

Module 8 Animation

This is Tarawa, an atoll and the capital of Kiribati – a Small Island Developing State in the Pacific.

Tarawa is impacted by floods, storms, sea level rise, and droughts.

This is leading to the erosion of land and threats to water and food security.

It has a growing, highly exposed population.

People move there from the poorer islands of Kiribati, which are also affected by climate change.

High population density, limited economic opportunities, and insufficient infrastructure contribute to the vulnerability of much of the population of Tarawa.

Some people choose to stay and adapt to or tolerate the risk, however others may need to move.

But on a tiny atoll like Tarawa, domestic migration is not an option.

So many of the people living on Tarawa want to move internationally.

But those affected by climate change cannot easily move across borders.

This is partly because those affected by climate change are not legally recognised as refugees.

Therefore, states are not obliged to accept these people.

This was clearly shown by the case of Iona Teitiota, who was deported from New Zealand back to Kiribati as the New Zealand court refused his claim to refugee status, which means that people in Tarawa may be unable to move and so could be considered “trapped”.

However, there is hope.

The court's ruling stated that people should not be sent back to a country if the risks related to climate change represent a risk to life.

It remains to be seen how exactly this non-binding ruling will influence states and the development of future laws.