

EVALUATION BRIEF

EVALUATION OF STRENGTHENING PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP AND VAKAMEASINA: FINAL REPORT

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

- Overall the evaluation found a range of strengths and positive impacts for both programmes.
- The RSE Policy is widely regarded as a good initiative of MFAT and the New Zealand Government more broadly.
- The evaluation supported MFAT's decision to continue with the two programmes.



ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES

Strengthening Pacific Partnership (SPP)

The SPP goals are strengthened Pacific Island Country (PIC) capacity to administer the RSE and wider labour export activities; improve PIC process for wider export; assess the impact of RSE in the Pacific; and facilitate opportunities for labour mobility in the fisheries and Canterbury trades.

Vakameasina: Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Worker Training Initiative

Vakameasina aims to maximise the development benefits of RSE by providing RSE workers from the Pacific with access to English-language, numeracy, financial and computer literacy, health and life skills training during their time in New Zealand.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

This evaluation sought to draw out key lessons from these programmes. It also reviewed the cost effectiveness of the approaches employed to deliver results and identified key changes needed for a second phase of SPP and Vakameasina.

The evaluation scope included activities implemented from 2011 until 2015. The evaluation used a theory-driven and mixed-methods approach, incorporating the Kakala 'Pacific world view' methodology for cultural appropriateness.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

MFAT is undertaking new designs for the next 5-year phase of SPP and Vakameasina. These designs will take into account the findings from this evaluation.

DETAILS ABOUT THE EVALUATION

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[Read the full report by clicking on this link](#)

FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION: STRENGTHENING PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS (SPP)

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL?

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has enhanced the capacity of Labour Sending Units (LSUs) in knowledge building, strengthening processes, information management, communications and management. This support was valued by PICs. MBIE staff were also effective communicators and relationship builders, often going beyond their remit.

Overall, SPP was considered value for money: it is an efficient and cost effective programme helping to generate considerable returns for New Zealand and PICs. Employers and MBIE stakeholders benefit considerably from the programme. There is potential to leverage contributions from employers and MBIE to either (a) scale up the programme, or (b) reprioritise MFAT resources to other complimentary areas if needed.

MBIE support for LSUs delivered through SPP has resulted in tangible outputs for countries including marketing websites and worker databases. The enhanced capacity of LSUs has contributing to the positive impact of the RSE policy, described as a 'triple win' that:

- benefits New Zealand, through filling labour shortages
- benefits Pacific states, through the provision of employment for a larger proportion of their populations and
- benefits Pacific RSE workers, through increased earnings.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE?

The evaluation noted that MBIE could better assess outcomes of SPP and capture and share emerging best practice through strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems. There is also an opportunity in the programme to capture some of the evidence as well as country specific outcomes.

The report also noted a need for the development of a more comprehensive results model reducing the number of goals. This would also establish clear and achievable end-of-programme outcomes and causal pathways.

There is also scope for the programme to define and address sustainability issues. The programme could also provide more intensive support to countries that might struggle with distances, communication infrastructure and other challenges.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE?

In moving into the next phase, the report recommended a reduction and consolidation in goals for the SPP while taking into account the whole Labour Mobility sector, including RSE and the new pilots. In this way, SPP can take an overarching approach to labour mobility in PICs with a stronger 'development' focus.

It was also recommended that additional activities to support this are incorporated into programme design. Activities could include support for PICs to develop and action Labour Mobility Strategic Plans as a starting point for this broader support to PICs.

EVALUATION INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM THE MFAT WEBSITE: WWW.MFAT.GOVT.NZ

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FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION: VAKAMEASINA

WHAT HAS WORKED WELL?

Vakameasina responds to worker needs taking a consultative approach to developing learning agendas, thus enhancing effectiveness. This is further supported by Fruition Horticulture staff and tutors, who are highly motivated and qualified. The adult learning techniques that they employed resonate well with workers.

Fruition Horticulture also successfully leveraged host community and employer support for RSE workers, by connecting them with religious and sporting groups. This support provided further learning opportunities and acclimatisation to life in New Zealand.

The flexible approach to programme delivery adopted by Fruition Horticulture and supported by MFAT has enabled the programme to 'snowball' learning opportunities, contributing to strong learning outcomes and enhanced efficiency.

Evidence shows that Vakameasina is helping workers to develop the basic skills necessary for negotiating life and work in New Zealand. It brings added value, providing a safe space for workers to learn about New Zealand and discuss issues. As a result of participation in the programme, workers improved their literacy, numeracy and communication skills leading to improved confidence.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE?

The report commented that the programme struggles to ensure coverage and worker participation from beginning to the end of the season. It also struggles to address the varying capacities of workers and take full advantage of employer's offers to provide support to the programme.

There are opportunities to fully explore more cost-effective and potentially far reaching options for training delivery, such as train-the-trainer courses, intensive one-day sessions or webinars, and allowing for the provision of employer driven training. Such additional training delivery options could link with the agendas of workers, employers and PICs, and include cost-sharing arrangements where there is a willingness.

Despite positive anecdotal feedback, it is unknown how many of the trained workers put their skills to use on return to their home country, which skills they use on return and how their skill development affects their local communities. This can be overcome through the deployment of a more systematic M&E process that seeks to capture longer term outcomes and impact.

WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE?

The report recommended some changes to training including making it more practical and identifying new ways for semi-skilled workers to gain skills. It also recommended increasing the number of ways training is delivered to include engagement options for workers.

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