

When the Sea *Remembers*

Five Pacific voices on a crisis they didn't create

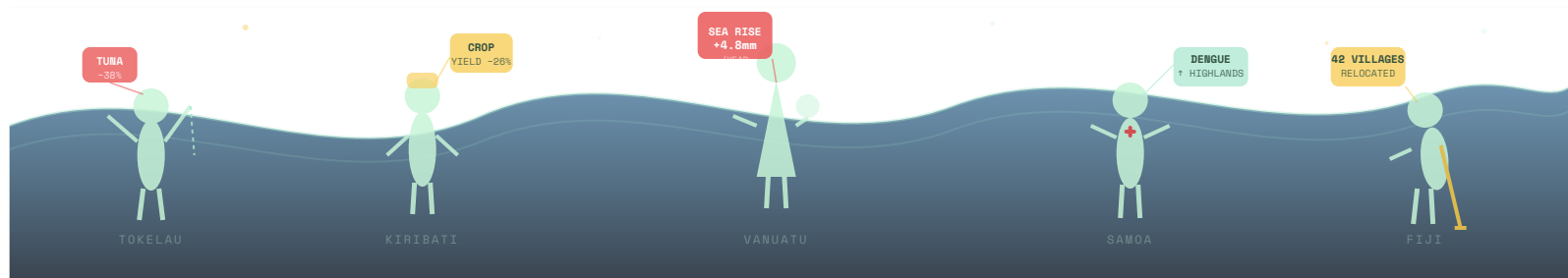
Pacific Island nations produce **less than 0.03%** of global greenhouse gas emissions — yet they face rising oceans, dying reefs, intensifying cyclones, and the displacement of communities that have called these islands home for **three thousand years**. This is not a distant future. It is already happening. These five stories put faces to the numbers drawn from official Pacific Data Hub datasets on sea surface temperatures, sea level anomalies, greenhouse gas emissions, crop yields, renewable energy, and disaster economic losses.

+3.7mm
SEA RISE PER YEAR

22
NATIONS AT RISK

0.03%
PACIFIC GHG SHARE

\$4.9B
DISASTER LOSSES 2000-24



Fono, 58

*Deep-sea fisherman,
atoll elder*

Fono has fished the same reef system his grandfather charted in song. For forty years the yellowfin arrived in the same current on the full moon of June. Three years ago they stopped coming. The water here is now half a degree warmer. The tuna follow colder water south — hundreds of kilometres beyond reach of his small boat. His community's fishing license income, which funds the health clinic and the school, has dropped sharply. The Pacific Data Hub Fisheries Management dataset records the shift in arrangement structures — but Fono lives what the numbers only hint at.

"My grandfather's songs told us where the fish would be. The ocean has changed its mind."

PDH:
DF_CLIMATE_CHANGE
· CROP_YIELD +

Nei Marawa, 67

*Taro farmer,
grandmother of seven*

Nei Marawa's taro plot was her mother's, and her mother's mother's before that. The same hands, the same songs at planting, the same prayers at harvest — for five generations. Now the plot is dead. The salt came slowly at first, carried on higher and higher king tides, until one day the leaves turned yellow and did not recover. The breadfruit and pandanus followed. PDH crop yield data shows Kiribati's root crop index has declined by 26% since 2008. Nei Marawa now depends on rice imported by ship. "We are eating from a world we never lived in," she says.

"The salt came for my garden before it came for our houses. It gives you no warning."

PDH:
DF_CLIMATE_CHANGE
· CROP_YIELD +

Sela, 34

Mother of three, Tanna Island

When Tropical Cyclone Pam made landfall in March 2015, Sela held her children in a concrete school building and listened to the roof peel away. By morning, 90% of the crops on Tanna were gone. The PDH Direct Disaster Economic Loss dataset records \$449 million — 64% of Vanuatu's entire GDP — destroyed in a single night. What the dataset cannot record is the smell of salt and broken coconut palm, or the fact that when the food ran out, it was the old women who remembered what the forest had to offer. "The yam came back before anything else," Sela says. "The elders knew it would."

"The cyclone took everything. The land gave us back what we needed — if we listened to it."

Lupe, 42

District nurse, Malaita Highland Clinic

Lupe has worked in the highlands for eighteen years. At 600 metres elevation, the air was always cool enough to keep mosquitoes away. She never once treated a case of dengue fever here. In 2021 she treated eleven. In 2023, forty-three. As surface temperatures rise — the PDH Mean Surface Temperature Anomalies dataset shows Samoa's annual anomaly reaching +0.82°C in 2024 — the mosquito line climbs. Climate change is not just floods and storms. It is a nurse watching diseases migrate uphill, watching children run fevers no one expected, in places the textbooks said were safe.

"I used to tell parents: at least we're high enough here. I don't say that anymore."

PDH:

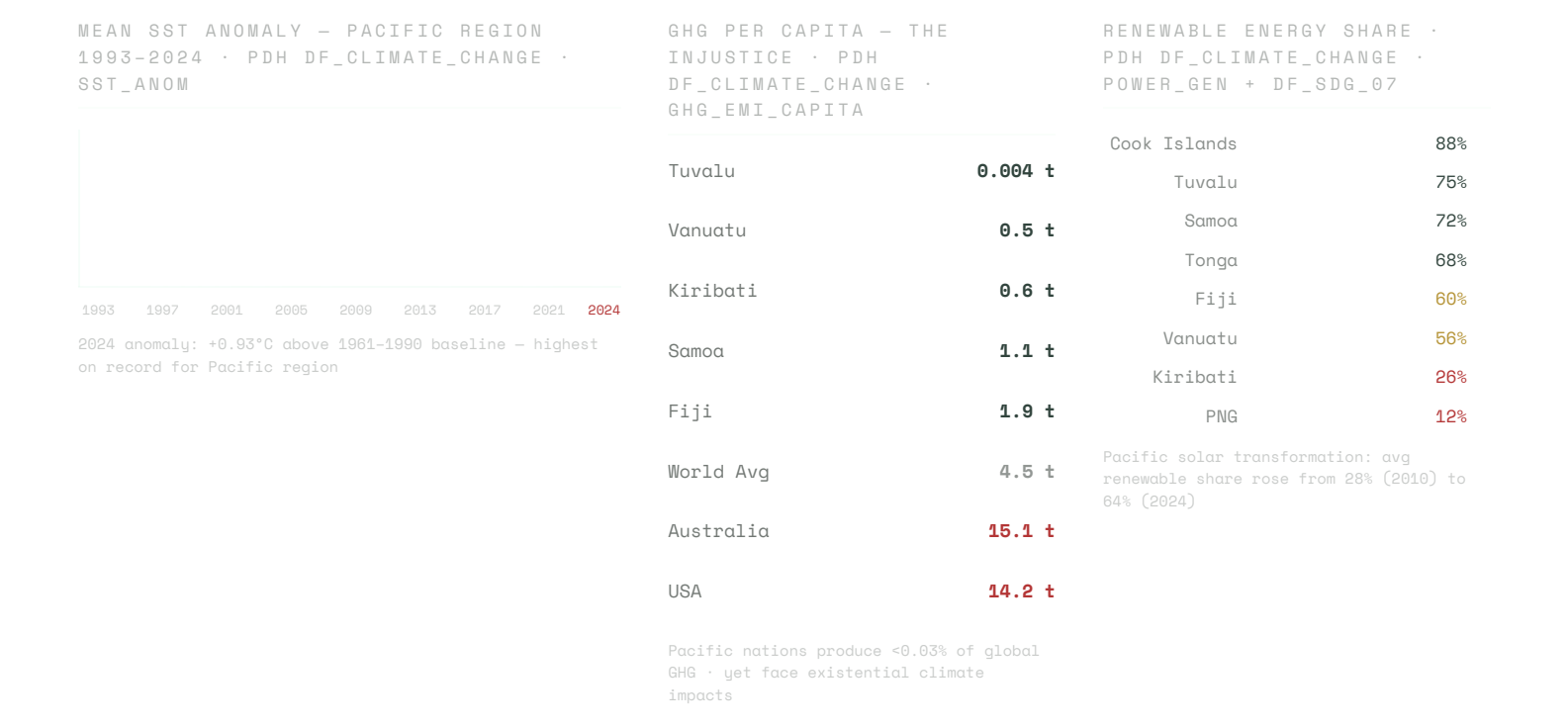
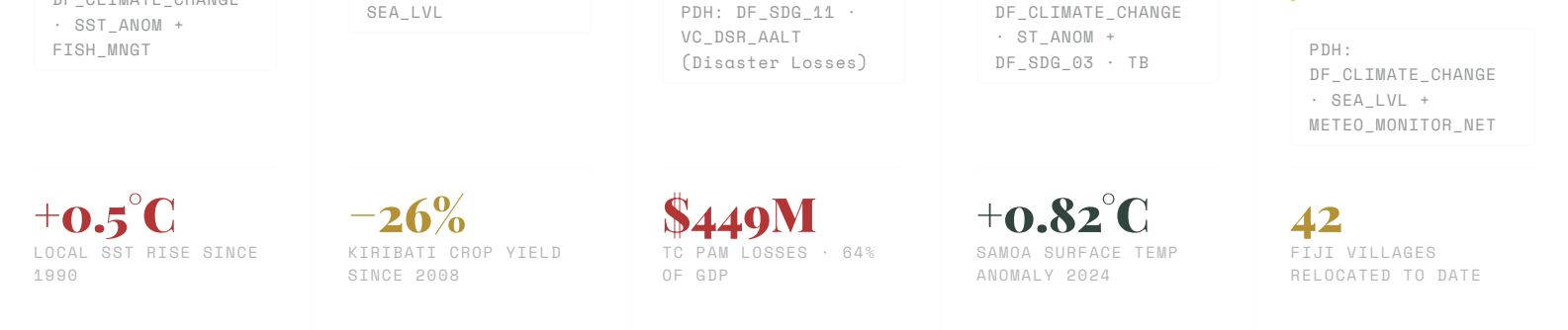
Joeli, 74

Elder, relocated village of Vunidogoloa

Joeli was born in Vunidogoloa, the coastal village that became the first in Fiji — and the world — to be officially relocated due to climate change. In 2014, the government moved the entire community two kilometres inland. They carried their cooking pots, their children's school drawings, the church Bible. They could not carry the graves. Joeli's parents are buried where the ocean now reaches at high tide. The PDH Sea Level Anomaly dataset shows Fiji's coastline retreating by roughly 3.7mm per year. To Joeli, each millimetre is a memory becoming unreachable. "The new village is fine," he says. "But home was there."

"We left the graves. That is the thing they don't put in the report. We left the graves behind."

PDH:



The Injustice in One Sentence: Tuvalu emits 0.004 tonnes of CO₂ per person. Australia emits 15.1 tonnes. Tuvalu will disappear first.



Source: PDH .Stat · DF_CLIMATE_CHANGE · GHG_EMI_CAPITA · SPC Pacific Community / UNFCCC · 2022 data

BEST CASE · SSP1-2.6 · NET-ZERO
BY 2050

+1.5°C

- › Sea level: +30–50 cm by 2100
- › Tuvalu remains largely habitable
- › Coral reefs can survive
- › Managed adaptation is possible

CURRENT PLEDGES · SSP2-4.5

+2.5°C

- › Sea level: +50–80 cm by 2100
- › Funafuti regularly uninhabitable
- › 90% of reefs severely bleached
- › Mass displacement inevitable

HIGH EMISSIONS · SSP5-8.5 · NO
ACTION

+4°C

- › Sea level: +1–2 m by 2100
- › Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands: gone
- › All reefs functionally dead
- › 500M+ climate refugees globally



100% Renewable Energy

Pacific nations are leading a solar revolution. Cook Islands: 88%. Tuvalu: 75%. Solar microgrids replacing diesel on remote islands. PDH Power Generation data tracks the transformation.

PDH: POWER_GEN · DF_SDG_07



Planned Climate Relocation

Fiji's national relocation framework — the world's first — has moved 42 villages inland. Community-led, dignity-preserving, culturally sensitive. A model being studied globally.

PDH: SEA_LVL ·
METEO_MONITOR_NET



Traditional Knowledge + Science

Pacific tabu (taboo) marine protection systems, combined with PDH fisheries data and modern monitoring, are proving more effective than externally imposed conservation models.

PDH:
FISH_MNGT_MULT_BILAT_ARGMT



Climate Justice & ICJ 2023

Vanuatu led 132 nations to secure an ICJ advisory opinion on climate obligations. The Pacific has secured Loss & Damage financing at COP27–28 — still critically underfunded at 28% of need.

UNFCCC · ICJ Advisory
Opinion 2023

*"The ocean is
rising. So are we."*

— Pacific Climate Warriors

OFFICIAL PDH .STAT DATASETS USED

Mean Sea Surface Temperature Anomalies (SST_ANOM) · Sea Level Anomalies (SEA_LVL) · Greenhouse Gas Emissions per Capita (GHG_EMI_CAPITA) · Crop Yield (CROP_YIELD) · Livestock Yield (LVST_YIELD) · Renewable Energy Share (DF_SDG_07) · Power Generation (POWER_GEN) · Direct Disaster Economic Loss (VC_DSR_AALT) · TB Incidence (DF_SDG_03 · SH_TBS_INCD) · Fisheries Management (FISH_MNGT_MULT_BILAT_ARGMT) · Meteorological Monitoring Network (METEO_MONITOR_NET) · Mean Surface Temperature Anomalies (ST_ANOM) · Rainfall Anomalies (RAIN_ANOM)

SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES & SUBMISSION DETAILS

IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) 2021–2023 · SPREP State of Environment 2020 · EM-DAT International Disaster Database · SPC Pacific Community Ocean Portal · Bureau of Meteorology Pacific Climate Data · NOAA Coral Reef Watch · ICJ Advisory Opinion on Climate Obligations 2023

Pacific Dataviz Challenge 2026 · Static Submission · Theme: Climate Change in the Pacific · Data: stats.pacificdata.org · Submission deadline: 31 August 2026