

Labour Mobility in Pacific Island Countries



**High Level Tripartite Forum on
Climate Change and Decent Work**
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International Labour Organization



1. Outline of presentation



- 1. Introduction.
- 2. Overview of labour migration flows in PICs.
- 3. Existing labour migration opportunities.
 - Seasonal and temporary mobility schemes.
 - Intra-Pacific mobility.
 - Factors affecting labour mobility.
- 4. Employment and working conditions in destination countries.
- 5. Conclusions and recommendations.



1. Introduction



- The importance of decent work and well-managed migration is recognized in the **Sustainable Development Goals**.
- SDG 8/Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environment for all workers, including migrant workers and in particular women migrants.
- SDG 10/Target 10.7 is to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well managed migration policies.
- The **Global Compact for Migration** sits alongside SDGS and provides a comprehensive guideline for safe and orderly migration in its 23 objectives, including a number of references to Decent Work and Labour Migration.

2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



- Overview of labour migration stocks and flows in the Pacific.
- Features and impacts of labour migration in the region



2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



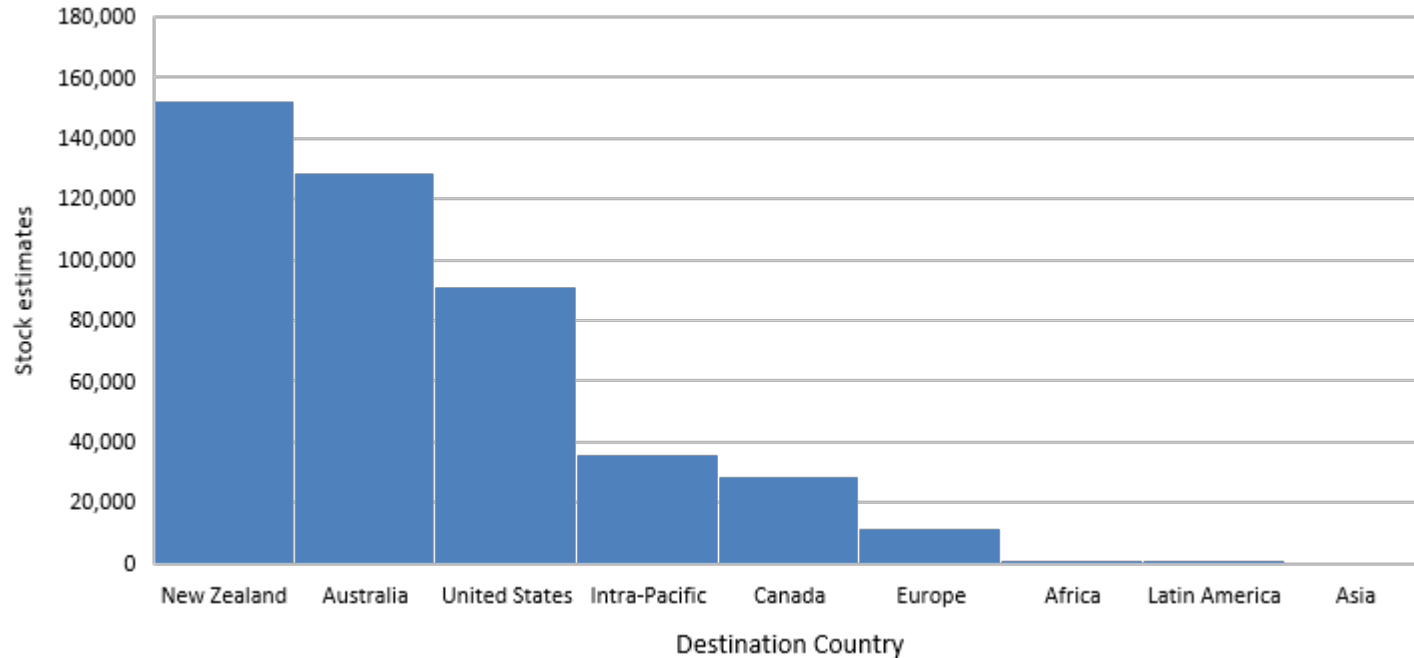
- The Pacific Islands region has long been characterised by substantial migration flows.
- In the past, they have mostly consisted of permanent migration flows directed to the Pacific Rim.
- Recent years have seen an increased diversification of migration flows and increasing temporary and seasonal labour migration.



2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



Destinations for Pacific Migrants

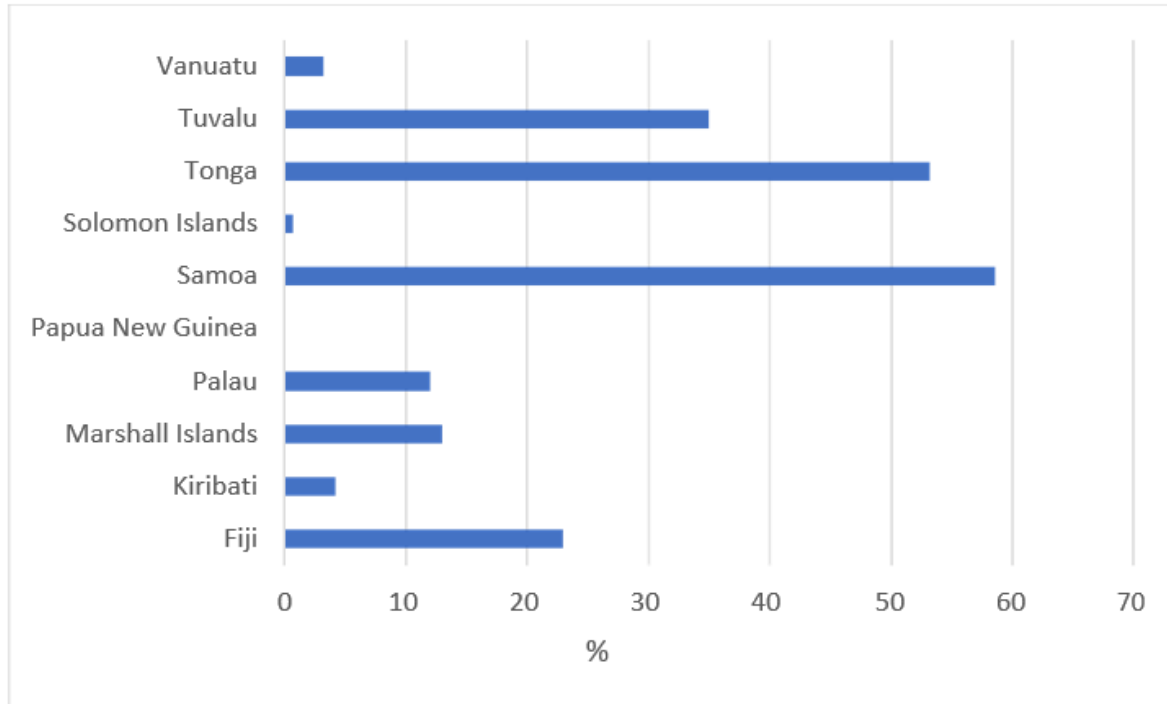


Source: UNDESA, 2017

2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



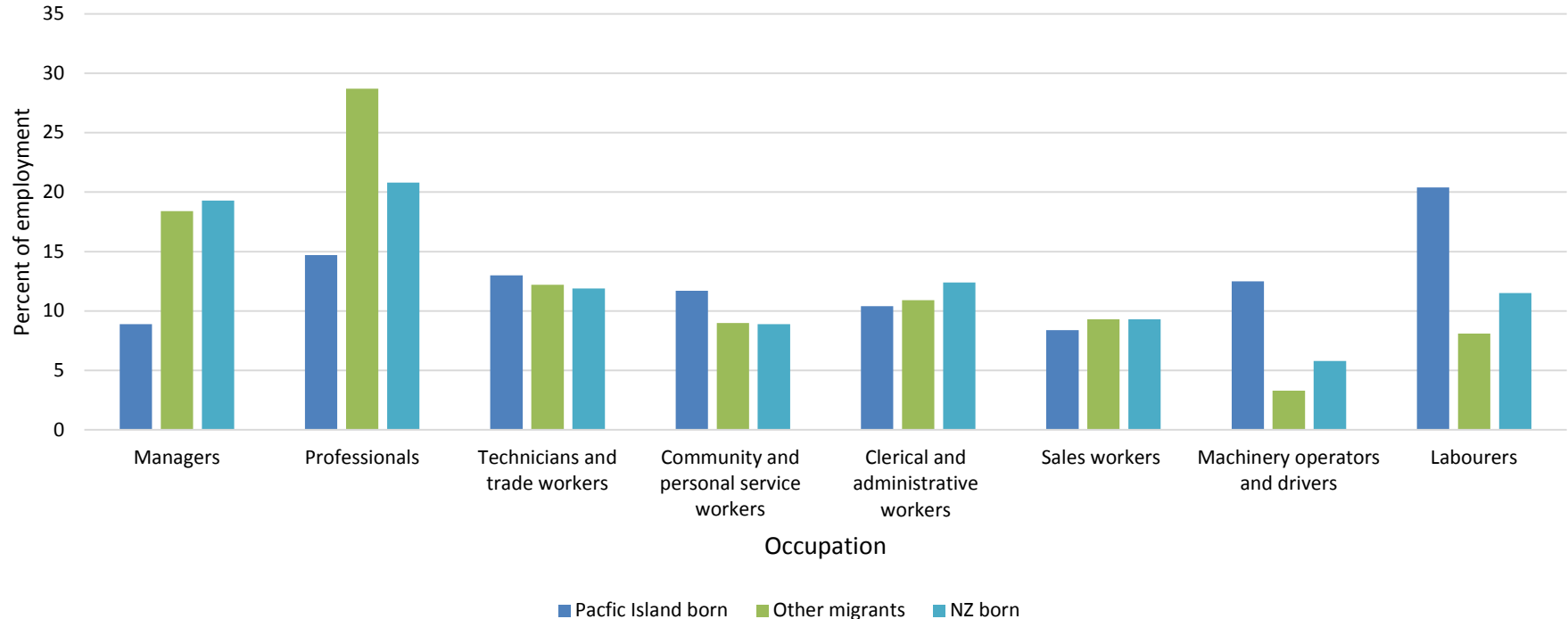
Percentage of emigrants by population, 2015



Source: UNDESA, (n.d.)

2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region

Occupational data for Pacific Migrants to New Zealand



2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



- Temporary and seasonal labour migration opportunities in ANZ.
 - RSE 2017-18 season: 9673 MWs
 - SWP 8457 visas granted.
- Intra-Pacific mobility.



2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



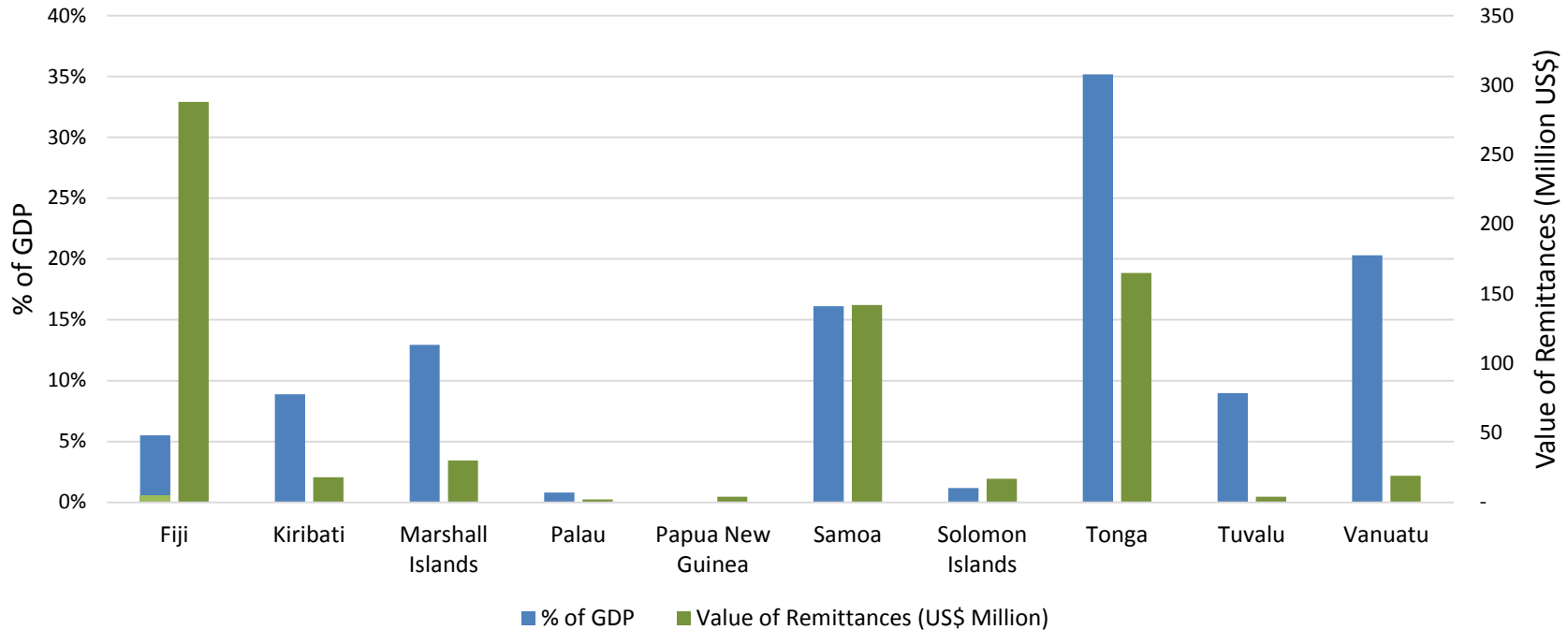
Climate induced migration:

- Atoll nation are worst affected by climate change yet low lying atoll states currently have limited opportunities to migrate overseas.
- In Kiribati, as many as 94% of all households had been impacted by a natural hazard in the 10 years, with 81% of the people saying that they had been affected by sea level rise.
- More than 73% of the households said that migration would be a likely response if either agricultural production became more difficult, sea levels rose, or flooding or saltwater intrusion worsened.

2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



Value Remittance inflows (USD millions) and as a % of GDP



Source: World Bank (2019).

2. Overview of labour mobility in the Pacific Region



Emigration of skilled human resources:

- Pacific Island Countries (PICs) with high rates of permanent migration experience negative effects associated with skill loss or brain drain.
- The migration of nurses and doctors from PICs is a growing concern and has affected the provision of health services.
- It also represents a loss of public investment in human capital.
- Education, health services, national sporting teams and other areas such as the construction industry, tourism management, trades and a range of professional services have been affected.
- Impacts less severe or absent in case of seasonal and temporary mobility.

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



- Seasonal and temporary migration programs have expanded rapidly over the last ten years.



3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



Seasonal Worker Schemes:

- Seasonal work has been a key development in the last 10 years, based on potential triple win principles.
- New Zealand's **Recognised Seasonal Worker Scheme** has expanded since its creation, with the cap now at 12,850 workers.
- Evaluation studies have found the RSE to be a generally successful seasonal labour migration scheme.
- The Australian Government implemented the **Seasonal Worker Programme** in 2015 was opened to all Pacific Island Countries and the annual cap was removed, allowing employers to determine the number of workers to be recruited.

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



Number of seasonal workers from participating Pacific Islands Countries

	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18	
	RSE	SWP	RSE	SWP	RSE	SWP	RSE	SWP	RSE	SWP	RSE	SWP
Fiji	0	0	0	0	30	<5	92	160	355	190	359	247
Kiribati	138	34	127	14	136	11	162	20	189	124	231	364
Nauru	0	10	0	0	20	0	20	17	17	0	14	0
PNG	31	26	58	26	96	35	68	42	121	139	124	92
Samoa	1,137	22	1,169	162	1,238	185	1,454	140	1,690	309	1,878	527
Solomon Islands	423	42	491	9	511	21	590	61	593	87	643	175
Tonga	1,573	1,200	1,538	1,497	1,750	2,179	1,687	2,624	1,822	2,691	1,899	2790
Tuvalu	56	0	71	20	70	7	64	<5	80	0	80	0
Vanuatu	2,829	119	3,070	212	3,435	567	3,726	1,198	4,171	2,149	4,445	3,348
All PICs	6,187	1,453	6,524	1,940	7,286	3,005	7,863	4,262	9,038	5,689	9,673	7,543

Source: Immigration New Zealand (n.d) and Howes (2018).

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



RSE Seasonal Earnings and Upfront Costs for Seasonal Workers (NZD)

	Average Seasonal Earnings	Average Upfront costs	Upfront costs as a % of earnings
Samoa	11,020	600	5.4%
Tonga	12970	600	4.6%
Vanuatu	11970	1150	9.6%
Solomon Islands	10570	1500	14.1%
Kiribati	15860	2000	12.6%
Tuvalu	9680	2000	20.6%

Source: MBIE (2016) cited in Underhill-Sem & Marsters (2016).

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



Limited access for women to seasonal labour mobility opportunities has remained a challenge:

- In 2013-14, only 11.5% of the workers who participated in the RSE and SWP were women.
- Female workers in the SWP earn slightly less than men despite them having a higher mean level of education than their male counterparts, although they remit more than men.
- The Kiribati Government has a dedicated RSE Unit, which has made considerable effort to secure new employers, especially for women.

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



Other Programmes in ANZ:

- Temporary migration to New Zealand mainly centers on people from the Pacific obtaining Essential Skills visas.
- The Pacific Trades Partnership initiative recruits trained Pacific Island carpenters for short-term employment in New Zealand's construction industry.
- In Australia, temporary migration has also centered around the skilled migrant category.
- Australia has recently launched the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). Under this scheme, workers can take up low- and semi-skilled jobs in rural and regional Australia for up to three years.

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities



Intra-Pacific Labour Mobility:

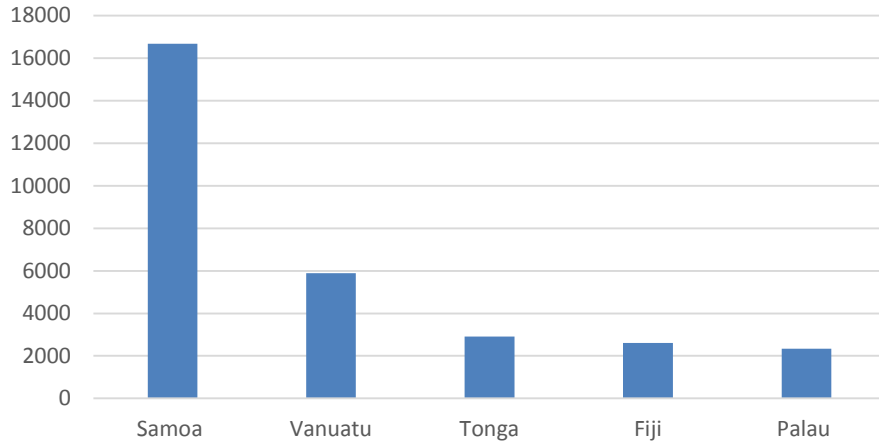
- Despite an absence of reliable data, intra-regional migration flows are known to already exist.
- Fijians have been able to find employment in several PICs and in various occupations and industries.
- The Skills Movement Scheme (SMS) under the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) was introduced in 2012.

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities

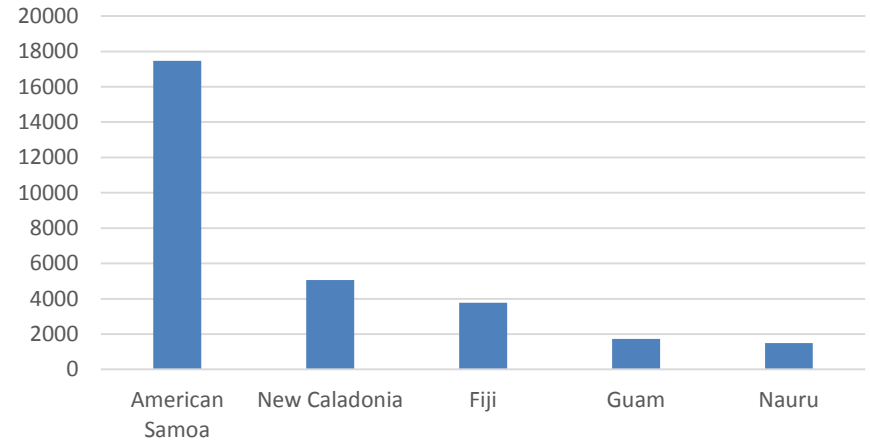


Intra-Pacific Mobility

Top Five Countries of Origin



Top Five Countries of Destination



Source: UNDESA (n.d).

3. Existing Labour Migration Opportunities

Factors affecting labour mobility:

- Skills and qualifications recognition – an important step.
- Geography and remoteness – increases cost and reduces awareness of programs.
- Trade agreements and bilateral schemes – low uptake.
- Recruitment agencies (in some corridors).
- The size and reputation of different source countries.



Future Employment Opportunities



- Future temporary migration opportunities may be found in Pacific Rim countries in industries with significant skills/labour shortages.
- In New Zealand, dairy farming is a recognised skills shortage industry with chronic staffing recruitment and retention issues. Similarly, the construction industry faces severe skills shortages.
- Migrant workers from Pacific countries have already been employed to meet labour shortages in the care industry. Further opportunities are expected in this industry given the rapid ageing of the Aus/NZ populations.

4. Employment and Working Conditions of Labour Migrants

- International labour standards
- Protecting labour rights for all seasonal and temporary labour migrants in destination countries.



4. Employment and Working Conditions of Labour Migrants



International Labour Standards:

- Cover all workers irrespective of nationality and immigration status unless otherwise stated.
- Applicable international labour standards include ILO Fundamental Rights Conventions , Governance Standards, Instruments of general application, Instruments with express provisions on migrant workers, and Instruments on labour migration and protection of migrant workers.
- In addition to Protocols and Recommendations, there are two non-binding frameworks specific to effective labour migration governance: the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006) and the ILO Fair Recruitment Principles and Operational Guidelines (2016).

4. Employment and Working Conditions of Labour Migrants



SWP:

- Changes made to the SWP in 2015-16 included the removal of the (previously 14-week) minimum stay requirement increasing the risk of Pacific seasonal workers not being able to earn enough money to cover their costs of participation.
- Many SWP workers in PNG have reported not receiving sick pay reducing their income, or have been forced to work while sick.
- Additionally, many seasonal workers struggle to access their accrued superannuation in Australia.
- According to the World Bank's 2017 study, there is an estimated 11.4 million AUD in superannuation contributions that SWP participating workers have not been able to access.

4. Employment and Working Conditions of Labour Migrants



RSE:

- Recognised Seasonal Employer/Approved Employer status binds workers to specific employers, since their visa cannot be transferred to new employers. This creates vulnerability to exploitation.
- RSE workers have been subjected to underpayment (non-payment in some cases), unverified pay deductions, denial of toilet breaks, and verbal and physical abuse by employers and 'gang masters'.
- Horticulture and viticulture as a whole have a very low level of unionisation, and seasonal migrant workers may be pressured not to join a union.

4. Employment and Working Conditions of Labour Migrants



Pre-departure orientation:

- Under the RSE & SWP Pacific countries are responsible for pre-departure orientation for preparing workers and reducing their vulnerability abroad.
- Pre-departure orientations include workers' rights and complaints mechanisms, employment conditions, climate, clothing and footwear requirements, taxation, insurance, remittances and budget advice, and emergency contact information.

4. Employment and Working Conditions of Labour Migrants



Regulation of recruitment:

- Both Australia and NZ prohibit the charging of recruitment fees.
- Fiji has ratified C181 that in principle prohibits the charging of recruitment fees and costs to workers.

Reintegration support:

- There is currently little or no reintegration support provided for returned seasonal workers

6. Recommendations



Improving Labour Migration Governance:

- Take steps to ratify ILO conventions governing labour migration and ILO conventions with express provisions on migrant workers.
- Map legislation on recruitment fees and related costs and consider alignment with the ILO Fair Recruitment General Principles and Operational Guidelines.
- Development of national labour migration policies

6. Recommendations



Improving Existing Temporary and Seasonal Schemes:

- Advocate for removing restrictions to change employers for seasonal and temporary workers in Australia and New Zealand.
- Portability of social security
- Enhance inter-country trade union collaboration.
- Increase the participation of women in seasonal work schemes taking into account good practices in the region.
- Monitor migration and recruitment costs paid by workers. Recruitment cost borne by worker as proportion of earnings is an SDG indicator.

6. Recommendations



Increasing intra-Pacific labour mobility

- Better utilization of opportunities

Moving to new destination countries and into new occupational areas:

- PIC governments in collaboration with social partners may develop an overseas employment strategy within national labour migration policy.
- After determining the preferred levels and type of labour migration, Pacific Island governments could become more active in gathering and disseminating information on potential labour migration opportunities in non-traditional destinations and new occupational areas. They could proactively negotiate BLAs/MoUs with potential destination countries.

6. Recommendations



Collecting comparable labour migration data to ensure evidence-based policy-making:

- Using the International Labour Migration Statistics (ILMS) template of the ILO and its global data-base, and replicating the process of technical support and focal points in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, it is recommended that ILO develop a database for the Pacific region.
- Research on social impacts.

Thank you



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