

Climate change and the Pacific: what role for domestic and international policies?

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What role for policies in responding to climate change?

- The response to climate change is not just about funding
 - Whether for renewable energy
 - Or adaptation
- It is also, and more importantly, about policies
 - And not just climate policies, but economic policies as well.

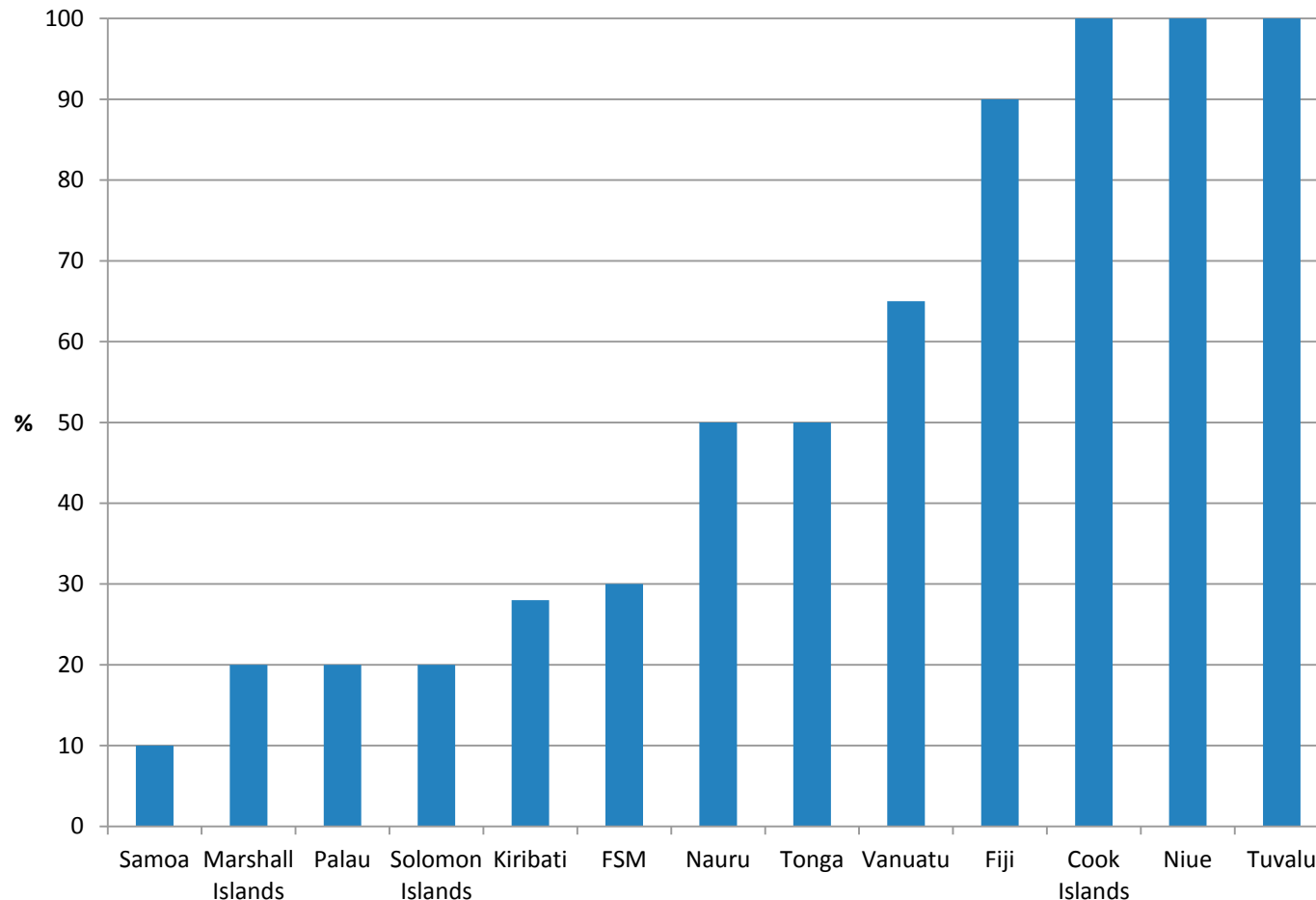
Topics

- Domestic mitigation policies
- International mitigation stance
- Adaptation

Domestic mitigation policies

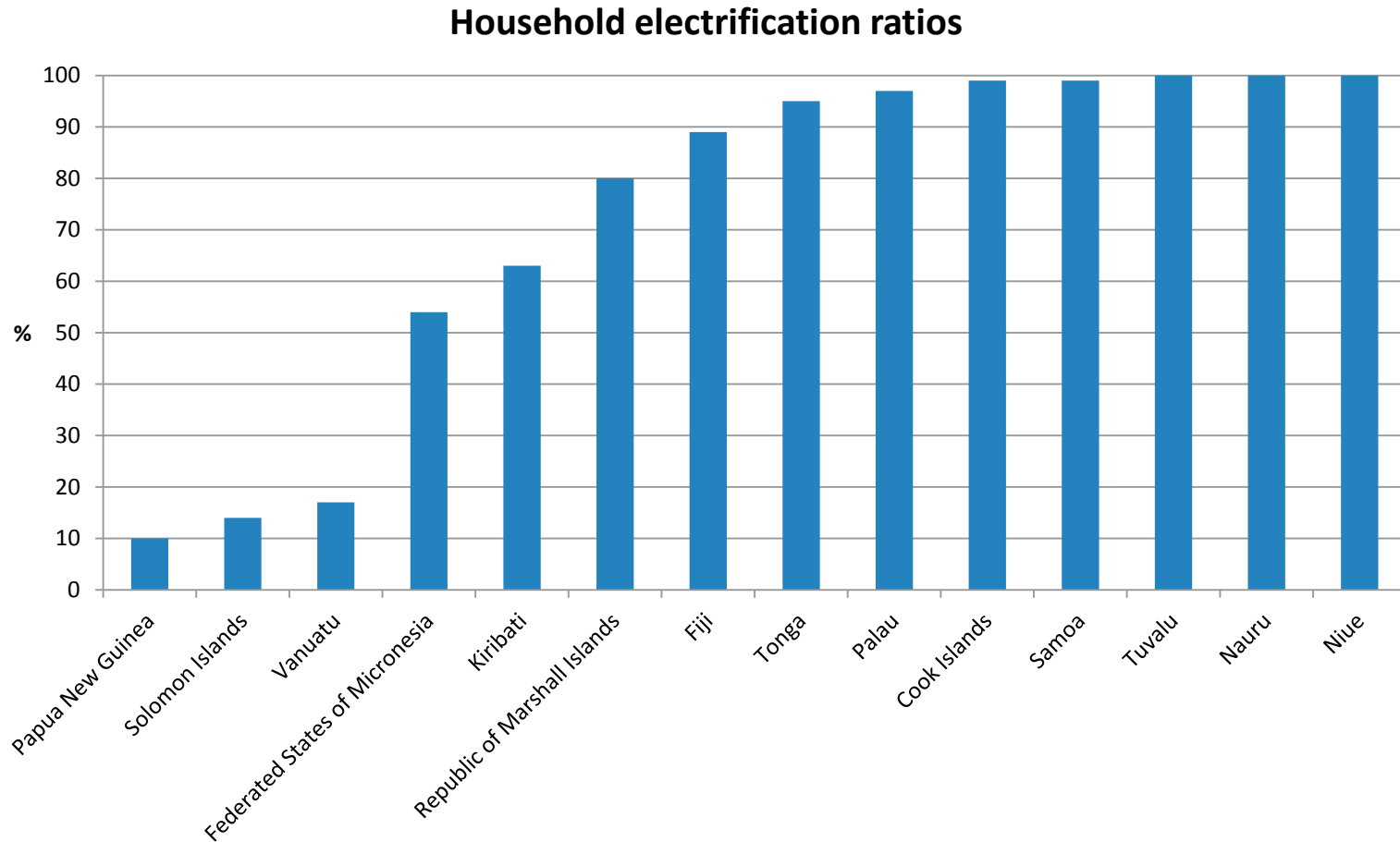
Many PICs have adopted ambitious renewable energy targets

National renewable energy targets (for 2015 or 2020)



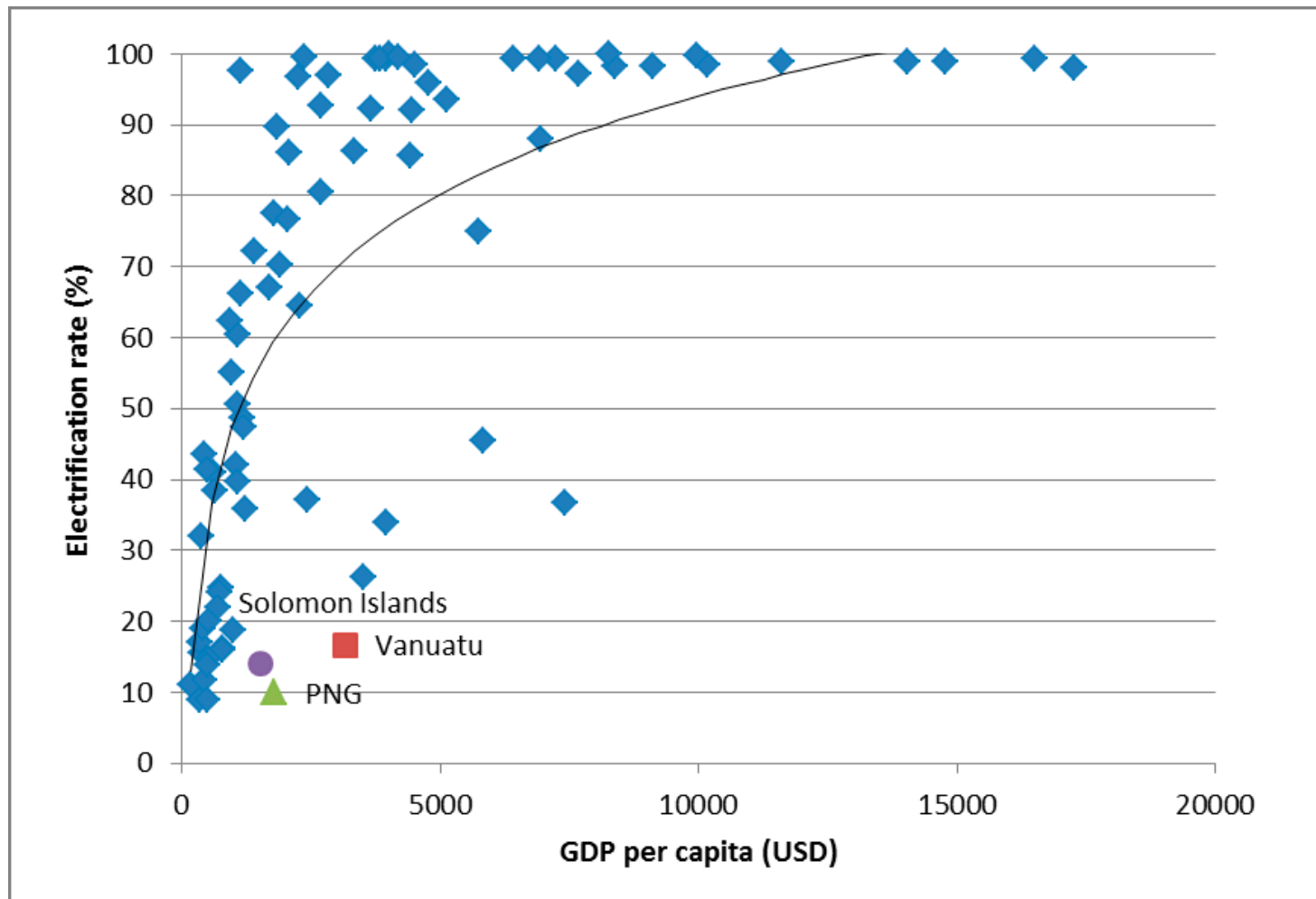
Source: Dornan (forthcoming)

Some PICs still face the challenge of rural electrification



Source: Dornan (forthcoming)

The Pacific has some of the highest levels of energy poverty in the world.



Source: Dornan (forthcoming)

And power utilities in the Pacific are often loss-making

- At least 6 out of 15 power utilities in the region are loss-making.
- In general, Pacific state-owned utilities make a low or negative return on their capital

“In PNG as in the other countries, the poor performance of the SOEs is due to weak governance arrangements, conflicting mandates, the absence of hard budget constraints, and lack of accountability.”

ADB Pacific/PNG SOE Report, 2012

Rethinking domestic mitigation

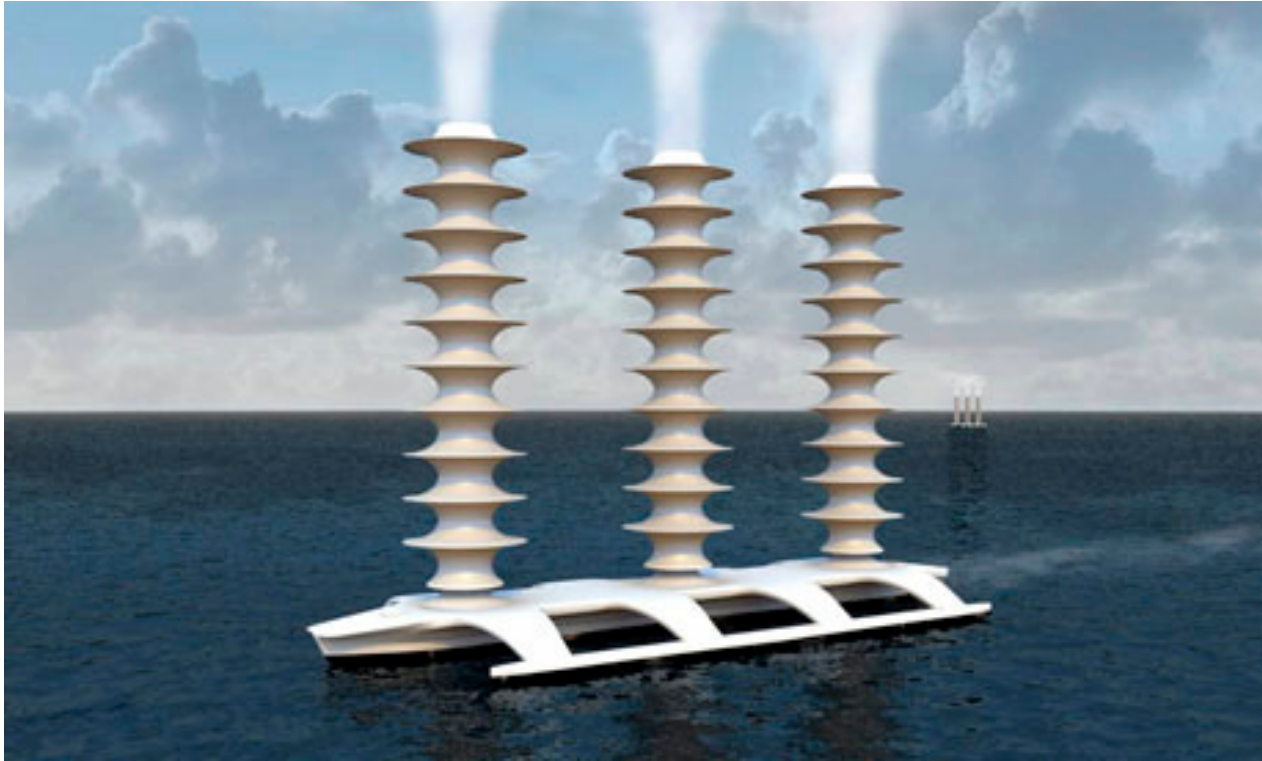
- Where necessary, revise renewable energy targets to make them more realistic.
- Prioritize rural electrification.
- Renewable energy can help with off-grid solutions, but maintenance has been the stumbling block to date.
- Tackle pricing and governance reform in the power sector.

International mitigation stance

Time for new thinking?

- So far the approach of PICs in international negotiations and fora has been to advocate for more ambitious mitigation targets.
- But the international response is far from adequate.
- An alternative, complementary approach would be to advocate international research into geoengineering.
 - i.e. ways to limit temperature increase other than by reducing emissions.

Sea-sprayers



Not necessarily a crazy idea

- Paul Crutzen (Nobel prize winner for his work on the ozone layer) endorsed geoengineering research in 2006.
- The National Academies (G8+5) have been advocating geoengineering research since 2008
- For example, 2009 UK Royal Society report:
“Further research and development of geoengineering options should be undertaken to investigate whether low risk methods can be made available if it becomes necessary to reduce the rate of warming this century.”

Geoengineering (cont.)

- Geoengineering is high risk, but so is not geoengineering.
 - The industrial revolution is itself a geoengineering experiment.
- The most vulnerable nations have the most at stake.
- The call would be only for research not deployment.

Adaptation

Adaptation: economic growth

- Climate change makes economic growth more difficult but also more important.
- Economic growth (or development) is a form of adaptation.
 - Growth makes more resources available for adaptation.
 - Addressing existing problems that would get even worse with climate change is good for growth *and* good for adaptation.
 - E.g. water pricing and infrastructure, risk management

Adaptation and migration

- Migration is also a form of adaptation, in some cases an essential form.
- But migration opportunities are very unevenly distributed across the Pacific
- Full access:
 - US compact states, Cook Islands, Niue
- Well networked:
 - Somoa (57%), Tonga (46%), Tuvalu (18%), Fiji (12%)
- Isolated:
 - PNG (0.2%), Vanuatu (0.6%), Solomons (0.3%), Kiribati (1.1%)

Note: Numbers in brackets are percentage of population living overseas in 2001.

An example: Kiribati

- The World Bank projects that 50% of Tarawa will be uninhabitable by 2100.
- Kiribati President Anote Tong:
 - “The very nature of what’s happening dictates that most of our people have to leave.”
 - “If we plan, beginning from now, we can move our people, gradually over time, with proper training, as dignified human beings living in the new community.”
 - <http://www.climate.gov.ki/2013/01/16/a-climate-change-reality/>

Migration reforms

- Climate change refugees?
 - Unpopular and unlikely
- Seasonal labour schemes?
 - Successful in NZ, but not Australia
 - Not so useful as a response to climate change
- Permanent migration windows?
 - NZ provides for Samoa and other countries; could be more widely adopted.
 - More work needed to utilize quotas
- Skilling for migration?
 - Attractive idea, but so far unsuccessful (APTC) or tiny (Australia-Kiribati nursing initiative)
- Opportunities in Asia?
 - TL in Korea

Summary: rethinking the climate change response

- Reorient the domestic mitigation focus
 - Some renewable energy targets overly ambitious
 - Rural electrification should be the priority where it is <100%
 - Emphasize power sector reform for better pricing and governance
- Reorient the international mitigation focus
 - The Pacific should become a geoengineering research advocate as well as an advocate for ambitious international mitigation
- Reorient the adaptation focus to give greater emphasis to:
 - Policies for economic growth and development
 - Migration

Summary

- Responding to climate change in the Pacific is a challenge not only for the Pacific, but for Australia, NZ and other partners/donors.

References

- Matt Dornan “Access to Electricity in Small Island Developing States of the Pacific: Issues and Challenges,” Devpolicy Discussion Paper, forthcoming.
- Kelly Wyatt “Escaping a Rising Tide: Sea Level Rise and Migration in Kiribati”, *Journal of Asian and Pacific Studies* 2013.
- Adam Millard-Ball, “The Tuvalu Syndrome: Can geoengineering solve climate’s collective action problem?”, *Climatic Change* 2012.

Thank you

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