostensibly from the climate change related challenges discussed below (Section  
157 2) through a process of *in situ* data collection (Section 3), and is further corroborated by this case study's  
158 analysis (Section 4) and summed up in its concluding synthesis (Section 5). The study limitations are  
159 discussed in Section 6.

160

## 161 **2. Overview: Climate change challenges in the Solomon Islands**

162 Similarly to what is observed in other SIDS ( Leal Filho 2018), the Solomon Islands face several  
163 climate change related challenges, which hinder the country's development prospects. But, despite their  
164 relevance, these have not yet been fully contextualised and analysed in an integrated way. This section  
165 of the paper aims to address this need by listing some of these challenges, including previous research  
166 performed on them, as well as arising solutions. Table 1 summarises the selected relevant literature.

167

168

**Table 1: Climate change related challenges in the Solomon Islands**

169

170 As Table 1 has shown, the Solomon Islands face a variety of challenges, but there are also some  
171 possible solutions. The next section of this paper discusses them.

172

## 173 **3. Data collection: Studying local realities and opportunities**

174 In order to provide a more concrete overview of the current reality data collection for this study  
175 was undertaken by a member of the research team while conducting research on the transformation of  
176 rural communities in 2015 and subsequently in 2017 (Ha'apio et al., 2018). The primary targets were a)  
177 community leaders, b) household heads, c) youth representatives, d) women groups and community  
178 representatives. The study as a whole and the selection of questions in particular, was targeted to gain  
179 new insights and perspectives on the development opportunities that communities have after  
180 experiencing extreme environmental and/or climate change related events. A total 119 people  
181 participated in the semi-structured interviews, which primarily sought to solicit qualitative information  
182 obtained from selected community leaders and youths. These were chosen based on two main criteria:

- 183 a) Community leaders are knowledgeable individuals and with the authority to implement actions  
184 b) Household heads since these are the ones who usually provide answers o behalf of a household

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<sup>3</sup> Although Bougainville Island is geographically the largest island forming part of the Solomon Islands archipelago, it is not politically a part of the nation of Solomon Islands but belongs to the Autonomous Region of Bougainville of Papua New Guinea, a region also referred to as Bougainville Province or the North Solomons.

- 185 c) Young representatives, as individuals who will influence the future developments on the  
186 islands and will be the ones coping with the long-term impacts of climate change  
187 d) Women groups and community representatives as persons of influence on the dynamics of the  
188 villages  
189

190 Details on the methodological approaches, selection of respondents and this study's preference  
191 for qualitative data (Silverman 2006) are further elaborated in Ha'apio *et al.* (2018, pp. 4-6). For the  
192 purpose of this paper, a focus was given on the insights from the **community leaders**, particularly in  
193 respect of **solutions** they perceive as important, in the following areas a) reconstruction strategies, b)  
194 fostering economic resilience, c) raising awareness of environmental concerns, d) minding the social  
195 impacts, e) considering water and sanitation issues f) fostering disaster preparedness and g) integrated  
196 disaster preparedness and improved community governance. Since confidentiality was assured to  
197 individuals, the subsequent section only presents the views and perspectives of the surveyed community  
198 leaders, and have been anonymised to only refer to the communities and not to specific persons.  
199 Furthermore, for reasons of space the data presented referred to their views and perspectives, as they  
200 relate to the development prospects of their communities.  
201

202 As far as the reliability of the data is concerned, it can be stated that, in line with standard  
203 approaches (e.g. Rothman, 2007) it is based on the seriousness of the sources, which have no reasons  
204 to lie, mislead or otherwise omit any details. Indeed, community leaders in the Pacific are among the  
205 most respected persons, and are local authorities in respect of traditions, values and law and order.

206 In terms of the validity of the responses provided, reference is made to Robson (2011). On this  
207 paper, the validity in the sense that the focus groups used as an instrument measures what it is designed  
208 to measure in the studied communities. Whereas the authors cannot be entirely sure that a similar study  
209 in another community would produce exactly the same results, it is clear that the method used may be  
210 deployed elsewhere and would very likely successfully collect the information and impressions from  
211 local community leaders.  
212

#### 213 **4. Results and Discussion: From adaptation to preparedness**

214 SIDS are exposed to an array of threats and natural hazards, which may also offer opportunities.  
215 According to Cuny (1994), when disasters occur, this may also provide opportunities for development.  
216 For example, Ong et al (2016) observe that recovery after disasters such as tsunamis provides  
217 opportunity to build back better for the impacted communities, and according to Luetz (2008), "the best  
218 time to 'build back better and stronger' is in the wake of a ... disaster" (p. 72). For example, this was  
219 noted after Typhoon Haiyan destroyed large parts of Tacloban City in the Philippines in November 2013  
220 (McPherson et al., 2015). Such experiences align with the notion that bad things cause suffering and  
221 tragedy, but they can also destabilise the status quo, open space for new discussions, and provide an



222 impetus to groups looking for positive changes. Further, governments and relevant authorities working  
223 within the recovery space across SIDS, and responding to climate change induced events such as  
224 cyclones and storm surges may be prompted to formulate more robust strategies in response to the risks  
225 and hazards facing affected coastal communities.

226 It is a fact that climate change adaptation efforts are needed on SIDS (Leal Filho 2015), especially  
227 those which may foster a country's development prospects. As far as solutions specific to the Solomon  
228 Islands are concerned, the subsequent section describes some of them, as well as some of the lessons  
229 learned, which may be implemented in some of the villages on the islands.

230

#### 231 **4.1 A reconstruction strategy**

232 In the Solomon Islands, similar approaches were also taken at Keigold Village on Ranogha and  
233 Tapurai village on Simbo Islands. At Mondo Village there was a landslide after an earthquake, which  
234 destroyed almost one third of the village and claimed two lives. As a result, 80 per cent of the residents  
235 of the old community (Mondo village) decided to resettle at a new location now called Keigold Village,  
236 which is located 145m above sea level (Ha'apio et al, 2017). While at Tapurai, the whole village was  
237 washed away by strong waves, killing 7 people in the process, with the houses being relocated 50 meters  
238 up a hill at the back of the same village (Lauer et al., 2013). This study focused mainly on how Mondo  
239 and Keigold communities responded to the extreme events including sea level rises, landslides, cyclones,  
240 and other disasters. Besides, there were several locations, where communities needed to relocate because  
241 of sea level rises (Albert et al, 2016; Birk, 2012; Luetz & Havea, 2018). Such events provided the  
242 communities, stakeholders, provincial and national governments a fresh opportunity to cooperate and  
243 relocate the respective villagers from their old vulnerable locations near the coastlines, which are  
244 physically exposed to storm surges, rough seas, and salt water inundations (Birk & Rasmussem, 2014).  
245 Following the resettlement of the two villages Keigold and Tapurai, the new destination sites are now  
246 located higher above sea level and have thus afforded the affected communities an opportunity to  
247 mainstream disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into their new village design.

248 The old village at Mondo was heavily populated (Interview, 8 August 2015). From observation,  
249 there will be no more space for the new families to build new homes, make new gardens or small holding  
250 farms. However, the resettlement site at the new Keigold village provides all these opportunities.

251

#### 252 **4.2 Fostering economic resilience**

253 The flooding and soil erosion of coastal areas have forced affected communities to participate in  
254 mangrove rehabilitations, coral reef replanting and coastal area conservation (Ha'apio & Gonzalez,  
255 2015). This physically improves the communities' resilience to the impact of sea level rise and surging  
256 storms (Albert & Schwarz 2013; Gillie, 1992). According to Lacambra et al. (2013), the mangroves  
257 have provided the villages natural barriers to cyclones and incoming waves. The coral reefs also act as  
258 an additional layer or barrier to increasing wave energy. These developments have offered opportunities

259 for aid donors to provide financial assistance to the communities to improve their resilience. For  
260 example, the governments of US, Australia and Germany have provided between USD\$400 to USD\$500  
261 million dollars for communities across the Coral Triangle Region (Indonesia, Papua New Guinea,  
262 Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste) to rehabilitate their coral reefs (Thomas et al., 2017;  
263 Rosen & Olsson, 2013). In the Solomon Islands, there were 89 locally managed marine protected areas  
264 (LMPA) established during the past 10 years. These LMPAs are now owned and operated by the village  
265 communities. Some of these LMPAs are established under the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) Program  
266 in the country.

267 The objective of these LMPAs is to replenish and revitalise the coral reefs so that the level of  
268 biodiversity at these areas can increase (White et al., 2014; Sulu et al, 2002). This will enable the increase  
269 in volumes and species of fish at the no-take zone and also have a flow-on effect into the areas allocated  
270 for fishing. The communities will increase the volume of their catches for sale to earn the needed income  
271 to support their livelihoods. This is an opportunity to increase the level of their adaptive capacity by  
272 increasing the socio-economic status in the community and enhance food security (Schwarz et al, 2011).

273 On the other hand, relocation of some of the villages provides new areas for the communities to  
274 expand into gardening or farming (Bennett, 1974; Cleasby et al, 2014; Lacey 2011; Keen & McNeil,  
275 2016). For example, villagers at the Keigold community participate in farming potatoes, yams, taro,  
276 cassava and other root crops for consumption with extra to sell at Gizo Township (Ha'apio et al., 2017).  
277 The extra money received now assists community members to pay for their children's school fees and  
278 basic necessities to support their households.

279

#### 280 **4.3 Raising awareness of environmental concerns**

281 At the Keigold community, more young people are concerned about the future of their environment  
282 (Ha'apio et al., 2017). This is because the Mondo community cannot indefinitely support the growing  
283 size of their population into the future. Thus, relocation to Keigold village has eased the dependency  
284 that the Mondo Village people previously had on the surrounding environment to support the whole  
285 village population. Since more than 80 per cent of the households migrated to Keigold, the environment  
286 surrounding the old village is now in a better position to enable its biodiversity to replenish. This has  
287 also allowed the community to properly plan and strategize on how to implement its zoning strategy at  
288 its new location (Interview, 8 August 2015). At the new relocation site, the village is well-planned and  
289 villagers take more responsibility for looking after and taking care of their environment. For example,  
290 if a new household moves into the village, the appointed tribal leader will allocate the precise location  
291 where to build the house, in addition to the area allotted to cultivate or farm for the household. These  
292 processes also involve the cutting of trees for timber required for the household construction.

293 At the new site, most households now use solar for their main source of energy for lighting. At the  
294 old village, the majority used lanterns with kerosene, but with the introduction of iron roofing, many

295 households have since moved to solar installations, hence reducing their level of greenhouse gas  
296 emissions.

297

#### 298 **4.4 Minding the social Impacts**

299 Initially there was a split within the community on whether to move to the new Keigold site or  
300 remain at the old Mondo Village. This process created some degree of distrust amongst those who  
301 remained and those who chose to migrate to the new village. According to interviews conducted on site  
302 (8 August 2015), about 80 per cent of households who chose to relocate to the new site found that the  
303 migration process created an opportunity to rekindle a certain bond of unity amongst the villagers and  
304 their villager elder. The village elder had expressed that he felt it was his duty as chief to allocate the  
305 portion of his tribal land for the community to settle.

306 With the establishment of the new village at Keigold, New Zealand Aid has provided money to  
307 build a new primary school at the new site (School Principal, pers. comm. 2015). Having been built with  
308 permanent building materials, the new school has significantly increased the number of classrooms and  
309 teaching staff and enrolment overall. Prior to the relocation, the former school only enrolled students  
310 from grade 1 up to grade 4. Pupils in grades 5 and 6 were required to transfer to Buri Senior Primary  
311 School. Buri Primary School is located about 25 km away from this community. Now Keigold  
312 community can enrol pupils from grades 1 to 6 as the school now has the capacity to accommodate a  
313 significantly larger number of students.

314 There was also a new clinic built at the relocation site. The clinic established at the old village was  
315 unable to accommodate many patients at one time, and in several ways cannot compare with the new  
316 health centre (Keigold Registered Nurse, pers. comm. 2015). Hence the relocation has provided an  
317 opportunity for the provincial government to invest in a new clinic, which can now also service patients  
318 from the surrounding villages. A new church was also built at the new site with better facilities overall,  
319 including rest house and community playing field, all of which is critical for community establishment.  
320 All these new opportunities arose from the implementation of the relocation strategies.

321

#### 322 **4.5 Considering water and sanitation issues**

323 At the new village, a water supply was constructed, which now distributes clean water to all the  
324 households in the community. By comparison, the old Mondo Village had leaking pipes and running  
325 taps at various locations in the village. Because of this condition, the supply of water throughout the  
326 village is progressively declining and it would be expensive to improve the entire water supply system  
327 in the village (Interview, 8 August 2015).

328 At the new Keigold Village, there was funding by donor aid partners for the construction of a new  
329 water supply (Village Chief, pers. comm. 2015). The funding covers construction of pipes from a new  
330 water source to a central location where water is stored in a tank. This allows the village to have enough

331 supply of water when the pipe is damaged and necessary repair work is done. By comparison, the old  
332 village had no such water storage facility.

333 Further, toilet latrine systems are being built at various zones in the new community so that the  
334 people can use these toilet and sanitation systems rather than needing to resort to nearby bushes or  
335 coastal sea areas as used to be the custom at the old village (Interview, 9 August 2015). According to  
336 Radio New Zealand (5 August 2009),<sup>4</sup> students from Australia and Papua New Guinea have helped  
337 construct latrines in a Solomon Islands village that had to be relocated following the devastating  
338 earthquake and tsunami in 2007. It was concluded that this contributed positively to the health and  
339 wellbeing of the new community (ibid). During diarrheal outbreaks, human wellbeing can be  
340 significantly diminished in the absence of proper toilet facilities, as was noted at the old village. The  
341 latrines were donated by an NGO, Emergency Architect Australia, and were installed by 15 students  
342 from the University of Queensland (Australia), and 2 students from the University of Lae (Papua New  
343 Guinea).

344

#### 345 **4.6 Fostering disaster preparedness: Hard systems**

346 At the new village, most homes were constructed using sawn timber and iron roofing, resulting in  
347 stronger and higher building structures overall. This is similar to adoption of new building code to resist  
348 future extreme events (Bayliss-Smith, 1988; Yates & Anderson-Berry 2004; Burslem et al, 2000) in  
349 other parts of the country. The inland movement (away from the coastline area) also implies that people  
350 are now located further away from any possible impact from Tsunamis. Secondly, the houses were built  
351 to withstand earthquakes, heavy rains and stronger winds. Furthermore, the preparedness of the village  
352 is reflected in the way villagers arranged and organised their new village. For example, they divided the  
353 village into three zones, the southern, central and northern zone. The southern end of the village is the  
354 main entrance to the village. It hosts the village health centre (clinic) and maintains a radio connection  
355 to all other parts of the country. This is a strategic location since the health centre also serves villagers  
356 from the surrounding communities. Given this location at the entrance to the village makes it easy for  
357 villagers from other communities to avail themselves of medical services following accidents or sudden  
358 bouts of sickness (Interview, 8 August 2015). The primary school is located at the northern end of the  
359 village. This allows for the privacy of the children to attend primary education in a manner that is  
360 sheltered from the hustle of disturbances in the community. Further, children are safer at this location  
361 from any possible storm surge impacts that may cause flooding near the coastline, which is closer to the  
362 southern part of the village. At the central zone is the church building, rest house and proposed  
363 community hall. During disaster events such as cyclones, earthquakes and Tsunamis, every community  
364 member may access this safe place because of the central location in the community.

365

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/185236/relocated-village-in-solomon-islands-gets-new-latrines>

#### 366 **4.7 Integrated disaster preparedness: Improved community governance**

367 Finally, the new site has also seen the establishment of a new community governance structure  
368 (Interview, 8 August 2015) at Keigold. Besides chiefs and church leaders, a Village Organiser was  
369 appointed whose sole responsibility now is to ensure that programs and activities in the community are  
370 well planned and executed. Importantly, the role of the Village Organiser includes providing awareness  
371 to the village community on what to do in the event of a disaster. For example, during earthquakes the  
372 community members are instructed to run to the centre of the village to seek refuge. During cyclones,  
373 households are advised to store in place necessary items such as mats, kerosene lamps, or solar or  
374 battery-powered torch lights with batteries always fully charged. These measures are intended to ensure  
375 that during and following disaster events (and before relief supplies arrive), villagers have prearranged  
376 the necessary equipment and processes to adapt and survive *in situ*. A similar study also identified the  
377 evacuation centre in the capital Honiara to prepare for times of extreme events (Reuben & Lowly 2016).

378 According to the Village Organiser, several workshops were also held following the move to the  
379 new site, which have seen multiple NGOs come and train the villagers on what to do, before, during and  
380 after disaster events. This momentum needs to be maintained as the villager population continues to  
381 increase. According to Singhal et al. (2016), the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency  
382 Management Agency<sup>5</sup> has defined disaster “preparedness” as “a continuous cycle of planning,  
383 organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in an effort to ensure  
384 effective coordination during incident response” (Homeland Security: Plan and Prepare for Disasters  
385 2017, p. 2). This is consistent with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management  
386 and Meteorology (MECDM, 2016) policy to mainstream climate change risk reduction into adaptation  
387 strategies. The Village Chief who is also the Provincial Assembly Member confirmed this in an  
388 interview with the principal researcher.

389 Finally, Chief Herrick has been enlisted as a key player within a comprehensive plan for multi-  
390 hazard emergency management. Emergency planners should conduct a community hazard-vulnerability  
391 analysis to identify the types of environmental extremes (cyclones, earthquakes, storm surges, heavy  
392 rains and tsunamis). At the new village the community, with the assistance of the Chief and the Village  
393 Organiser, ensures that these are put in place.

394

#### 395 **5. Conclusion: A short synthesis of the main lessons learned**

396 Climate change and rising sea levels are threatening the low-lying lands of the Solomon Islands  
397 and impair their development prospects. In the Lau Lagoon, low-lying coastal areas of Malaita, and  
398 elsewhere on atolls, the impacts of climate change on rural populations are especially conspicuous. The  
399 combination of sea level rises, and extreme events such as floods and extended periods of drought,  
400 means that the livelihoods of thousands of people in the country are under significant pressure. As this

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dhs.gov/topic/plan-and-prepare-disasters>

401 paper has shown, SIDS such as the Solomon Islands face a wide range of pressures from climate change  
402 and there is a pressing need to find reliable ways to adapt to these new challenges.

403 Understanding climate-human interactions in SIDS is an important step in addressing their  
404 problems (Nunn, Kumar 2018) and, inter-alia, in finding ways to foster their development opportunities.  
405 The examples presented in this paper, which are on the one hand specific to the Solomon Islands, are  
406 also exemplary of the diverse range of climate change related coastal pressures elsewhere in the world,  
407 on the other. They illustrate the need to seek a better understanding of climate change impacts on islands,  
408 and to identify suitable local solutions.

409 Apart from its focus on successful attempts of SIDS to cope with climate change, the novelty of  
410 the article resides on the fact that is one of the few pieces which have attempted to focus on successful  
411 climate change adaptation initiatives on Solomon Islands (a nation seldom represented in the literature)  
412 SIDS. The paper not only presents an overview of pertinent challenges faced, but also introduces two  
413 case studies from the Solomon Islands, which illustrate how much can be achieved by systematically  
414 pursuing adaptation strategies, especially in the Pacific region

415 The following bulleted shortlist highlights some of the key lessons learned and documented in this  
416 paper:

- 417 • Resettlement can be a (re)constructive adaptation response following rapid-onset disaster events  
418 such as landslides or cyclonic storm surges, but may similarly offer benefits in geographical  
419 areas prone to be affected by slow-onset problems such as anomalous precipitation or recurrent  
420 droughts.
- 421 • Resettlement related reconstruction can jump-start new projects (schools, clinics, sanitation  
422 works, latrines, clean water provision, etc.) while concurrently creating opportunities for multi-  
423 stakeholder collaboration that may bring together the diverse contributions of communities,  
424 provincial and national governments, donors, and development actors.
- 425 • The implementation of related adaptation measures may help communities to leapfrog stages of  
426 development, which may lead to some benefits, including reductions in greenhouse gas  
427 emissions. For example, at the relocation site, most households now use solar for their main  
428 source of energy for lighting, whereas previously kerosene was the default energy source used  
429 at the old village site.
- 430 • At the community level, the experience of rapid-onset disaster events may raise awareness on  
431 the benefits of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures  
432 into the planning and design processes of future villages.
- 433 • Integrated approaches can spawn or support improvements and collaborations in areas of  
434 environmental conservation or remediation (rehabilitation of mangroves, coral belts, etc.),  
435 sustainable farming practices, donor engagements, and enhanced provincial and national  
436 governance (as exemplified by the appointment of the Village Organiser).

437

438 Finally, there remains a pressing need to ensure that climate change adaptation measures are  
439 broadly agreed and indelibly supported and sustained by government over time, to ensure that the  
440 Solomon Islands are able to further its economic and social development at the same time that the  
441 country as a whole tries to adapt to a changing climate.

442

## 443 **6. Limitations**

444 The paper focused primarily on community leaders and did not examine in depth the opinion of the  
445 other groups. While the above synthesised benefits and lessons learned were observed in the wake of  
446 rapid-onset disaster events that resulted in reactionary relocation responses, albeit culminating in several  
447 positive outcomes, there are suggestions in the literature that anticipatory migration planning in atoll  
448 environments may offer further benefits and that policy maker foresight and anticipatory preparedness  
449 can enable more benign migration processes.” (Luetz 2017). This paper did not put an emphasis on  
450 migration. Instead, it focused on other possible solutions, based on local and indigenous knowledge and  
451 wisdom.

452

## 453 **Conflict of Interest Statement**

454 We declare that we have no financial and personal relationships with other people or  
455 organizations.

456

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**Table 1: Climate change related challenges in the Solomon Islands**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Related literature</b>	<b>Possible solutions</b>
Sea level rise	<p>Albert, S., Leon, J. X., Grinham, A. R., Church, J. A., Gibbes, B. R., &amp; Woodroffe, C. D. (2016). Interactions between sea-level rise and wave exposure on reef island dynamics in the Solomon Islands. <i>Environmental Research Letters</i>, 11(5), 054011.</p> <p>Birk, T. (2012). Relocation of reef and atoll island communities as an adaptation to climate change? Learning from experience in Solomon Islands. <i>Climate Change and Human Mobility: Global Challenges to the Social Sciences</i>. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 81-109.</p> <p>Luetz J.M. &amp; Havea P.H. (2018) “We’re not Refugees, We’ll Stay Here Until We Die!”—Climate Change Adaptation and Migration Experiences Gathered from the Tulun and Nissan Atolls of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. In: Leal Filho W. (eds) <i>Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Strategies for Coastal Communities</i>. Climate Change Management. Springer, Cham.</p>	<p>Migration / Relocation of lower line communities to higher lands, preferring familiar and proximate locations over unfamiliar and non-proximate destinations</p> <p>Enhancing migration through improving adaptive capacity, socioeconomic status, and forward planning</p> <p>Promoting education to limit population growth, while concurrently raising <i>in situ</i> and <i>ex situ</i> adaptive capacity</p>
Salt intrusion	<p>Birk, T., &amp; Rasmussen, K. (2014, February). Migration from atolls as climate change adaptation: Current practices, barriers and options in Solomon Islands. In <i>Natural Resources Forum</i> (Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 1-13).</p> <p>McDonald, J. (2005). Provincial Strengthening and Environmental Governance in the Solomon Islands. <i>Asia Pac. J. Envntl. L.</i>, 9, 293.</p>	<p>Introduction of salt resistant crops</p> <p>Relocating gardens to higher ground</p>
Coastal erosion	<p>Albert, J. A., &amp; Schwarz, A. M. (2013). Mangrove management in Solomon Islands: Case studies from Malaita Province. CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems. Penang, Malaysia. <i>Policy Brief: AAS-2013-14</i>.</p> <p>Gillie, R. D. (1992). <i>Ranadi Beach Coastal Erosion Study: Honiara, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands</i>. SOPAC.</p> <p>Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, disaster management and Meteorology (MECDM), 2016, <a href="http://www.mecdm.gov.sb/disasters/hazards/coastal-erosion/13-disaster-management.html">http://www.mecdm.gov.sb/disasters/hazards/coastal-erosion/13-disaster-management.html</a></p>	<p>Targeted planting of mangroves where possible and proper planning of coastline development</p> <p>Moving to higher ground where/when available</p> <p>Disaster alerts and corresponding risk reduction activities</p>
Flash floods	<p>Keen, M., &amp; McNeil, A. (2016). After the Floods: Urban Displacement, Lessons from Solomon Islands. <i>SSGM In Brief</i>, 13.</p> <p>Reuben, R., &amp; Lowry, J. H. (2016). Effectiveness of evacuation facilities in Honiara City, Solomon Islands: a spatial perspective. <i>Natural Hazards</i>, 82(1), 227-244.</p> <p>Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, disaster management and Meteorology (MECDM), 2016 <a href="http://www.mecdm.gov.sb/disasters/hazards/coastal-erosion/13-disaster-management.html">http://www.mecdm.gov.sb/disasters/hazards/coastal-erosion/13-disaster-management.html</a></p>	<p>Zoning and planning to ensure communities are well-prepared for incidences of flooding</p> <p>Where possible there should be technology to prevent or limit future floods</p> <p>Incorporating disaster risk reduction into adaptation planning</p>
Landslides	<p>Trustrum, N. A., Whitehouse, I. E., &amp; Blaschke, P. M. (1989). Flood and landslide hazard, northern Guadalcanal,</p>	<p>Ensuring that communities are located away from landslide prone areas</p>

	<p>Solomon Islands. <i>DSIR Land and Soil Sciences Contract Report</i>, 89(07).</p> <p>McAdoo, B. G., Moore, A., &amp; Baumwoll, J. (2009). Indigenous knowledge and the near field population response during the 2007 Solomon Islands tsunami. <i>Natural Hazards</i>, 48(1), 73-82.</p> <p>Fritz, H. M., &amp; Kalligeris, N. (2008). Ancestral heritage saves tribes during 1 April 2007 Solomon Islands tsunami. <i>Geophysical Research Letters</i>, 35(1).</p>	<p>Preserving important historical knowledge to guide communities in identifying and implementing appropriate future development efforts</p>
Cyclones and storm surges	<p>Bayliss-Smith, T. P. (1988). The role of hurricanes in the development of reef islands, Ontong Java Atoll, Solomon Islands. <i>Geographical Journal</i>, 377-391.</p> <p>Yates, L., &amp; Anderson-Berry, L. (2004). The Societal and Environmental Impacts of Cyclone Zoe and the Effectiveness of the Tropical Cyclone Warning Systems in Tikopia and Anuta Solomon Islands: December 26-29, 2002. <i>Australian Journal of Emergency Management, The</i>, 19(1), 16.</p> <p>Burslem, D. F. R. P., Whitmore, T. C., &amp; Brown, G. C. (2000). Short - term effects of cyclone impact and long - term recovery of tropical rain forest on Kolombangara, Solomon Islands. <i>Journal of Ecology</i>, 88(6), 1063-1078.</p>	<p>Introducing community level supported building codes</p> <p>Instituting timely warning systems and implementing cyclone resistant building codes at community level</p> <p>Relocating people and infrastructure away from cyclone exposed areas (especially in respect of impacts from wind exposure and storm surges)</p>
Food insecurity	<p>Rasmussen, K., May, W., Birk, T., Mataki, M., Mertz, O., &amp; Yee, D. (2009). Climate change on three Polynesian outliers in the Solomon Islands: impacts, vulnerability and adaptation. <i>Geografisk Tidsskrift-Danish Journal of Geography</i>, 109(1), 1-13.</p> <p>Schwarz, A. M., Béné, C., Bennett, G., Boso, D., Hilly, Z., Paul, C., ... &amp; Andrew, N. (2011). Vulnerability and resilience of remote rural communities to shocks and global changes: Empirical analysis from Solomon Islands. <i>Global Environmental Change</i>, 21(3), 1128-1140.</p> <p>Cleasby, N., Schwarz, A. M., Phillips, M., Paul, C., Pant, J., Oeta, J., ... &amp; Kori, M. (2014). The socio-economic context for improving food security through land based aquaculture in Solomon Islands: A peri-urban case study. <i>Marine Policy</i>, 45, 89-97.</p> <p>Lacey, A. (2011). Shifting the gaze, shifting the agenda: sustainable livelihoods in urban Honiara. <i>Development</i>, 54(3), 368-375.</p>	<p>Introduction of disaster tolerant garden food, e.g., giant swamp taro</p> <p>Introduction of backyard farming</p> <p>Introduction of locally managed protected areas for communities to retain safe access during and after disaster events</p> <p>Enhancing community awareness on adaptation strategies</p>
Lower levels of salinity result in coral bleaching	<p>Sulu, R., Cumming, R., Wantiez, L. N. T., Kumar, L., Mulipola, A., Lober, M., ... &amp; Pakoa, K.. (2002). Status of coral reefs in the southwest Pacific to 2002: Fiji, Nauru, New Caledonia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. <i>Status of coral reefs of the world</i>, 181-201.</p>	<p>Replanting of corals and protection from over harvesting</p>

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