

RSE Longevity Study (2007-2018)



Dr Rochelle Bailey
Department of Pacific Affairs, ANU
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Labour Mobility- RSE

Addressing the needs of NZ's horticulture and Viticulture industries

- The scheme has been successful in addressing these needs, highlighted in employer surveys and annual RSE conferences.
- “We are very, very dependent on the RSE workers scheme and if we are going to expand the industry in Central Otago we need to expand the RSE scheme ... New Zealanders' jobs are absolutely dependent on it” (Stephen Darling 2013)

Labour mobility and its role in development for Vanuatu

- For this case study: Development has very pragmatic and grounded local meanings and is associated with improvements to social and economic systems. Development is largely defined in the sense of improved livelihoods. Earnings from the RSE have aided in delivering locally specific forms of development.
- A key sentence from numerous workers has been: “**Without RSE this would not have been possible**” Also strongly resonates with my SWP workers.



Significant Changes

New Zealand

- Cap 5000-12,850
- Tax rate in 2008
15% reduced further
to 10.5% in 2011
- Joint ATR (2009)
- RSE-Strengthening
Pacific Partnership
Program
- Vakameasina

Vanuatu

- Seasonal Employment
Act (no.23 of 2007).
- Alcohol Ban 2009
- Vanuatu sends the
largest number of
workers to RSE and
SWP.
- Currently establishing
new international labour
mobility policies.

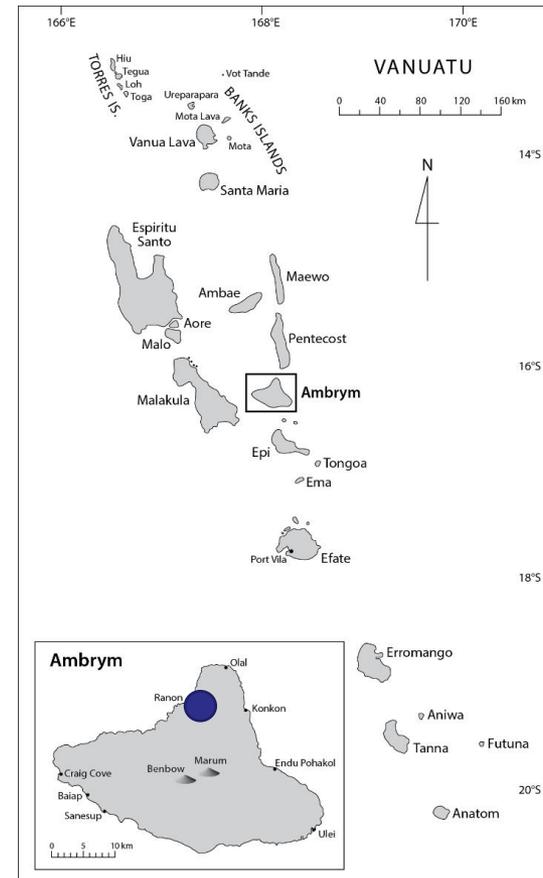
Case Study

- 22 ni-Vanuatu men, their families, communities, recruiters and Vanuatu Government officials
- Their supervisors, contractor, employers, NZ host community, NZ Government officials.
- 2007-Present



Strategic Recruitment for development

- The Lolihor district is located in north Ambrym in the Malampa province. It consists of 12 villages, but they also included workers from 5 other villages associated with Lolihor.
- Initially community selection-strategic recruitment for development– “The money that we will be earning will be going to the micro-credit scheme we just set up by the community that sent us here Lolihor.” (Michael 2007)



Lolihor Development Council (LDC)

- **2007-2008:** LDC selected workers and VT10,000 contributions made.
 - **2008-2009:** LDC selection ceases now direct but VT10,000 contributions continue.
 - **2009-2010:** Contributions declined.
 - **2010-2011:** Contributions to LDC cease and money is held in a NZ bank account.
 - **2011:** Hosted a meeting with LDC and RSE workers –negotiations of contributions are revived. Decrease VT10,000 to VT5,000 Back to VT10,000 when employers visited. The aim was to relocate Fire Mountain clinic.
 - **2013: NZD3000 = VT217,000** transferred to LDC. Purchased building materials for clinic.
 - **2014:** Ceased to contribute again.
 - **2015:** LDC changes hands after Cyclone Pam – Council planned to revive workers contributions.
- Obligations to further community development.
 - Blame game – workers being individualistic and workers distrust in council operations.
 - This was in part due to a disconnection with the LDC from workers and their families. Money disappearing.
- NB: Contributions to the church never waned nor did they to other councils on the Island.

LDC Successes and on hold till the next meeting (4 years on)



Recruitment

- Now direct recruitment. In 2008 SSCO hired a Vanuatu operations manager.
- SSCO
 - Part of the WB pilot 45 workers.
 - 2007 - 232 workers
 - now nearly 1300 workers in 2017/ 2018 season.



Pastoral care

Employers will also have to show us that they will provide the following to ensure overseas workers are well looked after (we call this 'pastoral care'). This will include evidence of:

- transportation to and from the port of arrival and departure
- an induction programme
- **suitable accommodation (still an issue)**
- **transportation to and from the worksite(s) (Can be questionable how much workers are charged for this – needs further monitoring to prevent exploitation)**
- access to acceptable medical insurance
- access to personal banking
- personal protective equipment
- onsite facilities (toilets, hand washing, first aid, shelter, fresh drinking water)
- necessary language translation (e.g. for health and safety purposes), and
- *the opportunity for recreation and religious observance.***(Also concerns to access)**

- “There are now seven men in my bedroom. It’s too much, all snoring and farting and we can’t open the window because it’s too cold. I brought myself a mattress, I’m moving to the lounge” (Cited in Bailey, 2009:162).



New systems – Wages, taxes and remittances

- Pre-departure trainings are improving and assisting but experienced workers such as team leaders normally provide clarity.
- Overcoming concerns of deductions from wages. Understanding hourly and piece rate.
- Aaron: "So many new things to learn my sister, I do not have a bank account back home, or a black horse machine to get money out of. Who else knows my secret number?"
- **“See this thing called tax. I don’t want to pay it anymore”**
- Submitting tax returns for hundreds of seasonal workers a years was ‘a nightmare’ for the company that required many extra hours of man power from office staff.
- Cost of remitting a barrier. Workers have access to SendMoneyPacific and it’s a great initiative but all that is available is Westen Union. Many workers do not have access to internet banking and there are workers that have concerns on how their remittances will be spent by the receiver.



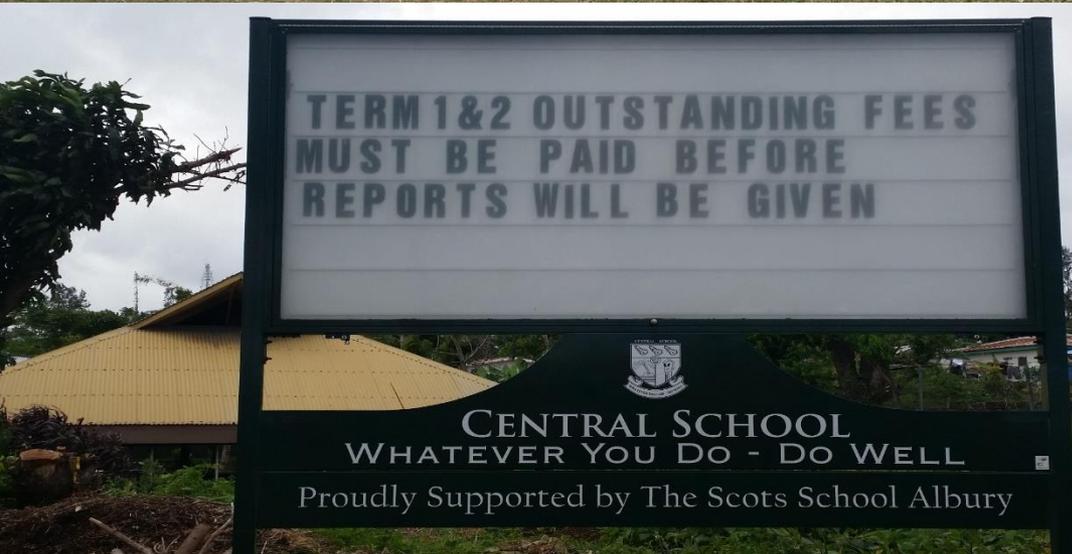


2017/18 Season	RSE (Pacific only)	SWP
Number of workers	10,488	8,457
Estimated remittances	\$57,684,000	\$46,513,500

- Estimates of \$5500 are on the lower scale.
- Significant cash injection into the region that did not exist prior to RSE and SWP.

Long-term Workers

- 8 still participating in RSE.
 - 1 NZ Permanent resident.
 - 1 in SWP
 - 10 in Vanuatu
 - 2 Deceased
- “No. This is my Job and I love it” John
 - “Maybe I will stop in 2020” Abe – who also said that he would stop in 2012
 - “I need it to continue paying for school fees, so maybe after then” Mark (Mark had a break from RSE 2009-2011 due to health problems with his son) but when his employer came to the island to visit the workers, he found an opportunity to return again.
 - “I hope this job continues so I can help my community” Craig
 - “This is my work now, I am very happy. Its good for my family and community that I keep coming to New Zealand” Ray.
 - “I will keep coming for school fees and to help my families” Tom
 - Many are the only seasonal workers in their communities and there is concern if they leave no one will replace them.





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Life without RSE

- Reaching their goals.
 - For the family.
 - Disappointing outcomes.
 - Difficult to return.
 - Blacklisting.
- “It’s time to stop. I accomplished everything. I would only come back if I needed money for school fees” Matthew (10 seasons).
 - “No don’t think about it, finished now, and happy to stay at the house. I have too much to do here [indicating his village]. I have to challenge them to find something here. Everything is money. Money is not the only thing, we got a lot of other things that are important as well” James (8 Seasons).
 - “I want to go back to RSE or try SWP for my daughter’s school fees” George (4 seasons).
 - Only two men said that would not consider returning to RSE.

From Paternalism to partnership. Employer and community relationships.



“This is a partnership between our company and your communities. The more our company grows, the more workers we will take from your communities. A relationship of mutuality” (Employer, Ambrym Island, 2012)

Multiple claims on income

- Lolihor Development Council (LDC).
- Family
- Extended kin
- Church groups
- Schools
- All fundraising activities.
- Walking ATMs



Barriers and obstacles to overcome

- Absence from families.
- Financial costs
- Ownership of money and reciprocal obligations.
- Expectations of financial and material remittances.



Social Issues

- Plenty of international literature on how absences impact children, however more needs done in the context of the Pacific.
- Family breakups
- **Community divides**
- **Culture of migration**
- **Impacts on education**



Strengthening Seasonal Workers' Family Program (SSWFP)

- SSWFP established in the 2011/12 season by my group of RSE workers.
- Funded by seasonal workers!
- Group fundraising - T-shirts, jandals, wallets and hand printed sarongs.
- From a group of 5 women to a program that has 15 committee members managing various support programs e.g; financial, social, educational and spiritual.



SSWFP expansion - counselling

- SSWFP has become well-known among seasonal workers families with requests to broaden its scope.
- Available to all seasonal workers families (RSE and SWP)
- Utilising and passing down some of the skills from the RSE Vakameasina training program to assist with reintegration.
- Financial assistance, loans and planning (pre-departure, while in NZ and upon return).
- Counselling services.
- Child care.

Negative impacts

- “I don’t think I will go back to my wife”.
- “One worker, he is in prison for killing his wife – he was unhappy she took another man while he was away”.
Spouses are seen as targets.
- “She got pregnant to a kiwi man – her husband did not want her back....It took a long time for a resolution”.
- “It doesn’t happen on our island, but let us tell you of others”
- Gossip is a problem and a source of conflict (Bailey 2014).
- Recruiters, chiefs and local leaders have been voicing their concerns of new social challenges.

Local leadership and Church Groups

- There are other community groups who are heavily involved with seasonal workers pre-departure and reintegration processes.
- Local chiefs are involved in many aspects of labour mobility from signing paperwork to authorise workers to participate – sorting out family and community domestic issues with workers.
- Church groups are playing supportive roles. There is some competitiveness between chiefs and church groups in their roles.
- In regards to the RSE and SWP -“Its been a capacity building exercise for us as chiefs...there is a need to train chiefs (especially the older ones) about these social changes and the different languages and intersecting cultures”.

Accommodating an aging RSE workforce

- Medical Insurance-providing more options.
- Team leader training – employers need to feel secure.
- Future planning – Leaving RSE...internal superannuation.
- Lessons learned from others that have left.
- Discussions of foreign investment after experiences at home.



Lesson learned, observations and recommendations

- Communication and constant dialogue between all stakeholders is necessary and strengthens the overall success.
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluations are necessary.
- To get the 'real' story developing relationships with research participants is essential!
- Further research is necessary on the impacts on families.
- Culture of migration.
- Reintegration support is essential but is a difficult and complex space with many considerations. As workers require varied support, dependent on personal circumstances and years of participation.
- Employed workers in countries abandoning employment to participate becoming an issue.
- Documenting the new cross-border labour relationships between employers and workers and the impacts on development.

Final remarks

- LDC achieved some development. However it was limited due to interactions and distrust.
- These schemes contribute to the livelihoods of seasonal workers enabling continued school education, housing and infrastructure projects, new business opportunities and an additional source of income to meet *kastom* exchange obligations. These incomes are redistributed.
- Reported challenges to family and community relationships have brought about the establishment of support groups.
- Overall the impacts have been largely positive, but we need to mitigate unintended negative consequences. The scheme and its effects are always evolving. The RSE review and social impact study will examine how wins can be strengthened for everyone.

