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Climate Change in the Pacific Islands

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Climate change have been a major concern among Pacific Islanders since the late 1990s. During that period, *Time Magazine* featured a cover story that read: *Say Goodbye to the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and Tuvalu* from sea level rise. Since that time, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, UN and government agencies and academic researchers have been assessing the impacts of long-term climate change and seasonal to inter-annual climate variability on the Pacific Islands. The consensus is that long-term climate change will result in more extreme weather and tidal events including droughts, floods, tropical cyclones, coastal erosion, and salt water inundation. Extreme weather events already occur in the Pacific Islands and they are patterned. El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events impact rainfall, tropical cyclone and tidal patterns. In 2000, the first National Assessment of the Consequences of Climate Variability and Change concluded that long-term climate change will result in more El Niño events or a more El Niño like climate every year. The bad news is that will mean more natural disasters. The good news is that El Niño events can be predicted and people can prepare for them. The really bad news is that some Pacific Islands are already becoming uninhabitable because of erosion of land or the loss of fresh water from droughts and salt water intrusion. Many of the most vulnerable countries already overseas populations in New Zealand, the US, or larger Pacific Island countries. For some Pacific Islander abandoning their home countries will be their only option.