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Social Development Outcomes of Participation in the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme for Ni-Vanuatu Seasonal Migrant Workers

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

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2011

For my sister

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4-9-1977 – 17-7-2007

Abstract

This thesis is focused on the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme which enables low-skilled seasonal migrant workers, primarily from the Pacific Islands, to work temporarily in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. This study examines how seasonal work schemes contribute to the social development of participating workers and their families, and therefore links to previous research that tended to focus on the positive economic development outcomes for workers, their families and communities.

The primary focus of this study is on the experiences of ni-Vanuatu migrant workers. Fieldwork, utilising qualitative research methods, was conducted in two field sites – vineyards of Blenheim, New Zealand, and Tanna Island, Vanuatu. Findings suggest that the scheme is delivering social and economic benefits to participating ni-Vanuatu migrants and their families. Furthermore, migrants gain skills and knowledge, particularly in relation to their management of time and money. Although not always directly transferable to Vanuatu, the skills and knowledge gained by migrants enable their success during repeat RSE contracts in New Zealand, reflecting migrants' cultural adaptability; the ability to move and adjust successfully to the cultural settings of both Vanuatu and New Zealand.

Alongside these positive development outcomes, there are power issues at play within the RSE scheme which result in the ni-Vanuatu migrants becoming dependent on pastoral care support, and involved in a submissive relationship with their RSE employers. Positively, with the increasing independence of experienced migrants, this situation is beginning to change. Nevertheless, with the success of experienced migrants comes a caution: if a group of experienced circulating migrants come to dominate participation in the RSE scheme, opportunities for first-time migrants to participate will be reduced, and inequitable development outcomes at the grassroots level in Vanuatu may result. It would seem then, that with equitable consideration of future recruitment, the RSE scheme may continue to deliver benefits to participating migrants and their families, as well as to Vanuatu and New Zealand.

Acknowledgements

It would have been impossible for me to complete this thesis without the support of a number of people both in New Zealand, and in Vanuatu.

First of all, to my family - Mum, Dad, and Bevan - thank you all very much for your encouragement and support throughout the previous year. I literally could not have done this without you. Thanks also to my friends and extended family around New Zealand and overseas for all your encouragement during this time. I am also extremely grateful to my research participants, both in New Zealand and on Tanna in Vanuatu, who gave their time so readily in order for me to gain a greater understanding of their thoughts, perceptions and experiences of the RSE scheme. Please know that I truly appreciate your input into this study, and that this study would have been impossible to complete without your contributions. As they say in Vanuatu, tankyu tumas!

To my fellow students who came through the Master's programme alongside me – I could not have wished for a better group of colleagues. We supported each other during the year socially and academically, and I hope that we remain in close contact now that we are heading off on our separate journeys. On that note, it would be remiss of me not to mention my office mate – Aaron. Although we spent half our time in the office discussing cricket, instead of studying, it was a great working environment. Cheers mate.

To the staff of the Development Studies department, and staff of the School of People, Environment and Planning here at Massey, thank you all for your assistance and support during my time here. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the Massey University P.E.P Graduate Research Fund, which provided funding for my fieldwork. To my second supervisor, Dr. Rochelle Stewart-Withers, thank you very much for your input and encouragement during the year, and the constructive feedback on my thesis draft.

Finally, to my first supervisor, Dr. Maria Borovnik, I will always be grateful for the outstanding support you gave me throughout my thesis. You willingly shared your time and knowledge with me, and your enthusiasm for the topic motivated me. Thank you very much.

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List of Abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LDC	Lolihor Development Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PSWPS	Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme
NKRM	Nalmaluien Kape Ramar Mene
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RSE	Recognised Seasonal Employer
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Work Programme
TMP	Temporary Migration Programme
TTTA	Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement
UN	United Nations

