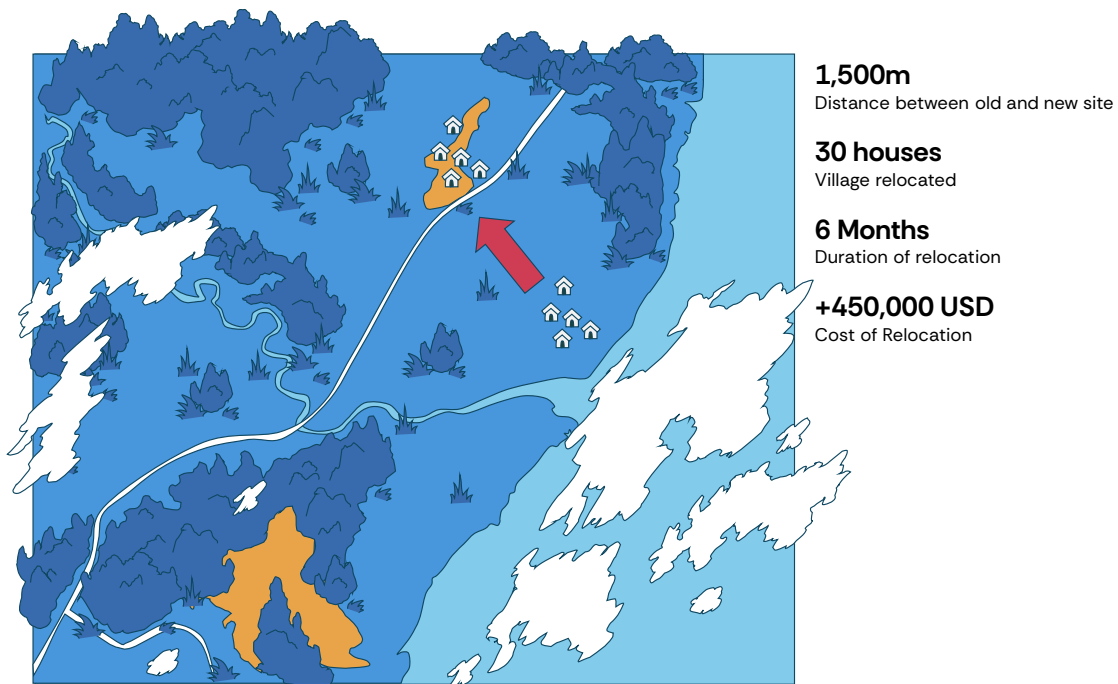


The Loss of Pacific Islands

Analysis by Andree Riquelme

In 2014, the village of **Vunidogoloa, Fiji**, was relocated approximately **1.5 km** inland as **rising sea levels**, coastal erosion, and flooding increasingly affected living conditions.



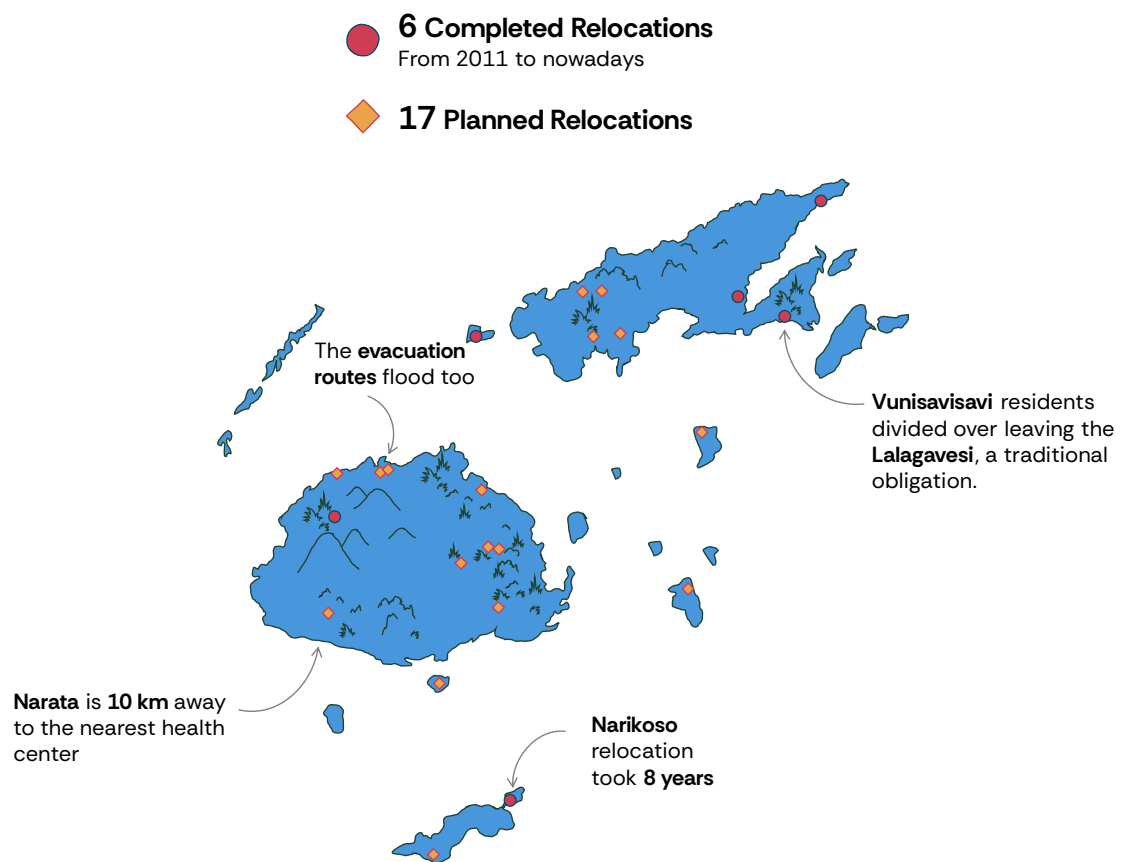
Source: UNITAR-UNOSAT, ArcGIS Web Map.

But the relocation did not happen overnight. For years, the people of Vunidogoloa had experienced the gradual impacts of coastal change, including flooding, saltwater intrusion, and damage to homes and infrastructure.

Simione Botu, Chief of Vunidogoloa, recalled: *"Over the years, I have had to move house three times because of climate change."*

His testimony illustrates that the experience of Vunidogoloa was not simply a single relocation event. The community had already been adapting to changing environmental conditions long before the official relocation took place.

Vunidogoloa was not an isolated case. **Across Fiji**, coastal communities face growing exposure to sea level rise, coastal flooding, and erosion.

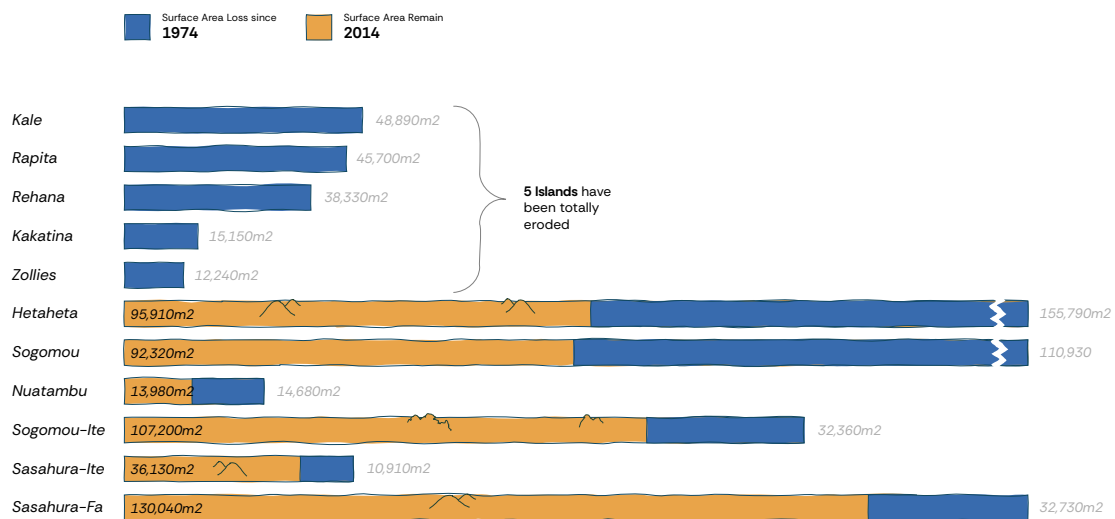


Source: UNITAR-UNOSAT, ArcGIS Web Map.

And Fiji is only one part of a broader Pacific story.

Across the Pacific Islands, rising sea levels and temperatures are creating increasing risks to land, infrastructure, livelihoods, and communities.

In the **Solomon Islands**, some of these changes have already resulted in measurable land loss.

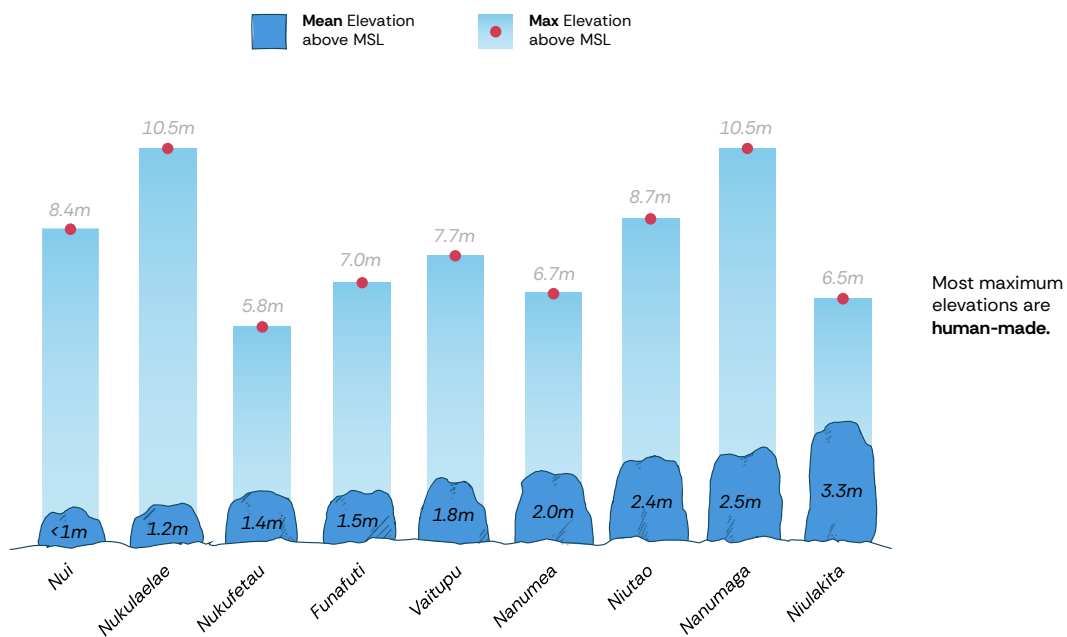


Source: *Interactions between sea-level rise and wave exposure on reef island dynamics in the Solomon Islands* (2016)

Across 11 islands, researchers documented a total net land loss of approximately **517,710 m²**, equivalent to around 72 soccer fields...

But the loss of land is not only a physical issue.

For Pacific Island communities, land is closely connected to **culture, identity, livelihoods, and continuity**. This is particularly evident in **Tuvalu**, where much of the country's territory consists of low lying atolls.



Source: *A National-Scale Coastal Flood Hazard Assessment for the Atoll Nation of Tuvalu (2024)*

The study found that Tuvalu's total land area is reduced by approximately **34.5%** during Mean High Water Springs (MHWS), illustrating how vulnerable its limited land area is to changing sea levels and tidal conditions.

Despite ongoing adaptation efforts, Tuvalu faces an increasingly uncertain future as sea level rise threatens the long-term habitability of its islands.

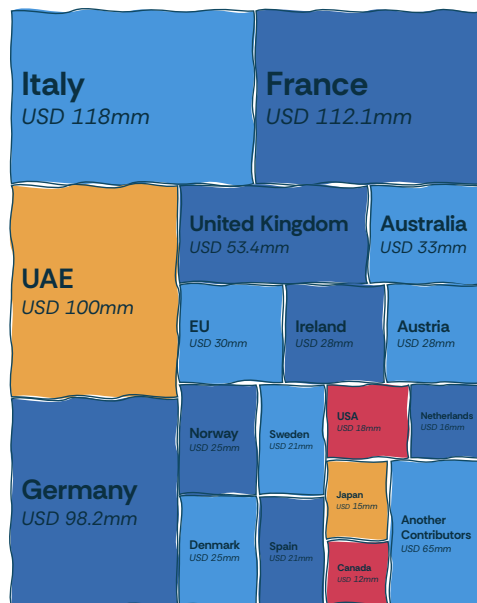
In response, Tuvalu has also begun preparing for a future in which its physical territory may become increasingly difficult to inhabit. At **COP27** in 2022, the country announced plans to preserve its culture, identity, and continuity as a state through a **digital representation of the nation**.

But Pacific Island countries are not simply facing these changes. They are also **pushing for action.**

For decades, Pacific Island states, particularly **Vanuatu**, have advocated for international financing for Loss and Damage. This decades long effort contributed to the establishment of the **Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage** (FRLD) at COP27 in 2022.

Since then, countries have pledged funds to the FRLD, but a significant gap remains between pledged and available resources.

By **September 2025**
USD 790.24mm has
been pledged to the
Fund by **27 contributors**.



But, in **May 2026** only **USD 456.14mm** has been paid.

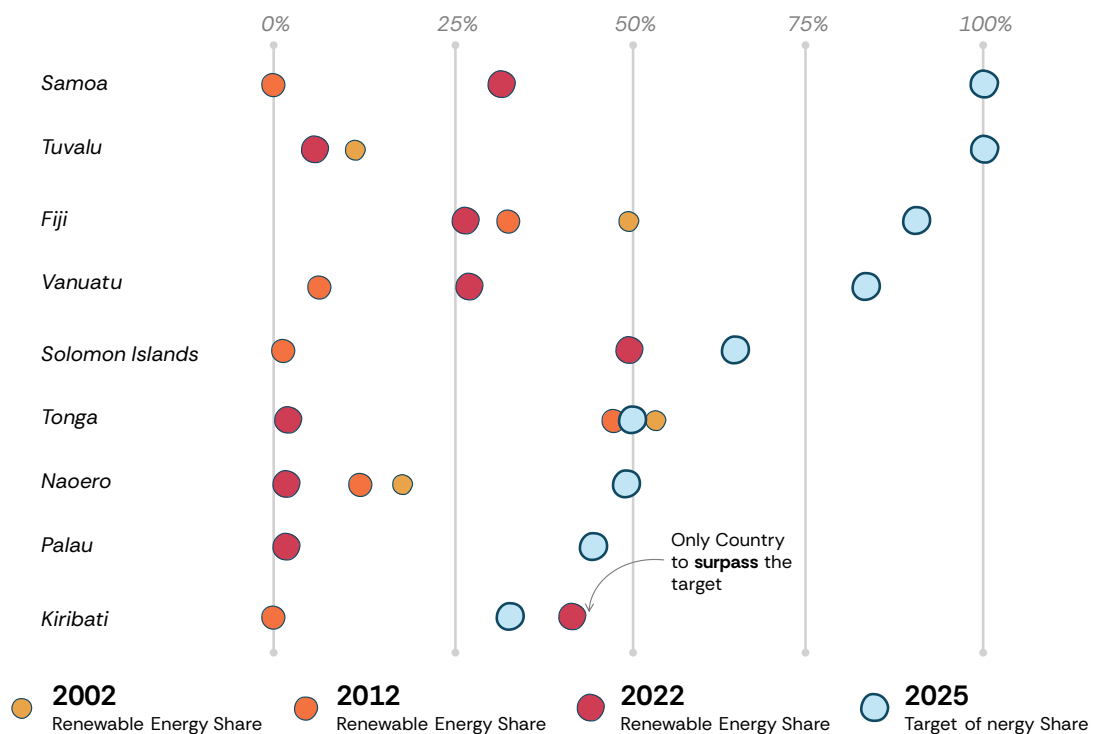
Source: *Report of the Board of the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage (2025)*

A 2024 assessment estimated global Loss and Damage financing needs at approximately **USD 395 billion** per year for developing countries.

The gap therefore extends beyond what has been pledged: it reflects the enormous difference between the resources currently being mobilized and the scale of the economic impacts climate vulnerable countries are expected to face.

But international financing is only one part of the response.

Pacific Island countries have also established **renewable energy targets**, seeking to reduce their dependence on imported fossil fuels while strengthening energy security and **addressing climate change**.



Source: *Pacific Data*, 7.2.1 Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption. Targets Compiled by Delphos.

Yet here too, a gap remains between ambition and implementation.

By 2022, only **one country** had reached or surpassed its 2025 renewable energy target.

The story of the Pacific is therefore not simply one of communities losing land.

It is a story of adaptation, advocacy, ambition, and an unfinished race against a changing climate.

From relocating villages inland, to protecting cultural identity, to demanding international financing and transforming energy systems, Pacific Island countries are already responding.

The question is no longer whether action is needed, but whether the scale and speed of that action will be enough.

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