

LMAP - Supporting the Seasonal Workers Programme

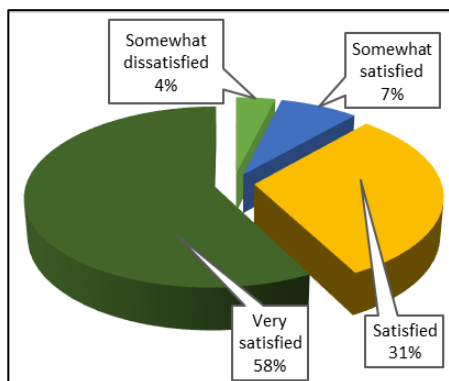
Implemented for the Department of Foreign Affairs by Cardno EM

Department of Employment

Reintegration and Tracer Study – Papua New Guinea December 2016¹

Since joining the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) in 2012, 150 Papua New Guinean (PNG) workers, including 24 women, have participated in seasonal horticultural work in Australia. This is the first research into the experiences of PNG SWP workers in Australia and the development impacts from their participation.

Thirty-four seasonal workers returned between August and October 2016, all had worked in the horticultural sector. Twenty six of those, 22 men and 4 women, were interviewed in Port Moresby, immediately on their return to PNG. Half had worked in Australia more than once with two workers returning from their sixth SWP assignment. Twenty three had been economically active in PNG before they left for Australia. Trained research assistants conducted one-on-one interviews in Tok Pidgin, overseen by a senior researcher.



The overwhelming opinion of responding workers was that the SWP work was a good experience due to the economic benefits workers could access.

“I was satisfied because I achieved my goals”.

“I saved more than expected”.

“Because ... I earned money for my financial support, that’s why I’m satisfied.”

“The earnings were good and gives me the possibility to look after my family.”

Others enjoyed the type of work they were doing and felt satisfied by the job: *“Working in the shed was good. The managers were very good so I am happy with the experience”.*

A third group indicated they learnt new skills and appreciated the experience - *“I was happy because I made good money, ate good food, (and) lived in a nice friendly environment. There was no violence and I learned many new things”.*

Savings were estimated to average AUD 1,940 spent on goods to take home, AUD 5,400 cash carried home and AUD 3,350 remitted while in Australia – a total average of AUD 10,690 per worker. Remittances were used mostly for family daily living expenses (62% of respondents) followed by health expenses (54%), educational expenses (46%) and traditional obligations to extended family and community/wantok (38%).

Gross earnings	AUD 22,500
Total deductions	<u>AUD 8,150</u>
Net earnings	AUD 14,350
Private expenses	AUD 2,250
Remittances	AUD 3,350
Savings taken back to PNG	AUD 5,400
Purchase of durable goods	AUD 1,940
Sum unaccounted for	AUD 1,435

All workers reported learning new technical skills which many could transfer back to their own farms in PNG. In addition, most workers reported improving their life skills, particularly relating to punctuality, with a high proportion learning about improved nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

65% of workers reported they were very happy with their stay in Australia (the balance were mostly happy). Many respondents indicated they had changed their perspective of gender, and the four female workers reported no discrimination and indicated they had been given equal opportunities. Four workers indicated they had had reintegration issues, possibly relating to financial demands from other family members.

Some workers raised queries on the current work ready pool (WRP) processes including selection processes, access for workers in more remote provinces, and the content of the pre-departure activities. Additionally, there are challenges and potentially prohibitive costs for people who reside outside of Port Moresby to attend pre-departure training. Returning workers receive less financial support from the Government of PNG pre-departure (for example for passport, medical and police clearance) than the first time they departed for seasonal work.

¹ **Disclaimer:** The analysis and findings in this summary 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. As LMAP implements more tracer studies including larger numbers of returning workers, the reliability of the analysis and conclusions will improve. LMAP intends to reanalyse the raw data collected as a larger data pool becomes available.

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Most workers reported they wanted to continue working in the SWP as long as possible with Australia the preferred work location for three quarters of the workers. Most of the workers had had indications they would be asked to return. All workers would recommend SWP to other family members.

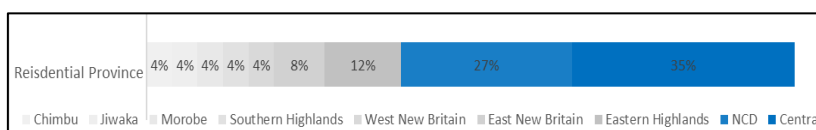
Potential areas to improve labour migration implementation in the PNG Department of Labour and Industrial Relations and/or LMAP

- (i) Improving the preparation of new workers including work fitness, and English skills.
- (ii) Improving the WRP selection processes to include more experienced farm workers including women from more remote areas. A pilot activity to increase women's participation is underway.
- (iii) Implementation of reintegration activities to provide awareness of and access to support services and relevant skills development.

Labour Sending Processes

Selection processes: PNG operates a WRP process. Most respondents had found out about the SWP informally through a relative, friend or neighbour who has connections to DLIR and made the initial connection.

Sixteen of the 26 respondents (62%) were living in either National Capital District (NCD) or Central Province, indicating an overrepresentation of these two provinces.



This may be because the workers from other provinces were disadvantaged in the selection (not able to regularly follow-up with DLIR), as well as by the high pre-departure travel and living costs incurred by applicants from other provinces.

Pre-departure briefings: All except for one worker thought that the pre-departure briefing (PDB) covered all important issues. Seven would have liked additional information on financial issues, wage deductions and pay rates, including the differences between hourly and piece rates. Although many workers only attended a short pre-departure training, 23 of the 26 respondents (88%) felt that they were well prepared.

Experienced returning workers indicated that pre-departure training in previous years was much more comprehensive and included physical training. They found this extremely useful preparation for the strenuous farm work in Australia. A problem with pre-departure training was that accommodation was neither organised nor provided for respondents from outside of Port Moresby.

Accommodation and transport: More than 30% of workers were dissatisfied with the costs of accommodation in Australia, rather than the accommodation standard, i.e. value for money. Some respondents were aware that workers on other farms paid less for their accommodation.

Support and services in Australia: Work-site facilities had a high satisfaction rating from most workers (87%). Twenty two percent of respondents were dissatisfied with access to banking facilities and 22% were dissatisfied with recreation opportunities (most of the workers had been working in regional locations).

About 80% were satisfied with their access to health services and opportunities for religious observances. The response to the question on English language translation showed more than 20% were dissatisfied but the response rate was lower than for most other questions.

All respondents used mobile phones for communication with their families and had good mobile reception on-site. Twenty respondents (77%) generally used social media to communicate but only five used it to communicate with their families. This suggests internet access was available at the three locations.

Eleven workers (42%) reported health issues with nine workers visiting a health facility and three being hospitalised. All the health issues were attributed to work related issues. Nine reporting workers indicated that they had taken at least one day off work due to sickness, with one worker reporting 14 days off. One injured worker reported that they were able to do some lighter pruning work during the period off work to earn some income. There was no negative² feedback on health-related support provided by the Approved Employers. Workers indicated they used less alcohol³ and no betel nut while working in Australia.

² Some workers complained they did not receive sick leave pay or leave. As they are employed as casual workers, sick leave entitlements are included in their hourly rate.

³ Some employers have a 'no alcohol' policy.

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Work conditions

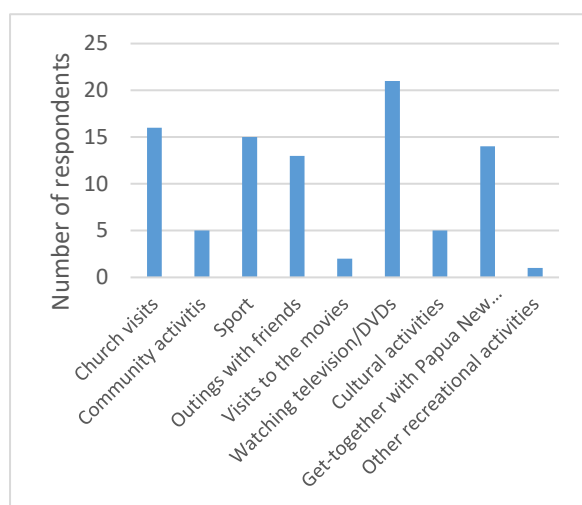
The Approved Employer on-arrival briefings⁴ were targeted at first time respondents, therefore experienced returning seasonal workers said that they received little valuable new information. However, these in-Australia briefings received a high satisfaction rating.

Respondents worked 5 to 7 days per week (average 5.9) and 8 to 12 hours per day (average 9.2 hours) with little difference between the hours for men (9.4) and women (9.1). Fourteen respondents were on shift work (54%). Some workers were on piece rate picking and reported some issues including that the rate per bin changed after three bins were filled per day.

There was good feedback on the team leaders' performance including motivating the worker groups:

"In previous years, the Tongans used to beat us Papua New Guineans, but this year we are equally fast"

Team leaders also played a key role in channelling complaints to their supervisors.



Recreation: Most workers had time-off on Sundays. They used this for a range of activities as shown alongside.

Reintegration: No specific reintegration activities had been arranged for these returning workers. However, feedback on the PDB activities had requested information / training on bank loans and starting a small business, which may be more appropriately raised when returning from work in Australia.

One worker who had returned to Australia for six seasons reported how he'd built a business using SWP income:

"I invested the earnings from Australia. It took me three seasons to save enough money to build a three-bedroom house. Then, over two more seasons I built a store next to my house, where I employ a relative to work. I'm now saving to buy a minibus next year, or the year after [2017 or 2018]."

Four workers (15%) reported difficulties adjusting after returning home. Anecdotal feedback was that this was family-related and involved family members requesting money.

Views on Australia:

Twenty-two workers (85%) had a more positive view of Australia after their work here. *"I now think of Australia more positively because it helped me to look after my family."*

Twenty workers reported forming new friendships with work colleagues from other Pacific and Asian countries.

The adjoining table summarizes the major likes and dislikes reported by the 26 workers about their work and time in Australia.

Workers' Major Likes	No.	Major Dislikes	No.
Related to work or income		Related to work or income	
Income	11	Deductions from pay	9
New skills	7		
Work place and culture at work	6		
Related to social life		Related to social life	
Friendliness of people	8	Accommodation	9
Cleanliness of place/environment	7		
Experiencing / learning new attitude	5		

⁴ Information on pay, deductions, health and safety, accommodation, expectations at work, behaviour outside of work and grievance procedures.

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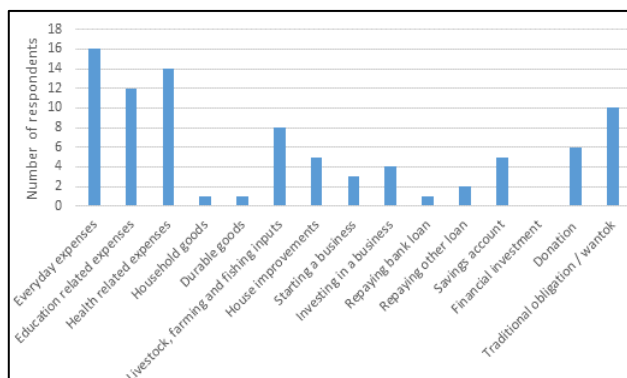
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Development Impacts

Surveyed workers' households had an average of 7.8 members with an average of 2.1 children and an average of six people primarily dependent on them. Twenty-three of the 26 interviewees had been economically active before going to Australia with nine employed and 14 self-employed. The majority were subsistence farmers or fishermen or worked in the informal economy.

Pay and remittances: The estimated total amount saved and either remitted or taken back to PNG was AUD 8,750, equivalent to almost PGK 20,000. This contrasts with an estimated average weekly income of PGK 360 or PGK 9,000 over 25 weeks if they had not participated in the SWP but worked in PNG.

Mobile phones, clothing and other electronic equipment were the main purchases in Australia and taken home with 2-3 workers purchasing capital equipment items that could be used for income generation.



24 of the 26 workers had sent remittances home while in Australia with about half sending remittances at least once per month. More than half used money transfer services with 27 % (7) using bank transfers.

Most remittances went to immediate family and were spent on family living, health and education expenses. Half the workers made donations and family gifts.

Decisions on spending SWP remittances were made by workers' families at home in half the cases. Eight workers (31%) decided how the money would be used alone while two decided jointly with their spouse.

Skills training: All respondents said they had learned new horticultural production and harvesting skills while working in Australia. 18 reported they had learned how to operate a tractor, with a smaller number learning how to operate other farm equipment. Several workers will transfer the skills learned to the crops they cultivate in PNG.

Twenty-two workers reported they had received on the job training, with 18 learning by observing the other workers. Sixteen undertook formal training activities with seven undertaking Add-on Skills Training (AoST), mostly in first-aid. One worker had undertaken all the AoST courses while another had obtained a machinery operator's certificate.

Twenty-one had improved their English language capacity and about 80% reported they had a better appreciation of punctuality. More than 65% had a better understanding of healthy lifestyles and nutrition.

Gender: Fifteen respondents said that their views on gender had changed because of working in Australia. Two female respondents noted that women and men are equal in Australia and women are treated with respect. Male respondents also mentioned that Australia has laws to protect women, and that women are independent and can move around freely. Some respondents commented on the fact that they observed Australian families going out together as a family, which they had never seen in PNG.

All female respondents and most male respondents thought that seasonal work was equally suited for men and women. The four female respondents reported they were treated the same by male workers on the property and had not experienced gender discrimination. Two women said they were given different tasks to the men by the employer while the other two women said that they did the same work as men.

Other development issues: Respondents indicated most households seemed to function well during the absence of the seasonal worker, although some struggled due to the additional chores and additional demands from relatives. None of the respondents mentioned an adverse impact on the family life or their relationship, although there might be adverse longer-term impacts that are not yet obvious.

Patrick⁵ said *"I acquired lots of different skills but it is the pruning that I will apply at home. I will transfer what I learnt from citrus to cocoa".*

John, who lives in Port Moresby, planned to:

"apply the skills learned to my vegetable farming activity because it will enhance some of my farming practises".

Some seasonal workers were lucky in that they worked on the same kind of fruit in Australia as they are in PNG. Jacinta from Central Province is one example:

"I will be able to apply the fruit picking, pruning and packing skills in my village to grow orange trees."

⁵ Names have been changed to protect worker identities.