



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

Comprehensive Assessment of Regional and Sub-Regional Labour Mobility Arrangements in the Pacific

December 2022



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ACRONYMS

GLOSSARY

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

FOREWORD

If there is one aspect of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent that stands out clearly as a priority, it is surely sustainable economic development. To facilitate this priority though, the region must consider strategies that promote immediate to short term wins, as well as long term economic viability. The benefits of sustainable economic development are both immediate and long term, cutting across all areas of development with positive impacts for the livelihoods and aspirations of all Pacific peoples.

A major contributor to Pacific economic growth, particularly following COVID-19, has been labour mobility. Already a key sector prior to 2020, the arrival of the pandemic on our shores led to a significant decline in economic growth, increasing the importance of labour mobility as a contributor economic development in the region.

Remittances from migrant workers and diaspora citizens form substantive contributions to GDP in some Forum economies. A 2018 report by ILO (pre-Covid 19) states that remittances into ten countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) amounted to US\$689 million. While the impacts of Covid 19 generated some downward pressure on remittance inflows, the World Bank projects that these flows into the region will expand in the post Covid-19 period.

The rising wave of migrant workers travelling overseas to meet workforce demands across the Pacific and the world provides a stream of much needed income and contribution to national GDP, however recent experiences have uncovered issues of concern.

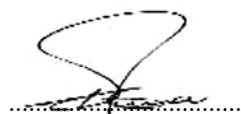
There is no question that in any labour mobility scheme, the welfare of the worker and his or her family is of paramount importance. The work-life balance of workers in overseas countries for the tens of thousands of workers, their health and safety and the overarching socio-impact on the families and communities concerned are a central consideration for any labour mobility initiative. As such it is imperative to ensure that labour mobility arrangements at regional and importantly sub-regional and bilateral levels are strengthened by promoting such safeguards to protect the interests of our workers economically, socially and culturally.

In 2020, the Secretariat identified labour mobility as a key catalyst to economic recovery in the region due to its significant contribution to GDP in the form of increased wages and remittances, as well as leading to improved livelihoods. In addition, sending nations are also seeing additional benefits linked to labour mobility including in relation to the development of workforce capabilities and skills.

In 2021, Forum Trade Ministers acknowledged the proposal for the convening of a biennial Labour Mobility Symposium and the development of a Regional Labour Mobility Strategy, pending the outcome of the Comprehensive Assessment of the Pacific Labour Mobility Arrangement. The said assessment commissioned by the Secretariat, was led by the Labour Mobility Reference Group (LMRG). To this end, I take this opportunity to convey my appreciation to the reference group chair, Fiji as the incumbent Forum Chair and Chair of the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting.

I also acknowledge the input and review provided by the Australian South Seas Islanders of Port Jackson (ASSIPJ) who are renowned for their work spanning a period of over a decade, focusing on workers social welfare, their protection and cross-cultural aspects of such arrangements.

It is my hope that the recommendations in the report will set us on the right track in ensuring we bring the founding mandate of the Forum to bear-putting our Pacific people at the centre of our regional development agenda. This comprehensive assessment is a timely resource and the Secretariat remains committed to ensuring our policy development and design builds on our collective vision under the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent.



Mr. Henry Puna
Secretary General

ACRONYMS

APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
EU	European Union
FIC	Forum Island Countries
FRPD	Framework for Rights of Persons with a Disability
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FTMM	Forum Trade Ministers Meeting
FTOM	Forum Trade Officials Meeting
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MSG SMS	MSG Skills Movement Scheme
MSGTA	Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (New Zealand)
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PACER Plus	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus
PacREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
PICTA	Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PLF	Pacific Labour Facility
PLGED	Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration
PLS	Pacific Labour Scheme
PSP	Pacific Skills Portal
PYF	Pacific Youth Framework
RSE	Recognised Seasonal Employer
SIS	Small Island States
SWP	Seasonal Workers Programme
TIS	Trade in Services
TMNP	Temporary Movement of Natural Persons
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
WTO	World Trade Organisation

GLOSSARY

Labour Mobility

Labour mobility – or mobility of workers – can be either occupational (movement along the occupational ladder) or geographic (movement across geographic locations). In the context of migration, geographic labour mobility is implied.

Note: The term “labour mobility” has the same meaning as “labour migration” but is more frequently used nowadays to reflect the dynamic and multi-directional nature of modern migration, indicating that those who move for employment purposes may do so more than once, may move across different countries of destination and that their employment abroad may not necessarily result in settlement in another country.

Migration

The movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a State.

Reintegration

A process which enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life.

Note: The various components of reintegration can be described as follows. Social reintegration implies the access by a returning migrant to public services and infrastructure in his or her country of origin, including access to health, education, housing, justice and social protection schemes. Psychosocial reintegration is the reinsertion of a returning migrant into personal support networks (friends, relatives, neighbours) and civil society structures (associations, self-help groups and other organisations). This also includes the re-engagement with the values, mores, way of living, language, moral principles, ideology, and traditions of the country of origin’s society. Economic reintegration is the process by which a returning migrant re-enters the economic life of his or her country of origin and is able to sustain a livelihood.

Source: Glossary of Migration, IOM.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2020, Forum Trade Ministers endorsed labour mobility as a standing agenda item of the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (FTMM) and Forum Trade Officials Meeting (FTOM). Ministers directed the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) to undertake a comprehensive assessment of labour mobility arrangements, including under regional and sub-regional trade agreements, and report back to the next FTMM.

2. In 2021, the FTMM acknowledged the proposal for a biennial Labour Mobility Symposium and Regional Labour Mobility Strategy and agreed to consider this work, pending the outcome of the Comprehensive Assessment of the Pacific Labour Mobility Arrangement.

3. It is worth noting, that while labour mobility provisions are included in regional and sub-regional trade agreements, these are either yet to enter into force or there is a non-binding (i.e PACER Plus) commitment on labour mobility arrangements under these agreements. In addition, even though labour mobility provisions under trade agreements are partially operational, Forum Island Countries (FIC) are engaging in bilateral labour mobility arrangements.

4. Labour mobility options have expanded for Pacific Island countries as a result of the growth of Australia's¹ Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and the introduction of the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). Labour mobility and associated remittance flows will be an important strategy to support Pacific Island economies to recover from the anticipated global recession associated with COVID-19, including the ongoing geopolitical tensions. In the longer term, Pacific governments facing the impacts of climate change are likely to deem temporary labour mobility as an adaptive strategy to mitigate the loss of productive land, livelihoods and habitat security.

5. New Zealand's long-standing special relationship with the Pacific is reflected in one of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy aims: to foster economic growth and regional integration in the Pacific. In 2021, New Zealand announced a refresh of how it engages in the Pacific region, through a Resilience approach. Under this approach, labour mobility is a key driver of both economic and fiscal, and social resilience. In August 2022, New Zealand announced the expansion of Pacific labour mobility opportunities into new sectors. These programmes are expected to be implemented from 2024.

6. Likewise, the Australian Government is committed to its Pacific neighbours as set out in Stepping up engagement with Pacific States announced in 2017, which includes increased opportunities for temporary work for Pacific citizens in Australia. In April 2022, Australia introduced a new Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) visa, which brings together its Seasonal Worker Programme, which allows employment for periods of up to nine months, and Pacific Labour Scheme, providing employment for up to four years. Both schemes allow unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled Pacific workers opportunities in a wide range of industries.

7. Remittances from labour mobility diversify household incomes and provide a safety net to meet basic needs when resource-based livelihoods are less productive, due to extreme weather events or longer-term climate trends.

8. Social issues such as disparity in wages, accommodation, health insurance and mental health continue to emerge through reports. Measures are underway to have these addressed with more consultations and analysis to be conducted with countries and workers.

9. It is recommended that consideration be given to developing a:

- regional platform for decision-making on labour mobility and policy support,
- regional labour mobility strategy; and
- regional information sharing network.

¹ RSE Impact Study 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

10. The past decade has experienced an increase of labour mobility schemes through bilateral arrangements which provided employment opportunities, remittances, skills building, investments in personal initiatives and entrepreneurship. While the schemes are intended to improve livelihoods and standards of living for many Pacific Island families, there are challenges that require a broader Forum intervention.

11. The schemes benefit receiving countries such as Australia and New Zealand where the labour market demands are high for seasonal workers and temporary employment. These schemes should be considered as Economic Programmes that are supported by development assistance to maximise their effectiveness.² Similarly, there have been benefits to other schemes and bilateral arrangements in the fisheries sector with major shipping lines, seafarers, caregiving, and tourism workers.

12. Australia uses Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) funds to support workers coming to Australia under Pacific labour programmes and provides ODA funding to help participating countries improve their capacity to support these workers. This support is what differentiates the Pacific labour programmes from other visas that allow non-citizens from other countries to work in unskilled jobs.

13. At the political level, in 2006, Leaders agreed to explore opportunities for developing labour mobility policies that would benefit Forum Island Countries. This is reflected by the inclusion of the movement of skilled professionals in regional and subregional trade agreements such as the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA), Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus), Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement (MSGTA), the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) for Forum WTO members, and the OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement - specifically the Pacific Regional Protocol (PRP).

14. The texts of these agreements provide Forum Members with integration of regional labour markets to gradually establish a single regional labour market among Forum Members. It is important to underline that most of the unskilled to semi-skilled labour mobility arrangements are bilaterally signed between Australia, and New Zealand, with individual FICs. As highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, these benefitted both sending and receiving countries during the crisis.

15. It is worth noting that the PACER Plus Agreement contains commitments under Chapter 8 on the Movement of Natural Persons, which covers employer-sponsored temporary entry and stay of skilled workers. There is also a separate non-binding Arrangement on Labour Mobility, which is formulated to strengthen Pacific labour mobility cooperation. The Arrangement establishes a Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) as a forum for discussion amongst all stakeholders, including non-signatories of the PACER Plus Agreement. The PLMAM outcome statement is also provided to Forum Trade Ministers for their consideration.

16. Consideration of labour mobility in other Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) suggest that labour mobility commitments can go beyond the skilled oriented scope of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) Mode 4. Canada, for example, in its FTAs with Colombia in 2007 and with Peru in 2008, substantially expanded the scope of commitments to include 50 categories of semi-skilled technicians including plumbers, electricians and gas and oil well drillers.³

17. In July 2018, Forum Trade Officials endorsed the development of the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy (PAfTS) to ensure effective coordination and priority setting at the regional level. This comprehensive

² Refer to Annex on Bilateral Arrangements including Ship liners

³ Kautoke, A, Pacific Update on labour mobility in the Pacer Plus, 2018.

assessment report on labour mobility aligns to the key priority areas of the PAfTS 2020-2025, services and people-to-people connectivity endorsed by the FTMM. The PAfTS was designed to help Members articulate the direction of the Blue Pacific strategy in economics and trade. While the strategy consists of core trade components, it also reflects trade-related issues such as Non-Communicable Diseases, trade digitalisation and labour mobility.

18. The comprehensive assessment also aligns to the endorsed 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Labour mobility was identified by member countries as an important source of revenue. Based on this, key recommendations in the comprehensive assessment support the vision and levels of ambition within the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, particularly under the thematic areas of People-Centred Development, Technology and Connectivity, and Resources and Economic Development.

19. In their meeting on 16 July 2021, Forum Trade Ministers:

- (i) **reaffirmed** the value of the ongoing assessment of regional labour mobility arrangements in highlighting key gaps in current labour mobility arrangements and identifying additional sectors that could merit coverage.
- (ii) **recalling** the mandate from the 2020 FTMM to include labour mobility as a standing agenda of the FTMM, **recognised** the strong call for a more inclusive and transparent regional dialogue on labour mobility.
- (iii) **acknowledged** the proposal for a Biennial Labour Mobility Symposium, and Regional Labour Mobility Strategy, and **agreed** to consider this work pending the outcome of the Comprehensive Assessment of the Pacific Labour Mobility Arrangements.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

20. The objective of this comprehensive assessment is to provide information, analysis and guidance on the current labour mobility arrangements and their impact in the region, including but not limited to the FTMM mandate in February 2020 to keep labour mobility as a standing item of the FTMM.

21. This work is linked to the PAfTS that provides high-level strategic direction on key trade priorities and aligns with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

22. The assessment will serve to inform Trade Ministers and Members on policy options on trade-related labour mobility arrangements, including existing provisions in multilateral, regional and sub-regional trade agreements such as PICTA, PACER Plus, MSGTA, OACPS-EU Partnership Agreement; and the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) for Forum WTO members.

23. Furthermore, the assessment will present key social issues on protection of labour migrants and recent developments to harmonise the existing labour mobility initiatives.

1.3 OVERVIEW

24. Labour Mobility schemes have continued in the region since 2006 with the establishment of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme by New Zealand to employ Pacific seasonal workers in horticulture and viticulture. In September 2022, the RSE cap was increased to 19,000 workers. In 2008, the Australian government launched the Seasonal Workers Programme (SWP). To date, more than 60,000 workers have participated in the SWP. These schemes facilitate workers from Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu (Timor Leste – Australia only).

25. The earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 in Canterbury, New Zealand resulted in property damage of about \$40 billion (2015 dollars) and resulted in a significant increase in demand for skilled tradespeople to support the rebuild of the city. In response to this, and as part of New Zealand's commitments under the PACER Plus Arrangement on Labour Mobility, a pilot scheme for 24 semi-skilled trade workers from Fiji, Tonga and Samoa was implemented in 2017. Following the success of the pilot, the Pacific Trades Partnership was established, with expanded opportunities for tradespeople from Samoa and Tonga. A similar pilot was initiated for fisheries workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu. Both schemes were put on hold as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons will be applied to the design of new labour mobility programmes for the seafood, meat processing, care and construction sectors. These programmes are expected to be implemented from 2024.

26. Australia's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) commenced in 2018 for unskilled, low and semi-skilled Pacific workers with longer visas of up to three years, and across more sectors including agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, fisheries, meat processing, horticulture, age care, hospitality, livestock, trades and tourism. To date, more than 9,000 workers have participated in the PLS.

27. Australian and New Zealand labour mobility schemes required labour for several industries including the horticulture and agricultural industries. There are also opportunities for fisheries and aged care.

28. The Pacific Labour Facility supports the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme, which is the Australian Government's new integrated approach to the Seasonal Worker Programme and the Pacific Labour Scheme.

29. For labour sending countries, remittances are important, contributing to economic growth, improved living standards and increasing imports and consumption. In Samoa, remittances make up around 18% of GDP, the equivalent of the manufacturing, agriculture, and mining industries combined for Australia. In Tonga, remittances make up 40% of GDP.⁴ Labour mobility also contributes to reducing income and social inequalities and providing insurance against negative shocks.

30. Data collation disaggregated for labour mobility and remittances through labour schemes are not available. This limits reporting on economic contributions through remittances. Further analysis will be required in this area.

1.3.1 Approach

31. The Secretariat, as directed by the FTMM in February 2020, led key agencies and stakeholders to undertake a comprehensive assessment of labour mobility arrangements, including under regional and sub-regional trade agreements.

32. The following strategies were proposed:

- a) Comprehensive assessment report of different labour mobility arrangements, including under regional and sub-regional trade agreements. This would complement the ongoing comprehensive review of regional trade agreements which refer to labour mobility, such as the PICTA Temporary Movement of Natural Persons (TMNP) and Trade in Services (TIS) Protocol, respectively;
- b) Stakeholder analysis and report on labour mobility in the region including the role of the Secretariat in labour mobility;

⁴ Devpolicy, 21 August 2020

- c) Gather information to strengthen the Pacific work-ready pool and the linkages to education systems and programmes under Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET);
- d) Undertake national consultations with Members on the existing and future labour mobility arrangements;
- e) Analyse the implications of the labour mobility arrangements in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and ASEAN countries vs the SWP, PLS and RSE programmes, and provide options to be explored for FICs;
- f) Elevate the present role of the Labour Mobility Reference Group (LMRG), comprised of Senior Officials, to assist the Secretariat by providing feedback on the comprehensive assessment; and
- g) Identify gaps and challenges in the existing labour schemes and how these can be addressed.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

33. The assessment aligned with regional policies, processes, and mechanisms such as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development, Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration (PLGED), Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF), Pacific Youth Development Framework and the Framework for Rights of Persons with Disability (FRPD). Similarly, these were undertaken within the context of the PAfTS 2020-2025, under components on Services and Comprehensive Connectivity, and aligned with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

34. It is worth noting that a Pacific Skills Portal concept was launched at the Forum Leaders Meeting in Tuvalu, in 2019. This is a work in progress and yet to be implemented.

35. The assessment also looked into intra-regional labour mobility arrangements between Pacific countries including informal bilateral labour arrangements although more needs to be done to fully capture these programmes. Ongoing national consultations with Members will be crucial. The assessment included gender analysis, job creation to meet youth unemployment rates and relevant human resource development priorities.

36. A peer review was conducted by independent consultants Australian South Sea Islanders Port Jackson, who identified gaps in the analysis through country surveys, questionnaires, and consultations. Recommendations based on these findings are included in this report.

1.5 GUIDING QUESTIONS

37. Guiding questions that informed the process for this report:
- i. What regional trade agreements, policies and platforms are in place containing labour mobility provisions?
 - ii. What national arrangements and policies are in place for Members participating in labour mobility schemes?
 - iii. What benefits and challenges are Members facing through labour mobility within the context of regional and sub-regional trade agreements?
 - iv. Consider labour mobility opportunities that fall outside the framework of trade agreements.
 - v. What are the socio-economic policy gaps faced by Members on labour market supply and demand including gender analysis, unemployment rates for youth, repatriation and human resource development needs and priorities?

- vi. What linkages and pathways are in place for skills development in relation to labour mobility opportunities?
- vii. Are regional mechanisms in place sufficient to support labour mobility in the region. What other options can be considered?
- viii. How do labour mobility schemes benefit both sides? Is it appropriate for workers and labour sending countries to be supported by labour receiving countries?

2. CROSS BORDER MOVEMENT OF LABOUR AND LABOUR MOBILITY ARRANGEMENTS

38. In delving into policy discussions of cross-border movement of people, it is reasonable to state that international trade agreements typically establish rules for temporary entry and presence of natural persons, and for highly skilled professionals and business people, as per the WTO Mode 4 provisions. However, in hindsight, one must remain conscious of the complexity of international migration and the difficulties of totally separating discussion of labour migration.⁵

39. Having said that, Forum Members have been involved in trade negotiations at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral level. The issue of labour mobility began to gain increasing relevance in the trade in services negotiation process. In fact, Pacific countries are trying to increase and diversify the mobility options of their citizens by including specific coverage of ‘temporary movement of natural persons’ within the context of trade agreements and labour mobility arrangements.⁶

- Movement of natural persons under regional and multilateral trade agreements:
 - (i) MSG Skills Movement Scheme (SMS) enshrined in the MSG Free Trade Agreement
 - (ii) PICTA Temporary Movement of Natural Persons
 - (iii) PACER Plus Chapter 8 Movement of Natural Persons (MNP)
 - (iv) Samoa Agreement (Pacific Regional Protocol)
 - (v) GATS Mode 4
- Bilateral arrangements (unilateral and voluntary commitments):
 - (vi) NZ Recognized Seasonal Employer Scheme
 - (vii) Australian Seasonal Workers Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme now known as Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme.
 - (viii) Bilateral Schemes/Arrangements

2.1 PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES TRADE AGREEMENT (PICTA) TRADE IN SERVICES AND TEMPORARY MOVEMENT OF NATURAL PERSONS PROTOCOLS

40. In 2001, Pacific countries signed the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) to promote regional integration moving towards wider integration with the global economy. The PICTA came into force on 13 April 2003 and was operational in January 2007. The FTMM sought to broaden the scope of PICTA in 2001, to cover trade in services (TIS). The PICTA TIS Protocol was opened for signature on 28 August 2012. The Protocol provided for the progressive reduction of regulatory barriers affecting the

⁵ STESCAP2688_No81.pdf (unescap.org)

⁶ D. Ritter, ‘Climate Change and Human Rights: The Imperative for Climate Change Migration with Dignity (CCMD)’ in M. Di Paola and D. Kamal (eds), *Climate Change and Human Rights: The 2015 Paris Conference and the Task of Protecting People on a Warming Planet*, Global Policy, November 2015.

movement of trade in services between the Parties. PICTA TIS has been signed by eight FICs and ratified by four countries.⁷

41. Included in the concept of PICTA TIS was the cross-border movement of people (termed ‘natural persons’, to make the distinction from legal entities such as companies and organisations). In 2009, a framework for the TMNP scheme was developed to address the critical domestic labour shortages, promote the temporary movement of skilled and semi-skilled people between FICs and encourage economic growth, as well as promote development of some FICs as labour exporting countries.

42. An increasing number of FICs have taken part in seasonal worker and other schemes in Australia and New Zealand. Samoa and Tonga are two of the three countries in the world where remittances account for the highest proportion of GDP.

43. However, the opportunities for mobility and the extent to which remittances contribute to each FIC vary significantly. Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau have largely open access to the United States labour market. Cooks Islands and Niue have open access to New Zealand. People from Fiji, Samoa and Tonga exhibit a high degree of mobility, often aided by historical and family connections. By contrast, the level of mobility from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and to a lesser extent Vanuatu is very low. Increasing remittances form a significant portion of the GDP of Vanuatu. Kiribati and Tuvalu sit in the middle of these latter two groups.

44. The PICTA TMNP arrangement was intended to offer opportunities for both skilled and semi-skilled workers, recognising there was already a significant amount of movement of skilled workers among the FICs.

2.2 PACER PLUS CHAPTER 8 MOVEMENT OF NATURAL PERSONS (MNP) - OPPORTUNITIES FOR FICs UNDER PACER PLUS

45. The PACER Plus negotiations were launched in 2009 with the aim of promoting regional integration in the Pacific. At their meeting in 2016, Forum Leaders reiterated the need for PACER Plus to assist FICs with achieving robust economic growth and sustainable development.

46. In April 2017, 14 Forum Member countries concluded negotiations on the PACER Plus legal text and market access offers. Australia, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu have signed the PACER Plus Agreement. With nine Forum Members ratifying the Agreement, PACER Plus entered into force in December 2020 with implementation underway by some of the Members.

47. There are eleven signatories to PACER Plus. The agreement entered into force on 13 December 2020, sixty days after the receipt of the eighth ratification from the Cook Islands. Tuvalu and Vanuatu have now gazetted their instrument of ratification.

Update on Ratification

PACER Plus Signatory	Date
1 New Zealand	24 Oct 2018
2 Australia	20 Dec 2018
3 Samoa	28 Jun 2019
4 Kiribati	11 Nov 2019
5 Tonga	27 Mar 2020

⁷ Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Tuvalu.

6	Solomon Islands	22 Jun 2020
7	Niue	9 Jul 2020
8	Cook Islands	14 Oct 2020
9	Nauru	2 February 2022
10	Tuvalu	19 January 2022
11	Vanuatu	24 May 2022

48. The Agreement covers trade in goods (rules of origin, customs procedures, sanitary and phytosanitary, technical regulations, standards and conformance), trade in services, investment, development and economic cooperation, transparency, consultation and dispute settlement. The schedules of commitments on tariffs, services, investment and movement of natural persons are annexed to the PACER Plus legal text.

49. In Chapter 8, Australia's commitments are limited to highly skilled intra-corporate transferees, independent executives, business visitors, and contractual service suppliers, and these commitments are equally applied to all sectors.

50. New Zealand's schedule of commitments slightly varies due to its inclusion of installers/servicers and independent service suppliers, but the scope of both schedules is essentially limited to highly skilled professionals. Australia and New Zealand's labour mobility commitments in the PACER Plus have not exceeded their Mode 4 commitments in the GATS.

51. The PACER Plus Agreement facilitates the cross-border movement of skilled workers. These include intra-corporate transferees, independent executives, business visitors and contractual service suppliers, etc. It applies to measures regulating the movement of natural persons (MNP)¹ on a temporary basis into a member country, and builds on rights and obligations established in both the Trade in Services and Investment Chapters of the Agreement. Pacific Island country commitments demonstrate increased awareness of the importance of attracting skilled service suppliers to promote more productive and competitive domestic industries.

52. The PACER Plus Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme (PACER Plus Implementation Unit) in Apia, Samoa will assist Pacific PACER Plus members through implementation of a Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme, which includes labour mobility. The unit will oversee programmes that will allow signatories to benefit from regional and international trade and contribute to economic growth and sustainable development. This includes activities that build on existing labour mobility schemes such as data collection and reintegration training.⁸

53. MNP commitments by Forum Island Countries World Trade Organization (WTO) members (such as Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu) go beyond their commitments in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

54. Commitments by Pacific Island countries that are non-WTO Members (such as Cook Islands,

⁸ <https://pacerplus.org/> access 27/08/21

⁹ <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/pacer/fact-sheets/movement-of-natural-persons>

Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Tuvalu) are equivalent to, or go further than, those made under the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA).⁹

3. INTRA-REGIONAL AND BILATERAL LABOUR MOBILITY ARRANGEMENTS

55. Intra-Pacific labour migration is small but growing, and there is potential for it to grow. There is also considerable migration of professional and technical workers from Australia, New Zealand, and various Asian countries into the region. There is therefore some room to create employment opportunities for Pacific Islanders at home through localisation of jobs. In countries with large permanent emigration, the loss of skills (brain drain) resulting from the emigration of skilled workers is a concern, particularly in Fiji.¹⁰

56. An advantage of temporary and seasonal schemes is that skills are not permanently lost. On the contrary, many seasonal workers return with new skills (although these are not always useful in their home country). Since the seasonal work schemes involve low-skilled work, they primarily target low-skilled workers. In their case, it is less the lost skills and more their working power that might be missed in their households, villages, and communities. The extended schemes for hospitality workers, caregivers, and construction workers, on the other hand, target skilled workers and could result in a loss of skills that are also needed in the Pacific Islands.¹¹

57. All PIC governments are committed to increasing their number of labour migrants in order to ease local labour market pressures, increase remittances, and facilitate skills transfers. With labour migration opportunities being increasingly for seasonal and temporary work, the risk of brain drain and declining remittances are lower than under permanent migration schemes. While temporary and seasonal schemes generally have better economic impacts for sending countries, they sometimes come with severe negative social consequences as a result of prolonged absences of family members. The social and health impacts of seafaring have been researched for Kiribati and Tuvalu but are less well understood for seasonal and temporary workers in Australia and New Zealand.¹²

58. One exception is Kiribati, which has signed an MOU on Labour Cooperation with Taiwan, China, in 2007. According to the MOU, Taiwan, China, permits the employment of I-Kiribati in Taiwan, China, in certain roles (manufacturing workers, construction workers, domestic helpers, caretakers, and crews on ships or fishing boats). Taiwan, China, also welcomes vocational trainees and undertakes to protect female labourers from sexual exploitation and physical abuse. However, no labour migration from Kiribati to Taiwan, China, has taken place under this MOU.¹³

59. Alongside the PACER Plus Agreement is a non-legally binding engagement platform which enhances regional cooperation on labour mobility. The arrangement establishes an annual labour mobility meeting to enhance cooperation in labour mobility. The arrangements include:

- establishment of a regional framework for labour mobility cooperation, including the PLMAM;
- enhance labour mobility schemes to maximise the development benefits for all participating countries;
- promote other labour mobility opportunities in Australia and New Zealand for the Developing Country participants;

¹⁰ Labour in Pacific Island Countries - ILO Report of November 2019

¹¹ Labour in Pacific Island Countries - ILO Report of November 2019

¹² Labour in Pacific Island Countries - ILO Report of November 2019

¹³ Labour in Pacific Island Countries - ILO Report of November 2019

¹⁴ STESCAP2688_No81.pdf (unescap.org)

- strengthen the legislative, regulatory and institutional frameworks for labour mobility in the participating countries;
- facilitate the circulation of temporary workers amongst the participants;
- consider social issues associated with the circular migration of workers;
- support efforts to build the labour supply capacity of the developing country participants through the provision of relevant education and training; and
- explore opportunities to facilitate the recognition of qualification throughout the region by encouraging competent bodies within their territories to cooperate with each other.

60. Traditionally the main focus in analysing labour mobility in the Pacific has been that of Pacific Islanders moving to the Pacific Rim. The substantial intra-Pacific movements as well as considerable labour migration into PICs have received less attention from researchers and policymakers. While all PICs are destination countries for some skilled, professional, and managerial workers, the largest numbers of foreign workers are employed in Papua New Guinea and Fiji (refer to Table 2).

Table 2. Number of migrant workers in Pacific Island countries, 2017.

PACIFIC ISLAND	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Cook Islands	4213	2109	2104
Fiji	13911	7508	6403
Kiribati	3022	1594	1428
Marshall Islands	3292	2016	1276
FSM	2785	1489	1296
Palau	4988	2831	2157
Papua New Guinea	32389	20558	11831
Samoa	4879	2444	2435
Solomon Islands	2532	1421	1111
Tonga	4952	2691	2261
Tuvalu	143	79	64
Vanuatu	3245	1612	1633

Source: UNDESA, population division

61. In May 2015, the total number of active work permits held by non-citizens in Papua New Guinea was 41,096, only 511 of which were held by Pacific Islanders (Voigt-Graf, 2016b). Papua New Guinea has witnessed an enormous increase in the number of foreign workers since 2005. The industries most reliant on non-citizen workers are construction and infrastructure; agriculture, forestry, fisheries; and mining. In Palau and the Cook Islands, most migrant workers are employed in hospitality and tourism.¹⁴

3.1. New Zealand’s Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) programme

62. The RSE scheme was officially launched on 30 April 2007, following pilot arrangements in 2005/2006. An objective of the policy is to ‘encourage economic development, regional integration and good governance within the Pacific, by allowing preferential access to workers who are citizens of eligible Pacific countries.

63. The PACER Plus Labour Mobility Arrangement complements and expands New Zealand’s existing initiatives. Key elements include:

- enhancing existing labour mobility schemes and exploring new opportunities,
- supporting institutions that manage labour mobility,
- promoting and improving current visa categories,

- tertiary vocational education and training, and
- improving recognition of qualifications and registration of occupations.

64. Under the Labour Mobility Arrangement, New Zealand has committed to enhancing the operation of the RSE scheme, which is focused on the horticulture and viticulture industries. This includes:

- improving worker selection and recruitment processes,
- enhancing pre-departure and re-integration programmes,
- improving training opportunities while in New Zealand, and
- working to improve pension schemes and health insurance arrangements.

65. The RSE policy is currently being reviewed as part of New Zealand's wider Pacific Migration review. One of the key objectives of the review is to ensure that workers are receiving a fair share of the benefits of participation. Alongside the review, New Zealand is also considering short-term improvements to the scheme and undertaking a review of accommodation settings. Outcomes from the policy review are expected to be implemented from July 2023.

3.2. Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM)

66. In 2008, the Pacific Island Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) was introduced in Australia and by 2012 Australia started the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) as a capped programme, primarily in the agriculture industry (horticulture sector). Participation in this scheme is exclusive to Pacific Island country citizens.¹⁵ By July 2015, the cap on the seasonal worker programme was lifted. Australia's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) commenced in 2018 for unskilled, low and semi-skilled Pacific workers with longer visas of up to three years, and across more sectors including agriculture, aquaculture, forestry, fisheries, meat processing, horticulture, age care, hospitality, livestock, trades and tourism.

67. In 2021, Australia introduced a new feature of its Pacific labour mobility programmes. A skills development programmes provides workers with access to training while they are working in Australia. Funding is available for employability and life skills (such as first aid, financial literacy, drivers licence, basic learning English), job skills (such as forklift licence, food safety, occupational health and safety) and formal qualifications (including Certificate I/II/III in areas like aged care and meat processing).

68. In April 2022, Australia brought together the SWP and PLS under a single Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM). The PALM scheme allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from nine Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste when there are not enough local workers available. Through the PALM scheme, eligible businesses can recruit workers for seasonal jobs for up to nine months or for longer-term roles for between one and four years in unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled positions. The PALM scheme is uncapped and open to all sectors.

69. A new Australian Government was elected in May 2022 and has committed to expanding the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme and improve working conditions for PALM scheme workers. PALM scheme reforms will make the scheme more attractive to employers facing workforce shortages and to Pacific workers interested in participating in the scheme. The Government has committed to:

- o reducing the burden of upfront travel costs for employers of seasonal workers
- o reducing red tape for all PALM employers.
- o relocating the Australian Agriculture Visa programme within the PALM scheme to deliver more flexibility for employers.

70. The Australian Government is consulting with PALM scheme countries about these changes.

¹⁵ https://www.wti.org/media/filer_public/a1/6f/a16f3a34-98b2-4507-be29-7e0bb82a8d72/part_iv_chapter_13_elisafornale_routledge.pdf

3.3 Potential Labour Mobility opportunities in non-traditional destinations

71. Non-traditional destinations and new occupation areas could be negotiated as a region or through bilateral labour agreements/MOUs with potential destination countries.
- (i) *Aged Caregiver and health schemes* – These are arranged at bilateral level from some of our Pacific countries where more recognition is required, and countries need to be recognised as host countries along with Australia and New Zealand. In 2007, an aged caregiver pilot scheme, was first considered in the region in 2007 for Solomon Islands. Other countries that also mobilise aged and health care workers include Palau, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati.
 - (ii) There are approximately 250 PLS aged care workers employed in Australia under the PALM scheme. The majority of these workers either hold an Australian qualification in aged care or a related field or have relevant work experience. Australia is currently piloting two approaches aimed at increasing the number of Pacific Islanders who can obtain an appropriate Australian qualification.
 - (iii) *South Korea's Employment Permit System* - for low-skilled workers currently permits entry for up to 55,000 workers annually. In the Pacific, Timor-Leste had signed a MOU with the Korean government agencies taking away the process out of the hands of private brokers. In Timor-Leste alone, a total of 1,886 Timorese workers were sent to Korea between October 2009 to June 2015.¹⁶
 - (iv) *Sports Mobility* – Today there continues to be a rise of professional sport, particularly rugby union and league, where Pacific Island athletes reported to have become top-level performers and highly valued global commodity.¹⁷ Fijian rugby players can be found from the top tiers (France, Britain and New Zealand) to lower tiers (USA, Romania and Japan). Up to 500 Fijian athletes hold professional contracts in foreign competitions with a 179% increase of professional Pacific Island athletes over a seven-year period in France. Remittances to Fiji that were reported to have been generated through rugby in 2006, were estimated to be FJD18.54 million or 11% of total worker remittances sent that year.¹⁸ More studies need to be conducted for updated information on sports earnings in the region.
 - (v) *Seafarers* – At the time of this report, there are no specific seafarer labour mobility schemes in place for the region but there are a number of Pacific islands that have pursued opportunities and arrangements to work on commercial fishing vessels. These include Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu. In a report by ILO, existing seafarer programmes in Kiribati and Tuvalu are working well although there is a decline in recruitments due to the impacts of COVID-19 and travel restrictions. The report highlights opportunities on 161 ships - 76 registered under the German flag and 85 vessels registered under flags of convenience (Liberia, Cyprus, Antigua and Barbuda, Panama and Ireland).¹⁹

¹⁶ Experiences of Young Timorese, Australian Aid Conference, 2016.

¹⁷ Besnier, 2012; Horton, 2012

¹⁸ <https://jsfd.org/2017/08/01/rugby-union-driven-migration-as-a-means-for-sustainable-livelihoods-creation-a-case-study-of-itaukei-indigenous-fijians/>

¹⁹ ILO report on Labour Mobility in the Pacific Island Countries, 2019

4. ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF LABOUR MOBILITY

4.1 Recruitment and related fees

72. It is important for sending countries to consider the benefits and costs of labour mobility. This will help to determine whether labour mobility programmes are fit for purpose for Pacific Island countries, including whether they balance potential negative impacts with economic and skills gains. It is also important for receiving countries to foster mechanisms by which they provide Economic Analysis in terms of the benefits to their respective economies through the existing Labour Arrangements in Australia and New Zealand, as well as other FICs.

4.2 Workers earnings and wages

73. With the reopening of borders for a number of PACP/FICs economies comes the critical question of managing the mass labour migration in search of greener pastures in Australia and New Zealand, resulting in a substantial deficit of the domestic work force expected to steer the PACP/FICs economies towards recovery post-Covid. The same is further exacerbated by the raising of minimum wages for some of the PACPs/FICs, which is a challenge for local employers to meet, thus the consistent labour drain.

74. While the schemes have assisted PACP/FICs Governments to minimise the unemployment rate (maybe not substantially), it may be worth considering creating safety valves for the sake of the ongoing socio-economic resurgence post Covid-19.

4.3 Remittances

75. The International Labour Organisation reported remittances as one key economic benefit of migration. The ILO report states that in 2018, remittances into ten countries (Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) amounted to US\$689 million. While the economic benefit to sending countries was significantly high, this caused skills shortages in Pacific Island countries. It is important to highlight the issue of skills loss in the islands.²⁰

76. Whilst we recognise the significant contributions from labour mobility on enhancing livelihoods for Pacific families and communities with increased remittances, skills dividends, access to education for their children, improved housing and living standards, some issues have emerged that require more attention. These include pre-departure expenses which includes fees for passports, visas, medical and police clearances, as well as domestic travel and accommodation expenses in the capital city for workers from other parts of the country to undergo medical and fitness tests. Travel expenses comprise international return airfares, domestic travel (both in the PICs and in Australia/New Zealand) and accommodation expenses during transit²¹, pre-departure briefings, recruitment fees and related costs, worker rights, compliance with wage regulations, health benefits, pension payments, family considerations and personal safety, cultural and language barriers.

77. In the consultation with members leading up to the formulation of the comprehensive assessment report, it has been highlighted that not enough time is given for people to understand ones obligations and rights. The peer review assessment report also noted that pre-departure briefings often do not occur or occur only a few days prior to departure. In Vanuatu, the pre-departure briefings are conducted over two days and cover workers' expectations, living in Australia and New Zealand, budgeting, and the law in Australia and New Zealand. In Samoa it is held one week prior, Kiribati is five days, Fiji three days and Tuvalu one day.²² Workers in some instances lack access to affordable healthcare and lack coverage by Medicare.

²⁰ ILO report on Labour Mobility in the Pacific Island Countries, 2019

²¹ Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific, ILO, 2022

4.4 Taxation

78. Although workers' pay tax, there is no provision in place to reimburse taxation, amounts paid in tax are not directly linked to contributory benefits schemes. Workers are not afforded equality of treatment with nationals regarding taxation arrangements. In the RSE, New Zealand only has double taxation agreements with Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Samoa and has tax information exchange agreements with the Cook Islands, Niue and Vanuatu.²³

4.5 Social Pension

79. While further analysis is yet to be conducted, according to the Fiji Government, workers can access their superannuation once they return to Fiji by applying a Departing Australian Super Annuation Payment (DASP) via the Australian Tax Office (ATO) website. The taxes on superannuation claims are about 50%, including a 15% government tax when contributions are paid in, and 38% when workers withdraw them. According to the Vanuatu Government, it will take two to three months for the payment to be made into the workers bank accounts. In Kiribati, the Government assists returned workers to claim their superannuation. According to the Government of Tuvalu, it is a challenging process for both workers and the Department of Labour to claim superannuation after returning to Tuvalu or whether they can only claim it if they do not intend to return to work in the future.²⁴

5. SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF LABOUR MOBILITY

OVERVIEW

80. Labour mobility in the Pacific has increased over the years through labour mobility schemes and bilateral arrangements that provide employment opportunities, remittances, and capital for re-integration initiatives and social entrepreneurship.

81. The labour mobility schemes provide economic opportunities not only for labour sending countries but also for labour receiving countries. There is a need to investigate these benefits for labour receiving countries and what contributions to the economy are captured through the labour mobility programmes. The future analysis should focus on all FICs considered as receiving countries of labour migrants and workers.

82. Labour mobility has been supported in the region at the highest level by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and Ministers. This political commitment is reflected in the inclusion of the movement of labour in regional and sub-regional trade agreements such as the PICTA, MSGTA3, and PACER Plus and has extended through education, economic, skills transfer and development, and now COVID-19 recovery.

83. The labour mobility agenda is supported by technical agencies²⁵ and the private sector, but most importantly is aligned to national development plans of Pacific Island countries. A few countries have developed national labour mobility and migration policies with others considering developing similar policies. Some countries have included labour mobility in their national Trade Policy Frameworks. These developments show national capacity to identify priorities for implementation, although resourcing and monitoring may still require support. These are covered in Annex 1.

²² Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific, ILO, 2022

²³ Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific, ILO, 2022

²⁴ Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific, ILO, 2022

²⁵ Agencies include APTC, IOM, ILO, UNESCAP and relevant CROP

84. The priority sectors for labour mobility are skills development and training needs to meet labour market demands for New Zealand and Australia. For countries such as Tuvalu, labour mobility opportunities have existed since the 1990s with offshore employment as seafarers, although this has declined in recent years due to labour demand and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁶

COUNTRY	SECTORS FOR LABOUR MOBILITY
Fiji	Agriculture, aged care, horticulture, meat processing, tourism and hospitality
Kiribati	Agriculture, aged care, horticulture, meat and seafood processing, tourism and hospitality
Nauru	Horticulture, meat processing
Papua New Guinea	Agriculture, horticulture, meat and seafood processing
Samoa	Aged care, agriculture, tourism and hospitality, horticulture, meat processing
Solomon Islands	Aged care, horticulture, meat processing, agriculture and fishing
Tonga	Agriculture, horticulture, livestock and meat works, tourism and hospitality, aged care and trades
Tuvalu	Aquaculture and fishing, forestry, aged care, tourism and hospitality
Vanuatu	Aged care, agriculture, horticulture, meat and seafood processing, tourism and hospitality

Source: Pacific Labour Facility, National Government websites and the Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment – NZ for RSE data.

5.1 SOCIAL WELFARE AND PROTECTION

85. A number of social welfare issues have been reported through the media and parliamentary committee hearings, including allegations of exploitation of workers, incorrect pay rates, living conditions below the mandated standard, employers charging excessively for accommodation, crowded dormitories, long working hours above the legal normal working hours, and lack of social support services and structures. In an RSE impact study released on 22 May 2020, the RSE scheme is under the constant scrutiny of international markets with far reaching consequences for export earnings if RSE employers are seen to be using poor or mediocre employment practices.²⁷

5.1.1 Accommodation

86. As raised both through the assessment by the Secretariat and feedback from the peer review, accommodation issues were a concern for workers in Australia. Accommodation challenges are faced across the nation as a whole. Availability of affordable, accessible and appropriate accommodation – particularly for low-income workers – is a critical challenge and has been exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19. There is a need to gather information on similar challenges faced by workers who are part of labour schemes in other FICs such as Fiji, Cook Islands or the Marshall Islands, who are part of bilateral agreements and do not fall within the formal arrangements in this report.

87. A 2020 review on accommodation for workers in Australia examined the cost of accommodation for the PLS and SWP workers. Changes were proposed for policies under the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) to improve the value and suitability of accommodation provided under the two schemes.²⁸

²⁶ Tuvalu National Labour Migration Policy

²⁷ RSE Impact study 2020

²⁸ Pacific Labour Mobility Accommodation review, 2020

88. Key findings of this review included issues of overcrowding and potential overcharging of accommodation. The Australian Government agreed to and acted on all recommendations in the report, with enhanced oversight and reporting processes now in place.

5.1.2 Protection and worker rights

89. Concerns have also been raised by Members around the protection of the rights of Pacific Islanders engaged in seasonal worker schemes.²⁹ Problems with existing visa arrangements that are tied to specific employers need to be monitored with existing processes in place by Australia³⁰ for example where workers are able to report concerns with employers as sponsors that allow for guaranteed work in Australia. The concerns with working conditions and pastoral care of seasonal workers under both the RSE, SWP and Pacific Labour Scheme have also increased as reported by the ILO.³¹ Media reports have highlighted allegations of exploitation among RSE and SWP workers. In Australia, all allegations of worker mistreatment are investigated, and the Australian government takes swift action against employers who are found to breach PALM scheme requirements. This includes referring matters to other authorities (Australian Border Force, Fair Work Ombudsman, Australian Federal Police) where necessary.

90. Worker rights and labour standards have to be continuously discussed between sending and receiving countries to ensure no violations of fundamental human and workers' rights. Several developed countries have included labour standard provisions in their Free Trade Agreements e.g., NZ in its FTAs with Thailand, China and Chile and Australia in its FTAs with the United States and Peru.

91. Some seriously harmful working conditions and physical and psychological impacts have been documented in the case of Fijian private military and security personnel. More information is needed on the flows and impacts of the migration of Pacific Islanders as domestic workers, since migrant domestic workers are known to be particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Finally, studies have identified broader impacts that the absence of seasonal and temporary workers have on their communities, ranging from the loss of able-bodied young men for community work to marital dissolution, family abandonment, and cultural barriers.³²

92. Recent World Bank reports stated that the Labour Mobility Schemes in Australia and New Zealand are contributing to the economic development of most Forum Island Countries.³³ There may also be value in communicating to Members the economic contribution of Pacific Island countries (including Timor-Leste) to Australian and New Zealand economies so sending countries know their true value in the current labour and economic partnership.

93. New Zealand horticultural produce exports in 2021 were a record \$6.68 billion FOB value to 127 countries, comprising 11.1% of New Zealand's merchandise exports. The average value for the five years prior, 2016 to 2020, was \$5.73 billion FOB. Total export and domestic produce reached a new high in 2021 and estimated to exceed \$10.2 billion. Although this is not entirely credited to the Pacific workers in the horticulture sector, it is an indicator of the contribution Pacific workers participating in labour mobility schemes make to the NZ economy.

²⁹ <https://pina.com.fj/2022/02/24/vanuatu-government-launches-inquiry-into-labour-schemes-after-testimony-from-workers-in-australia/>

³⁰ ILO Pacific Island Countries, ILO, 2019

³¹ Labour Mobility in Pacific Island Countries, ILO, 2019

³² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-suva/documents/publication/wcms_712549.pdf

³³ Pacific Possible, World Bank, 2016.pdf

94. A 2020 report (commissioned by New Zealand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment) into the impacts of the RSE scheme on communities in both New Zealand and Pacific countries highlighted some key findings.³⁴

- (i) increased attention on worker’s wellbeing for Pacific Island governments, individually and collectively, with the opportunity to clearly articulate their expectations and that of RSE employers while working and living in New Zealand,
- (ii) Active policy development on labour mobility to respond to the need for a more equitable distribution of seasonal work opportunities and income across rural communities. These policies need to be developed within the larger strategic context of national employment policy frameworks and human resource and workforce planning, and
- (iii) Addressing the negative impacts arising from family separation causing issues around mental health, family disunity and, in some communities, lower productivity as workers are abroad. Mitigation measures include formal (e.g., services) and informal (e.g., traditional structures) support to respond to lack of human resources in communities as carers and providers for the families.

5.1.3 Health of workers

95. The feedback from the assessment peer review also highlighted persistent issues for workers on the Pacific labour mobility programmes such as the lack of access to affordable healthcare, lack of coverage by Medicare and the lack of support mechanisms provided to workers to consult a medical doctor or a health worker when sick. SWP workers are not entitled to access Australia’s universal public health system (Medicare), which provides medical services by doctors, specialists, and other health professionals, as well as hospital treatment and prescription medicines for free or at a low cost. SWP workers are liable for all healthcare costs incurred while in Australia and it is a requirement of Visa Subclass 403 that the holder maintain adequate health insurance.³⁵

96. The socio-economic impact of COVID- 19 report by IOM noted that there was an increased level of anxiety due to extended periods of family separation and economic constraints faced through reduced earnings.³⁶

97. Across countries of destination support should be provided to ensure that workers and their families receive appropriate counselling and mental health support. In Australia and New Zealand, this risk is being mitigated to an extent through counselling and psychosocial support to Pacific labour mobility workers.

5.1.4 Families of workers

98. Generally, the provision of the labour mobility schemes significantly benefit families of workers in terms of increased household income, assets, and savings from remittances sent to workers’ respective families.

³⁴ RSE Findings report, 2020

³⁵ Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific, ILO, 2022

³⁶ Rapid Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID 19 on Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region, 2020.

99. The biggest social issue is family separation where workers are separated from families for the duration of worker contracts. Family dynamics are impacted due to long periods of absence from home. In some instance, family members of workers are pressured to bear the responsibilities of looking after immediate and extended families.³⁷ Support for families before, during and after worker mobilisation may help families to prepare and plan for this separation.

5.1.5 Gender Analysis

100. Currently, women are significantly underrepresented in the Pacific labour mobility programmes across the Pacific region. The Pacific Labour market analysis report of 2020 highlighted that the labour force participation of women across the region continues to be too low.³⁸ In Australia alone, from the 10 PALM countries participating in the labour mobility programme, women make up only 18% of labour mobility workers since its commencement to 31 August 2022.

Table: Women's participation in Australian labour mobility programs since commencement to 31 August 2022

COUNTRY	FEMALE	% FEMALE	MALE	NOT SPECIFIED	GRAND TOTAL
Fiji	897	17%	4277	0	5174
Kiribati	331	18%	1474	0	1805
Nauru	14	28%	36	0	50
Papua New Guinea	211	15%	1194	1	1406
Samoa	1177	16%	6331	4	7512
Solomon Islands	839	16%	4325	0	5164
Timor-Leste	1991	28%	5119	2	7112
Tonga	3769	16%	19653	0	23422
Tuvalu	17	14%	102	0	119
Vanuatu	4591	18%	21634	3	26228
GRAND TOTAL	13837	18%	64145	10	77992

101. Since Fiji signed up to the RSE scheme women have represented 6% of the total 1,731 approved applications.³⁹ In 2018-19, women from Kiribati made up 36% of the RSE scheme. As of July 2020, Solomon Islands' women made up 27% of the Solomon Islands' in the New Zealand's RSE. As of July 2020, Tongan women made up 9% of participants in the RSE. Since the beginning of the programmes in Tuvalu, women have made up 35% of Tuvalu Islands participating in the RSE. In July 2020, ni-Vanuatu women made up 9% of RSE workers.⁴⁰

102. There needs to be gender-responsive and sustainable economic development outcomes in the labour mobility programmes. The recent survey undertaken by ILO of the gender balance by country of origin shows a gender gap. Fiji men is 63% and women 36.7%; Kiribati men is 61.3% and women 38.7%; Samoa men is 63.3% and women 33.3% with other 3.3%; Vanuatu men is 60% and women 40%. Total percentage of male workers is 62% compared to women workers of 37.2%.⁴¹

³⁷ Country's consultations and surveys, 2021

³⁸ Pacific Labour Market Analysis, 2020

³⁹ Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2020

⁴⁰ Rochelle Ball, Rochelle Bailey, Nicole Haley and Meg Keen, 2015, Pacific Labour Mobility: Removing the Gender Blinkers

⁴¹ Seasonal worker schemes in the Pacific, ILO, 2022

5.2 TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

103. There is a need to look into the supply chains of labour for the current schemes to be sustainable and beneficial and for the sending country's ability to provide the labour force. Given its greater focus on semi-skilled work, the Pacific Labour Scheme could consider providing more formal training for Pacific workers to meet Australian Labour Market Standards in sectors such as tourism, caregiving, meat, etc. The Skills Development Program under the consolidated PALM scheme (see paragraph 63 above) provides some opportunities to do this, but there is scope to do more.

104. The Australian Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) conducted a Pacific labour market analysis in 2020 across nine countries looking at available sources through national government websites, Pacific Labour Facility and the RSE programmes through the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment. It found major skills shortages in trades, hospitality and tourism, business and management, ICT skills, agriculture, health and teaching.⁴² The countries included Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

105. The regional analysis also reported workers were underqualified for their positions. There was a need to strengthen literacy and numeracy, proper work ethics and professionalism. To ensure that skills for labour mobility are met, there is a need for greater investment in the areas of literacy and numeracy considering it is also key education priorities.

106. Although the assistance of the APTC has been beneficial, some courses are restricted to students who have existing work experience/qualifications and they must pass an English Language test. APTC does however provide Foundational Skills Development courses for students who cannot meet these requirements. There is a need for national governments to increase support to national technical, vocational, education and training (TVET) institutions to offer training for Australian and New Zealand labour markets.

107. APTC is increasingly focusing on supporting local training providers through institutional strengthening activities. As part of a sustainable exit programme, APTC could also consider supporting interested technical institutions in the Pacific to deliver Australian-accredited courses. Such an approach would require local government support and those institutions to meet Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) requirements.

108. The PACER Plus Qualifications Recognition for Labour Mobility project (the PACER Plus project) is currently underway by the NZQA and the Educational Quality and Assessment Programme (EQAP) for Pacific countries who are PACER Plus signatories and regional stakeholders. The PACER Plus-associated Arrangement on Labour Mobility aims to improve recognition of qualifications and strengthen education quality across the region.

109. This project is designed to deliver a regional approach for qualifications that increases opportunities for labour mobility and will extend to countries who are not signatories of PACER Plus. This is intended to support labour mobility opportunities across the region, particularly for skilled and semi-skilled workers.

110. Regulatory cooperation frameworks, such as the Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA), are necessary to reduce regulatory barriers to entry, particularly in terms of qualifications and certification requirements.

⁴² Pacific Labour Market Analysis, APTC, 2020

5.3 YOUTH PARTICIPATION

111. Youth unemployment is a serious issue in all Pacific Island countries. In the Pacific region youth unemployment is estimated at 23 per cent.⁴³ Skills development policies and incentives should be developed to harness the large untapped youthful workforce in the Pacific region.

112. During the peak of the COVID 19 pandemic, a World Bank report noted increased financial strain on some households, while community representatives noted that more youth were dropping out of formal education or training to help support their family financially.⁴⁴ Concerns associated with this is if youth do not ‘get out’ after the pandemic, there are potential long-term implications for human capital development within Pacific communities.

113. This further underlines the need for policymakers and training providers to foster and promote training aligned to regional labour markets, minimising the potential of youth dropping out of formal education whilst maximising the untapped youth force across Pacific Island countries into regional labour markets.

6. IMPACT OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC

6.1 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LABOUR MOBILITY

114. Labour mobility in the region has the potential to play a key role in socio-economic response and recovery. FICs need to engage in discussions on the trans-Tasman bubble using regional mechanisms and lessons learned from the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway COVID-19 (PHP-C). This will inform policy development around preparedness and labour mobility programmes, and help to respond to future shocks. Border initiatives implemented by New Zealand and Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic showed the benefits of prioritising access for seasonal workers from Pacific countries.

115. A regional assessment on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in the Pacific found negative economic and social impacts on labour mobility with reduced hours and lockdown (World Bank 2020). The report highlighted that workers mobilised for the schemes from Samoa account for 6.0% of the workforce, Tonga 14.7%, and Vanuatu 8.1% which contribute to economic growth through remittances and improved livelihoods for their families. The negative impacts did not only affect economic benefits but social welfare and mental health for those who did not travel due to travel restrictions, and those who were not able to return home due to border closures.⁴⁵

116. In addition to these impacts, a regional report by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) covering Fiji, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu reported workers who were not able to participate in the schemes experienced increased levels of anxiety due to unemployment.⁴⁶

117. Whilst recognising the impact of COVID-19 and the importance of vaccine certification for reopening borders and supporting economic recovery, Forum Trade Ministers in their meeting in 2021 concluded that the region has to consider a regional vaccine passport to facilitate the reopening of borders. Work has progressed in consultation with Members and updates will be provided once the process has been completed.

⁴³ <https://www.ilo.org/suva/areas-of-work/youth-emp-policy>

⁴⁴ Pacific labour mobility, migration, and remittances in times of COVID-19, World Bank Group, 2021.

⁴⁵ World Bank, Pacific Labor Mobility, Migration and Remittances in Times of COVID-19: Interim Report, Nov 2020

⁴⁶ Rapid Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region, 2020

118. Leaders welcomed Australia's intentions to work with all members to establish robust and practical processes for vaccine certification, including digital vaccination certificates, and the announcement to double the number of Pacific workers. This led to over 24,000 SWP and PLS workers in Australia as at May 2022. These workers have helped to meet demands in the agriculture, meat processing, accommodation, hospitality and aged care sectors.⁴⁷

6.2 UPDATE ON EXISTING VISA ARRANGEMENTS

6.2.1 Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the USA

119. The COFA is an international agreement of the United States with the Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau. The Compact regulates the relationship between each Compact State and the United States across many areas, including international trade and labour mobility. Under this agreement the United States gives these countries access to US domestic programmes and its citizens may live and work in the United States and vice versa.

6.2.2 Cook Islands and Niue Political Status

120. Cook Islands and Niue are states in free association within the realm of New Zealand. Cook Island and Niue nationals are automatically New Zealand citizens, and both have New Zealand's Head of State (the British monarch) as their own head of state.

6.2.3 Pacific Access Category Resident Visa

121. New Zealand international/humanitarian policy recognises a historic relationship with the Pacific through the Samoan Quota and the Pacific access category programme that allows 1,750 people to be granted residence in New Zealand annually. These programmes opened to registration in October 2022 after a two and a half year COVID-enforced suspension, with suspended ballot places being spread across the next few years.

- The Pacific Access category resident visa applies to Kiribati (75), Tuvalu (75), Tonga (250) and Fiji (250) to New Zealand is based on the ballot system.
- Samoan Quota 1,100

6.2.4 Diversity Visa (DV) Programme

122. Known to many in the Pacific region as the green card lottery, DV is a programme that allows for the lottery winners to receive a United States permanent resident card. The aim of the programme is to diversify the immigrant population in the United States. In 2020 alone, approximately 13 million people applied for the lottery. The lottery is administered by the Department of State and conducted under the Immigration and Nationality Act, established under the Immigration Act of 1990.

⁴⁷ <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/media-release/new-era-pacific-australia-labour-mobility>

6.2.5 Pacific Engagement Visa

123. The Australian Government will establish a new Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV), providing pathways to permanent residency for nationals of Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste. The PEV will grow the Pacific diaspora in Australia and enhance the people-to-people links between Australia and the Pacific. The programme will start in mid-2023 and will be informed by ongoing consultation with Pacific island countries. Up to 3,000 visas will be allocated annually across participating countries through a ballot process. Visa allocations for each country will be determined based on a range of factors such as population size, diaspora in Australia, existing migration pathways and expected demand.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR DECISION-MAKING ON LABOUR MOBILITY AND POLICY SUPPORT

124. The establishment of a Labour Mobility Reference Group (LMRG) will be the primary regional mechanism to monitor and report on key issues raised in the report on labour mobility as directed by the FTMM. Based on the findings of the report the LMRG role will be reviewed for continued oversight on progressing recommendations. This will allow for:

- strengthening regional coordination of efforts and support of labour mobility for all Members, to assist FICs to develop or review their national labour and employment policies;
- PICs that have not developed national labour migration policies could learn from the experiences of Kiribati, Samoa, and Tuvalu with developing and implementing their policies, and based on the lessons learned, develop their own national labour migration policies;
- in looking at policy development, significant policy and implementation gaps have been identified which include gender imbalance in skills development, recruitment and participation of women in existing labour mobility programmes. Member consultations raised capacity gaps of Labour Sending Units that require further support on managing worker welfare and how risks can be collectively addressed by sending and receiving countries;
- the need to consider an economic assessment of economic returns from labour mobility schemes to receiving countries in the region specifically for Australia and New Zealand; and
- the need to look beyond the Pacific region, in particular to undertake a feasibility study focusing on aged care in the Japanese market specifically health tourism; and an analysis in the United States, as well as Canada.

7.2 REGIONAL LABOUR MOBILITY STRATEGY

125. To help build a regional platform to engage all Forum Members, the Secretariat will develop a concept note for a Regional Labour Mobility Strategy as part of the PAfTS to address key areas identified in the report for progressing labour mobility in the region. Labour Mobility falls under the PAfTS components of Services and Comprehensive Connectivity. The strategy will be developed with evidence-based research that aligns with the implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

7.3 REGIONAL INFORMATION SHARING NETWORK

126. A robust Pacific Diaspora Network will be set up involving Pacific Missions with periodic Pacific Diplomat Roundtables with the primary role of engaging and supporting workers by assessing labour conditions in collaboration with relevant ministries and agencies (for instance, Australia's Fair work commission, etc.); and, acting as a channel between the sending and receiving countries whilst respecting the formal channels to escalate concerns. This can build on existing regional mechanisms such as the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting extending participation to all Members.

127. Recognising the impact of climate change, diaspora engagement has played a role in humanitarian responses in the region. Similarly, the diaspora has supported workers in receiving countries on labour mobility schemes. Labour mobility has also been considered as an adaptation strategy, by helping Pacific countries to increase investment in skills development in the environmental sciences and other skills for disaster preparedness and self-reliance.

8. CONCLUSION

128. More analysis is required on the social welfare and support for workers engaged in labour mobility schemes. Some information is provided on media platforms that raise awareness on key issues and measures to address them. A strong evidence base is needed to improve programmes, strengthen inclusive participation and to respond to policy gaps highlighted in the report. Further analysis is required on areas such as social inclusion, data collection, accommodation, wages, transportation costs, and remittances.

129. Initiatives are underway to strengthen education quality across the Pacific and increase opportunities for labour mobility, coordination and synergies within the context of the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy 2020-2025 and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

Annex 1: Labour mobility policy analysis by country – Sources: Pacific Labour Facility, National Government websites, National Labour Mobility Policies, Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment – NZ for RSE data

COUNTRY	SUMMARY	KEY GOVERNMENT POLICY POSITIONS AND PRIORITIES	POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION GAPS
Fiji	<p>Currently the Fijian Government's priority areas in labour mobility are agriculture, aged care, and tourism and hospitality based on its labour force experience. Fiji has also been successful in the meat-processing sector and, as at 3 April 2020, has the largest share of workers in the meat-processing sector under the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). It will be necessary to assess how the COVID-19 pandemic influences the future demand for work including how it could potentially shift the areas of focus to new industries.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations has in place the <i>Employment Policy</i>, <i>Operational Plan</i>, and <i>Strategic Development Plan</i>. The Fijian Government's commitment also prioritises the enhancement of technical, vocational and lifelong skills training at all levels including through work placement agreements with employers. The <i>Fijian Trade Policy Framework 2015-2025</i> highlights the need for human resource development policies to train future entrants into the workforce with necessary skills. Higher education and learning institutions will be linked with businesses and stakeholders to reshape course offerings aligned to the changing demands for specific skills. Fiji will also continue to pursue at the WTO a satisfactory agreement on Mode 4 - movement of natural persons (<i>labour mobility</i>).</p>	<p>a. Low number of women participating in labour mobility Although Fiji has recognised the importance of gender equality and participation of women, there is still a gender imbalance in the participation of women in labour mobility schemes. As at 3 April 2020, there were 207 Fijians currently employed in Australia under the PLS of which 23 were women and 184 men. Fijian women were represented in three industries: meat processing, aged care and hospitality. Since 2015, 1,252 Fijians have been engaged under the SWP, of which 129 have been women. For 2019-2020, 20 women along with 195 men were working under the SWP. Since Fiji joined the RSE scheme there have been 102 approved applications for women to work in the scheme, which is only six per cent of the total 1,731 approved applications (Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, 2020).</p> <p>b. Capacity of the Labour Sending Unit Capacity building is required in the LSU to strengthen and improve PLS processes including streamlining the marketing, registration, screening, pre-departure training and mobilisation. Strengthening data collection, partnerships and stakeholder engagement is required together with a communications and marketing plan.</p>

Kiribati	<p>Kiribati holds a comparative advantage in the maritime and fisheries sectors as it has a long history of labour migration through seafaring. However, due to the global recession, the number of employed seafarers has declined. Before the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), 250 nationals of the Smaller Islands States of Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu were given the first mover advantage under the Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program (NAWPP). Hospitality workers from Kiribati were employed in the Hayman Islands as well as in the aged care sector where nationals continue to be employed or under Covid-19 have been redeployed to other sectors and states.</p>	<p>The Kiribati National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP)2 and the 20-year vision plan (KV20) discuss approaches to ensuring safe labour migration, decent overseas employment opportunities as well as plans for transformative development through maximising use of natural, human and cultural capital.</p>	<p>a) Gender inequality in the seasonal workers programmes Women made up 36 per cent of the RSE scheme in 2018-2019 and 12 per cent in the SWP in 2019-2020. Several factors, including the specific nature of work involved, competing care roles of women in the family setting, and employer preferences, may influence these low numbers.</p> <p>b) Capacity of the Labour Sending Unit Capacity building is required for the LSU to strengthen and improve PLS processes, including streamlining the marketing, registration, screening, pre-departure training, and mobilisation.</p>
Nauru	<p>Many Nauruans have had previous work experience with Australian companies during the peak of phosphate mining and later in refugee and asylum seeker detention centres, including more recently with the Regional Processing Centres. Therefore, Nauru is in a unique situation of possessing workers trained to work under Australian workplace standards, instructed in English, and many have qualified under the Australian Qualification Framework. Nauru has Australian certified tradespersons in the automotive, construction, electrical and engineering sectors.</p>	<p>The government's first national Labour Mobility Policy (LMP) 2020-2024 guides the work of preparing workers to pursue overseas employment. It ensures a balanced approach to creating employment for local citizens and providing systems to safeguard and protect Nauruan workers with overseas contractual agreements (Office of the Chief Secretary to Cabinet, 2020). The Nauru Government's areas of interest in labour mobility are agriculture (packing, driving and machine operating), aged care, skilled areas of machinery operators, truck drivers, qualified tradespersons and meat processing.</p>	<p>a) Improving the reputation and behaviour of Nauruan workers The government has undertaken to improve the reputation of Nauruan workers and is determined that only committed and hardworking Nauruans are selected for labour mobility opportunities.</p> <p>b. Capacity of LMU The LMU is a relative newcomer to labour mobility, with only 12 workers engaged in the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) as at December 2020 and none in the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP). The LMU currently has only three dedicated staff with limited experience in the full recruitment process, from pre-screening to pre-selection, documentation, and mobilisation.</p>

<p>Papua New Guinea</p>	<p>The Government of PNG wants to provide significantly increased opportunities for decent and productive work for women and men of working age in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. This necessarily requires PNG citizens to have access to employment opportunities both at home and abroad. Focusing on the future, Circular labour mobility remains a key focus for the Government of PNG in their economic recovery efforts and social wellbeing of its people.</p> <p>The next 3 years are expected to drive the transition of PNG from being the lowest contributor to worker mobilisations in Pacific Labour Mobility to a nation with a strong reputation among key stakeholders for systems and procedures which support capacity for growth.</p>	<p>The Papua New Guinea Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) is tasked to assist in the recruitment, mobilisation, pastoral care and reintegration of workers participating in overseas labour mobility opportunities, with a particular focus on semi- and low-skilled workers. To ensure achievement of the Government of PNG's stated goals the Labour mobility Unit has been given the target of increasing the number of workers employed overseas in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM) and the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme to 8,000 by 2025.</p> <p>The Government of PNG has implemented 4 main overarching principles under which the Labour Mobility is required to operate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equity 2. Transparency 3. Workers' Rights and Care 4. Privacy and Data Management <p>The Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) is committed to ensuring the integrity of labour recruitment arrangements that ensure only the best workers represent Papua New Guinea overseas. For this to be successful, transparent and open arrangements must underpin recruitments and employers need confidence that wantokism plays no part in the selection of workers. The Government of PNG policy does not provide opportunities for representatives or agents to act on behalf of employers or workers.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Government of PNG LMU needs to solidify internal and external relationships. Immediate action around working with other agencies to ensure an effective streamlined process in preparation and mobilisation of workers is a key priority. Most relationships have been ad hoc relying on the wantok approach which is solely reliant on a particular individual's relationship with another instead of forming reliable department to department long term partnerships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Internally there is untapped potential to establish a closer working relationship with the Ministerial Steering Committee to assist with building sustainable relationships with key stakeholders. o Externally continuing work around formalising relationships in terms of recruitment, briefings and training with different agencies, Districts and Provinces. 2. Development of strategies and focus on continual improvement in labour mobility policies and processes, commitment to assisting in worker welfare and wellness with the inclusion of a welfare officer in the new organisational structure and by fully engaging from a District and Provincial level in worker readiness activities. 3. Lack of access to key services such as medical doctors, NID's, Passport and Police Clearances as a key part of the visa approval process are being addressed in partnership with the Australian High Commission.
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	<p>This policy applies to all bureaucrats and consultants employed in the selection of workers for participation in labour mobility schemes. This includes all members of the LMU and participating regional administrations.</p> <p>The Government of PNG sees labour mobility as a win-win for its citizens. It provides a source of decent work and good incomes in formal jobs abroad, and it upskills workers so that they can expand their businesses or find better work at home. By targeting workers from rural communities for agriculture work, it can direct remittances to grassroots populations that can use it to significantly improve their quality of life. When remittances are spent, they contribute to Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue for rural provinces.</p>	<p>The high internal travel costs and essential services costs limits peoples' ability to meet the requirements to be considered eligible for labour mobility schemes. Remoteness also impacts on access to information about labour migration opportunities.</p> <p>4. Reintegration is regarded as pivotal to economic recovery. The strategy is under development and will be a joint exercise with World Bank. GovPNG feel very strongly that the reintegration process needs to commence pre-departure through information sharing and funded activities inclusive of their families and communities where applicable. A key highlight raised by GovPNG, is that the person returning from their deployment in Australia will not be the same as when they left, so assistance may be required for both them and their families while they readjust to life back home. Psychosocial support may need to be included in the strategy to help the returnee to readjust as they reinsert themselves in their village and community.</p>
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<p>Samoa</p>	<p>The Samoan Government's priority areas in labour mobility are agriculture, aged care, tourism and hospitality based on its labour force experience. It has a large work-ready pool of both men and women with experience in a variety of industries (Pacific Labour Facility, 2021). As of December 2020, Samoa had the third-largest share of workers under the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). It has been a very strong supplier of labour for the meat processing industry, having the second largest share of workers in the industry.</p>	<p>5 Sixty percent of Samoans born in Samoa are living in other countries, mainly in New Zealand, United States of America or American Samoa.</p> <p>The Government of Samoa, in its Samoa 2040, Transforming Samoa to a higher growth path, aims to increase employment to 100,000 Samoans by 2040. Samoa 2040 targets four key thematic areas for transformative economic opportunities, one of which is labour mobility. This policy context is reinforced by a number of other strategic plans, including the Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2019-2020 and the Samoa National Employment Policy 2016-2020.</p> <p>The Strategy for the Development of Samoa sets out four priority areas. Relevant to labour mobility is Priority Area one, Economic, which aims to maximise gains from domestic and foreign trade and increase income generation opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.</p> <p>The National Employment Policy promotes decent and productive employment, including equal access to employment.</p> <p>A Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Samoa and the pulenu'u (village mayors) on behalf of the Upolu and Savai'i Village Councils aims to enhance collaboration and accountability between the government and local villages around the recruitment, preparation and performance monitoring of workers under the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP), Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, the Canterbury Initiative Trade Employment and Approval in Principle (AIP) visa.</p>	<p>a) Gender inequality in programmes</p> <p>Low number of women participating in labour mobility schemes. Although Samoa has recognised the importance of equal access and gender equality, there is a gender imbalance in the participation of women in the workforce and employment opportunities.⁴⁸ As at December 2020, there were 170 Samoans employed in Australia under the PLS, of which only 11 were women. Samoan women were represented in two industries: meat processing and aged care.</p> <p>b. Pre-departure briefing</p> <p>The quality of pre-departure briefing can be compromised due to high demand and lack of dedicated trainers, venues and funding (Pacific Labour Facility, 2020).</p>
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Solomon Islands	<p>The Solomon Islands Government labour mobility priorities for the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) are in aged care, agriculture (horticulture, viticulture and meatworks) as well as tourism and hospitality. For the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP), priority sectors are agriculture and construction.</p> <p>Solomon Islands' comparative advantage under the PLS currently lies in the meat processing sector. It will be necessary to assess how the COVID-19 pandemic influences the future demand for work including how it could potentially shift the areas of focus to new industries.</p>	<p>The Solomon Islands' Government Labour Mobility Strategy (2019-2023) targets 5,500 Solomon Islanders to benefit from international work experience annually by 2023. The Labour Mobility Strategy is aligned with the National Development Strategy 2016-2035, which aims to increase labour mobility and employment opportunities outside the Solomon Islands. The National Development Strategy also seeks to increase Solomon Islanders' share of regional employment markets for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.</p> <p>The Solomon Islands' Labour Mobility Policy Framework outlines systems for managing labour mobility and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Labour Mobility Unit and key stakeholders. The Framework is a collation of nine policy areas that include governance and administration, and workers' recruitment, mobilisation, return and reintegration. The Framework's Worker Protection and Inclusion Policy facilitates the inclusion of under-represented population groups into labour mobility opportunities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs & External Trade, 2020).</p>	<p>a) Gender inequality in programme As at 31 July 2020, Solomon Islands women made up only seven per cent of Solomon Islanders in the PLS, and in 2019-2020, 27 per cent of the RSE and 12 per cent of the SWP.</p> <p>b) Geography and remoteness Unequal access to migration opportunities is linked to geography and remoteness. The high internal travel costs in a region with high external travel costs limits peoples' ability to meet the requirements (such as police clearances and passports) to be considered eligible for labour mobility schemes. Remoteness also impacts on access to information about migration opportunities. (ILO Office for Pacific Island Countries, 2019).</p>
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Tonga	<p>Tonga has experience in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) providing almost 60 per cent of SWP workers to date. Tongan workers have a reputation for being physically strong and having one of the highest productivity rates in the seasonal labour schemes (Pacific Labour Facility, 2019). Tonga's success is in part due to the role played by intermediaries: labour hire firms run by Tongans in Australia and returning workers who act as recruitment agents in Tonga. They have incorporated a private sector approach to the SWP scheme where employers directly recruit workers through agents with no interference from government. The Tongan diaspora has also contributed to their success (Curtain & Howes, 2019).</p>	<p>Tonga's Labour Mobility Policy (TLMP) 2019/2020 – 2023/24 framework aims to enhance the development impacts of labour mobility. The overarching policy guidance for the TLMP is the Tonga Strategic Development Framework (TSDf) 2015-2025. The TLMP has three crosscutting themes of poverty alleviation, women's economic and social empowerment, as well as youth development. The TLMP envisions providing low and semi-skilled Tongan workers with more circular migration opportunities for decent work overseas while enhancing socio-economic development impacts of labour mobility in Tonga. Additionally, the National TVET Policy Framework 2020-2025 aligns with the TLMP. The Framework supports the upskilling of Tongans working in seasonal or temporary work programmes in horticulture and other industries in Australia and New Zealand, as well as lifting workers' employability, productivity and incomes. It recognises that vocational trades are a pathway to further training and employment including overseas labour mobility opportunities (Ministry of Education and Training, 2019).</p>	<p>a) Gender inequality in labour mobility participation The Tongan Government has prioritised the “negotiation for greater access to overseas employment schemes particularly for more skilled works and opportunities for women workers”. However, as at 31 July 2020, Tongan women made up only 14.5 per cent of Tongans in the PLS and in 2019-20, only nine per cent of Tongans participating in the RSE. From July 2012 until 31 July 2020, women made up only 14 per cent of Tongan workers in the SWP.</p> <p>b) Lack of LSU capacity and experience in developing work-ready pools. Due largely to Tonga's long-standing direct-recruitment model under the SWP, employers are solely responsible for the selection of workers with minimal LSU involvement. This exposes the LSU to a risk of sending low quality workers which ultimately would affect long term demand.</p>
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<p>Tuvalu</p>	<p>Historically Tuvalu has a proud history of labour migration through seafaring. Tuvalu has a comparative advantage in fishing and aquaculture under the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). As at 1 May 2020, it was the highest labour sending country in the fishing and aquaculture sector, followed by the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. Additionally, Tuvalu has a comparative advantage in the forestry sector as the lone labour sending country under the PLS.</p>	<p>In 2015, the Government of Tuvalu approved the Tuvalu National Labour Migration Policy (NLMP), which comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Judiciary, Communication & Foreign Affairs. The policy has an Action Plan that links education with employment, including opportunities abroad. The policy also provides a coherent strategy for promoting overseas employment and the protection of Tuvalu nationals abroad.</p>	<p>a) Gender inequality in labour migration. Women's participation in paid employment is influenced by cultural, gendered norms on the role of women. As at 26 June 2020, only three females out of the 36 Tuvaluans in total had been engaged in the PLS. Women have made up nine per cent of Tuvaluan workers under the PLS, 41 per cent under the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) since joining in 2012, and 35 per cent under the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme (since 2007).</p> <p>b. Development of LSU The development of the Tuvalu LSU has been impacted by resource constraints in terms of capacity building and funding.</p>
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<p>Vanuatu</p>	<p>Vanuatu has developed a strong reputation in relation to labour mobility in the Pacific. It dominates the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) as the largest contributor of workers and is the fourth largest sending country in the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS), contributing over 10,000 workers to the three labour mobility schemes (Department of Labour and Employment Services, 2020).</p>	<p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade launched Vanuatu's Labour Mobility Policy in December 2019. The key aims of the policy are to: increase labour mobility opportunities and make them available to a wider range of people; enhance Vanuatu's skill base and better match skills development to overseas employment opportunities; improve the governance and operation of labour mobility; strengthen the social and economic benefits of labour mobility; maintain Vanuatu's attractiveness and receiving country trust in the international labour mobility market; and reduce costs for workers and ensure their well-being and protection.</p> <p>The policy is intended to address uncertainties with regard to worker welfare and performance, recruitment practices, employer relations and government-to-government arrangements for the benefit of Vanuatu. The Institutional Arrangements outlined in the policy promote cohesion and close co-operation between the different institutions involved in labour mobility in Vanuatu, regionally and internationally.</p> <p>Vanuatu's labour mobility focus is on agriculture, horticulture, hospitality and tourism, and meat processing.</p>	<p>a) Gender inequality in the labour mobility schemes</p> <p>As at 31 July 2020, ni-Vanuatu women made up only 23 per cent of total ni-Vanuatu workers in the PLS and in 2019-20, nine per cent of the RSE and 17 per cent of the SWP. This is due to several factors including competing care roles of women in the family setting, cultural norms and perceived vulnerabilities in safety and wellbeing, employer demand for workers with particular attributes, and women prohibited from undertaking specific types of work in some cultures (Bailey, Rochelle, 2013).</p> <p>b) Impacts on Agriculture</p> <p>Participation in labour mobility schemes like the RSE and SWP has reduced agricultural output in participating communities (Dornan, Matthew, 2018). However, the Vanuatu Government's COVID-19 pivot including a 3-year (2020 to 2022) agricultural stimulus package valued at VT3 billion (USD300 million), has increased attention on the potential for net skills gains via horticultural workers.</p> <p>c) Capacity of the LSU in data collation and management</p> <p>Capacity building is required for the LSU to strengthen and improve PLS processes including maintenance of the work-ready pool, registration, screening, pre-departure training and mobilisation. The LSU has relied on recruiting agents to provide it with accurate data to update its work-ready pool database.</p>
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