

Independent Progress Report of AUSAID LABOUR MOBILITY INITIATIVE IN THE PACIFIC MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Prepared by: Pacific Governance & Growth Section

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Aid Activity Summary:

Aid Activity Name	Labour Mobility		
AidWorks initiative number	INI174		
Commencement date	2008	Completion date	2016
Total Australian \$	12.7 million		
Total other \$	No direct financial contributions from Pacific partner governments or other donors.		
Delivery organisation(s)	Various		
Implementing Partner(s)	Pacific island governments in Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.		
Country/Region	Pacific		
Primary Sector	Broad-based growth		
Aid activity objective	Supporting Pacific Island countries to train, manage selection, recruitment and management of their nationals working overseas; supporting Pacific seasonal workers to manage their money, learn workplace-supporting skills including first aid, literacy and numeracy; and evaluating the impact of the pilot on economic development of Pacific Island countries.		

Evaluation Summary

Evaluation Objective: To assess the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) and consider the development impact and quality of the initiative. A secondary objective is to document lessons learned during the course of the pilot to inform the new design of the capacity building component of the initiative in 2013.

Evaluation Completion Date: 28 March 2013.

Evaluation Team: Stuart Raetz (Team Leader, Clear Horizon Consulting), Jess Dart (Managing Director, Clear Horizon Consulting) and Steve Kaleb (AusAID Canberra).

AusAID's response to the evaluation report

The Evaluation found that the performance of AusAID assistance under the Labour Mobility initiative was rated highly relevant (5 out of 6), adequate in terms of sustainability (4 out of 6), impact (4 out of 6), and efficiency (4 out of 6), and less than adequate in monitoring and evaluation (3 out of 6), effectiveness (3 out of 6) and gender and disability inclusion (3 out of 6). In particular:

- The development assistance provided by AusAID has proven highly relevant with regard to building institutional capacity and managing the supply and export of labour.
- External factors such as staff turnover (all countries), a lack of leadership within some Ministries (Kiribati) and institutional re-structuring (Tonga) have negatively influenced the effectiveness of interventions. The evaluation found that technical assistance provided by the World Bank to increase the capacity of Labour Export Units (LEUs) had resulted in minimal evidence of change. The assistance provided, however, has been highly valued by the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) and must be viewed as a long term investment.
- In terms of sustainability, there is high-level political appetite in PICs and support in place to build institutional capacity for countries to independently manage the scheme. However, if AusAID assistance were to end now it is likely that the scheme would encounter significant difficulties and challenges in maintaining the supply of workers.
- Impact is evaluated as adequate – with direct benefits for Pacific workers under the initiative including an average contribution of around \$12,000-\$13,000 per annum to participating workers, of which around \$5,000 is remitted to the home country per person.
- In terms of the quality of aid delivered, it is acknowledged that there is room for explicit inclusion of strategies to increase gender and disability participation. Recent work undertaken by the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Taskforce (PWSPD Taskforce) in Tonga has identified the need to address the social impact of labour mobility through further research. This will be noted in the Tonga Country Plan Summary.
- A lack of available data has limited evaluation of the efficiency of AusAID assistance. However, with increased numbers of workers and a rising proportion of returning workers in 2011-12 the LEUs were able to capitalise on economies of scale to maximise the best use of staff time and resources allocated to the supply of labour.
- Lastly, the evaluation found that poor planning had resulted in monitoring and evaluation occurring on an ad hoc basis.

AusAID agrees with the majority of the recommendations and plans to respond through a new design for capacity building assistance. The evaluation highlights the need for sufficient long-term planning and certainty regarding funding so that the delivery organisation can address the specific needs of participating Pacific countries in managing labour recruitment. As the evaluation assesses AusAID support to the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme, a longer commitment to capacity building was not possible. However, since the permanent Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) commenced on 1 July 2012, AusAID can plan a longer commitment that seeks to sustainably build the capacity of Pacific LEUs to manage labour recruitment. Better monitoring and evaluation will provide the necessary basis for capacity building planning and delivery.

While the development impact of the SWP has been clearly positive, the new design will seek to further boost its impact on poverty by improving gender equity and disability inclusiveness, and providing better re-integration services for returning seasonal workers. The details of the design will be informed and developed through full consultations with stakeholders in participating Pacific governments, Approved Employers, Whole-of-Government partners and the managers of New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme. Although a single delivery partner for capacity building is preferred, a key challenge will be how to efficiently support up to nine different participating governments with varying needs in a single project.

AusAID's response to the specific recommendations made in the report

Recommendation	Response	Actions	Responsibility
1. Clarify the role and responsibility of AusAID in the Seasonal Worker Program focusing on how capacity building fits within the wider program design and ensure that this is communicated to program partners.	Agreed.	Clearer in-country support by AusAID will facilitate better monitoring and planning of capacity building activities and more visibility of our support by Pacific government partners. AusAID Canberra will discuss with relevant bilateral programs whether labour mobility can be included in Partnerships for Development. Other options will be assessed including whether a regional officer based in Suva can support capacity building implementation.	AusAID Canberra
2. Where possible AusAID should engage with both partner countries and the Australian Government high commissions at post to include a stronger commitment to labour mobility in the Pacific Partnerships for Development.	Agreed.	As above.	AusAID Canberra
3. Provide support for the labour export units in Pacific sending countries to provide greater oversight of the direct recruitment mechanism.	Agreed.	AusAID Canberra will investigate options to strengthen pre-departure support through the new capacity building design planned for 2013-14. Further, the possibility of placing trained skilled volunteers within LEUs to assist with providing oversight will be investigated. The potential regional officer based in Suva may also help with this oversight. Some LEUs are reconsidering direct recruitment to ensure oversight and appropriate preparation of workers.	AusAID Canberra/posts/LEUs

4. Work with Pacific LEUs to ensure that pre-departure training is undertaken for all participants and that it is both appropriate to the requirements of Pacific workers and employers.	Agreed.	AusAID Canberra and DEEWR will monitor the level of understanding amongst seasonal workers of issues covered by pre-departure training through capacity building visits. Within the design stage of AusAID's next phase of support, focus on capacity building will include methods to improve the quality and consistency of both pre-departure and re-integration briefings. Further, AusAID will liaise with both LEUs and employers through forums such as Employer Conferences to determine that training is meeting all requirements including operational realities, closer industry engagement, and improved language and leadership training.	AusAID Canberra DEEWR
5. Engage closely with DEEWR to identify Australian domestic labour market requirements and employer preferences and ensure that this information is communicated to Pacific sending countries.	Agreed.	DEEWR will continue to engage with Australian employers through forums such as the Stakeholder Consultative Panel, regular newsletters and by liaising regularly with Pacific LEUs.	DEEWR
6. Continue to provide opportunities for Pacific countries to market their workers based on country specific strengths and Australian labour market requirements through the Public Sector Linkages Program.	Agreed.	AusAID capacity building support through the World Bank and ILO is developing marketing strategies and websites for each Pacific country. Under the capacity building delivery design, further marketing assistance will be considered. Through a Public Sector Linkages Program grant, DEEWR will deliver mutually agreed training, organise an annual tour of Approved Employers and a workshop with Australian Government officials and employers to further provide marketing opportunities.	AusAID Canberra DEEWR

7. Consider providing further assistance to LEUs in communications and marketing possibly through the placement of a skilled volunteer through the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) or Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) programs.	Agreed.	AusAID will investigate the possibility of placing skilled volunteers or advisers within LEUs through programs such as AYAD and AVID. Potential host organisations (i.e. Pacific Island governments) will be consulted to determine their specific requirements.	AusAID Canberra
8. Engage with employers and LEUs to ensure that a balance of returning and first time workers is recruited in the Seasonal Worker Program.	Noted. Employers will, in most cases, seek returning workers. However, experience from other seasonal worker schemes indicates that workers prefer up to around 5-7 years of seasonal work.	Continue to promote the benefits to employers of having a balanced proportion of first time and returning workers. Whether employers choose returning or first-time workers, however, will continue to be a recruitment decision made by employers.	DEEWR LEUs
9. Develop strategies to increase the distribution of benefits equitably in the scheme.	Agreed. The scheme should seek to improve access for a range of workers, including those from remote islands, from poorer backgrounds, women and the disabled.	As part of the design for investment into new capacity building assistance, AusAID will discuss with LEUs strategies to increase the equitable distribution of benefits.	AusAID Canberra LEUs

10. Strengthen the link between the SWP and further training opportunities such as TVET and APTC for instance by including referrals to training in debrief sessions for returning workers.	Agreed.	<p>Strengthening the links between SWP and training opportunities will promote enduring and sustainable change within Pacific Island communities. DEEWR is enhancing the accessibility of add-on skills training for workers while in Australia including in literacy and numeracy, first aid skills, basic IT and recognition of prior learning.</p> <p>AusAID Canberra will investigate options to strengthen these links as part of the new design for capacity building assistance. This might include improving the consistency and quality of re-integration briefings to include options for further training.</p>	AusAID Canberra DEEWR
11. Continue to provide assistance to Pacific labour export units based on the institutional assessments conducted by the World Bank.	Agreed.	<p>Supporting a long-term capacity building plan is critical to ensuring positive change within LEUs.</p> <p>Capacity building support to the LEUs that builds on work already undertaken will form the focus of the design for the next phase of AusAID support.</p>	AusAID Canberra
12. Greater oversight of the interventions conducted by the World Bank and other contractors/sub-contractors is required to monitor program effectiveness.	Agreed.	AusAID Canberra will investigate options for providing additional in-country support in order to more closely monitor program effectiveness. This could include an officer based in Suva to monitor capacity building interventions across participating Pacific Island countries.	AusAID Canberra

13. Establish a mechanism whereby Pacific governments communicate any structural or institutional changes likely to affect the capacity of labour export units to development partners in advance.	Noted.	<p>Many opportunities to communicate already exist. DEEWR will encourage LEUs to communicate these issues.</p> <p>Structural or institutional changes affecting LEUs can be discussed during the annual domestic conference or during annual training visits undertaken by DEEWR to all LEUs. Effective communication will also be necessary between the LEUs and the capacity building partner with monitoring from a potential AusAID regional based officer.</p>	LEUs DEEWR AusAID Canberra Posts
14. Ensure that capacity building interventions have an adequate level of follow up support and training for LEUs in order to realise the utilisation of tools and processes that are developed.	Agreed.	AusAID will ensure that adequate levels of support and training for LEUs is provided through a more comprehensive, long-term capacity building plan in the new design.	AusAID Canberra
15. Clarify the Theory of Change for the Seasonal Worker Program illustrating how the program will contribute towards higher level development objectives.	Agreed.	The new design of capacity building will include a monitoring and evaluation plan that explains the development impact of specific interventions.	AusAID Canberra
16. Develop a Seasonal Worker Program monitoring and evaluation framework which aligns with the design of the capacity building assistance package in 2013 and the SWP Theory of Change. Ensure that the framework contains guidance on documenting routine project monitoring (i.e. capturing records on number of workers who have attended pre-departure training) as well as demonstrating project outcomes and achievements (i.e. changes in the capacity of LEUs).	Agreed.	The new design of capacity building will include a monitoring and evaluation framework including how key information will be collected.	AusAID Canberra

17. Where possible engage program partners in the design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system capable of demonstrating the performance and achievements of the seasonal worker program as well as providing information for program improvement and management purposes.	Agreed.	The design of capacity building assistance will involve full consultation with stakeholders to develop an effective monitoring and evaluation system.	AusAID Canberra
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