

Timorese workers in Australia:

A study of seasonal work experiences, skills and future options

A report of the follow-up Tracer Study in Timor-Leste

for the

Labour Mobility Assistance Program (LMAP)



Dr Ann Wigglesworth, (Consultant) and Abel Boavida dos Santos, (Research Team Leader)

April 2017

DISCLAIMER: The analysis and findings in this report of an LMAP implemented study are based on a small number of respondents who were available at the time of the survey in one SWP country. Caution should be taken in extrapolating the results across all SWP workers and other SWP countries.

All findings, conclusions and recommendations are those of the consultant undertaking the study, not the Australian Government. The report has been reviewed and revised, based on stakeholder feedback by the LMAP Team Leader and LMAP Monitoring and Evaluation and Research Specialist.

Contents

List of Tables	ii
List of Charts	ii
Executive summary	iii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Social context of labour migration in Timor-Leste	1
3. Research methodology.....	2
4. Activities since returning to Timor-Leste	3
4.1 Planned and actual activities undertaken by workers in Timor-Leste	3
4.2. Looking for and getting a job.....	4
4.3. Starting a business.....	4
4.4. Participation in Training	6
5. Money Management.....	6
6. Gender and culture.....	8
7. Future involvement in the SWP.....	9
7.1 Pre-departure Briefing.....	10
7.2 Reintegration Process.....	11
7.3 Future plans.....	11
8. Comparison of April and November data.....	12
8.1 Return to work by sector and gender	12
8.2 Use of earnings.....	13
8.4 Reintegration into the Timorese economy	13
9 Integrating SWP into national planning	13
Conclusion	14

List of Tables

Table 1: Workers' availability for survey	2
Table 2: Businesses started by returned workers	4
Table 3: Training and advice received by returned workers	6
Table 4: Expenditure of workers since return to Timor-Leste, by value and top five ranking	7

List of Charts

Chart 1: Profile of workers interviewed, by gender and sector	3
Chart 2: Planned activities at the time of workers' return, and actual activities 6 months later	3
Chart 3: What further support would be useful for long term success of the business	5
Chart 4: Female and male workers have changed their perspectives about gender since returning home.	8
Chart 5: Returning workers choosing the same or different Approved Employer (AE) or type of work according to their work sector	10
Chart 6: Workers preference for either a detailed PDB briefing or Brief Refresher only	10
Chart 7: Which of the following you would like to see covered in the reintegration process?	11
Chart 8: Future plans of returning workers	12
Chart 9: Sector and gender of workers in November 2016 compared to April 2017.	12

Executive summary

The Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) has enabled workers from Timor-Leste to participate in seasonal accommodation sector and agricultural work in Australia since 2012. This research has been commissioned to consider the experiences of Timorese SWP workers in Australia and the development impacts of their participation at home.

In November 2016 a Re-integration and Tracer Study was conducted involving 50 Timorese who had recently returned from participating in the SWP, to understand their experience of the SWP, as well as the benefits it brings to their life in Timor-Leste. In this follow-up study conducted in April 2017, 39 of the same workers were re-interviewed to determine what they have done during their six months back in Timor-Leste, their spending patterns and their plans to return to SWP. The research aims to understand the motivations of the workers and how the SWP contributes to achieving their long-term plans in Timor-Leste.

The research found that overall workers contribute a large part of their time and money to house building or renovation, which is a major expenditure item for SWP savings. The next major expenditure was daily living expenses while workers are renovating their house, looking for a job, or planning their business. There was a big gap between their intention, as stated when interviewed immediately after they returned to Timor-Leste, and what they actually achieved. Half (ten) of those that intended to set up a business succeeded in doing so. The research demonstrated a significant amount of savings in the bank, intended to start a business or undertake further house construction. Further, the research demonstrated the challenge of finding a new job on return to Timor-Leste with only 60% of those who originally indicated their intention to look for a job actually doing so, and of those, only two workers succeeding in getting one.

A significant finding has been the degree to which workers claimed to have changed their behaviour with respect to gender attitudes since working in Australia. Most men have changed their attitudes toward women in their families. They are now more supportive of women getting an education and of helping with domestic duties, and are using approaches other than aggression to resolve issues or disagreements. Women workers have strengthened their resolve to take greater control over their lives.

Beyond the significant benefit to returned workers and their families from participating in SWP, there are opportunities to strengthen development impact in Timor-Leste. The following recommendations, from this follow up study, add clarity in this regard:

- i. Pre-departure briefings should continue to be held with greater attention to the content of Letters of Offer, as well as greater emphasis being placed on Australian Law and Australian culture that pertain to seasonal workers (this was recommended in the initial study).
- ii. The reintegration process should include support that builds business skills. This might increase returned workers business aspirations in strategic or niche market areas.
- iii. A comparison should be made of the success of returned worker businesses with the development of other small businesses in Timor-Leste. Such a comparison could determine if the skills and financial resources generated through the SWP are effective at supporting economic development of partner countries.

- iv. The Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE) should be supported to leverage SWP opportunities towards Timor-Leste's strategic development aims:
- SEPFOPE could encourage linkages between returned workers and productive sectors, by fostering links with, for example, the Timor-Leste youth development strategy; Avansa Agrikultura and TOMAK, to name a few.
 - SEPFOPE could coordinate with the Ministry of Tourism as well as private sector tourism and hospitality operators to select seasonal workers that will strengthen the human resource base for tourism in the locations where it is planned to be developed.
 - Recruitment of SWP workers could potentially be more effective if done in the districts, particularly for work in the agriculture sector. Potential workers from the districts could be informed about agricultural extension support, tourism plans and business skills training to encourage them to plan new productive initiatives.

1. Introduction

The SWP contributes to the economic development of nine participating Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste, by providing access to work opportunities in the Australian agriculture sector, accommodation sector in selected locations and tourism sector

(<https://www.employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme>)

This research has been commissioned by the Labour Mobility Assistance Program (LMAP), using DFAT funding, to investigate the experiences of SWP workers in Australia as well as how it has contributed to the livelihood and wellbeing of the workers' family in the present and into the future. The study aims to understand the development impacts of the SWP program as well as the workers' intentions in terms of spending and their livelihood activities while in Timor-Leste to:

- i) contribute towards improvements to the management of the SWP, including preparation, mobilisation, management while in Australia, and the re-integration processes; and
- ii) identify the short- to medium-term impacts of participating in the SWP for the seasonal worker, and the context and mechanisms that influenced these outcomes.

In November 2016 a Re-integration and Tracer Study was conducted with 50 Timorese workers who had recently returned from participating in the Australian government funded SWP. Through in-depth interviews, participants were asked questions about their experience of the SWP, as well as questions relating to the development impacts of participating in the SWP - family situation, money earned, and skills developed, as well as participants' intentions in terms of spending patterns, and work while back in Timor.

In this Follow-up study, 39 of the original 50 workers were re-interviewed to determine what has happened to them during their six months back in Timor-Leste, and their further intentions. Many of the workers were due to return to Australia in late April and May. The timing of this research aimed to optimise the numbers that could be reached, prior to departing again for Australia. A small number of workers had already returned to Australia and a few were not contactable.

2. Social context of labour migration in Timor-Leste

For large numbers of youth, migration starts with moving from their rural village to their district town or the capital, Dili, often for educational purposes - half of all secondary school places are in Dili. In addition, the urban drift of youth is driven by the greater opportunities for training and work in the urban areas, in a context in which 'employment' is perceived by the majority to mean a government or private sector job, and in which opportunities are very limited. Timor-Leste has a highly centralised government and a very small private sector concentrated in Dili which further fuels urban migration. For school-leavers, returning to work on the family farm does not meet the expectations of either the parents who have paid for their education, or the youth. Young people arrive in Dili for greater training and work opportunities. They enjoy the access to telecommunications and internet, the urban youth culture and the bright lights of the city¹.

The question of how to transform a labour sending program to contribute to national economic development is a key issue. The majority of SWP placements are in horticulture, with a smaller number in the hospitality sector. Under current recruitment practices, opportunities are available to largely urban based young Timorese who have little experience in agriculture or interest to use their SWP skills to promote agricultural development at home. Tourism workers can and do transform their skills into tourism activities

¹ Ann Wigglesworth (2016) *Activism and Aid: Young citizens' experiences of development and democracy in Timor-Leste*, Monash University Publishing 150pp.

if they are resident in suitable locations. Many urbanised residents struggle to pay high costs for land for a house or to establish businesses, whereas workers with strong family links in the rural areas may have access to land in their home village. The diversity of the Timorese geography is such that the place of origin of a worker will have significant impact on their ability to access land and develop different kinds of agricultural activities. The Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE) has offices in most of the districts, but currently these are not used for SWP recruitment.

3. Research methodology

The survey team comprised data collectors who had been involved in the previous Reintegration and Tracer survey carried out in November 2016. Two of the original data collectors were not available, and it was decided to proceed with a smaller number of data collectors. The follow-up questionnaire was substantially shorter than the original survey, requiring only 30 minutes per interview (compared to up to two hours in the initial tracer survey).

Two days of training were conducted for the Follow-up Tracer questionnaire, and a pilot carried out with two participants. These interviews have been included within the analysis of this report as no changes were made to the questionnaire after the pilot.

The survey targeted all respondents of the initial tracer survey in November 2016. The need to interview specific workers resulted in a more time needed by the data collectors to locate respondents and arrange interview times. Some were living in the districts but eventually it was possible to meet most of them when they came to Dili for SWP training and/or preparation in April. A total of 37 of the original 50 respondents were included in the second study.

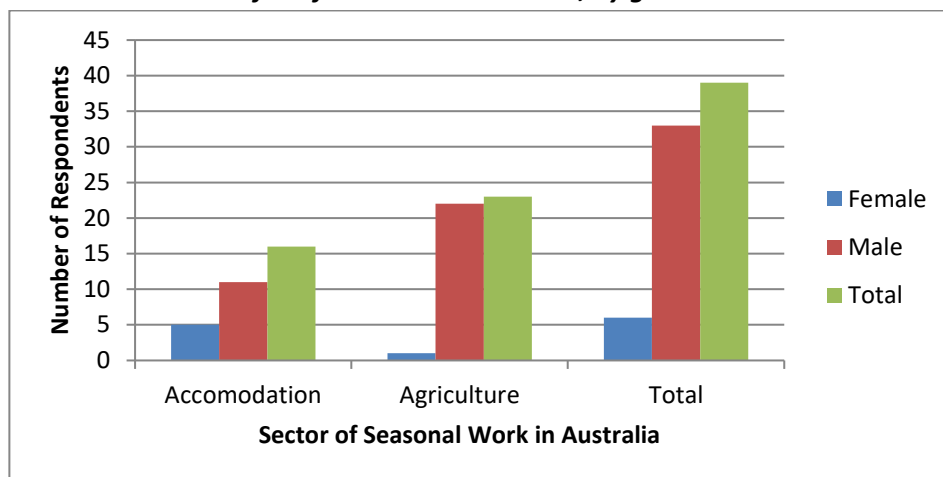
Table 1: Workers' availability for survey

Workers availability for survey	Number
Workers who returned to Australia prior to survey start date	9
Workers who could not be contacted	4
Workers in November survey interviewed in follow-up in April 2017	37
Workers from November pilot survey interviewed in April 2017	2
Number of interviews completed	39

The questionnaires used for both November and April surveys were developed by LMAP for use across multiple SWP participating countries in order to obtain consistent information across the program. The initial questionnaire was amended by the research team to include qualitative (open-ended) questions to gain a deeper insight into workers' planned and actual livelihood activities when they return home and their use of their SWP savings.

During the survey, to gather as much information as possible, the Research Consultant and Research Supervisor met with the data collectors every day. The survey forms were checked for completeness and consistency, and the data collectors were asked to clarify any inconsistencies with data collected. Through this process, the data collectors shared useful knowledge about the circumstances and motivations of the worker. An evaluation meeting was also held at the end of the survey.

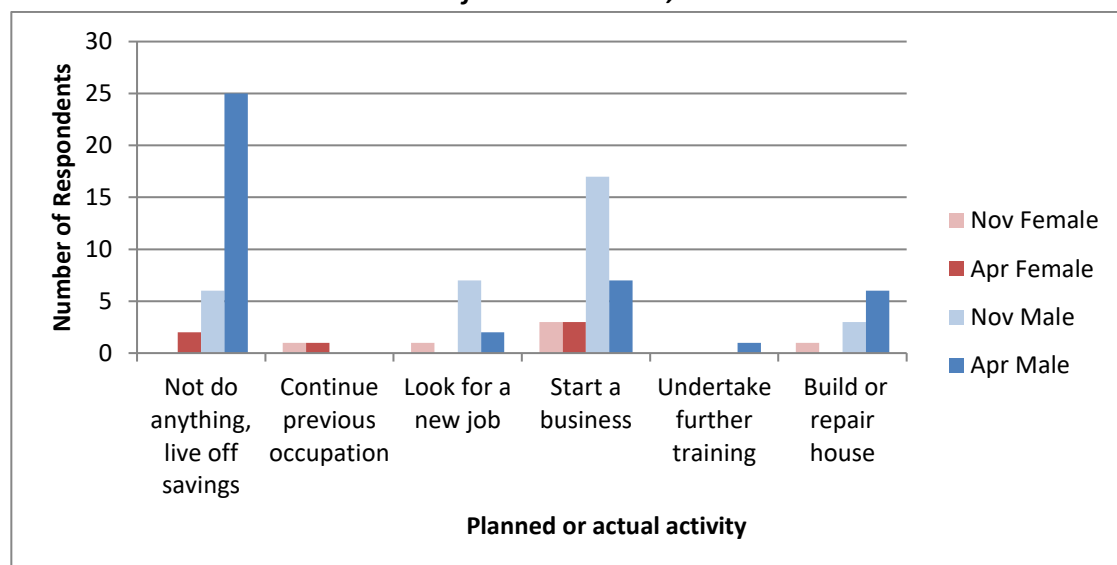
Six women and 33 men were interviewed for this follow up survey, of whom five women and eleven men worked in the accommodation sector and one woman and 22 men had worked in agriculture. Thirty-one (80%) respondents spent most of their time since returning to Timor-Leste in Dili while eight (20%) spent most time in one of seven different Districts of the country.

Chart 1: Profile of workers interviewed, by gender and sector.

4. Activities since returning to Timor-Leste

4.1 Planned and actual activities undertaken by workers in Timor-Leste

The study commenced by investigating what workers had planned as their main activities against what actually transpired when they returned home.

Chart 2: Planned activities at the time of workers' return, and actual activities 6 months later.

Twenty returned workers (51%) had wanted to start a business when they returned in November. Eight workers (21%), mostly male, had intended to look for a new job, whilst 18% of men (but no women) intended to not do anything except live off their savings. Another 10% (three men and one woman) planned to spend the time building or renovating a house. Some men, but no women, described undertaking multiple activities, both are included in the foregoing chart.

At the end of the six months at home, 27 respondents (69%) had not participated in any economic activities other than living off their savings. Of those women and men that intended to look for a new job, only 13% did so and all but two failed to find one. Respondents confirmed that whilst they had looked for work, there were no work opportunities available.

Several other reasons were given for the difference between the planned and actual activities. Eight respondents (20%) said that they changed their plans because they had to spend their money on supporting relatives, including paying for school fees. Some workers that had initially planned to look for a new job decided not to look for work because they would be going back to Australia to work on SWP and didn't want to then give up a job in Timor-Leste. One worker successfully responded to an advertisement for work, thus he did not follow through with his plan to start a business. One respondent had to spend all the money on a funeral and another had to spend much of it on a wedding as '*adat*' (customary obligations).

The following sub-sections consider each activity in turn.

4.2. Looking for and getting a job

There were two workers who did find a new job, one as a factory worker, and the other working as Assistant Manager in an international organisation. One responded to an advertisement and the other approached the employer directly. Both said that their SWP skills that were useful in the job included work skills such as team work, leadership and punctuality, as well as English skills. Another two workers unsuccessfully looked for new work but ultimately returned to previous occupations, one as a restaurant worker and the other as an artist. Of these four, the factory worker and the artist did not have plans to return to SWP.

4.3. Starting a business

Half (10) of the 20 workers that had intended to start a business were able to do so, with all females that had intended to start a business being able to do so. Fewer men started a business than had intended to so, citing that they needed to fix their house before they started a business. The businesses are listed in table 2 below disaggregated by gender and district of residence:

Table 2: Businesses started by returned workers

	Type of business	Gender	District
1	A Guest House	Female	Covalima
2	A restaurant	Female	Dili
3	Make and sell tofu and tempe	Female	Dili
4	Make and sell bread	Male	Dili
5	Importing motorbikes from Indonesia for sale	Male	Dili
6	A small shop (general village store)	Male	Dili
7	A small shop (general village store)	Male	Dili
8	A shop selling clothes and shoes	Male	Dili
9	Bought a truck to transport coffee & people	Male	Aileu
10	Money lender (saving to start a mechanics workshop)	Male	Dili

Other reasons for not starting a business as intended included:

- not being able to find suitable premises;
- not having enough start-up capital;
- changing the type of business established;
- postponing business establishment due to inferior equipment (available);
- building or renovating a house as a priority; and

- spending capital on buying transport, such as a *microlet* (local bus) or goods transport vehicle instead (where such purchases are not accompanied by stated intentions that they want to start a business, the vehicle might be purchased for a family member rather than for use by the worker).

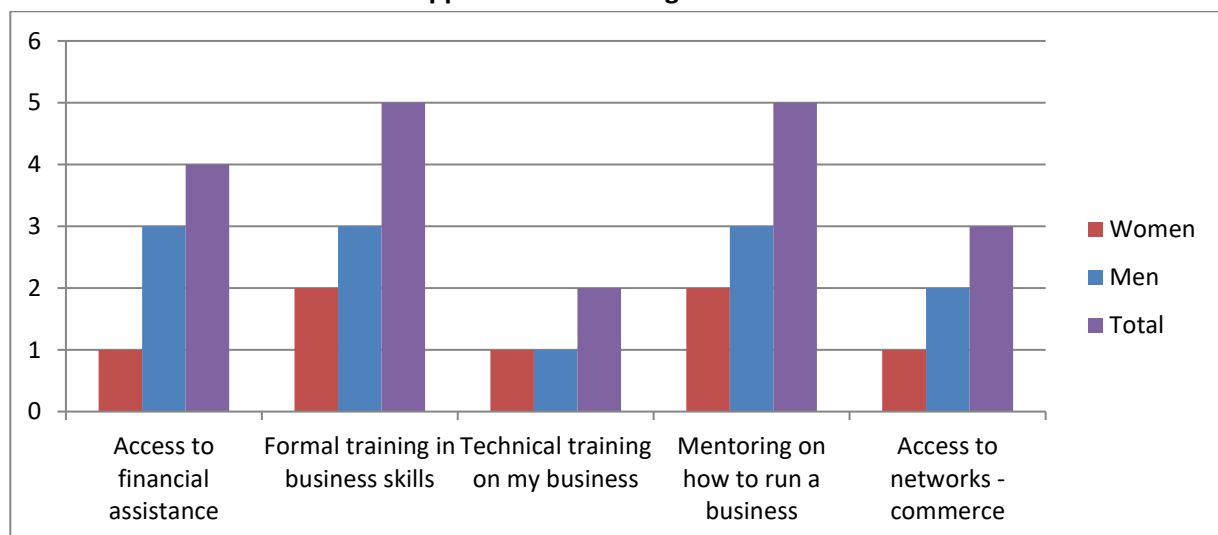
All ten workers who started a business involved another two to four family members in their enterprise. They all established the businesses using their own financial resources. One had formal training from IADE to develop a business plan but the majority either had no training or advice or they learnt skills from a family member. One mentioned that he developed the required skills in Australia.

The skills workers developed during SWP that were useful in developing a business included : hospitality, general work skills, and English skills. No workers were using agricultural skills in their businesses and four said they did not use any skills learnt in Australia.

All the 10 businesses are still operating and will be carried on by a family member when the worker returns to the SWP, except one business which is to be put on hold. Half of the businesses have long term plans to extend their enterprises.

Those who had started new businesses were asked what other support could contribute to the long-term success of their business. Respondents felt they lacked skills in business development, including formal training or mentoring in how to run a business. Access to financial assistance was also seen as important, particularly by men, while technical training or access to commercial networks were least important. Two of the ten respondents mentioned all categories, suggesting they would welcome any kind of support. Workers' who live in the rural areas are affected by constraints in accessing information, business training and credit support. A worker who is establishing a guest house in Suai did access on-line training in business management, through his own initiative.

Chart 3: Further support useful for long term success of the business



The desire for business skills development is consistent with research previously undertaken with migrants working in Korea, which found returning Timorese migrants believed they had useful technical skills for establishing a business but didn't feel they had adequate business skills². Access to more support would

² Ann Wigglesworth and Zulmira Fonseca (2016) 'Experiences of young Timorese as migrant workers in Korea', Development Policy Centre ANU website: <http://devpolicy.org/2016-Australasian-aid-conference/Papers/Wigglesworth-Fonseca-Experiences-of-young-Timorese-workers-in-Korea.pdf>

not only strengthen their business but could encourage more strategic businesses. Some workers have taken the initiative to establish innovative activities, rather than competing with an oversupply of 'kiosks' selling imported goods, such as production of foods (tofu, tempe, bread) and the establishment of hospitality infrastructure (guest house, restaurant). Some have also established transport and service businesses - a mechanics workshop, a construction materials shop, a printing and photocopy shop, and a petrol station were all mentioned as aspirational plans for business growth. It is recommended that greater access to support that builds business skills might increase this kind of productive activity.

4.4. Participation in Training

In addition to training in relation to their businesses, workers were asked about any training they had participated in since returning to Timor-Leste. Six workers (15%) mentioned they had attended training (note: one of these identified training as their main activity in chart 2).

Table 3: Training and advice received by returned workers

	Nature of training	Who provided it?	How long was it for?	Where was it held?
1	Health in communities	Ministry of Health	2 days	Comoro training centre
2	Management	Konnecto agency	1 day	Liquica
3	Business skills	IADE	1 day	SEPFOPE
4	Hospitality	Training centre	2 months	Dili
5	Tempe/tofu making	Her sister	1 week	Sister's house
6	Finance, administration and English	Mahon training centre,	4 months	Dili

The three short formal trainings of 1-2 days were provided free of charge. More intensive training was undertaken by two workers, one in hospitality over two months and the other in finance and administration and English over four months. In both cases they invested in the training themselves. One worker mentioned training by her sister and friend over a week, but two other workers that had receiving family based training did not identify such training when asked what training and advice they had received.

5. Money Management

Workers were asked to provide information about their major expenditures. The enumerators then ranked the top five expenditures of each worker. Major expenses were for buying land, house improvements and starting a business. There were no responses for 'repaying loans to bank/moneylenders' or 'some form of financial investment'.

Table 4: Expenditure of workers since return to Timor-Leste, by value and their top five ranking.

Item no	Spending	Top 5 ranked expenditures (no. workers)	Avg. value per person (USD)	Total Value (USD)
8	House improvements	26	3,382	87,920
1	Everyday expenses such as food and transport	37	1,743	64,500
17	Savings in bank	13	2,699	35,090
9	Transport such as motorbike, car or truck	16	1,841	29,460
11	Starting a business	9	3,094	27,850
10	Buying land	5	4,790	23,950
2	School fees or other education related expenses	23	1,020	23,430
14	Customary obligations	18	963	17,330
4	Household goods such as pots, linen	19	393	7,470
7	Goods that support your livelihood such as livestock, boat, or other goods or equipment to support farming or fishing	5	831	4,155
6	Electronic goods such as computers or mobile phones	7	424	2,970
13	Donation to church or community	6	420	2,520
19	Other (a trip to Indonesia, buy weaving materials)	2	1,225	2,450
3	Health related expenses	5	302	1,510
5	Durable goods such as refrigerator, radio, TV, washing machine, satellite dish	3	185	555
12	Investing in existing business	1	500	500
16	Repaying loans from family or friends	1	235	235
Total expenditures in top five individually ranked items				\$331,895

The ranking of their expenditures provides a greater insight into priority items for many workers. Everyday expenses were the top ranked expenditure category. House improvements were ranked as a second priority, but the expenditure patterns of the returned workers show that building or renovating a house absorbed the highest expenditure for two thirds of the workers, averaging USD3,382 each. Other workers were making improvements to the house they lived in, typically their parents' house, but planned to build another house for themselves once the first was complete.

Nineteen workers (49%) contributed to customary obligations which in two cases absorbed most of the available savings, respectively due to a funeral and a wedding in the family. Thirteen workers have an average of USD 2,700 each as savings in the bank. This highlights that several workers intended to set up a business but did not, and their intended investment in a business remains unspent.

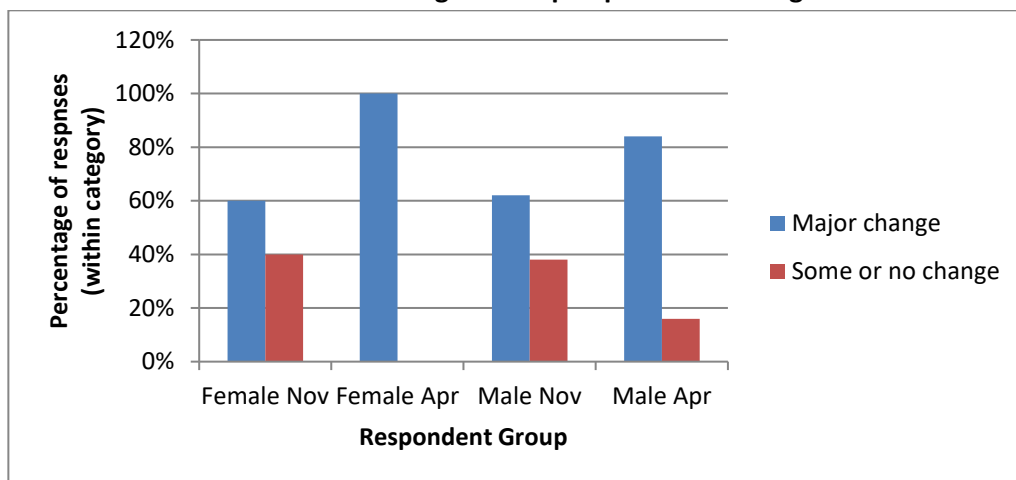
Other major expense items include the purchase of land (5 respondents or 13%) and transport (16 respondents or 41%). The purchase of land may be a pre-requisite to build a house, but land may also be needed for business purposes. Similarly, several workers invested in transport business by buying a truck or *mikrolet* (local bus), while others purchased motorbikes for their own use. The worker who purchased the *mikrolet* did not reveal any business plans in relation to it, but he did have plans to set up farming activities in Bobonaro with other friends, based on what he learnt in Australia.

With respect to superannuation paid in Australia, just over half the workers (20) had claimed their superannuation. One worker lodged a claim is still waiting for payment, two have been informed that there is an issue with their claim and another doesn't know why he hasn't been able to claim. Of those who did not claim superannuation, the majority have the understanding that they shouldn't make a claim until they have finished work with their Approved Employer and no longer intend to go back to the same workplace.

6. Gender and culture

Workers were asked whether their views on gender had changed since returning from Australia, and compared to the responses from the November 2016 tracer study. In the November survey, 62% of men and 60% of women said they had a significantly changed their perspective about their own role in their family. When surveyed again in April 2017, all the women and 82% of the men said their views had changed, indicating that the change in attitude has strengthened after some time at home.

Chart 4: Female and male workers have changed their perspectives about gender since returning home.



In addition, respondents were asked to explain how their views have changed. The degree to which most male workers claimed to have changed their behaviour is remarkable, with some indicative change statements from male respondents as follows:

- *'Before I went to Australia I forbade my wife to continue her education because women should be in the kitchen, but when I got back I took her to register at the university, because in Australia women are free to do what they want to do.'*
- *'Before I went to Australia I didn't allow my wife to go to school but now I support her to go to school.'*
- *'Before I went to Australia I told my young sisters they could not go to school, but when I got back I took them to register at the school and paid for them.'*
- *'Before I went to Australia I forbade my young sisters to go far from the house, but now I encourage them to learn.'*
- *'It opened my thinking to give my wife the opportunity to go to school and to work.'*
- *'It changed my thinking, I used to think that my young sister did not need to continue school, when I returned I supported them to go to school.'*
- *'Before I went to Australia I would slap them but now I have returned I do not and life is calmer.'*
- *'Before I went to Australia I would be angry with my siblings if they rode the bicycle and beat them, now I teach them to ride.'*
- *'My thinking has changed, now I respect my wife and sisters.'*
- *'Before I went to Australia men were village chiefs but now women can be village chief.'*

- 'Before I went to Australia (in the house) I wouldn't do anything but now I help my wife with the housework because men can also do this work.'
- 'I help in the house now and look after the children when my wife is busy which I did not do before.'
- 'Before I went to Australia I would be angry but now I can control my emotions in the house.'
- 'I now respect women when they give their ideas.'
- 'We respect each other, now I have respect for my sisters' thinking and their rights.'
- 'I apply the experience I had in Australia, we cannot beat women because the police will take us.'
- 'There is a change in the family, there is less anger, calm life and mutual respect between men and women.'
- 'Now the Government sends both men and women to work overseas.'
- 'There is a change in capacity and intelligence which has lifted up women to be like men.'
- 'Create a situation for workers, men and women to work equally in the home and there is less conflict.'
- 'There is a change and less conflict now.'
- 'I consider women's rights because we spoke about gender equality and have to practice, not only speak about it.'
- 'I value women and give motivation to my younger sisters that they not be afraid or shy but can learn. I'm calmer.'

Responses from female workers:

- 'I am like a parent for two children of my mother who is disabled so I look after them. Before I was forbidden to work but then I decided I would make the decision myself not allow my husband to decide.'
- 'Before going to Australia I was dependent on others but now I can do things for myself.'
- 'I am now responsible for the house.'
- 'When I returned to Timor I made a decision to apply my experience from Australia. Women and men are the same, but we sometimes limit women and discriminate against them.'
- 'I shared the experience I have from Australia that women and men are the same (equal). My family are now attending an English course, so they will be able to go on SWP.'
- 'In hospitality we learnt to serve people equally, we cannot discriminate.'

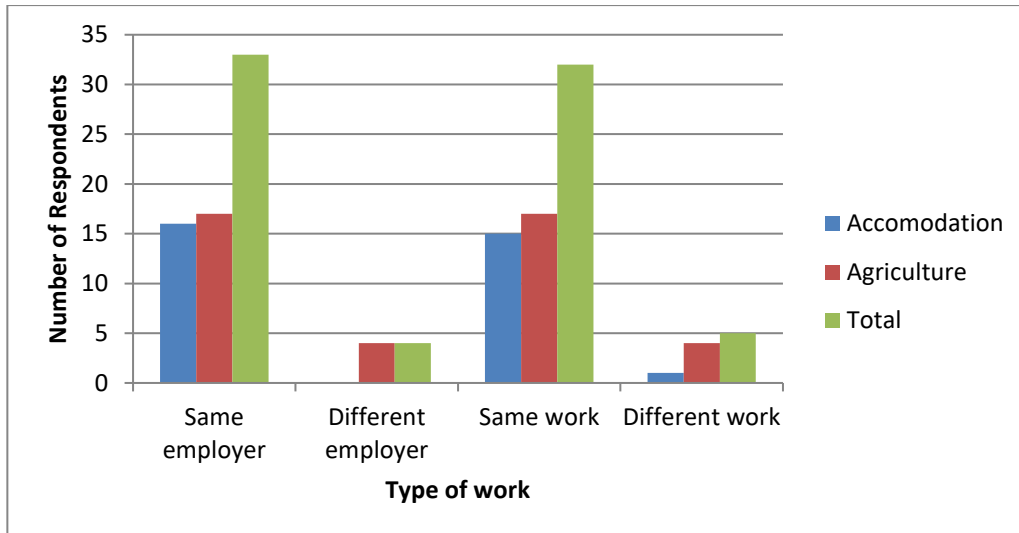
Overall men say they are more respectful of women now. Workers have learnt that violence is not an acceptable instrument to respond to situations or ideas that they disagree with. Many men talked of being calmer and having less conflict in the household now compared to before. While they were in Australia, men also learned to play a role in household tasks including cooking, cleaning and washing, and now they realise that they can do this work at home as well. Women, on the other hand, experienced being treated as an equal. They took this experience home and shared it with their families, sometimes finding voice in place of formerly subservient behaviour.

7. Future involvement in the SWP

All except two workers (95%) intend to return to Australia this year. Of the two, one will not return because he wants to return to pursuing his art career, and the other was unsure because he has just started a new job. In addition, at least two workers (both women) who were interviewed in November, but did not participate in the follow up survey, have informed SEPFOPE that they will not return to the SWP program - one had participated in SWP for some years and had completed a certificate IV in Hospitality but could not be successfully contacted for the follow up survey.

Workers were asked whether they intended, if they were able, to return to the same Approved Employer and workplace. Thirty-two workers (86%) intend to return to the same Approved Employer and work role (if possible). Another four workers (11%) aim to return to a different Approved Employer - all four of these are men who worked in the agriculture sector previously. One hospitality worker is staying with the same Approved Employer but changing his job from a gardener to a kitchen hand. No women anticipate changing their workplace.

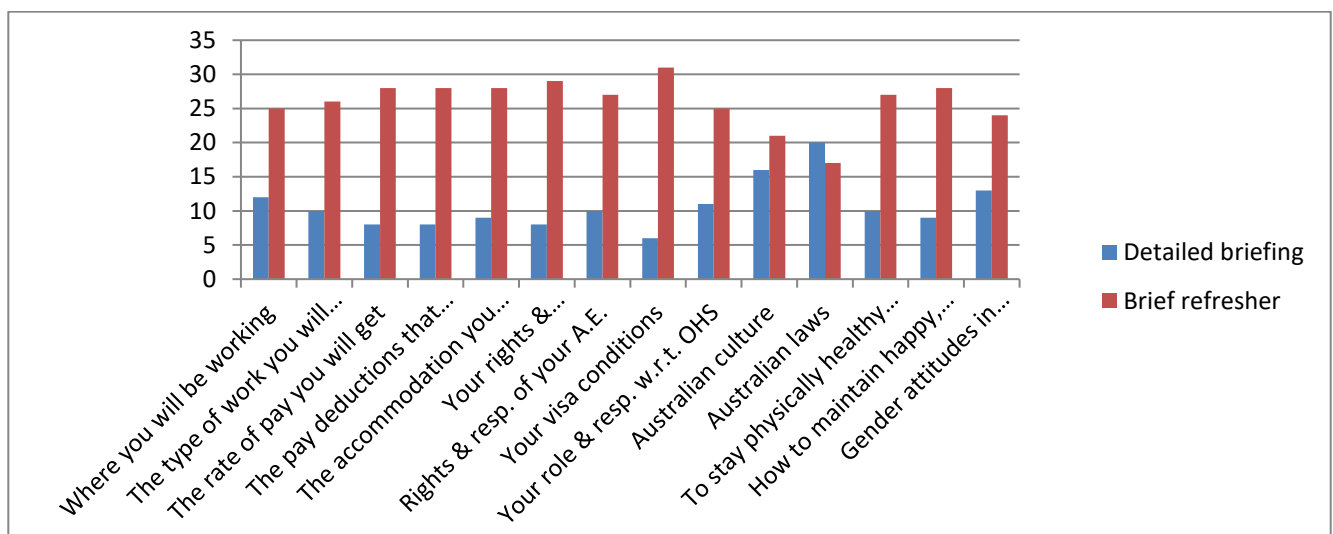
Chart 5: Returning workers choosing the same or different Approved Employer (AE) or type of work.



7.1 Pre-departure Briefing

Workers were asked to think about key issues covered in the Pre-departure briefing, and whether they would need a detailed briefing (which some received prior to their previous work but not all) or a shorter refresher briefing before returning to Australia. Generally, workers preferred a refresher briefing overall except for one topic, Australian Law, where most workers requested a detailed briefing. Also 'Australian culture and how it differs from the culture of your country' also got a stronger than average response in favour of a detailed briefing. This is consistent with comments in the November tracer survey.

Chart 6: Workers preference for either a detailed PDB briefing or brief refresher only.



Several comments from respondents indicated the need for clarity about salary, deductions and conditions, one mentioning specifically when they take on a new work role. Several also wanted to better understand Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and rights and responsibilities. Three workers implied that the material in PDB was not understood well:

- 'PDB must be held each year until we understand it well'
- 'PDB should be a week not just one or two days only'
- 'The (SEPFOPE) staff must know the material better'

Workers need to understand the content of the Letter of Offer because it contains their employment conditions, in English. One worker explained that payslips had been provided to the workers which included deductions that had not been included in the Letter of Offer. As team leader he had to negotiate to have these deductions removed. This demonstrates the importance of workers understanding the contract conditions and the team leader having good English so that they can negotiate any inconsistencies.

7.2 Reintegration Process

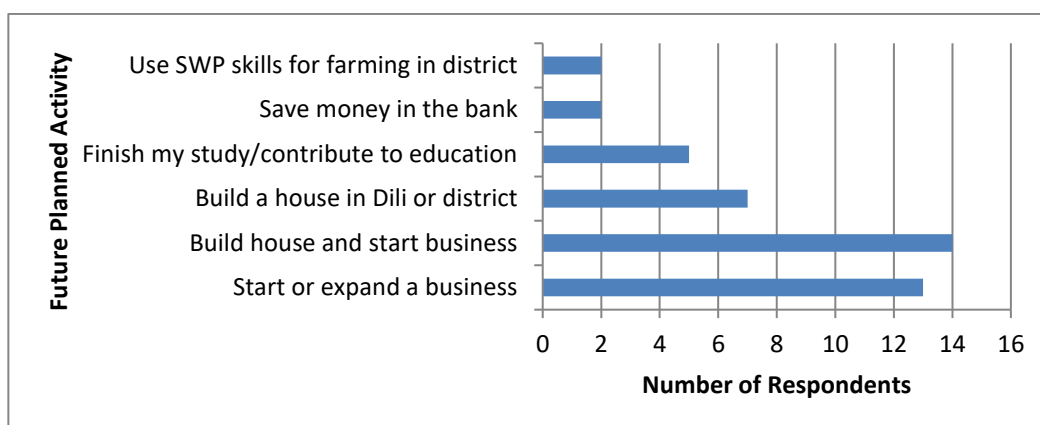
Consistent with findings already presented, there is a strong preference for reintegration briefings to provide information in relation to starting a business, followed by getting a job. Also important was the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience in Australia. Of least importance was improving their farm and advice on reintegrating into the home and community

Chart 7: Which of the following would you like to see covered in the reintegration process?



7.3 Future plans

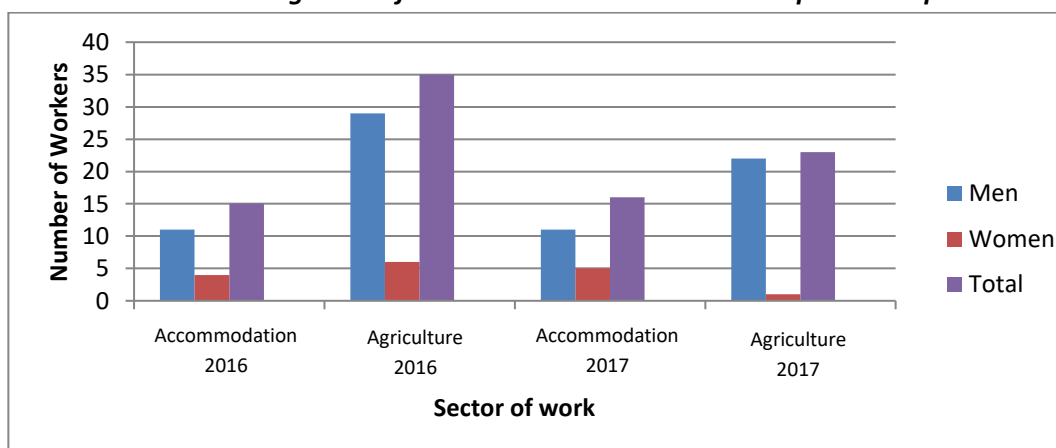
Workers were asked if they are going to join SWP again and what they hope their earnings will enable them to achieve next. The majority (27 workers or 69%) mentioned starting or continuing a business. Five mentioned paying for their study or for their siblings' study as well as contributing to house renovation or starting a business. Businesses start-ups mentioned included a Printing and Photocopy Centre, a petrol station in Los Palos, a local store (kiosk), a restaurant, clothes making, and selling construction materials. Two workers wanted to start agricultural activities in Ainaro and Bobonaro respectively, using the skills they learnt in Australia. House construction or renovation was mentioned by 20 (51%) workers - at least four of these were planning to build a house in their district (Liquisa, Baucau, Aileu and Ainaro).

Chart 8: Future plans of returning workers

8. Comparison of April and November data

8.1 Return to work by sector and gender

Comparing the data with that collected during the initial tracer study in November 2016 offers some interesting reflections. Firstly, the workers' choices to return to the same or different workplaces shows the accommodation sector to be relatively stable, with most accommodation workers hoping to return to the same employer and workplace. This is less the case for agriculture where less workers, particularly women, anticipated returning. This trend was further evident from a conversation with a group of male workers who departed for Broome on 28 April 2017. At least two of them had previously worked in agriculture in Victoria, but had chosen to change to accommodation in Broome, because they said agriculture work was too tough due to long working hours and cold conditions.

Chart 9: Sector and gender of workers in November 2016 compared to April 2017

All hospitality workers who were interviewed in November also participated in the April interviews and returned to Australia. Two workers, a female in the accommodation sector and a male in agriculture, were included in the November pilot but not included in the November analysis.

In the follow-up sample, the proportion of horticultural workers dropped from 70% in November to 59% in April, and the hospitality workers increased from 30% in November to 41% in April. For women workers, hospitality workers all returned to the same sector, while women in the horticultural sector dropped significantly. Of those workers who had returned to Australia before the survey started, two men had

worked in hospitality, five in horticulture and two women in horticulture in 2016 - whether they returned to same work is not known.

8.2 Use of earnings

Initial research shows that the majority of the workers are between 26 to 35 years old and are most likely secondary school educated. Fifty eight percent (58%) were married, 36% never married and a few were widowed. The November survey showed the workers sent money to the following Timorese recipients:

- Spouse and dependent children (40%);
- Parents or grandparents (26%);
- Other family (22%);
- Other/ friends (2%); and
- Sent no remittances due to short work assignment (8%).

In the November survey there was not a response option of 'remit money into own bank accounts'. Yet in the April survey many workers identified 'savings in bank' as a top five ranked use of funds. The total value of these savings is estimated at USD35,000 held by the thirteen returned workers. Savings were mostly linked to aspirations to establish a business or to live off savings while building/renovating a house.

In November, four workers did not send remittances due to shorter working assignments. In the April survey one participant made a plea to be allowed to go for the complete 6 months. He had been three times, and each time for just four months. For all seasonal workers, the minimum duration of stay is determined in consultation between the Approved Employer and the Department of Employment, based on the approved employer demonstrating that a competent seasonal worker will benefit financially from their participation in the SWP. Workers are entitled to reject a job offer should they prefer to wait for a better opportunity.

8.4 Reintegration into the Timorese economy

In November, half the returned workers wanted to start a business and the April follow up survey showed that half of those were able to do so. The success of returned worker businesses has not been compared to the development of other small businesses in Timor-Leste - such a comparison could determine if the skills and financial resources generated through the SWP are effective at supporting economic development of partner countries.

Skills in hospitality, life/work skills and English language skills were found to be useful in starting a business. No workers found agricultural skills to be useful, even though in the initial November survey, almost half of the workers thought that their agricultural skills would be useful. The accommodation sector appears to produce skills which are more likely to be put to productive use on return to Timor, with several returned workers starting businesses in the sector.

9 Integrating SWP into national planning

Tourism development in Timor-Leste is widely seen as an important sector in national economic development. Tourism currently centres largely around beaches, coral reefs and diving. Outside of Dili, tourism infrastructure is limited, and key destinations being promoted are principally in the north and east of the island. Ecotourism/ community-based tourism has potential in certain district towns and localities of natural beauty. SEPFOP could coordinate with the Ministry of Tourism as well as private sector tourism and hospitality operators to help strengthen the human resource base for tourism in the locations where it is planned to be developed through the employment of returned seasonal workers with hospitality experience in Australia.

While the soft skills that are learnt by seasonal workers (punctuality and team work) are important and applicable across any crop or sector, there is scope to enhance the direct applicability of agricultural skills through better matching of workers to the crop that workers are assigned to. Horticultural placements include the production of vegetable crops, water melons and oranges. Workers reported learning relevant skills for these productive activities. The research team observed that workers could be more purposefully selected for picking different fruits. For example, orange pickers could be selected from the cooler hill districts such as Ainaro, Aileu, Emera and Manufahi for there to be a possibility to apply their skills to enhancing orange production when they return. Similarly, water melon pickers could be selected from the warmer coastal regions such as Baucau, Lautem, Viqueque and Covalima for the technical skills to be transferable to their specific horticultural practices.

Unless workers return to their district they are unlikely to be able to access land to follow up with horticultural production at home. For this reason the recruitment of SWP workers could potentially be more effective if undertaken in the districts, particularly for work in the agriculture sector. Although the selection might be easier to undertake in Dili, the provision of information about SWP and the initial registration process, along with some preliminary screening, could take place in the districts. Further, potential workers from the districts can be informed about agricultural extension support, tourism plans and business skills training to encourage them to plan new productive initiatives.

There are many options to support seasonal workers, applying their skills and earnings for productive economic activity in the agricultural sector when they return home. For example, the government's youth development strategy could include promotion of market gardening activities for urban youth and make productive land available to them. Similarly, existing agricultural support and market access programs in Timor-Leste such as Avansa Agrikultura or TOMAK have the potential to offer support to returning workers on their return home: the role of SEPFOPE should be to facilitate linkages between returned workers and productive sectors.

Another consideration for reintegration is that when workers first return from Australia, they frequently use their savings for immediate needs such as to build or renovate their house, to buy a motorbike or other transport. Those who have participated for two or three times are more likely to start thinking about how to start a business or other economic activity because they have already met their immediate needs (and those of their family). Thus, participation in SWP offers important opportunities for improving the family lifestyle over some three to six years.

In the November study, 28% of male workers and one female said they had difficulty reintegrating in Timor. The main reason for this was not having gainful employment between deployments which they noted as causing a sense of low self-worth. The role of SWP in supporting the resolution of livelihood issues can be cyclical, starting with improvements to home infrastructure and buying material goods, and progressing over subsequent deployments to investing in businesses or other activities, and generating sufficient income at home to support their family. This is consistent with the policy objectives of SWP.

Conclusion

The workers are appreciative of the opportunity to work on the SWP to be able to support their families through house improvements, paying education fees for family members and making major purchases for the household. Overall, the workers contributed a large part of their time and money in Timor-Leste with house improvements being the principal use of SWP money. SWP savings expenditure is prioritised for daily living expenses while returning workers are working on their house, looking for a job, or planning their

business. A significant amount of money was also saved in the bank, often reflecting their unrealised intentions to start a business or for further house construction.

There is a development impact and opportunities for workers at home, with half of workers that intended to start a business being able to do so, and combined with savings a strong preference for others to start businesses in future. The experience and skills that were acquired through SWP in Australia motivated workers to establish business activities. Opportunities exist to provide more information about establishing a business enterprise, and how to gain support for a business once back in Timor. Further, the current selection process of seasonal workers could be better calibrated to matching skills developed in Australia to geographic location and district level economic growth aspiration in Timor-Leste. Access to new job opportunities is more challenging, particularly in light of Timor-Leste's high unemployment rate, and the low wages available in Timor-Leste in comparison with Australia.

The workers found pre-departure briefings (PDB) extremely valuable, but felt in need of greater understanding about issues of Australian Law and Australian culture. As well, a detailed review of the contractual conditions is important, particularly as the Letter of Offer is provided in English and may not be well understood by many of the workers. Some workers (in both November and April) reported differences between their understanding of their contract and actual circumstances in Australia. Comments from some workers suggested that they did not have a full understanding of the information that was provided in the briefing, thus PDBs should continue to be held with greater attention to these issues.

A highly significant and remarkable finding was the degree to which workers claimed to have changed their behaviour with respect to gender attitudes since working in Australia. Most men said that they had changed their attitudes toward women in their families and are now more supportive of women getting an education and of helping with domestic duties than they were before. Women workers have strengthened their resolve to take greater control over their lives. Complementing DFAT's considerable investment in gender equality issues, these workers might provide some useful role models for how the underlying patriarchal mentality in Timor-Leste can be changed.

This work has provided valuable insights to the SWP program in Timor-Leste and it is suggested that independent research continues to be undertaken to measure the development impact of any changes to recruitment practices and additional support mechanisms for returning workers. The Tracer study is an effective model that can provide important insights into the experiences of SWP workers in Australia and on return.

This follow up study reiterates and adds to recommendations made in the November Tracer study:

- i. Pre-departure briefings should continue to be held with greater attention to the content of Letters of Offer, as well as greater emphasis being placed on Australian Law and Australian culture that pertain to seasonal workers (this was recommended in the initial study).
- ii. The reintegration process should include greater access to support that builds business skills. This might increase returned workers business aspirations in strategic or niche market areas.
- iii. A comparison should be made of the success of returned worker businesses with the development of other small businesses in Timor-Leste. Such a comparison could determine if the skills and financial resources generated through the SWP are effective at supporting economic development of partner countries.

- iv. SEPFOPE should be supported to leverage SWP opportunities towards Timor-Leste's strategic development aims:
- SEPFOPE could encourage linkages between returned workers and productive sectors, by fostering links with, for example, the Timor-Leste youth development strategy; Avansa Agrikultura and TOMAK, to name a few.
 - SEPFOPE could coordinate with the Ministry of Tourism as well as private sector tourism and hospitality operators to select seasonal workers that will strengthen the human resource base for tourism in the locations where it is planned to be developed.
 - Recruitment of SWP workers could potentially be more effective if done in the districts, particularly for work in the agriculture sector. Potential workers from the districts could be informed about agricultural extension support, tourism plans and business skills training to encourage them to plan new productive initiatives.