



NEW ZEALAND
INSTITUTE FOR
PACIFIC RESEARCH

How many wins to make a winner: seasonal labour mobility schemes in the Pacific

Associate Professor Yvonne Underhill-Sem

Dr Evelyn Marsters

Key points:

- ***Labour mobility here to stay: so how to ensure gains in economic rights do not mean loss of social, cultural and political rights***
- ***Need refined analytical framework to capture diversity of implementation and impacts***
- ***Need for longitudinal research interrogating different imperatives and the wins and losses***

Labour mobility is destined to retain a critical development role in the Pacific

*Decent work for all Pacific men and women **citizens** in their home countries is a **distant possibility** so employment in other countries is increasingly **the reality**.*

Research Background Part 1

In 2017 the New Zealand Institute for Pacific Research (NZIPR) published **a review of a decade of research** into Pacific labour mobility, titled ‘Labour Mobility in the Pacific: A systematic Literature Review of Development Impacts’.



Key findings from the SLR

*Well-known researchers dominate as authors because they have worked at the **interface of inter-agency relationships** between the New Zealand government, the World Bank, and selected universities. While more recent research surfaces the **complex social impacts** of seasonal labour mobility, the **policy dial remains stuck on the triple win approach.***

Research Background Part 2

2017 – 2018

Field research in **Kiribati (Tarawa), Fiji (Suva), Tonga (Tongatapu)**

Research teams with **established relationships** in each of these island countries
Consultations conducted with in country MFAT staff, island country ministerial offices, island private sector employers, civil society, development banks, training institutes and labour sending units.

*Consultations delivered **findings from the SLR** to assist in understanding the **positive and negative impacts** of seasonal labour mobility and discussed **future options** for international labour mobility.*

Overarching finding

- **Future options** for international labour mobility needs to be **strategically managed** to ensure the **mitigation** of negative social and economic impacts and the **enhancement** of economic and social outcomes- all disaggregated by gender
- *Existing “Triple Wins” framework can be redeveloped to include the imperatives which drive Pacific labour mobility and the ancillary services (wrap around services).*

Table 1: Imperatives Driving Labour Mobility Policy by the Who Wins Framework

Who Wins/Looses Benefits	What are the Wins/Losses			
	Economic Imperative	Demographic Imperative	Political Imperative	Development Imperative
Country of Origin	<p>Increased remittances which improves national income.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Family and community in home villages.</p>	<p>Eased strain of “youth bulge” on wage employment. Opportunity for off-shore training of citizens.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Loss of able bodied men and women for gardening, building, care work.</p>	<p>Provision of a key leverage point in PACER Plus discussions with Australia and New Zealand.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Continued reliance on NZ and Australian as donors.</p>	<p>Spread effect of remittances and easing of pressure on government services.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Increase consumption of ‘modern’ goods.</p>
Country of Destination	<p>Improved viability of horticulture / viticulture sector.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Reliance on imported labour.</p>	<p>Responsiveness to shortage of readily available unskilled labour in rural areas.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>No incentive to improve rural work.</p>	<p>Consolidation of historical relationships with Pacific neighbours. Responsiveness to internal employer demands.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Backlash against new immigrants.</p>	<p>Improved rural development in New Zealand.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Impoverishment of rural NZ for NZ’ers.</p>

Table 1: Imperatives Driving Labour Mobility Policy by the Who Wins Framework

Who Wins/Looses Benefits	What are the Wins/Losses			
	Economic Imperative	Demographic Imperative	Political Imperative	Development Imperative
Seasonal Worker	Increased income, though only seasonal. Opportunity for training.	Reduction of tension with underemployed young men and women in home village.	Offer of chance of being a good employee to ensure continued seasonal work for self or community.	Provides personal empowerment, work experience, community leadership and local business development.
	----- Opportunity cost of work not done at home	----- Delayed/interrupted parenthood	----- Shift in leadership structures	----- Reduction in community engagement.
Ancillary Services	Increased revenue from services such as transport, accommodation, food suppliers	Increase in employment opportunities for rural New Zealanders (skilled and low skilled)	'Reciprocal' international trade and employment agreements for the mutual benefit of both NZ and PICs	Development of services in rural New Zealand to support RSE

Kiribati

The **policy landscape of labour mobility** in Kiribati has undergone significant development in recent years. New research directions and policy needs to be aware of:

- the implementation of the recently signed **PACER Plus Agreement** and its associated **Labour Mobility Assistance Programme (LMAP)**;
- the on-going investment by New Zealand and Australia through their aid programmes in the development of **Kiribati's infrastructure**
- The scoping of further phases of **New Zealand's Strengthening Pacific Partnership (SPP)** programme and **Australia's LMAP** capacity building support for labour mobility in the Pacific.

KV20 - Office of Te Beretienti and the Cabinet is committed to securing improved livelihoods for people throughout the Pacific

Temporary labour mobility overseas is a critical component of KV20, partly for **income-generating** reasons and partly for the opportunities it provides for **acquisition of skills and knowledge** that can contribute to development in the islands.

Ambitions to increase overseas employment opportunities

A new era of labour mobility in Kiribati

Identified opportunities arising from the research include:

- having **different approaches to marketing** in Australia and New Zealand,
- making sure that **consideration is given to negative social impacts** that arises when workers spend lengthy periods away from their families in overseas employment (seafarer studies), and
- keeping an eye out for **new employment possibilities** for I-Kiribati within the labour markets of other Pacific countries.

Fiji Policy landscape

The policies for long-term strategic planning framework for labour markets in Fiji rests on the **National Employment Centre Decree 2009**. The Legislation commits to securing improved livelihoods for people throughout the country via **formal** employment, **informal** employment, **volunteer** service, **foreign employment** service.

Fiji's government's has a long-established commitment to improve its labour market which is understood to be growing faster than can be absorbed by the growth of the economy, which by all accounts is growing steadily.

Fiji and developing labour mobility in multiple sectors

Fiji is supporting unskilled seasonal migration to NZ and Australia; semi-skilled opportunities in the **security** services sector; and **highly skilled** migration in the nursing sector. There is also a well-founded understanding of considerable opportunities in **care** giving globally.

In Fiji opportunities exist for linkages to skill acquisition and knowledge for “at home” development, and investment and development of **small and medium enterprises**.

Emergent issues for Fiji and international labour mobility

- The implementation of the **PACER Plus Agreement** and its associated Labour Mobility Arrangement (LMA), which Fiji has not signed as of November 2017;
- The on-going investment by New Zealand and Australia through their aid programmes in the development of Fiji – especially in education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (**TVET**), and labour mobility;
- The development of **further phases** in New Zealand and Australia:
- New Zealand’s Strengthening Pacific Partnership (**SPP**) programme (now called Toso Vaka o Manu); Australia’s Labour Mobility Assistance Programme (**LMAP**) and the new Pacific Labour Scheme and Pacific Labour Facility.

Tonga policy landscape: A recognised need for new strategic policy directions

Greater **collaboration across government** to strategically manage Tonga's long term labour mobility. Challenges included:

- a) **Labour market issues** and **responsibilities** are split across government ministries.
- b) **Stronger linkages** need to be made between the Tonga Strategic Development Framework, labour mobility, and economic sustainability.

A growing awareness of the social impacts of international labour mobility

Consultations highlighted anecdotal evidence of social impacts, there is an awareness of the need to create **longitudinal surveys** which capture economic and social impacts in Tonga. Social impacts which were highlighted include:

- a) Added economic and social pressure on family and community life due to cost of **increasing costs of living** and the slow expansion of employment opportunities domestically.
- b) **Interpersonal and family tensions** due to separation.
- c) Shifts in **household food security** when those responsible for gardens and fishing leave.
- d) Shifts in house building, repair and maintenance with those with such skills leave.

Tracking the winners and the loses of labour mobility

Many Pacific families have **benefitted** from seasonal work opportunities in New Zealand and Australia. There are also **downsides** to these opportunities.

Better understanding is needed on how to mitigate the downsides in order to ensure seasonal labour mobility will not only be sustainable but will also enhance the domestic economy and society. **Labour mobility needs to be understood as a wider development issue.**

A new era of labour mobility and a new era of research

More research, policy frameworks, and data collection is needed in key areas:

- **cross government and multi-stakeholder co-ordination**
- policy tools that delivers **better labour market data and analysis**
- improvements to **pre-departure training and de-briefing**
- Further consideration of **skills development and training.**

In addition, preparedness for climate change and the involvement of women in economic development



NEW ZEALAND
INSTITUTE FOR
PACIFIC RESEARCH

<http://www.nzipr.ac.nz/2018/06/21/call-for-sessions-islands-and-oceans-a-conference-for-pacific-research/>