

November 1st, 2017

FIGHTING TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY: YOUNG FATHER FROM KIRIBATI APPEALS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

“My country is in peril from rising seas so I am here to appeal for urgent climate action, otherwise we will lose our homes. Kiribati is going under water,” said Eri Aram.

Eri, a 28-year old father of three from Kiribati, is in Australia this week to tell the story of his country. He will then attend the UN climate summit in Germany to ensure his people are given a voice in determining future climate policy.

For Eri, forced relocation as a result of climate change is a very real and grim prospect.

“Every year my wife and I talk about the having to leave Kiribati due to sea level rise. But we and our children are i-Kiribati, Kiribati is our home, it is our language, traditions, culture and we don’t want to lose it,” he said.

As the ambassador of Caritas Australia’s latest report on climate change in the Pacific, Eri is calling on the Australian government to play a much stronger role in the global move to a clean energy future, including a commitment to no new coal mines.

The *Caritas State of the Environment for Oceania* report, released today, shows that sea level rise, food and water shortages and extreme weather events are wreaking havoc on people’s lives.

“Across the Pacific climate change is entrenching poverty and inequality,” said Negaya Chorley, Head of Advocacy at Caritas Australia.

Caritas urges the Australian government to match the leadership shown by many Pacific Island nations who have adopted some of the strongest renewable energy targets in the world.

“Our country is completely unprepared for what’s coming,” said Ms Chorley.

Tens of thousands of people will be made homeless by climate change. There is no whole of government approach to adequately tackle climate change and address its consequences. We need to be far more proactive and strategic in our long-term planning.”

Eri’s experience of climate change is reflected by other Pacific Islanders featured in the report.

Being a father motivates Eri to take action. “I want my kids to look up to me and I must prove that I am responsible for them and my country. I want a clear and bright future for my children, as everyone does,” he said.

To read more about the impacts of climate change in the Pacific during 2016-17, visit www.caritas.org.au/oceania-report

Caritas media contact: Interviews with Eir Aram are available. Nicole Clements on 0408 869 833 or Susan Duric on 0407 536 130 caritasmedia@caritas.org.au

More about Erietera Aram

Erietera works with the Kiribati Department of Fisheries and is a Coordinator for the International Coastal Cleanup in Tarawa, Kiribati. He has qualifications in Ocean Resources Management and dreams of opening libraries on all the islands of Kiribati.

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