



CULTURE: Conserving it Together
 Suva, Fiji, 1-5 October 2018
An ICOMOS conference on heritage conservation across the Pacific

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CONFERENCE PAPER ABSTRACT

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| NAME OF PRESENTER: | Proposed panel organized by Frances Namoumou, Siteri Tikoca and Andrew Potts |
| TITLE OF PAPER: | Climate Change and Resettlement: the Role of Culture and Heritage |
| THEME: | <i>Theme 1: Heritage at Risk – Climate Change and Disasters</i> |
| PAPER ABSTRACT: | |
| <p><i>Fiji is currently in the process of relocating several traditional communities whose locations are not viable in the long term in the face of a changing climate. This panel will discuss the culture and heritage dimensions of the planned relocation of communities in the face of climate change and how this process could benefit from the engagement of heritage professionals working in partnership with local stakeholders.</i></p> <p><i>Fiji is by no means alone in facing this situation. Climate change will force millions of people to relocate worldwide. With its thousands of islands and high concentration of development in coastal areas, the Pacific Islands are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and, as such, is considered a hot-spot region; the very survival of some low-lying States, such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tokelau, and the Marshall Islands, is under threat.</i></p> <p><i>The number of people at risk of resettlement in the Pacific will be comparatively few, however. By 2050, in the worst-case scenario, 0.6 million people will face resettlement associated with climate change across the region. Nevertheless, life on a small coral atoll leaves few alternatives when the sea rises; by default, internal resettlement options will be limited. Resettlement of at-risk communities is one adaptation response. The concept is not new; an extensive body of research exists on involuntary resettlement caused by development projects, such as dam constructions, mining activity, and natural hazards. Studies have shown that development-induced resettlements expose affected communities to risks of impoverishment as a result of loss of livelihoods, resources, and human rights. Many development schemes showed a lack of concern for the social dynamics of the displaced communities; in numerous cases, people were merely an afterthought. To avoid similar mistakes and to minimise the trauma of upheaval, any proposed resettlement of island communities in response to the impacts of climate change requires very careful planning on the part of governments and other non-government agencies, yet climate-change adaptation and mitigation have not received sufficient attention</i></p> <p><i>Communities that move in anticipation of climate change, however, may leave themselves open to greater vulnerability from the move than they experienced previously. Resettlement, therefore, should always be viewed as a strategy of last resort, as any move may be maladaptive for the islanders involved.</i></p> <p><i>In light of the above, decisions on a climate change and resettlement policies need to be made today. The session will draw lessons from the current project of the Fiji government on the relocation of Vunidogoloa village. The session will examine the role of culture and heritage in this process and the possible lessons learned for resettlement policy framework. These include social and political relations between the moving and receiving communities and cultural protocols need to be part of the pre and post-resettlement processes. The session will also explore the impact of the close relationship/link between the nature/land and the people, for whom nature is a critical part of identity.</i></p> <p><i>Such a collaboration could aid Fiji and also help create a best practices program on how to empower cultural heritage that would be of use to communities and governments considering</i></p> | |



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relocation. Such a program would undeniably have the capacity to contribute to what is emerging as an enormous need for a planet, improving lives and protecting our heritage.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENTER:

Frances Namoumou, Pacific Conference of Churches

Siteri Tikoca MSc, Conservation Officer, NatureFiji-MareqetiViti

Andrew Potts, Coordinator, ICOMOS Working Group on Climate Change and Heritage