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**“It does not go as well as it could”: The Views of  
Melanesian Migrant Farm Workers of the Cultural,  
Economic and Social Benefits and Costs of Seasonal Work  
in New Zealand**

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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**Daisy Kagien Lepon**  
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## ABSTRACT

New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme (RSES), launched in 2007, is an example of international short-term labour migration schemes that have been developed to solve labour shortages in the destination countries, especially in the agricultural sector, and to contribute to the economic development of the labourers' home countries. A review of the literature identifies four main issues that have been investigated: the strengthening of the economic base of the labourers' home countries, how schemes contribute to adult farmer education and the transfer of technology and skills, links between migrant workers and other development strategies, and the economic and social costs of workers' participation in schemes. Much of this literature highlights benefits to both countries from such schemes but there are a small number of critics who question the costs of schemes to the labourers and their home countries. Little information is available on the workers' own views of the costs and benefits of schemes for them. This thesis focuses on the experiences of a group of labourers from Vanuatu who came to work in New Zealand under the RSES in 2009. It asks: *What are the views of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) Melanesian seasonal migrant farm workers on the cultural, economic, and social benefits and costs of working in New Zealand under the RSES?* Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted in Bislama with 12 Vanuatu RSES workers in Northland in August 2009. Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts identified four benefits recognised by the interviewees: earning monetary income for family and community back home, gaining useful knowledge and skills that could be applied back home, personal satisfaction from the work, and personal experiences of a new country and society. Four costs recognised by the interviewees were also identified: difficult working conditions, earning less money than expected, lack of freedom and choice with respect to aspects of their time in New Zealand, and the emotional difficulties of missing home and family along with implications for gender roles of being away from home. The interviewees lacked information and understanding about a number of important aspects of the RSES, and there were no effective mechanisms for them to raise and solve the problems they were

encountering. This thesis offers a number of policy recommendations that not only support the effective operation of such a scheme from the host country's perspective but also seeks to ensure that such schemes are of genuine value to the participating workers, their families and their home countries.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AID	Assistance in International Development Agency
BRCSS	Building Research Capabilities for Social Science
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers
CSAWP	Canadian seasonal agricultural workers programme
DOL	Department of Labour
FIFO	‘Fly-in, fly-out’ workers
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
IMSED	International Migration Settlement and Employment Dynamics Research Group
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
PNG	Papua New Guinea
NZ	New Zealand
NZHVI	New Zealand Horticulture and Viticulture Industries
SMFWs	Seasonal migrant farm workers
RSE	Recognised Seasonal Employer
RSES	Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## **Introduction and purpose**

This qualitative study explores, from the point of view of migrant workers themselves, the cultural, economic and social benefits and costs of ‘fly-in, fly-out’ (FIFO) seasonal migrant farm workers (SMFWs) employed in New Zealand under the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy. A distinguishing characteristic of this study is that it has been undertaken by a policy maker from a Melanesian country (Papua New Guinea) who is fluent in Bislama, the common language used by Melanesians.

The study has been undertaken from a Labour Studies perspective, central to which is the notion of ‘worker voice’. Cochrane, Law, and Piercy (2004) define that perspective as an inherently democratic notion, involving:

the active participation of working people in decision making in their employment, in the community, and in broader economic and social life. In our use, this notion refers not only to the collective expression of ‘worker voice’ through union representation but also to the ‘voices’ of particular groups of workers such as women, Maori, and ethnic workers. (p. 79)

The primary purpose of this particular study is to give voice to the views of Melanesian workers employed under the RSE. The study’s main focus is the cultural, economic, and social benefits and costs associated with these workers’ participation in the scheme. This thesis also seeks to add to the body of knowledge about Pacific SMFWs’ experiences in order to help policy makers identify appropriate policy options that not only support the effective operation of such schemes from the host nation’s perspective but also ensure that such schemes are of genuine value to the participating workers, their families and their home countries.

The research question investigated in this research project is:

*What are the views of FIFO, Melanesian, SMFWs on the cultural, economic, and social benefits and cost of working in New Zealand under the RSES?*

The reader should note that this is a 90 point thesis, that is, it represents the equivalent of 75 percent of a year's full-time study.

## **Background**

The employment of migrant, seasonal, agricultural workers in countries like New Zealand is the subject of considerable debate. Some of the principal issues that first prompted this study were canvassed in a submission from Oxfam Australia (2006) to an Australian Senate subcommittee. Oxfam's concerns included both "the likely technical, legal and administrative consideration for such a scheme" and "the effects of the scheme on the economics of Pacific nations" (p. 1). A year earlier, Maclellan and Mare (2005) had commented on the significance of today's world of the "temporary movement of natural persons" (p.6) (known as "Mode 4") that would result from international negotiations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). In its Senate submission, Oxfam held that the import, export and retention of workforce from the high density areas to the lower density areas in order to meet labour market requirements presents major challenges for agriculture industries, companies and employers globally.

Gordon's (2006) study, entitled "Dorothea Lange: The Photographer as Agricultural Sociologist", argues that the American agricultural economy is dominated by big-business growers who are dependent on migrant farm workers - mainly people of colour and often of foreign birth. She describes this as the most "backward" and the most "advanced" (p. 4) agricultural labour relations in the twentieth century. In that vein, aid agencies, such as Oxfam, are particularly concerned about the labour relations dimensions of schemes that result in unemployed skilled and unskilled migrant workers from the Pacific having access to Australian and New Zealand labour markets on a short term, contractual engagement. In its submission, Oxfam stated that it was unsure whether migrant

workers gained maximum benefit or rather incurred net cost while they lived and worked in a host country.

That questioning of benefits and costs was at the heart of this study and a preliminary investigation undertaken in 2008. My concerns about the benefits and costs of schemes such as the RSE have been deepened by two Masters' theses that became available after the completion of my fieldwork. Lina Ericsson's (2009) thesis in Political Science is from the Jönköping International Business School in Sweden and Rochelle-lee Bailey's thesis in Anthropology is from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. Both candidates studied ni-Vanuatu workers employed in New Zealand under the RSE and both are critical of the benefits gained by the workers.

### **The 'Recognised Seasonal Employer' (RSE) Scheme**

The New Zealand Cabinet agreed to implement a temporary seasonal work scheme on 16 October 2006 (Ramasamy, Krishnan, Bedford, & Bedford, 2008); the RSE was launched on 30 April 2007 (Bailey, 2009). As Ramasamy et al. observe, the RSE:

is the latest development in a long line of initiatives that successive New Zealand governments have taken to meet short-term demand for workers who do not qualify for entry under selection policies favouring migrants with high-level skills and qualifications...since the 1970s, New Zealand has had a range of temporary work schemes... that have targeted recruitment from countries in the Pacific. (p. 171)

According to Bailey (2009), the "RSE policy is modelled on the Canadian seasonal workers programme (CSWAP)" (p. 12) which targets Mexican seasonal workers.

Ramasamy et al. (2008) report that "The RSE policy is the outcome of a multi-ministry approach to the problem of seasonal labour shortages in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries" (p. 171). But while the primary purpose of the scheme is to meet New Zealand labour market needs, the RSE also aims to assist the migrant workers and their home country. In this respect, those authors view it as:

a novel initiative for New Zealand in that it is the first significant attempt to develop an international migration policy that explicitly attempts to achieve the triple win for migrants, their countries of origin and the destination countries, and has come to dominate the discourse about international migration and development in the twenty-first century. (p. 171)

Bailey (2009), Ericsson (2009), and Ramasamy et al. (2008) all identify much the same potential benefits for the migrant workers and their home countries. Bailey comments:

The benefit for the host country is that the scheme will provide a reliable pool of labour for industries where labour sourcing is difficult...For the sending country; the scheme provides an opportunity to export labour and increase gross national product through remittances. Lastly for the workers, the scheme provides a chance to earn much more money than they could in their own countries, so that they can increase their standard of living, and gain new skills. (p. 9)

Evaluation of the RSE is still in its infancy. The Department of Labour has commissioned the University of Waikato to undertake an evaluation study. However, as Ramasamy et al. (2008) note, “positive development outcomes for industries and Pacific states, while critical long-term objectives of the RSE policy, are not the core focus of the initial evaluation study, given the short timeframe for reporting to cabinet” (p. 182).

Nevertheless, there has been unease about the RSE since its launch. For example, as early as 2008, an Australian, Nic Maclellan, argued that inadequate “engagement with unions, the community sector and Pacific diaspora communities has led to significant problems” (Maclellan, 2008, cited in Ramasamy et al., 2008, p. 182). Similar unease emerged in mid-2008 when I undertook a small, preliminary study in Northland as part of an Honours paper (Lepon, 2008). Since then, Bailey’s (2009) and Ericsson’s (2009) studies tend to confirm that not all is well with the scheme, especially from the perspective of the migrant workers and their home countries.

### *Key issues driving policy*

Schemes like the RSE are very popular in Vanuatu and similar countries. In this subsection I summarise very briefly, from a Melanesian perspective, the backdrop to that popularity and the key issues that need to be addressed by migrant work schemes, such as the RSE, if they are to benefit the countries of origin and the migrant workers themselves.

A common characteristic of Melanesian, Pacific countries is the high density of unemployed people, especially young males, and the generally limited employment and other income generating opportunities in the region (World Bank, 2006a; 2006b). This core problem is accompanied by the risk of social unrest, especially in the main population centres. This in turn is compounded by a wide range of contributing factors such as low levels of education, inadequate health services, gender discrimination and domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and the advance of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Pacific Island governments believe that they cannot overcome these problems on their own and that partnership with more developed economies is necessary. Some look to lessons learned from Central America, especially Mexico, where rural areas have been so affected by economic liberalization policies and free trade that labour migration is often seen as the only alternative (Brem, 2006). Ramasamy et al. (2008) quote from the Eminent Persons' Group Review for the Pacific Islands Forum which stressed:

listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognize the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, healthcare, and job opportunities. (Chan et al., 2004, p. 13, quoted at p. 176)

Ramasamy et al. (2008) also provide a helpful summary of the “regional perspective on migration and development” which highlights the convergence of a mounting “pressure from leaders of Pacific countries on Australia and New Zealand to open up their labour markets to more unskilled/low-skilled migration” and the “labour demands in the (New Zealand) horticulture and viticulture industries” (p. 176). In this vein, Bailey (2009) quotes the former New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister, Winston Peters: “Pacific nations have been urging us for

some time to offer greater access. They want a chance to sell their labour to us, just as we sell goods to them” (p. 22; as cited in Plimmer, 2006, p. 95).

In summary, the policy dialogue has been attempting to respond to more than just New Zealand’s labour market requirements on one hand and unemployment in Pacific countries on the other. Rather, the policy dialogue is aware of the need to address the issue of employment in a wider context that seeks improvement in literacy, opportunities for vocational training, the acquisition of English language, development of leadership, and the fostering of business management and budgeting skills, especially for younger Pacific Islanders. Ramasamy et al. (2008) also support the view that the RSE “scheme reach [the] rural areas [and] clearly benefit [migrant workers with] greater access to waged employment opportunities overseas” (p. 182).

Thus, from the perspective of Melanesian countries, such as Vanuatu, the RSE scheme has the potential to not only provide short-term employment opportunities for unemployed people from the Pacific but also to assist poverty reduction and contribute to social and political stability within the region.

This regional and country government view dovetails with the aspirations of potential migrants. A number of authors have noted, potential migrant workers, especially young males, often feel that their countries’ institutions, systems and mechanisms are inadequate to motivate them to stay and work at home. To unemployed or under-employed potential migrant workers, labour migration schemes offer the chance to benefit economically from limited term opportunities to work in a higher wage economy, even if they may not always be aware of the costs (Brem, 2006; De la Briere, Saoulet, de Janvry, & Lambert, 2002; Oxfam, Australia, 2006). However, potential migrant workers often hope to use savings and remittances money and perhaps, a modest loan in order to establish small enterprises on their return to their home country. They could utilised their newly acquired skills while on overseas employment services to help their families. These aspirations are often linked to policy makers who’ hope that the return of better skilled workers with some capital can help promote economic growth through rural based agricultural industries (Pacific Island Forum, 2006; Ramasamy et al., 2008).

## **Research approach and perspective**

This section provides an overview of the qualitative framework that I used for this research. Further details about the method of information collection and analysis are provided at the beginning of the Chapter Three.

My study is based upon the qualitative methodological framework described by Denzin & Lincoln (1994) as introduced to me by Dr Delwyn Goodrick at a 2009 *Qualitative Research Techniques* course for the New Zealand Social Statistics Network:

[It's] multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials...[based on people's] personal experience, introspection, life story, interview...and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2)

In this study, I use qualitative research techniques and purposive sampling which involves selecting information rich cases and undertaking in-depth, open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002, p. 4). As a researcher, I rely “extensively on verbal accounts of how people act” and how they describe their feelings opinions about their experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 88). This approach helps better understand people's subjective meanings in life and their underlying issues (Heritage, 1997).

In my earlier field work in Northland, New Zealand, I found similar issues to those reported by Bailey (2009) and Ericsson (2009); these in turn linked back to the work of De la Briere et al. (2002) and to the concerns expressed by Oxfam Australia (2006). In my research, I focus on workers' views and subjective meanings around what Clark (2006) terms the concepts of ‘social benefits’ and ‘social costs’ in order to make a distinctive contribution to a growing research literature on fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) seasonal work.

My research perspective has been influenced by my own position. From the late 1980s until the early 2000s, I was an agriculture extension worker and specialist in

gender and community development in Papua New Guinea and more recently was employed as a senior policy analyst in the PNG Ministry of Agriculture. I thus have extensive, practical experience of working with male agricultural workers in developing communities. In my most recent position I have also had to work on Pacific labour mobility proposals. This background influenced my decision to undertake this study as well as the formulation of the research topic and the research approach adopted. For most of my career, I have been a fieldworker in areas outside my 'home' and language region. I also have developed links with other Melanesian countries (e.g. Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) as well as with the wider networks of students, farmer cooperatives, employers, businesses, NGOs and civil societies. These experiences form an important part of the background to this research and have provided insights and opportunities that have helped me in the gathering of relevant information and understanding.

In summary, my perspective is that of an insider from a Melanesian country who has practical experience and networks that have helped facilitate an unearthing of information and insights which could have been difficult to glean if one was an 'outsider'. Of course, my position as an insider may raise questions of bias: however, I am confident that my supervisors have monitored and guided the preconceptions that have shaped the collection and interpretation of data presented in this thesis.

### *Identifying relevant literature and undertaking interviews*

An initial literature review was conducted in 2008 before I undertook my preliminary study (Lepon, 2008). A more extensive review was undertaken in 2009. These reviews included published academic articles, conference papers and full volumes as well as policy documents and newspaper articles. The publishing of two relevant theses (Bailey, 2009; Ericsson, 2009) has identified yet more relevant literature, some of which has been incorporated into this thesis. In addition to literature focussing on the Pacific, I also examined some literature on labour migration schemes from Australia, Canada, Europe, Germany, Mexico, and the United States of America.

Some insights from my literature review have been introduced already. A more substantial overview of the relevant literature is presented in the next chapter.

For the moment it is sufficient to note that when I first began to examine the literature I was surprised to find that while there was quite substantial research, usually quantitative, on the short term, economic benefits of labour migration schemes (e.g. Gibson, 2006, 2007, 2008), not much attention appeared to have been given to broader social issues and the qualitative views of the migrants themselves.

This project built on an earlier, small study undertaken as part of my BSocSc (Hons) coursework. The preliminary research was supervised by Michael Law and Associate Professor Joyce Stalker. The earlier study led to a video conferencing Building Research Capabilities for Social Science (BRCSS) seminar (PowerPoint slides attached). Given the limitation of a 15 point graduate paper, the research report and subsequent seminar only scratched the surface of the issues raised. Thus it was agreed with my supervisors that I would use a similar approach with a larger number of interviewees for my Master's thesis.

The principal method of research data collection used in this project was the semi-structured qualitative interview. I initially developed the interview schedule for my 2008 field work and revised and extended it for this study. Qualitative in-depth interviewing was considered to be the most effective approach to the developing interpretative and naturalistic approach (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 48) to its subject matter. The fieldwork for my preliminary study was conducted in August and September, 2008. The fieldwork for this study was conducted in August and September, 2009, when 12 workers were interviewed. The details of the interviewing process, including the ethical considerations given to informed consent, are elaborated in Chapter Three, along with the analysis process using thematic coding. The interviews were conducted in Bislama, a language familiar to both the interviewer and the interviewees. They were then transcribed and translated into English. The thematic coding process adopted was largely an inductive one, involving numerous encounters with the transcripts.

## **Thesis organisation**

This thesis is organised into four chapters. This first chapter introduces the study, states its purpose, provides introductory background information, outlines the key policy drivers behind the RSE, and sketches the research approach.

Chapter Two draws on the literature examined in order to present a broad theoretical framework for the study. This chapter has four substantive sections. The first section begins with some of the associated, mainstream economic benefits and international migration and development literature. The second section continues with a review of adult farmer education. It concludes with some of the relevant literature on how and what mechanisms enable workers' learning to occur. The third section became necessary as the findings emerged when it became evident that while the organizational health and safety measures concerning FIFO SMFWs are important, it is unclear whether the host or labour sending governments are responsible. This confusion occurs between transnational borders with differences in labour laws, within which were issues of regulation, monitoring and reduced compliance cost. All were significant to the study. The fourth section features aspects of workers' own aspirations. In particular, it investigates effectiveness of information sharing, technology and skills transfer considering the value of remittances and their relationship to development and labour market research benefits.

The third chapter presents the findings from the field interviews in Kerikeri, Northland, New Zealand and the context of the fieldwork. Chapter Four presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

The purpose of this chapter is to draw on an extensive range of international literature in order to present some of the theoretical considerations and insights that frame this study and inform the analysis of the interviews. In particular, the chapter focuses on literature that discusses the economic and social benefits for migrant workers and that which discusses some of the economic and social costs of participation. The chapter also seeks to identify gaps in the literature, much of which fails to convey the workers' own voices; their real stories, their feelings, their experiences and their learning.

Most importantly, in this chapter I begin to develop a literature-based argument that much of the migrant workers' experiences and learning places them in an asymmetrical relationship with their FIFO/SMFWs status in the host country. The discussion, which is necessarily constrained by word limits, is organised around four major themes: economic base strengthened, adult farmer education with technology and skills transfer, the links between migrant workers and development strategies, and the economic and social costs of participation.

### **Four important themes in the literature**

#### *Theme One: Strengthening the economic base*

Much of the enormous economic and management literature on this broad topic is primarily concerned with the supposed strengthening of the economic base of the home country as well as that of the migrants themselves (e.g. Adams, 1990; Ahiburge & Brown, 1998; Astorga & Commander, 1989; Bailey, 2009; Burgonion, 2008; De la Briere et al., 2002; Ericsson, 2009; Freund & Spatafora, 2007; Gibson, McKenzie & Rohorua, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; Gibson & McKenzie, 2008; Gibson, Gibson, & McKenzie, 2007; Gibson, 2006; Koc & Onan, 2004; Lowell, de la Garza & Hogg, 2000; Luthria, 2008; Maclellan & Mares, 2005; Millbank, 2006;

Oxfam Australia, 2006; Ramasamy et al., 2008; Ratha, 2005a, 2005b; World Bank, 2006a; 2006b; Wucker, 2004). In various ways, numerous authors discuss “how workers benefit in terms of financial rewards and remittance money sent home to the workers’ country of origin for investment, and rural asset accumulation and to support family members left behind” (Adams, 1990, pp. 2-3).

However, some authors do critique the mainstream economic theories (e.g. Bailey, 2009; De la Briere et al., 2002; Ericsson, 2009; Koc & Onan, 2004; Oxfam Australia, 2006). The process of strengthening economic bases is, they argue, quite complex and creates social relations and power dynamics that have an impact on migratory labour schemes and their participants. Further, they hold, because migrant workers have different needs, the notion of exactly what constitutes financial benefits for them can be contested. Finally, they note, much of the evidence in various economic studies is often anecdotal.

In summary, their more qualified views hold that while the strengthening of the economic base is important, it must be recognised that this occurs in both the host and the home countries. Some even question which country’s economic needs are actually being met. The suggestion is that often it is host country’s employers whose needs have priority. For example, in an influential study Brem (2006) found that employers in Canada preferred migrant workers over resident workers. Department of Labour (2004) reports in its *Skills Action Plan Newsletter* that employers are willing to pay for low skills workers to carry out certain tasks and that the “demand for workers is outstripping supply, especially at the lower end of the skill spectrum” (p. 2). Thus short-term migrant workers are seen as one way of meeting that demand.

### *Remittances and the impact of costs*

As noted above, migrant workers’ remittances to their home country are a cornerstone of migrant labour schemes in that they are regarded as the fundamental element of livelihood strategies to “alleviate poverty”, (Millbank, 2006, p. 3). Koc and Onan (2004) define remittances as “part of the payment for labour exports of sending countries that accrue to the country of origin” (p. 89). Clearly, small Pacific countries are very dependent on remittances (Maclellan & Mares, 2005; Millbank,

2006). Remittance money often supports family households, pays for education, and helps meet social obligations. Thus a positive aspect of remittances is that they can act as a catalyst for poverty alleviation (Burgonion, 2008; Lowell, de la Garza & Hogg, 2000; Maclellan & Mares, 2005; Ratha, 2005a; 2005b).

There are, however, largely unanswered questions about exactly how much workers can remit, given the costs they face in the host country. With respect to the RSE and, specifically migrant workers from Vanuatu, Ericsson's (2009) recent study raises many troubling questions about workers' capacity to access saving or to remit significant amounts. This was in part attributable, Ericsson suggests, to the role played by agents and pastoral care agencies and the fees they deducted.

Other authors have also touched on the issue of financial incentives and hidden costs. Financial incentives, such as reimbursement of fees for visa and work permits, international airfares, medical, health insurance and workers compensation, can help to attract migrant workers for seasonal employment (e.g. Astorga & Commander, 1989; Maclellan & Mares, 2005; Millbank, 2006). However, workers may not always be aware of hidden costs. For example, Astorga and Commander (1989) report that while Governors in Mexico in the late 1980s were required to certify that there are sufficient houses available before any Non-local US & H-2A workers were recruited, half of the cost of the workers' travel was eventually recouped by employers. More recently De la Briere et al. (2002), Oxfam Australia (2006), Misa (2008) and New Zealand's former Prime Minister, Helen Clark (as quoted by Trevett, 2008), note that employers and workers in the RSES have problems around this issue that need to be addressed. The point more recently raised by Ericsson (2009).

### *Theme Two: Adult farmer education integration: Building workers' capacities*

In order for SMFWs achieve high work performance standards, they need to be taught aspects of the particular crop they are working on as well as the specific skills required in their assigned roles. Maclellan's (2008) research supports the notion of migrant workers receiving training as part of the "Medium to long-term NZHVI's seasonal labour strategy" of which "skills development" is one of the

important components (p. 47). There is a strong body of work that supports the notion of skills development among RSE workers through adult education and training in order for them to build their capacities and gain confidence (e.g. Bailey, 2009; Ericsson, 2009; Maclellan, 2008; Maclellan & Mares, 2005; Misa, 2008; Oxfam Australia, 2006).

### *Formal and informal learning*

There is wide recognition that adult farmer education occurs in both formal and informal settings. Bialysok and Smith (1985, as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1998) argue that transmission of knowledge does not take place only through the formal education system. Learning also occurs in informal settings where both theory and practical understanding of a subject combines and “all sides fit together” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, 174) and knowledge is a process for one to use. However, Bialysok and Smith (as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p. 179) argued that the most important component is the “control and processing system” whereby knowledge is gained during practical application and performance at the workplace. They also stress that learner error and bias can hinder workers’ progress and productivity in their jobs. However, as several authors observe, differences in culture and tradition, as well as English language difficulties can impede learning.

The literature suggests that most farmer adult education training programmes are integrated with farming activities; for example, field day trips, hands-on farm practices, and demonstrations (Anonymous, 2006; FARMS, as cited in Beharie, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Johnson, as cited in Beharie, 2005; Morrissey, 1999). Migrant workers, it seems, tend to learn real skills through observation and practical involvement in the job they are assigned to perform in the farm. Beharie (2005) notes that in Canada and the United States, migrant workers may attend hour-long training sessions in organic vegetable production, irrigation, English language skills, business and management skills: skills that can be transferable to the home country. Possely (2008) quotes a US trainer, Sarah Crane, who stated that “in our workshops or outreach programme, we want to teach [migrant workers] the skills to be able to run their own farming [business]....It’s kind of the all-American dream” (Possely, 2008, p. 1). There is also some overseas evidence that migrant

farm workers who receive training are retained or rehired for future seasonal work (Maclellan & Mares, 2005).

However, Maclellan and Mares (2005) note that the high turnover of seasonal farm workers every year presents a challenge.

### *Unions and civil society as broader educative forces*

A number of authors, such as Morrissey (1999) who studied an enlightened Ohio programme, see an important role for trade unions, farm labour organization, and adult education agencies in collaboration with employers and government agencies in the design of not only vocational training programmes but also education that improves their English language, communication and human relations skills, and health and safety awareness. Studies such as Morrissey's (1999) also underscore the role unions can play in facilitating workers' transition into their new work environment and workplace culture. Local unions can also help SMFWs establish links with their diasporas communities. So too can other elements of civil society such as churches and community organizations, including migrant organizations.

Workers can also use their time in the host country to help promote their home country's exports. A United Nations publication, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2008) states that it is crucial for civil society's involvement and participation to enable the development of homeland business. Maclellan and Mares (2005) encourage countries with labour mobility schemes to consider the Spanish model of unionization in the farming sector and the Canadian model in order to facilitate not only training but also better regulatory and safety compliance. Similarly, international research by Martin (2004) also supports unionization and union involvement in training. United States agriculture, that author argues, needs "brains, not brawn" (p. 12).

Unfortunately, as a consequence of de-unionisation over a long period, there is now very little union involvement in the New Zealand horticulture and viticulture. Further, while the former Labour Government (1999-2008) placed some emphasis on social partnership, peak union organizations, such as the Council of Trade Unions, appear to have played a very limited role in the formation and implementation of the RSE programme.

### *Theme Three: Links to other development initiatives*

This subsection discusses some aspects of the link between the RSE and similar schemes and other development initiatives.

#### *Personal savings*

In theory, savings can help migrant workers achieve their medium to long-term goals when they return home. For example, a savings account can be used as security to apply for a further loan to start up a business in their homeland upon return. This is more possible if the returning worker has acquired relevant skills and experiences while overseas. In addition, a skilled returning worker with savings is, in theory at least, more likely to attract assistance from their government and financial institutions. In terms of future development within the host country, small businesses and rural agricultural activity is often identified as the most likely areas to benefit from workers' participation in short-term, migrant labour schemes (Pacific Island Forum, 2006, October b).

#### *Capacity building and development in the Pacific*

Ramasamy et al. (2008) stress the importance of medium and long-term development outcomes through the transfer of appropriate technology and skills. This forms, they argue, are part of the "triple wins for co-development through international migration" (Ramasamy et al., 2008, p. 171). A challenge is to link that individual skill development with wider initiatives.

For example, as Anzu (2010) reports, a major sub-regional agriculture capacity building development program for the three western Pacific countries, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu is funded under the EU African-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) science and technology program was scheduled to commence in 2010. The programme comprises:

three impact projects to the total value of K11.5 million [NZ\$5.8 million], funded under the EU Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) science and technology program. Nine agricultural research and development

organisations from the three countries will benefit from this milestone development over three years starting this year. (para. 1)

It is not clear, however, how such initiatives will link with migrant labour schemes.

For some time, a number of authors have debated whether or not remittances, savings, and skills acquisition actually translates into economic development in the home country (e.g. Allen, 1969; Breilkope, 2004; Burgonion 2008; Freund & Spatafora, 2007; Gibson et al., 2007; 2008; Lowell et al., 2000; Magee & Thomas, 2006; UN, 2008, p. iii). There is both an optimistic view that, somehow, skills and technology transfer occurs (e.g. Burgonion, 2008; Gibson et al., 2008; 2007; Lowell et al., 2000; Pacific Island Forum, 2006, October b,), and a more pessimistic view. For example, authors such as Allen (1969) and Beharie (2005) question the emergence of multinational agriculture businesses that run greenhouses with advanced technology and which are “no longer family farmers...families are [no longer] working side by side [but]... managed as a business [or] as a corporation” (p. 67). Further, there is concern that women have fewer opportunities and that female migrant farm workers are not given the opportunity and often lack exposure.

There is also in the literature a sense that the social relations prevailing in both the home and host countries are not necessarily conducive to longer term skill and technology transfer. Ahmad (2005) argues in his research paper titled *Science and Society in Cuba in the Context of Techno-Economic Globalization* that social relationship is important between the scientific knowledge owner and resources owner for production, development and industrial technological innovation. Most migrant workers who are natural resources owners still lack knowledge about different farming technology and machinery and their relationship to agriculture production and marketing. Thus, Ahmad (2005) argues, the techno-economic development in the context of globalization” has become ever more science-based. He challenges developing countries to create social relations and arrangements internally and externally to direct and control the process of scientific knowledge production from the initiation stage of production to the end product or outcome for sustainable development.

#### *Theme Four: Economic and social costs*

As noted in Chapter One, my initial study (Lepon, 2008) and my Masters study were prompted by gaps in the literature with respect to the economic and social costs of participation in schemes like the RSE. In my initial study, it became evident that much of the literature paid too little attention to issues such as the employment terms and conditions of the seasonal migrant workers' contracts, their rights at the workplace, good faith bargaining on issues relating to salary/wages and tax, social safety nets, and health and safety measures at the workplace. Since my initial study and the completion of my fieldwork for this thesis, both Bailey's (2009) and Ericsson's (2009) studies have highlighted similar concerns. Another area that remains under-researched is the impact of short-term labour migration on the families left behind in the home country.

In this subsection, I touch briefly on some of the issues that are considered rather thinly in the literature and which I sought to explore in my fieldwork. I deliberately do not discuss in any detail Bailey's (2009) and Ericsson's (2009) studies as they became available only after I had conducted my fieldwork and thus did not influence my interviews.

##### *Employment terms and conditions of contract*

Overseas studies, such as Beharie, (2005), Morrissey (1999) and McLeman (2009), argue that SMFWs are unaware of their employment terms and conditions and that in most cases, it is assumed that the recruiting government's labour laws will protect migrant workers from poor working conditions.

In a country like New Zealand, which has a formal employment relations system, it can be assumed that most matters relating to the terms and conditions of migrant workers employment is the responsibility of the New Zealand Government. However, my initial study (Lepon, 2008) and Bailey's (2009) and Ericsson's (2009) studies raise some questions about the extent to which those responsibilities are being met. The problem, to which I have referred earlier, is that in New Zealand short-term, migrant, RSE workers are employed in largely, if not completely, non-unionised settings. Further, in so far as their employment terms and conditions

are explained to them in advance, it is usually in a quite different context, their home country.

The patterns that appear to be emerging in New Zealand from studies such as Bailey (2009), Ericsson, (2009) Lepon, (2008) resemble those observed elsewhere. For example, Basok (2000) found that Mexican migrant workers in Canada often lacked information about their labour rights. As a generalization, it seems very common for migrant workers to be excluded from participating in trade unions in the host country and to have had limited experience of unions in their home country.

### *The limitations of pastoral care and the vulnerability of employment*

The RSE incorporates a rather vague notion of ‘pastoral care.’ New Zealand DOL (2008) and International Migration, Settlement and Employment Dynamics Research (IMSED) Group evaluated the RSE Policy for the First Season (2007-08) and found that pastoral care varied across different RSE employers. It found that the management styles and approaches taken are different and quotes one employer who said: “Pastoral care involves a grey area - where do human rights and pastoral care interact? Where does our responsibility start and stop?...Impossible to answer.” (Large pipfruit grower, Hawkes Bay). Pastoral care can also be an expensive charge on the migrant worker.

In Ericsson’s (2009) study, pastoral care was provided, at a cost, by the same organisation that had recruited the workers. Interviewees also told Ericsson that they had few rights and that workers hired on a six months basis were told with very little notice that they were returning to Vanuatu after only two and a half months.

### *Salary/wage and tax differentiation*

Overseas studies often note poor working condition for contract workers which can include a lack of minimum working hours, poor lodging, inadequate meal and rest periods, inadequate transportation arrangements, and unsatisfactory insurance for occupational injury and disease argued by Stan Raper, national coordinator for agricultural workers program of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada (Beharie, 2005) which resemblances here. In addition, migrant

seasonal farm workers can be faced with higher cost and structural factors constraining their full participation in a host country (Basok, 2000). And there is concern that both they and the families left behind can fall outside the social safety net that applies to domestic workers.

### *Occupational health and safety issues*

Much of the discussion of occupational health and safety in the relevant literature is concerned with the socio-economic impact of health and safety on workers who are involved in migrant labour programmes (Anonymous, 2006; Basok, 2000; Quandt, Arcury, Early, Tapia & Davis, 2004; Beharie, 2005; Contant, 2006; Koc & Onan; 2004; Martin, 2004; Maclellan & Mares, 2005; McLeman, 2009; Misa, 2008; Morrissey, 1999). In various ways, authors discuss both the interrelationship of health and safety issues, limited workers' rights and the lack of social safety nets and the impact on spouse and family members when a worker is injured.

Authors such as Basok (2000) and Quandt et al. (2004) are critical of labour mobility schemes. In particular, they hold that the special aspects of migrant workers' occupational health and safety and the impact of accidents must be recognised by the host country's labour laws. Transnational or migrant workers, they argue, are placed in a disadvantaged position when negotiating their employment conditions. They cannot be expected to understand fully host country concepts or the processes to be followed when seeking compensation for work related accidents. Further, they hold, when injuries occur, most home countries do not provide the social safety nets for the workers and their families that might be assumed under the host country's labour laws (Basok, 2000; Contant, 2006; Misa, 2008).

In the case of New Zealand, the non-unionisation of the horticultural and viticultural sectors compounds the general problem described above. In unionised environments, trade unions usually play an important role in health and safety (Basok, 2000; Quandt et al. 2004). Unions advocate for appropriate national policies, monitor measures at the workplace, and can organise campaigns and build awareness. Where they exist, unions can also disseminate information to migrant workers, monitor workplace practices, and provide advocacy and other assistance

when workers are injured. However, as the limited overseas literature suggests, in the absence of unions and other civil society organizations, migrant workers often lack information about rights and safe practices and the compromises to their health that arise from working in bad weather or living on poor diets (Anonymous, 2006; Beharie, 2005; McLeman, 2009; Morrissey, 1999 Quandt et al., 2004).

### *Impact of short-term migrant labour schemes of the families left behind*

Basok (2000) argues that the very nature of migrant work results in family separation and can eventually lead to marriage break down, health and social issues, and the transfer of infectious diseases. Koc and Onan (2004) support this argument. The absence of the male requires the female spouse to take over all household tasks. Female spouse often have multiple roles and can be under pressure to meet their husband's family and social obligations. This can lead to poor health and they are easily susceptible to diseases and sickness. If migrant workers stay longer in the host country, their spouses and family members may insist on joining the migrant. Martin (2004) found that migrant workers who have their families join them incur high cost of living in the host country and may get employed in secondary hazardous jobs in order to earn extra money.

MacLellan and Mares's (2005) study explored the traditional economies of Pacific rural villages and observed that every aspect of the people's life was under challenge. They argue that the "paradise" (p. 9) image of Pacific life used to promote tourism is going through a transitional period. Migration of one partner can compound stresses as social structures are changing as a result of new patterns of work organisation, urbanisation, and changes in people's lifestyle, eating habits, social activities and gender roles.

Other possible impacts on families are familiar. Where migrant workers become involved in anti-social activities (e.g. drug, alcoholism etc.) this can produce further stresses on families (Basok, 2000; Bailey, 2009; Ericsson, 2009; MacLellan, 2008). Migrant workers may also establish new sexual relationships which result in family break-ups as well as having psychological effects on children. Unfaithful migrant workers and their wives are also susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases.

### *Lack of stakeholder participation and interaction*

There is a lack of clarity around who are the key stakeholders in labour migrant schemes, both with respect to the home and host countries. In today's 'market' context, much of the emphasis seems to be placed quite narrowly on the individual migrant worker and the employer while other stakeholders, such as families, villages, churches and other civil society organisations seem to be marginalised. Basok (2000), Constant (2006), and Misa (2008) all highlight the importance of stakeholder participation, including, at the macro-level, the involvement of governments, employer organizations, and unions.

A difficulty is the complexities of the dynamic relationship in both the home and host countries between the migrant workers and other stakeholders. There are both existing social relations and power dynamics in the home country and new social relations and power dynamics in the host country. The latter can be especially difficult for workers to manage in the absence of the civil society organizations and networks that support families in the home country. Bailey (2009) reports on the disempowerment of migrant RSE workers employed in South Island viticulture. As Contant (2006) notes, the exclusion of migrant farm workers from trade unions can lead to the silencing of those workers.

### **Summary**

This chapter has drawn on a selection of literature in order to identify the identified benefits and costs associated with migrant labour schemes. As noted early, there was a gap in the literature with very few studies discussing the economic and social costs of short-term migrant labour schemes. Further, at least until very recently, much of the critical literature was based on overseas studies, in particular studies from North America. My earlier small study (Lepon, 2008) and Bailey's (2009) and Ericsson's (2009) theses now provide insights into New Zealand's RSE. However, as discussed above, the findings are not encouraging.

In principle, short-term migrant labour schemes can help individual workers as well as home countries strengthen their economic base. The keys to that are remittances,

savings, and the acquisition of skills and knowledge. These potential benefits, I have argued thus far, have to be balanced by the under-researched economic and social costs of participation. Potential benefits can be compromised, if the remittances and savings are low, if the time in the host country is shortened, and if the education and training is only basic and limited.

I have also established that there are numerous questions to be asked about employment rights, health and safety, non-unionisation, and the nature, quality and cost of pastoral care. These questions are urgent, given that the RSE appears to rely on quite a high level of employer self-regulation.

It is against the backdrop of the issues explored in this literature review as well as the findings from my earlier study that I prepared the interview guide for the interviews that are reported on in Chapter Three.

## **CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS**

This chapter presents selected findings from interviews conducted in Northland, New Zealand, in August and September, 2009. To begin, the methods used to collect and analyse information will be described. This includes some details about the interviewees who provided information to the researcher. The main findings from these interviews are then presented.

### **Method of information collection and analysis**

Qualitative in-depth interviewing was considered to be the most effective method for an interpretative and naturalistic approach to this subject matter (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 48). RSES workers from Vanuatu, working for two different companies in Northland, were recruited through a contact person who had assisted the researcher with a previous small project on the RSES scheme. The contact was a woman living in Northland who, at the time of the first study, was working on orchards with RSES workers. At the time of the thesis project, she was no longer employed in orchard work but was still able to make contact with possible research participants. The researcher is very grateful for the valuable assistance and support given by this contact person.

A “purposive sampling” technique (Patton, 1990, p. 160; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was used in the following way. I sought to interview male migrant workers with one to three children under the age of 16 years old living with their mother and other siblings back home. Finding out about such workers would highlight social costs and benefits in ways that single male workers without families would not. The interviewees selected were on seven to eight months’ contract work under the RSES. They were the sole provider of financial support for their family, their children’s education and, in some cases, extended family members. The interviewees were mostly involved in the traditional subsistence economy in their country of origin prior to coming to New Zealand.

The information collection methodology for the project gained ethical approval from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Waikato. The researcher believes that social research should be conducted to assess the social world in which people are living and interacting with each other and within their environment. However, I was mindful of asking sensitive questions that may lead to invasion of interviewees' private life or constitute deception. I worked hard to conduct the interviews in such a way as to respect the interests of all parties involved.

A letter was sent to each potential participant (see Appendix A) with a follow-up telephone call. In-depth interviews of between one and two hours in length were conducted at a time and place convenient for each interviewee. This was usually at night at the place they were staying. Immediately prior to each interview, a consent form was completed (see Appendix B). Interviewees were promised confidentiality with regards to their identities. In total, 12 male FIFO Melanesian SMFWs from Vanuatu were interviewed, ten from Company A (which employed them primarily in relation to kiwifruit) and two from Company B (who provided work on citrus crops as well as general farm work such as fencing). All interviewees were either from one particular village on one of the islands of Vanuatu, or were married to someone from that village. With the permission of the respondents, all interviews were tape-recorded. The interviews were conducted in Pidgin/Bislama, the local language for Vanuatu, PNG and Solomon Islanders (the researcher is from PNG). Verbatim interview transcriptions were made, and these were also translated into English by the researcher. The transcripts were analysed mainly thematically, with attention being paid to the advantages and disadvantages of the workers' experiences from their point of view.

The first part of the interview focused on the recruitment process for the participants and the nature of the work they were undertaking in New Zealand (see Appendix D). Their personal details were gathered on a self-completion form given to them after the interview (see Appendix E:1 & E:2). The second part of the interview centred on the positive aspects of workers' New Zealand experiences and the economic benefits of the Scheme for them. The last part of the interview asked questions about the negative aspects of involvement in the Scheme. Here the

participants were asked to mention any costs. The interviews concluded with a general discussion about the RSE Scheme.

Table 3.1 below sets out some of the details about the interviews. All males, they have been given pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. All but one are members of the Presbyterian Church.

Table 3.1

*Company A & B: Personal details of Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers*

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. of Children</b>	<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Employment Contract Expiry Date</b>
<b>Company A</b>	Thaddeus	Early 40s	Married	3	Primary	Sept 2009
	Peter	Late 20s	Single	0	Secondary (Year 10)	Sept 2009
	Tommy	Late 30s	Married	3	Primary	Sept 2009
	Charles	Early 40s	Married	4	Primary	Sept 2009
	Matthew	Mid 30s	Married	3	Secondary (Year 10)	Sept 2009
	Vincent	Mid 30s	Married	5	Primary	Sept 2009
	Andrew	Late 30s	Married	2	Primary	Sept 2009
	Anton	Late 30s	Married	2	Primary	Sept 2009
	Randall	Mid-50s	Married	5	Primary	Sept 2009
	Solomon	Early 40s	Married	2	Primary	Sept 2009
<b>Company B</b>	Edward	Mid 20s	Married	1	Secondary (Year 10)	October 2009
	Bryan	Mid 20s	Single	0	Secondary (Year 10)	October 2009

Interviews were conducted in August 2009, a month before workers were due to return home. They were conducted under difficult conditions. Interviewees were very busy, working long hours on orchards, returning home very late in the day feeling tired and worn out. They were more concerned to eat and relax, and get to bed to get up early for the next day's work, than to take part in a long discussion with a researcher. Initially, some interviewees were suspicious that the researcher might be investigating them on behalf of their employers or a recruitment agent for future employers. However, after this confusion and delay, it was clarified that the project was for academic research, and that the concern was to hear the workers' stories about their experiences with the Scheme. The next problem that arose was the need to select just 12 participants from the 30 who worked for the two companies, as nearly everyone was keen to become involved. The older workers were especially interested in talking with the researcher. Restricting interviews to 12 was necessary because of the amount of work in transcribing, translating and analysing that number. But the researcher was able to meet with all the interested workers after the 12 interviews were completed, so that everyone was able to have their say and discuss the issues important to them.

The interview transcripts were analysed qualitatively, using thematic analysis. A form of coding was applied to identify text relevant to the researcher's interests, to find commonalities and differences in the 12 transcripts. Initially, the first three interviews were transcribed and coding passes were made over them. After seeing some of the patterns of themes that were emerging, the rest of the 12 interviews were conducted keeping these in mind. I was not able to get the interviewees to check their transcripts as they all returned to their home country soon after the interview. Interviewees did complete forms recording personal details and their contact details in Vanuatu, and this enabled me to talk to some of them by telephone about aspects of the research. During the data analysis, I was able to consult my research diary following the advice of Lincoln and Guba (1985) to apply reflexivity in qualitative research. This diary recorded many things I had seen and discussed during the fieldwork that "add richness and detail to analysis and interpretation as well as recording the more mundane decision about method and procedure" (Goodrick, 2009, p. 53)

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim in Bislama from the audiotapes and then translated into English. This was very demanding and time consuming. However, it was an important process for me as a qualitative researcher in order to reflect deeply on the material and then undertake the thematic analysis. I was assisted in this by one of my supervisors, Dr John Paterson. A number of meetings were held with him to clarify the meaning of what interviewees had said in the light of translation and transcription issues.

I went over each transcript a number of times until I had a clear idea of the key themes that are discussed later in this chapter. I have followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach to thematic analysis and used the file folder methods suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1982). A first level of coding was undertaken to look for recurring themes and concepts, then a second level using memoing and case summaries to clarify the themes and their relationships. The goal was not to quantify the experiences, behaviours and attitudes of the interviewees but to understand the nature and diversity of their subjective meanings.

The focus of this research is on the interviewees' points of view. There is no attempt to independently verify or correct their views. What they think, their confusions and lack of clarity, any contradictions in their comments, and so on, are left alone. These are people who find it hard to communicate effectively in a strange cultural and work environment. This is part of who they are, and this project attempts to re-present their voices as much as possible. The voice of employers, for example, is not re-presented, but they have power in a way that the workers do not.

## **The interviewees and the RSE Scheme**

According to the interviewees, there are differences in the operations of the scheme by the two companies involved. For example, the selection and recruitment process differed. Company A sought to recruit a mixed group of elderly and middle-aged workers, including women. Company B recruited young unmarried men. The time of arrival in New Zealand also differed. One Company recruited workers earlier and upon their arrival there were not much work for them to do. It was difficult for them to meet their cost of living over that time. Half of the interviewees had

previous waged employment and the other half were unwaged self employed workers prior to coming to New Zealand.

Interviewees reported that they were deceived by a local man who had collected money from them to register them as workers to come to New Zealand. It later transpired that he had no connection to any New Zealand employers and he disappeared. The employers' who recruited the research participants had a positive experience with Vanuatu workers from the same island in 2008, often had friends or business connections there, and so they directly sought workers from there for 2009. Recruitment involved RSES employers personally interviewing candidates.

Before leaving home, the workers were farewelled by their community. At this time, it was made clear to them that the community would provide support for the workers' families in their absence and that it was expected that the workers would provide some benefits for the community and the church upon their return. This might include financial support for church and community projects, musical instruments, power generators and so on.

During the selection process, some people who wanted to be part of the Scheme were disqualified on medical grounds. Employers were assisted by the workers, church leaders, village chief and government officials to find replacements elsewhere in Vanuatu, many of them having some link to the village. Overall, the involvement of the local community and leaders in recruitment provides some safeguards for workers, balancing the way employers might want to exploit the Scheme.

Each individual worker's employment contract agreement was signed before leaving Vanuatu but copies were not given to the workers. At the time, they were excited to be coming to New Zealand, and there were many forms to be read and signed, many of them in English with which they were not always familiar. Once arriving in New Zealand and realising the significance of the employment contract in defining working conditions and rates of pay, it was felt it was too late to do anything about it.

The research participants came from the same village in Vanuatu or had significant links to that village. They travelled to New Zealand as a group, seeking to fulfil

financial hopes but also to travel and see new places. They provide a pool of workers that can return in future and they are able to inform others back home about the Scheme and its advantages and disadvantages.

## **Selected findings**

Interviewees talked about the positive and negative aspects of their New Zealand experiences as workers on the RSE scheme. In the following section, in the first part, I identify four important themes that emerged from my thematic analysis of the interview transcripts relating to what the interviewees gained from involvement in the scheme: earning monetary income for family and community back home, gaining useful knowledge and skills that could be applied back home, personal satisfaction from the work, and personal experiences of a new country and society. In the second part of the following section, I identify four important themes that arose from thematic analysis relating to the more negative aspects of their experiences: difficult working conditions, earning less money than they expected, lack of freedom and choice with respect to aspects of their time in New Zealand, and the emotional difficulties of missing home and family and implications for gender roles of being away from home.

### *Positive aspects of workers' experiences in New Zealand*

#### *Theme One: Earning monetary income for family and community*

Table 3.2 below sets out some of the financial aspects relating to each interviewee (figures are in \$NZ), including the amount they think they would be likely to repatriate to Vanuatu as a result of their work in New Zealand. This money is very significant compared to what they could earn in Vanuatu. Note that nearly all interviewees had already sent some small sums back to Vanuatu already. The largest amount was \$1000 sent back by one person to meet school fees. However, details of remittances were not systematically collected in the interviews

Table 3.2

*Company A & B: Financial aspects for Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers*

	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Estimated wages per fortnight (\$NZ)</b>	<b>Accommodation &amp; transport costs / fortnight</b>	<b>Estimated savings likely to be taken home</b>
<b>Company A</b>	Thaddeus	\$400	\$220	\$2000
	Peter	\$500- \$1000	\$220	\$5000
	Tommy	Below \$500	\$220	\$6000
	Charles	\$500-\$1000	\$220	\$7000- \$8,000
	Matthew	Below \$500	\$220	\$7000
	Vincent	Below \$500	\$220	\$4000
	Andrew	Below \$500	\$220	\$4000
	Anton	Below \$500	\$220	\$3000
	Randall	Below \$500	\$220	\$3000- \$4000
	Solomon	Below \$500	\$220	\$3000
<b>Company B</b>	Edward	\$500 to \$1000	\$220	\$6000
	Bryan	Below \$500	\$220	\$5000

In addition, a number of interviewees had purchased some things to take back home with them. These included tools, clothes and shoes for family members, and a camera. Most interviewees also reported that some of the money taken back home by them would be used to buy things for the community or local church, such as a generator.

One of the most important things identified by interviewees as gained from their involvement in the RSES was the ability to earn money to take back home. There is

a strong motivation for them to provide their labour services in New Zealand compared to their country of origin where very few, if any, such employment opportunities exist.

In Vanuatu . . . money is hard to find. . . Lots of us are finding it hard while only a small number of us have the money. Those who . . . work in offices for the government or . . . work in the private sector . . . in business they earn money. But for some who do not have a business . . . somehow they must develop a business. There is no chance for a man to earn money in Vanuatu. That's why we must come to New Zealand to earn money. (Tommy)

The money earned from the RSE Scheme will be used for the family and household needs of SMFWs in their country of origin as well as for their personal needs.

[I have come to New Zealand] to earn some money to take home to the Island . . . to build a good house . . . [for] my family [to] go and stay at home . . . One [of my interests] is to install solar power in the house to provide the family with light in the night . . . I [also] come here to work and find my tools to take home and use them to build my house . . . It is [also] hard to pay school fees for children on the Island . . . They send some of us here for that, especially for [money for] those children who are in High School. Money for school fees is expensive, that's why we have to come. (Peter)

Interviewees often referred to intentions to set up self-employment projects back home with the money earned from their work.

I will do one thing where it will help me and my family...My favorite work back home is in furniture . . . I have collected my tools since . . . last year. . . So now I will take some more when I return and will start a furniture business for myself . . . My thought is to construct furniture. Lots of people who travel to New Zealand have built houses and there is no furniture for their houses. . . I think furniture is the need for most of the people there now. (Bryan)

The chain saw and other things that I will buy will benefit the community. I also think that . . . I will use my chain saw for cutting timber to sell to the community . . . and benefit from the small money earned. (Tommy)

In this way, the remittance money earned from the work in New Zealand is identified as a catalyst for the establishment and development of income-generating small and medium enterprises, as leading to long term economic benefits for the

Island communities, and as alleviating poverty (issues identified in Burgonion, 2008; Lowell et al., 2000; Maclellan & Mares, 2005; Ratha, 2005a; 2005b).

When asked at the end of the interview whether the benefits of the Scheme outweighed the costs, most interviewees started off by assessing this in financial terms, though it turned out that they could not divorce that from other considerations. Only one of the interviewees stated that it was clear to him that the benefits of the Scheme outweighed the costs. He acknowledged significant costs to being involved in the Scheme and that savings would be relatively small but he felt that overall it was worthwhile. Two interviewees were undecided whether the Scheme was worthwhile or not. For example,

The cost is less and the benefit is more . . . from my experiences within these six months in New Zealand. But the benefits will be small for us by the time we get back to Vanuatu . . . so [that] means the overall assessment . . . is 50/50 or at the same level. (Tommy)

Most interviewees were negative in their evaluation of the scheme, even though they might end up with significant savings to take home.

We have seen that the benefit is small . . . the costs of some of the things are very high. . . paying the plane ticket. . . with the visa, passport, and rentals for accommodation at \$2400. I should have kept record of the expenses for the six months for our . . . food. It is estimated about 700 plus dollars . . . I also think that I will take about \$7000 to \$8000 home. If I do not take that amount home then [with all the hard work and disruption] it will be an overall cost to me. (Charles)

The fact that the interviewees earned less than they expected is discussed further below, when the negative aspects of workers' experiences are considered.

### *Theme Two: Gaining useful knowledge and skills*

Most of the SMFWs are committed to semi-subsistence agriculture work in their country of origin, and some of the horticultural knowledge and skills they are gaining in New Zealand are useful for their rural livelihood in Vanuatu. The interviewees described various agricultural crop production techniques they have become aware of in New Zealand which are used to gain higher crop yields. They

have learned that New Zealand farmers carefully manage their crops during the critical period of growth and development and as a result earn profits.

In [Vanuatu], we don't know, we just plant our crops and wait for the crops to be ready to harvest and we consume them. In pruning, we do not prune. . . We do not look after the crop out in the field like farmers in New Zealand are doing. I see them water their crops and trees every day and think that is how they make more money. (Edward)

Here I see that [farmers] look after their crops or plants. . . They apply fertiliser . . . where crops must grow well and they . . . spray . . . I see they manage their crops well. They make sure the fruit is not affected by pests which reduce yield of the crops, and the farmer will have a good harvest in the next season. (Anton)

Most interviewees discussed how farming success in New Zealand depended heavily on the use of technology and a highly skilled workforce working under contractual conditions. They mentioned that, despite this, they have learned some useful skills that could be applicable to their work back home:

I learn a lot . . . about farming . . . [and] see how they make their farms clean and neat. So when I go home I will . . . make my garden clean . . . I have . . . seen their farms, including the dairy farms and how their farming system works. How they look after their cows and do fencing. I learn a lot of things that I will take back home, . . . [like] how to . . . look after the animals back home . . . and teach others about how . . . they could prune their cocoa, do clearing, and how to enable the fruit trees to bear good fruit. What I will teach them will come out of the farming that I learn here. So they will take good care of their farm and animals. (Bryan)

The interviewees noted that they were learning from working with kiwifruit, even though it was a crop they did not have back home. This included, for example, the pruning of the crop to gain higher production. Their jobs are structured to enable them to learn while they are being trained and while working. The workers like the training approaches taken in relation to kiwifruit.

When we arrived, the boss took us to the farm and taught us about how many branches to leave in a bay, the spacing requirements, what type of branch to prune and what type...to leave. After that we worked by following the instructions given. We did have difficulties in the first week trying to get used to the nature of the job assigned [for us] to do. The [first] week passed by, then the second, and after the third week we got used to the job. The work

involved with the gold kiwifruit was easier for us to do and when we come to green kiwifruit, it was a bit difficult. At least we have been involved with these two crops and are familiar with them; and it's a normal thing now. (Thaddeus)

The skill of pruning is seen to be transferable to cocoa and other trees in Vanuatu with the aim of increasing crop production for higher income. Vincent, for instance, discussed how the knowledge and skills he learnt in New Zealand about kiwifruit were transferable to passion fruit production and marketing in Vanuatu, with the local hotel industry there providing a possible market for him. The transferability of budding and grafting techniques was also mentioned by most interviewees. An issue which was not mentioned by the interviewees, but is relevant here, is that the workers are gaining skills and knowledge which would enable them to develop new crop varieties in Vanuatu should changing environmental and climatic conditions occur due to global warming.

Most SMFWs referred to learning about the use of chemical fertiliser with kiwifruit plants during transplanting.

Today, we learned how to apply the fertiliser. [*He is very excited about the new skills learnt*]. We dig the hole and then put the [fertiliser] into the hole, then put the vine into the hole to grow. They are using a lot of fertiliser compared to Vanuatu, where you just cut the bush and go and plant your food. The [use of] fertiliser is new for me... We from Vanuatu do not use fertiliser [in the village gardens]. We just plant our food and when it's ready we harvest and eat. (Charles)

However, Solomon was one who was aware of the differences between New Zealand and Vanuatu farming that meant that the use of fertiliser was not necessarily transferable. In New Zealand, farmers want high quality crops to export overseas whereas in Vanuatu farmers are growing crops primarily for household food consumption. The intensive agriculture and emphasis on exports in New Zealand mean that farmers need to use chemical fertiliser, but these conditions were not applicable currently in Vanuatu. Anton referred to the new knowledge and skills learned from mono-culture and specialization in NZ farming, something he believed could be used when he returns home.

I will earn money from copra and after that I will plant peanut and kava. I have lots of things and I also have...learned plenty of things about how to work with different crops. If I plant peanuts, I

have to plant peanuts and earn money from it. I am learning how to work and see that work is good . . . [and I will do that]. (Anton)

Most interviewees referred to the difficulties of transferring to Vanuatu the use and skills relating to agricultural technology. They gain knowledge and skill about the technology and yet they lack the financial capacity to pay for the agricultural machinery and chemicals to use back home. The interviewees also pointed out that work back home is organised differently from how work is done in New Zealand, and described useful lessons learnt about the work ethic in New Zealand:

Here [in New Zealand] when you work you have money... The work we do in this place is different... [In] Vanuatu, we work today, and tomorrow we rest or sleep... Here, I learn plenty of skills... I learn how to...manage money and my living in the house. [I have] also become aware that sometimes ...at home, [we] do not get up and go to work on time. [There] one day we...work and then...another day [do nothing], and yet we say we have problems [with] money. When I come [to New Zealand], I learn plenty of things like I have to work to have something. I will go back home and apply what I learned. (Anton)

One thing I learnt in this scheme is about work...The work is different from what I used to do. So what I [see]...is about how they organise the work for us to do in line with the timing they give us... It is one big thing that I learnt in this scheme. (Andrew)

Part of the different work organization the workers have encountered in New Zealand is related to time management. In the RSE Scheme, the workers are in a contractual work arrangement in which the work is specifically designed and assigned with set periods to carry out specific tasks. Most interviewees mentioned that New Zealand attitudes towards time management are different from Vanuatu.

When I come here I learn about working on time. I go to work from 8am and I come back at 5pm . . . In Vanuatu . . . we do not organise the time to work...Men used to tell stories to each other until late in the day, and then they quickly go to their garden for a short time and return. If only we follow time for New Zealand [and] ....work like [them in] . . .their time . . .we will earn money . . .and benefit from it and live [a] good life. Oh, [I wish] we can do the same like we are doing now ... in Vanuatu. (Tommy)

Another way that farm work is organised in New Zealand differently from Vanuatu is in terms of team work. Interviewees described the significance of the teamwork

they learned in New Zealand and its benefits in improving work performance and achieving the work targets set for them.

One of the interviewees had been working in New Zealand on the scheme in the previous year. Upon his return to New Zealand, Edward lobbied for more flexible work arrangements resulting in flexible working hours. Sometimes men in leadership roles in Vanuatu may be part of the scheme and also assist with communication with employers.

One of us who came last year is our leader and he takes that position. Those of us who are new to this work... regarded him as our leader. He came last year and...talked to the boss about the workers' problems and needs. He then talks to us about what the boss says...Sometimes the workers do not behave well or they are in need of something, they come and see [our leader] about it. [He] then sees the boss and at the same time tells us what the boss says. Sometimes we want something, we see [him]...about the things and he will see the boss or sometimes we go direct to the boss...Some of [our chiefs] came with us and they are our leaders from Vanuatu. They are staying with us here and we work together and they look after us here. (Edward)

Some of the useful knowledge and skills gained by the workers arise outside of the horticultural work they are contracted to undertake or are related to aspects of lifestyle more generally. Three examples are eeling, building construction, and buying and selling over the internet. Other important learning experiences mentioned by interviewees were improvements in their ability to communicate using the English language and the undertaking of daily domestic tasks normally performed in the household by women in Vanuatu. These issues will be discussed further in the context of the problems faced by the SMFWs.

### *Theme Three: Personal satisfactions from participation in the RSE Scheme*

Most interviewees indicated positive feelings about their active employment and participation in the RSES work. They feel valued for their work and feel that they are making a significant contribution to their employers. They feel inspired to return home and apply what they have learned, making themselves valuable to their own families and communities.

The important thing is, it is about our life and creating a business for us to rely on after the RSE job...It is for changing [and improving] our life. (Peter)

I love the job, the employment... It is a long term project for us that we come to work. My aim is that I must do the work that I am here for and earn money. (Matthew)

I think that for... us to come here and work or do the work fast, the company see us and they are glad about our work. So I think every time they will recruit us... to stay to work and take money home...to build and develop our country... So our government will benefit from it with us... My boss does not want me to go away; he wants me to stay so I will come back. But it depends if I behave well then I will come back in future to work. (Bryan)

We come and work faster and it is good that we complete the task earlier. Like today, the boss did not see us...and we work really hard...He just sent his thank you and said we are sweet. (Peter)

These personal satisfactions with participation in the RSE Scheme are partly enabled by the role of their own leaders and the way that the employers acknowledge the workers' achievements. As participants described:

We worked faster than [other workers] from last year. The boss came and thanked us and organised a small gathering for us...He told us that those who came last year did not complete the pruning and those of us who came this year complete the pruning job. He was very glad and thanked us. (Anton)

They [the employer] tell us that if we are not happy about something, we must... talk to them, and raise concerns about the work during the bad...weather condition. [They said] when things were not right and you are not happy, you must feel free to stay in the house [and avoid]...the cold and freezing [weather] that will make you sick. (Edward)

Edward spoke highly about his employer (Company B) and the work arrangements which contributed positively to his satisfactions with his job.

We do not have supervisors where he/she is always at our nerve, our boss gives us the time sheet...you fill the time sheet stating what time and where you start work. You write the time when you finish work also...I am not sure about others who work with [the other Company]. As for us we do not have supervisors. (Edward)

Company B organises work in a flexible manner for their workers but Company A workers found their work conditions to be quite rigid. This means that the degree of personal satisfaction varies from workplace to workplace.

*Theme Four: Experience of a new country/society*

The workers for Company A did not get any opportunity to take time to visit other parts of New Zealand. Any time away from their work or living places was largely limited to shopping in the local town. For the workers for Company B, however, the opportunity to meet others and see other parts of New Zealand was provided for them by their employer.

We meet with lots of friends and went to their homes and visited Maori villages. There are other places we visited... the place where early white settlers and Maori chiefs signed contracts and land agreements [the Treaty]. My friends invited us and we went and visited the place, and [we have also gone] skiing. They also plan another visit to the place before we returned to Vanuatu... I am glad that I have come and seen a place like New Zealand. (Edward)

The New Zealand environment and climate is very different from Vanuatu where, according to the interviewees, people are not so concerned about the cleanliness of their environment.

I breathe fresh air [and the] environment is clean. They clean their places to the satisfactory standard with decorations and [they are made] pleasant to attract tourism and visitors. In comparison to us, we have dirty and filthy places and environment. (Edward)

Here is different from home... I love this place so much. I see how the white men live and when I go back I can change... my living. They keep their home clean... and back home the boys' make too much dirt and too much noise. Here, they look after their things, the farm and their environment... I love this place. (Bryan)

Sometimes interviewees referred to what they have learned about animal management on farms in New Zealand. For example, Bryan reported:

There are big differences in the kind of work we do now and the things I see... in New Zealand and back at home, like the animals. With cows back home, we go and rush them to move them and I see that they are not tame. Here, animals are tame and I can touch them and walk in between a hundred cows. (Bryan)

Their time in New Zealand includes meeting new people who are often friendly and hospitable.

The place has lots of people who are kind and good to people including us... The white man treats people [fairly]. They like us when we come and stay here. Even the Maoris are...very kind and friendly. We have talked to them. They took us to their house and [we] eat with them. I have learnt a lot of things from them that I didn't know and understand before. (Edward)

This included workers for Company A who were able to meet locals at Church and even visit with them afterwards.

A number of aspects of New Zealand culture are noticeably different to the interviewees.

We find that [the way people dress ]...like how the white man have their styles. They also kiss [and hug each other] outside [in public] and in front of others... [We], from another culture, are not like that...For us things like that...we have to hide and do it. Our clothes must cover our body or...we wear pants and swim. (Edward)

Even basic things like obtaining food are very different from Vanuatu where the cash economy is less significant and people rely on their gardens for food.

The food here is different from ours; we do not work too much for money. We work for food and ... go to the garden and grow...our food. I eat different food, when I stay home...and I miss lots of our food. (Bryan)

[Back home] we do not rely too much on supermarkets and shops like we do here in New Zealand for our daily food needs. In Vanuatu, we grow our own crops in the garden and if you want to go and work, you go, no one man or women controls you. More than that, in Vanuatu, you don't use money too much to buy food to eat like what we are doing here. In Vanuatu, you don't budget for food like what we are doing here where we spend \$50 to \$60 for a week for food. (Edward)

Interviewees also discussed how many customs in New Zealand were different so that they had to learn to behave differently, such as respecting private property and not simply going into someone's home to take what they want.

It is important for us to be aware of and not to steal from others and our colleagues. The Labour Department in [Vanuatu] is fully aware of this issue. (Edward)

In Vanuatu..., when a man comes across something, he takes it... That is what I see [is different here]. It is good that there is no stealing. All the things are just left anywhere and it can stay there... Other people don't go into someone else's yard... [When] we walk somewhere, we do not cross over other person's yard or farm. (Anton)

### *Negative aspects of workers' experiences in New Zealand*

Despite the range of positive aspects outlined above, there were also a number of significant negative elements in the interviewees' experiences with the scheme in New Zealand. Four main negative themes are explained below.

#### *Theme One: Hard working conditions*

The employer from Company B spent time socializing with workers and worked hard at assisting them in the workplace. His approach was flexible and he paid attention to their concerns. On the other hand, Company A was much more difficult to work for. The employer tended to impose work arrangements without any monitoring of their impact on the workers. He paid little attention to their daily welfare.

However, regardless of who they were working for, the interviewees found the work that they were required to do was physically demanding in ways they had not anticipated.

Work here is different from Vanuatu...It's really, really, really...it's too strong compared to Vanuatu...[where] you work...according to your human power, [where] you are not forcing your body to work. Here you must work fast and...force yourself and I don't know how we do that. I have to say that it is like...lotto...machine or engine. You force your body to work. So you have to go faster, and sometimes you feel sick. (Vincent)

It's not one easy time for us. We work, work, work, till afternoon and it's a different kind of work. In picking . . .when we work, work, we feel our back is heavy [strained]. When we come to the house... all the boys feel tired . . . [exhausted]. (Tommy)

We did not experience...working morning till afternoon in Vanuatu...In New Zealand, you have to work for hours and hours, minutes and minutes, till afternoon...Also work is not easy, you work and will be tired. . . In pruning time if you continue, you will kill yourself with work and in the afternoon your back and shoulder is tired with your body and muscles sore. (Peter)

Most interviewees were unaware of the standard working hours as they experienced long hours of work in bad weather conditions - “work arrangement is 24/7” for them, they feel. They sometimes forego their break and lunch hours for more work done for more pay, which has health consequences for the workers.

During kiwifruit picking season we pick every day, even Sunday to Monday. Sometimes the boys feel too tired and they take one day off on Sunday. (Charles)

It is estimated for eight hours of work. I think we go to work very early in the morning and should come home early... Then we will have enough rest, cook our food, eat and have our shower. We must do that so we can go back fresh the next day with more strength to work. (Peter)

We start work at 7:30 am till 5:30 pm. We feel it’s really hard and [difficult work], our backs and shoulders are sore. We are really trying our best. When we work and feel tired and have no strength, our boss will tell us to continue work. We continue work and when we arrive home, in the room you will see the boys sleep, one will sleep here and one on the bed and one there. (Thaddeus)

We work on contract and you can bring your food with you. You want to eat, you can eat during lunch. If you think about making money than you will not eat during lunch and bring your food back to the house again. That makes the boys feel tired [and hungry] but they...want the job so they continue. (Anton)

The long hours and lack of time to recover mean that other tasks are unable to be done. This was particularly a problem for Company A employees whose work arrangements were not flexible.

If you lose your ATM card, you work until 5:00pm and you have no time... to go to the bank...To get another ATM card you have to be absent from work...No time for you to... stand on the queue at the bank to do transactions of money...for the family... We work, work, till afternoon, there’s no free time. We do not have time to do all these things. (Solomon)

Sometimes wet weather prevents work – and the workers will not get paid. Furthermore, the cold climate is foreign to the workers.

Sometimes, it is cold...and too cold...not like...Vanuatu. Sometimes the place is too cold. I think getting cold in New Zealand weather...now is a big problem for workers experiencing this place... When it rains, we do not work, and we stay in the house... When it is heavy rain, we do not work and we get no pay. (Charles)

[Here] is different from Vanuatu. Early [in the] morning I wake up and want to go to work, but it's very cold. So I have to wear clothes, about three or four [layers], to keep me warm. The work is not hard but it's very cold, cold, you feel cold, cold in the early hours of the morning [when] you go to work... When work ends [at the end of the day] you begin to feel cold, cold and return back to your house... We are sick [and] all our body is sore because we are not trained to work in cold weather. (Thaddeus)

Furthermore, some interviewees were upset about how their work output was sometimes recorded. They felt cheated, and sometimes they were unable to have it corrected.

Sometimes your [work] will not [be] correctly recorded, that's one of the common problems. We do a big job but the recording is not correct...and our pay does not compensate for the contract work that we do. They have to count the number of...kiwifruit we work on and it goes to the office. Sometime they do not record it accurately and it creates problem for us and affects our pay. When...it was not correct...I personally talked with my supervisor about it... I told her that my money is not correct and she knew [the mistake] and corrected it. (Vincent)

The interviewees felt that they had not received good information about working and living conditions, and the impact of bad weather on their pay.

No information on the conditions of work or the law for New Zealand was given to us...to know... and make the right decision during the interview. We come here and the things are totally different [than we expected]. (Vincent)

If [we have]...days [absent from]...work due to bad weather and other reasons, they should pay us. It is too late for us now as we have signed the contract. I also did not understand the employment contract...Some of us who attended school at a higher level should understand better but...it's very difficult to understand the written document. For some of us who are here

working do not know whether they are treating us well or violating our rights as workers. (Tommy)

The interviewees felt that not enough care was taken with their health and physical soreness, and their crowded living conditions helped to spread the 'flu and other illnesses.

They do not know that in the afternoon the workers will have body aches [and] pains and will not be able return home in the middle [of the] work because we have signed the contract of employment with the Company... We did not experience this type of work arrangement [back home]. We just came and experience [the work conditions here]; and feel sick about it. So some of us take leave... We are still thinking how the work we do will affect us and the extent of its impact. (Peter)

If one of us gets sick in this type of job [in this type of] weather condition, we work and live in this place, it is easy for others to get the sickness quickly because of our living conditions. (Matthew)

The interviewees are aware that they are often paid on a different basis compared to fellow workers on the orchards. Apart from the women workers on the scheme, they are not given work in the packhouse, a form of work seen to be less arduous than outside work. At certain times of the season, they are also under significant pressure to work as many hours as possible, seven days a week.

Work in the packhouse [means] good pay and avoid work in the field... Work in the pack house has money; all of them do not have deductions like we have. They did not allow us to work with the backpackers... We came to pick kiwifruit on contractual arrangement... and then do pruning... We started picking in March, April and June. When it's time for picking we work...Monday to Sunday and it depends also on the weather...They think that we must be on time to pick fruit [and it has] time limits... That is the time where [every employer] needed us very badly to work every day. (Peter)

The interviewees noted that they were not given a clear idea before arriving in New Zealand of the hours of work. The standard rate for wage calculation is based on the minimum wages (\$12.50 per hour) and there is effectively no overtime pay for working on Sundays and public holidays. Discussing issues with other workers, they have come to the conclusion that they are paid only about half of what is a fair wage.

We are working on contract... and we are not on an hourly rate. So we are not making any overtime. I think if we work on Sunday, it's like overtime...Even the women from Vanuatu who...work in the [pack house at] night did not get their [extra] pay. They did not pay all of them on the night shift job and they just work extra hours... It is like overtime for workers...If they did not include it, then they should make it clear, and pay us. This is from my own understanding that when we come from Vanuatu, the time for me to work should be like that and they should pay... [The recruiters] did not mention overtime and we did not know whether we work on Sunday or not. (Peter)

Sometimes we work with the light from the tractor when we use to pick...They do not pay our overtime, but then they deduct our money for the use of the transport during overtime. (Randall)

Most of the interviewees referred to doing “extra” work that they did not initially expect to have to do. They feel they are “killing ourselves” to meet their employers’ expectations and to earn the money that makes their time in New Zealand worthwhile. Vincent had a number of problems with his work experience in New Zealand. In the end, he felt it may not be worth it.

I think that I will not come back; instead I will stay back in Vanuatu and establish some of my work relating to construction. I am really interested in the work but some work conditions are not right and I do not want to come back. (Vincent)

### *Theme Two: Less money to take home than expected*

Interviewees referred to a range of expenses that they incurred in relation to the scheme that they had not anticipated or expected. These included payments they made before they left Vanuatu, medical insurance, the level of taxation, living costs such as paying to have laundry done, needing to meet half the cost of their air fares, and the cost of sending money back home. The interviewees understand that some deductions from their wages are for their benefit, such as the medical insurance which would meet the cost if a worker had to return to Vanuatu in the case of the death of a family member back there, but some were confused about claiming back medical expenses.

We have signed the agreement that when we are sick...they pay...the hospital where the worker attends. But one time I was sick and [went] to the doctor and they tell me to pay for a blood test. I pay \$110 and they have not [refunded] my money yet. I

have given the receipt to the boss... On the paper they said they will refund my money...It doesn't seem to be the case... Some of them [the workers] get their refund and some of us they did not pay us yet. This makes me wonder...Probably I do not speak English [clearly enough] to them. (Randall)

Two of us who paid for our medical insurance got our refund...We produced the medical certificate and take it to the employer so they pay for our sick leave... There are about five who are sick now... and do not know how to claim for medical insurance. Some of them got two to three days sick leave already and are not paid for. (Peter)

Some employers appear to be more concerned than others about these matters and made sure that the workers received assistance and care. Other employers have not been as active in assisting the workers.

There is some recognition amongst the interviewees that male workers face a challenge in saving and then using that money responsibly that women do not, due to culturally-ingrained habits and attitudes.

In Vanuatu, women... are the savers, who save money more than the fathers. If one mother comes to New Zealand and makes [some money], she will save and hold that money for two or three years before it runs out. This is [compared to] some of the fathers with [some money] who when they go to Vanuatu today it will be spent when they drink kava... The money will finish quickly... Mothers will save money and not spend it unnecessarily. They will not drink kava, they will not smoke, they will not throw it away. (Andrew)

Overall, the interviewees do not think that the Scheme is fair to them. There are too many unanticipated costs, some of which they do not understand, and they are not earning the level of income that they feel they were led to expect.

In my mind I think that those who organised this scheme... should pay everything to help us to come here. [They should] pay for our visa and tickets... and they will all make more money out of us... When we came to work for the scheme... they reported on how much money we would earn for one week's work... and then pay deductions started for everything... for the company to re-coup the money they spend on workers. (Peter)

We come and our leaders said it's for quick money; you work and earn big money. It's true, good money but... our labour is very good and worth a lot. Our leaders see the sums of money that can be earned and think that the rate is good, but the work we have to

do [is a lot] and the pay we get is not right or balanced with our labour input. (Thaddeus)

*Theme Three: Lack freedom/choice over life*

While they are in New Zealand, interviewees find that there are a number of ways in which their life is restricted. They are not able to exercise the kind of choices and freedom that they are used to at home. One example is strict restrictions placed on their alcohol consumption placed on them by the employers. In a number of ways, they feel they are treated as children, with decisions being made for them. Some of the restrictions reflect the long hours they work and the lack of their own transportation. There is a difference between the two companies, with one employer providing workers with outings and the other not. Even when they are taken to town to do shopping, they feel they are not given enough time to do all they want.

At times we go to town [and the employer] gives us limited time to go shopping. If we stay longer, because we are new to the store, and do not know the place... or if we want to see the place or there are some goods that... we see and want to buy, if we are slow...sometimes he leaves us and drives away from us. We do not know how to find our way back to [our living quarters] and just wait for friends to find us and they... drive us back... They tell us that... we are like diplomats for our community, that we represent all from home including our families... While staying here when we have a problem...we came together...and they teach rules to us. Like for us to have a meeting, discussion and sort out any differences. So our coming here is alright, we are not worried, it's just that we are restricted. (Peter)

One important issue relates to the inability of workers sometimes to attend Church on Sunday. At the height of the picking season, they are required to work every day of the week.

In Vanuatu...we do not work on Sunday. We come here and we work Sunday to Sunday... When we do pruning... they stopped us and we go to church. During fruit picking, we worked Sunday to Sunday. I feel that time for us to work should end on Saturday. I was not trained to work on Sunday . . .[but to attend] church. I see that I have come to New Zealand to train myself to work [on Sunday] and feel that it's not right for my life. (Thaddeus)

Workers do not have the ability to fend for themselves as in Vanuatu. Being totally reliant on a cash economy is foreign to them.

It's not like Vanuatu where if you don't work for someone [for money], you can go to the garden and harvest food, take it home and cook and eat it. You don't need money to pay for food. Here, I am always worried; I have to earn enough money each week to pay for rent and food. And if it rains and there's no work, you don't get any money. They will not pay us if we don't work during rain. (Thaddeus)

The food they are given is not necessarily what they would choose.

We think that it will be good for us to cook for ourselves... The main food we eat here is bread...with rice... The local food that we would eat in Vanuatu is more expensive here...Rice and bread is cheaper here and that's the main food we are given... We are not given banana or taro... There are banana, taro, kumara, yam, and Island cabbages in the supermarket...if only we cooked for ourselves. (Matthew)

Some interviewees noted that there were very few social activities they could participate in after work. Television was available in their lodgings but they would have liked the opportunity to play sports. One of the interviewees, who was a returnee worker, referred to how recreational activities were organised for workers when he was in the South Island during a previous season.

The living and sleeping facilities provided for the workers were described by some as dirty, overcrowded and unhealthy. Working long hours and returning tired to their lodgings meant they did not always have the opportunity to do things themselves. This extended to clothes washing and personal hygiene. To some extent, the problem is caused by the men not being used to responsibility for domestic chores at home.

The beds we sleep on, I am not...happy about that because they change our bedding sometimes only once a month. We pay them weekly and the bedding should be changed weekly. Sometimes we... sweat in the night, the blanket and pillow smells of sweat. But we come back to them and wait for them... to come and change it. (Charles)

It is good if the employer is aware of our needs for soap and purchases some for us to wash our clothes. We work till late and have no time for shopping in town... Sometimes we [are]...in an

awkward situation when the white man smells our dirt... and I do not know what to do. (Thaddeus)

When the employer comes into the room and sees that the place is not clean he will say that this is not Vanuatu... He will continue to say that we come and spoil the lodging. (Vincent)

Some of the interviewees referred to how they are avoided by some white people and they are unsure whether this relates to them being dirty or something more culturally-based. White men's [people's] attitudes and behavior [towards us is different]. When we go to the kitchen they see us and they don't want us to stay with them...and eat. Most of them are not happy with us. They see us going into the kitchen and they go out through the other door. Looks like we are black man or? Some of them wanted to eat with us and we used to go inside with them . . . and most of the others then went outside. ...I think we are too dirty or...I ask myself, why is that? We don't know how they see and regard us. (Thaddeus)

Lack of fluency with English means that the Vanuatu workers often feel isolated from other people they encounter as fellow workers or out in the community. It also contributes to their difficulties in finding out about things they do not understand and undermines their confidence in dealing with their employers.

#### *Theme Four: Family and gender roles*

Travelling a long distance from home, community and family, and being tied in to a work contract for many months in a foreign land, mean that the interviewees experienced significant emotional stress. Many wept when discussing this.

I find it... really hard for me when I come to live here. I think too much about my family and want to go back after the third month. The boss did not allow us to go. This is because of the six months work contract we signed... I stay and think too much about my family...I want to return home. If only I received \$1000 or \$2000 [from this job], it will be alright for my family... I keep on wondering whether my family is safe, especially one small boy who might climb and fall from the coconut tree, cut his leg, or a coconut might fall on his head. When I think about all those things that might happen to my children... I wish that I am at home to look after...them. (Thaddeus)

When I do not sleep well, I stay awake and think about my child and the mum... [*tears in his eyes*], How they are?... I understand that they are there and everything is alright... One more month left for me to go back home to see my family. (Edward)

Oh I... really miss everybody [*voice tone changes and tears in eyes*]. I used to think that...I must go back now...I miss all my children and their mummy. When I ring them they say, no that's alright... we are fine. I used to wonder whether they are telling me the truth as...all of them are far away and...I am here. (Vincent)

It's a long time for me to come and work, and I think about my home [*tears in his eyes*] but here's the contract that I signed for six months. I have to stay for the full six months work and then I will go back. So I will stay and think about when I can go back home...My plan to come here is to work and take money home to build my house for the family to live in; if that's fulfilled then I'll be happier. (Anton)

Being away from home for a long time also means that part of their identity in the family and community is temporarily suspended, and others at home have to take on unaccustomed roles.

They find it hard to do the work that I used to do [*blinking eyes and tears*]... The work is there and, I tell you, it's hard for the children's mummy to control everything. She has gardening to do and must take care of each child. She also cooks for everyone that goes to school... This is their mummy's role now and she is finding it difficult to talk to all of them to get them to behave, it is hard for her to control everyone. (Matthew)

As well as this, the male workers are learning to take on some domestic chores which may change their behaviour when they get back home.

One of our [males'] attitudes [in Vanuatu] is for us to be like masters. We sit down and the women wash and they cook. So now we learn some skills in this place... how to cook and wash clothes... We wash our clothes during the weekend, and we cook our food... For me in my life [previously] I did not wash clothes and when I ring and talk to my children's mummy [my wife] and tell her that I am washing my own clothes...she said, 'Oh good, my husband, you go there and now you wash your clothes but here you don't wash, ha...ha...ha... so that's good for you now.' (Vincent)

Back home . . .my wife does most of the laundry . . .and washes my clothes. Now, I will tell her that I will wash my trousers. [I know now that] you can wash your own clothes. Sometimes when my wife needs to wash clothes and if she feels tired, I can wash our clothes. If my wife has other jobs to...do or even if she needs to go to the garden...I can take up the responsibility and wash our clothes. (Thaddeus)

Some interviewees also referred to how they had to abandon their tasks in the Church as well as on community committees, and that they worried about this.

The community didn't know that I was coming to New Zealand... I am a chairman and I ran away ha...ha...ha... from my [community responsibilities] at home... When they heard that I was running away, they said...you never asked us whether you could go... My wife has taken up most of the roles and does... all the work every day... I'm not sure how she is handling it. (Andrew)

Some men from my village took over my responsibility...for the... Church since I left for New Zealand. They have taken up my role and when I return... I will pay all of them even though they did not ask for something. (Solomon)

The interviewees were aware that previous workers on the Scheme had encountered significant problems arising from being away from spouses and families. Extra-marital relationships, in New Zealand and in Vanuatu, and contracting sexual diseases had occurred, and these had brought significant social disruption and conflict when workers returned home. Court cases, and family break-ups had occurred before.

There are plenty of them who come and get women from here and create a problem. The mothers [wives] are staying home and also go to men who are at home, and that creates a problem... They still go back and stay after they go through the court and fix the problem... I don't know how? I can't say anything; maybe, it will be like that. (Andrew)

None of the interviewees mentioned any awareness of these kinds of problems with their own group of workers.

### *Final reflection: The need for better information and assistance*

When reflecting on their experiences, the interviewees highlighted that they had not realised what would be involved in their work in New Zealand. In particular, people considering being part of the scheme in future should have the opportunity to discuss it with previous workers. It was also crucial that there be significant links between employers and the communities of the workers, and those employers be closely involved with workers during their time in New Zealand. Anton found the interview with the researcher made him a lot more aware of these matters.

It's good for you and others to come and talk to us and collect evidence so that we can use it in the future. Your coming here lets us know that we are doing important work...for all the big men for the farms here in New Zealand... I will go home and increase awareness [amongst others about the scheme]...and if some of them want to come, they will come. (Anton)

I will... give my honest opinion [about the benefits and costs of the scheme] to women and men who have husbands and wives. I will not hide anything from them but will tell them that there are good and bad things. But it is for each of them to decide whether to go and work for money to bring back and benefit their family or community. (Andrew)

Many of the interviewees thought that the scheme was best for young people who could handle the hard work and long hours, and who would not miss spouses and children.

It's not good for the old men and women to come. I see that old men and women are not active compared to the young ones. Those like me, who have the strength and energy to do the heavy work, they can come. (Edward)

Regarding the work, the boys [young men] are interested and they like the job a lot...Some of them will return [next year] to do the job again. (Bryan)

I will encourage young people and youths to come and work...If my name is among the selected list of workers then I will return. (Thaddeus)

Most interviewees were excited about seeing the researcher who shared a Pacific Island background. It meant that they felt they could speak openly about the issues in their own language, in Pidgin/Bislama. They emphasised the need for an on-going impact assessment of the scheme. Researchers should pay attention to the experiences of foreign workers because of the difficulties they face in the workplace and issues of concern should be publicised.

The scheme...is good but does not go as well as it could and there is discrimination against us at the work place... Your work is good and you follow us where we are at in our work and...have given us a chance to reflect on things. (Anton)

You have come here to talk to us and help those of us...from the Island to improve our conditions...and for us to live more safely...in those matters that we have discussed for your research. (Vincent)

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter examines how the findings from the interviews presented in Chapter Three relate to the four main themes identified in the literature in Chapter Two: economic base strengthened, adult farmer education with technology and skills transfer, the links between migrant workers and development strategies, and the economic and social costs of participation in the scheme. In doing so, it is returning to the initial research question set out at the beginning of Chapter One: “What are the views of FIFO, Melanesian SMFWs on the cultural, economic, and social benefits and costs of working in New Zealand under the RSES?” At the end of the chapter, a number of recommendations are offered that arise from this project.

### **Strengthening of the economic base**

The aim of the RSES and similar short-term migrant labour schemes is to strengthen the economic base of the home country (in this case, Vanuatu) as well as of the migrants themselves. The funds earned by workers and brought back home are seen to be important resources that otherwise would not exist. One of the objectives of these schemes is poverty alleviation, although the more critical literature identifies the negative impacts of hidden costs for workers in the host country and the possibility that economic conditions at home may not allow development to occur. The interviews conducted for this project confirmed that the ability to earn money to take back home was significant for scheme participants. That was the main reason why they had decided to take part in the scheme. The majority of them would be taking a significant amount of money home with them, much more than they could easily earn in Vanuatu. However, it was discovered that there was a significant range in the savings able to be made by the interviewees, from about \$2,000 to about \$8,000, depending on their ability to work efficiently, the costs they had to meet while in New Zealand, and their personal spending discipline. Most had plans to use those funds to assist them to set up income

generating small businesses or enterprises in Vanuatu. In this sense, the RSES is partly successful.

However, the hidden costs faced by the interviewees meant that they earned less money than they expected. These include payments they made before they left Vanuatu relating to such things as passports and internal travel, and expenses in New Zealand like medical insurance, the level of taxation, living costs such as paying to have laundry done, needing to meet half the cost of their air fares, and even the cost of sending money back home. The interviewees view the scheme as distinctly unfair, especially when they compare themselves with other workers, their rates of pay and work conditions. Furthermore, the work they have to do is experienced as physically exhausting and the work discipline imposed on them is unfamiliar and very demanding. The working day is long for them. During harvest time, they work seven days a week, and they experience significant discomfort when the weather is cold. The negative aspects of their experience in New Zealand meant that nearly all the interviewees assessed the costs as outweighing the benefits of the scheme to them. Despite this, most indicated that they would be interested in returning to work in New Zealand the following year. This indicates the hard choices to be made by workers whose abilities to earn income at home are very limited.

The interviewing method used in this research gathered the workers' views at the time just prior to their return home. It is not possible to assess just what money they actually ended up with as a result of the scheme, nor what that money was used for back home afterwards. It is also beyond the scope of this research to comment on the broader impact on communities in Vanuatu and the benefits to New Zealand employers of participation in the RSE Scheme.

### **Adult farmer education with technology and skills transfer**

The literature points out that involvement in schemes like the RSES provides workers with new skill development useful back home, building their capacity as workers, and helps them to gain confidence in relation to work. All schemes provide informal on-the-job training and some, especially in North America,

provide more formal learning opportunities. It is also argued that an important role could be played by trade unions, farm labour organisations and adult education agencies in vocational training programmes and even English language improvement. In the RSES in New Zealand, it is up to the employer to provide on-the-job training, and other organisations have no involvement.

The interviewees reported that they had gained useful skills and knowledge while working on the RSE Scheme. Some of these, such as pruning, were seen to be directly transferable to crops in Vanuatu. Aspects of work organisation were also seen to be useful in Vanuatu. However, it was also understood that many of the horticultural practices in New Zealand were too capital-intensive or relied on technology that was inappropriate in Vanuatu. As it was, employers tended to get the workers to do manual work rather than use machinery and other technology. There were indications that the interviewees took pride in meeting work targets, and there were a number of personal satisfactions for them in the work experience. A number of interviewees referred to learning things outside of the horticultural work they were mainly engaged in, such as how dairy cows were treated, smoking eels, building construction techniques, and the use of the Internet. Again, whether these skills and understandings actually turned out to be useful in Vanuatu is beyond the scope of this study.

### **Links between migrant workers and other development strategies**

The literature mentions that the savings of workers could be used to develop small businesses and agricultural activity in the home countries, such enterprises being part of development programmes there. From a broader perspective, it has also been observed that women have fewer opportunities to take part in such forms of development. This research is not able to contribute much to this part of the literature as it is focussed on the workers prior to their return home, and all the interviewees were male. However, the movement of males from Vanuatu to New Zealand meant that women often had to bear extra work burdens in their absence. This is dealt with in more detail in the next section.

## **Economic and social costs of workers' participation**

Until very recently, the literature has said little about the economic and social costs for workers of their participation in short-term migrant labour schemes and the impact on the families left behind. Such issues as employment terms and conditions, their rights in the workplace, good faith bargaining on issues relating to wages, social safety nets, and health and safety measures at the workplace have been neglected but have recently been highlighted by Bailey (2009) and Ericsson (2009) in relation to New Zealand's RSES.

I noted in Chapter Two that some studies had noted that SMFWs were often unaware of their employment terms and conditions and that it tended to be assumed that the recruiting government's labour laws will protect migrant workers from poor working conditions. My interviews in this project confirmed the findings of my initial study (Lepon, 2008), and those of Bailey (2009) and Ericsson (2009), that this assumption does not always apply. The work setting is non-unionised and it depends significantly on the individual employer as to what conditions are applied to the workers. In order to earn any money to take back home, workers have to work very hard, for long hours, in physically demanding tasks. The interviewees felt very strongly that much better information about the work should be provided to potential workers when recruitment for the scheme took place in Vanuatu. Previous workers on the scheme should also be involved in telling potential workers about what was involved in it.

One of my main findings relevant here is that interviewees' often did not have clear understanding of a range of matters relating to their employment contract and work conditions. They did not have copies of the contracts they signed before leaving Vanuatu. They were not always sure what the standard working hours were. A number of aspects of their working conditions came as a surprise to them – partly this related to a different work ethic than the one they were used to in Vanuatu, the need to work every day, despite the weather and despite how much their bodies were aching, for set hours or to meet set targets. Such pressure meant that they were often too tired after work to attend to domestic tasks at their living quarters, tasks that they were not used to undertaking anyway as they were not men's jobs back home. In addition, interviewees felt very restricted during their

time in New Zealand. They felt that some basic freedoms were not available to them. They did not have adequate time and transport to go shopping or go to the bank to send money home or simply to look around. They were not even able to go to church every Sunday.

Workers were reluctant to make their dissatisfactions known to their employer. There was no effective channel for them to raise issues or make requests. They did not feel confident in English and felt culturally inferior. Even sometimes when they felt that their work output was not correctly recorded and complained, they felt that they were not taken seriously. Employers report to the New Zealand Department of Labour on the suitability of workers for future participation in the scheme, so workers do not want to be seen as trouble makers. Employers are responsible for the pastoral care of workers but, as was apparent in this research, some employers take this seriously and others do not. Interestingly, Bailey (2009) adopted a participant observer approach in her thesis research and worked alongside Vanuatu RSES workers in Central Otago as a wage-worker (ironically being paid more as she was not under the same contractual conditions). She became an important advocate for the workers, raising issues for them with their employer. A significant improvement could be made to workers' experiences on the scheme if attention was paid to solving these communication problems.

One of the costs of participation in the RSES for workers was their separation from their families. The emotional stress of this was significant, with many interviewees weeping when they discussed this. Some had considered returning home early but felt bound by their contract to remain. It was thought by these interviewees that the scheme was best for young people who could handle the hard work and long hours, and who would not miss spouses and children. (One interviewee also made the point that women RSES workers were able to save a lot more than males were as they were more disciplined in personal spending on things like cigarettes and alcohol, and were more focussed on providing for family needs.) The interviewees also discussed the impact of their absence on their families back home. For those who were married and had families, their wives took up extra household and family roles, often struggling to do so. Sometimes older female children were pulled out of school to assist with domestic household chores, gardening and to take care of younger siblings. Interviewees were aware that previous workers on the scheme

had become involved in extra-marital relationships in New Zealand and that sexual diseases had been contracted, causing heartache and disruption when they had returned to Vanuatu.

## **Recommendations**

In the past 18 months, three independent, academic studies based on qualitative interviews with migrant workers (Bailey (2009), Ericsson (2009), and this study) have all revealed a less than satisfactory situation with respect to the recruitment and treatment of Melanesian (principally Ni Vanuatu) workers employed under the RSE Scheme. In the light of the interviewees' views about the cultural, economic, and social benefits and costs of working in New Zealand under the RSE Scheme, I recommend:

- That the Department of Labour, which has the primary responsibility for the regulation and monitoring of the RSE workers' programme, take note of and act upon the findings in this and similar studies with special regard to the different treatment of, and opportunities offered to, migrant workers by different employers and contractors operating under the RSE Scheme. In particular, that the DoL pay special attention to non-compliance with the Employment Relations Act and the principle of 'good faith, hazardous working conditions, unreasonable deductions from wages, poor living conditions, and a lack of adequate, appropriate cultural and social support;
- That the DoL investigate and remedy the problems that arise from the inconsistencies between contracts of employment made in the home country the appropriate labour law and practices that apply in New Zealand;
- That the Department of Labour, consider reducing compliance costs for employers who abide by the rules when recruiting migrant workers; follow good, independently certified, employment practices; promote skills development on the part of workers; and, treat their workers in a culturally sensitive, friendly way;

- That New Zealand Department of Labour ensure that independent agencies, such as civil society agencies, be funded to provide culturally specific support services to the seasonal migrant workers living and working in the host country.

Note: This recommendation follows from findings that confirm that the lack of culture-specific support services for the FIFO migrant SMFWs, especially those from the Pacific and Melanesia is leading to migrant workers losing their connectedness to their home country and way of life as they sacrifice much of their culture in order to integrate into the host country's labour force;

- That trade unions or the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) should represent migrant workers in the RSE programme and be involved in facilitating RSE workers human and labour rights, including their safety at the workplace;
- That sending and receiving governments, together with stakeholders, allocate more effort, time and resource for future research and evaluation of the RSE;
- That policy makers, service providers, and researchers recognise the unequal power relationships that have emerged from this and other studies with respect to FIFO SMFWs working on the RSE Scheme and their employers;
- That policy makers, service providers, and researchers also recognise the conflicts between the market-oriented values associated with employment in the NZVHI and Melanesians' more collective social, cultural, religious beliefs and values;
- The policy makers, contractors, service providers, and researchers recognise better and act upon the gender and family impact the recruitment of male FIFO SMFWs has on the situation and gender role of a spouse/mother who remains in the home country;

- The policy makers, contractors, service providers, and researchers take greater account in policy, work practices, and support service provision of the difficulties faced by workers when in the host country as result of the changes in their own and their spouses' family roles;
- That stakeholders recognise that SMFWs also require education and training that leads to behavioural changes and future opportunities for strengthening their home country's economic base through the adoption of new work ethics for farming, the adoption of technological innovations for agribusiness value chains, and the incorporation of environmental resources management strategies into returning migrants' farming practices;
- That the DoL and other stakeholders fund an on-going impact assessment on the Pacific FIFO SMFWs themselves, especially the Melanesians' (Vanuatu male and female workers) who are employed under the RSE Scheme. Such research should focus on the improvement of workers' employment contracts, conditions of work, and rights at the workplace, including independent representation through a union or independent civil society organisation;
- That stakeholders also fund additional research to investigate migrant workers' agricultural skills with a view to ensuring they participate in education and vocational training that matches the skill needs in their home countries' existing industries or new emerging niche markets are encouraged; and
- That researchers recognise that the biggest challenge they face remains their identity and connectivity to the research subjects, especially in terms of culture, language, and values.

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## APPENDICES

### *A: The Information Sheet for Participants*

Date: June, 30th, 2009

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to interview you about your views as a Melanesian seasonal migrant farm workers employment and your views are about the benefits and cost of working under the RSE scheme, here in New Zealand.

I am a Masters in Social Science student at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. I am studying Labour Studies. Prior to coming to New Zealand to study, I worked with Papua New Guinea (PNG) Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) as a Policy analyst and before that as an agricultural extension and community development officer. I have a special interest in Melanesian migrant seasonal workers.

The interview will be conducted by me. A contact person has made the arrangements for me and may be in contact with you regarding the project. The interview can be conducted in either English or Bislama or a mixture of both. It is likely to take about 1 hour to 1½ hours. I would like to tape-record our conversation so that I can obtain an accurate record of your views.

Your identity will not be disclosed to any other person and your name will not be used in my thesis. A Consent form will be given to you to sign and this will indicate what is promised to you should you agree to an interview. This project has been given ethical approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Arts and social Sciences.

The research results will be published in my Master's thesis, discussed at academic conferences, published in an academic journal. They also may be reported on research websites.

If you agree to take part in this interview, you have the following rights:

To refuse to answer any particular question.

To ask any further questions about the interview or research project that occurs to you, either during the interview or at any other time.

To remain anonymous, should you so choose-anything that might identify you will not be included in conference papers, academic articles or any other report about the findings of the research.

To withdraw your consent at any time up after your interview.

To take any complaints you have about the interview or the research project to the University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, or can email its secretary at [anthrosec@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:anthrosec@waikato.ac.nz))

In the next couple of days or so, I will telephone you to see if you are willing to take part in an interview. If you agree, I will make an appointment for this.

For further information, please feel free to contact me directly through email at [dl68@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:dl68@waikato.ac.nz) or telephone my home landline or mobile

With regards and best wishes

Ms Daisy Lepon

Student Researcher

## *B: The Consent Form*

1. I am undertaking a research project to obtain the views of Melanesian, seasonal migrant farm workers on the benefits and cost of working in New Zealand. This project has ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

2. I would like to interview you about your employment as migrant seasonal farm worker. The interview will take about 1 to 1.5 hours.

3. I would like to tape record the interview so that I can obtain an accurate record of your views.

4. When I am not using them for writing my research report, the tape recording and any transcript of it will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Department of Societies and Cultures at the University. No one, apart from me and my supervisor(s) will have access to them. All information will be destroyed after five years or if later at the completion of all relevant publications and presentation.

5. You may choose to remain anonymous. This means that no-one else will know that you have been interviewed and you will not be able to be identified in any published report on the findings of the research.

6. General research results may form the basis of public and/or conference publications in academic journal and may be reported on relevant research websites. In any publication and presentation, your anonymity will be preserved. I will advise you when any article or report is placed on online

7. If you agree to take part in this interview, you have the following rights:

To refuse to answer any particular question.

To ask any further questions about the interview or research project that occurs to you, either during the interview or at any other time.

To remain anonymous, should you so choose-anything that might identify you will not be included in conference papers, academic articles or any other report about the findings of the research.

To withdraw your consent at any time up after your interview.

To take any complaints you have about the interview or the research project to the University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240, or can email its secretary at (anthrosec@waikato.ac.nz)

"I wish to remain anonymous" (circle) YES NO-to be confirmed at end of interview

"I consent to be interviewed for this research on the above conditions"

Signed: Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

"I agree to abide by the above conditions"

Signed: Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## *C: Key Research Questions*

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide

What was your employment before coming to New Zealand?

How did you learn about the Regional Seasonal Employment Scheme?

How were you recruited?

Why did you decide to join the RSE?

Describe for me the nature of the work you are doing here in NZ?

Looking more closely at economic benefits, what are the most important benefits for you?

Have you gained any knowledge or skills that you may be able to use you go back home or in another job or just in your everyday life?

Have did you gain that knowledge or those skills

In addition to the above, what benefits has your family and/or your village gained as a result of you coming to NZ?

What has been the impact on your family of you coming to work in New Zealand?

What has been the impact of you of coming to work in New Zealand for the RSE?

Do you think it is a good thing for Vanuatu for workers to come to NZ on the RSE?

When you go home, will you encourage other men from your family or village to come to NZ on the RSE?

Why/Why not?

## *D1: Interview Schedule Guide - English Version*

### **Introduction/Background**

*Good day to you, warm up question/consent....*

*Tell me how long you have been in New Zealand?*

*What was your employment before coming to New Zealand?*

*How did you learn about the Regional Seasonal Employment Scheme?*

*How were you recruited?*

Important to probe about the circumstances that led to recruitment:

- Who recruited?
- What promises were made; that is, what were the perceived benefits a the time of signing on?
- Role of church and/or clan and/or village leaders (are other people getting a commission)?
- Did workers come as a social group (eg same village as present or past workers)?

*Why did you decide to join the RSE?*

(Allow plenty of time for interviewee to nominate reasons; try hard not to suggest answers; don't get bogged down here, go back to these reasons when exploring benefits in more detail)

### Exploration of the job

*Describe for me the nature of the work you are doing here in NZ?*

(allow plenty of time for interviewee to talk about the different tasks; if work has been structured seasonally then have interviewee describe the job month-by-month.)

Questions will also probe:

- Who does what sort of work? Look for rich description of actual tasks undertaken, responsibilities assumed.
- Do Melanesian RSE workers get set the same or different tasks from locals or backpackers or other non-RSE workers?
- Do women (including locals, backpackers etc) do the same work as men (explore answer further)?
- What are the days and hours of work?
  - How suitable are these?
  - Are there any problems
- What are the transport arrangements?
  - How suitable are these?
  - Are there any problems
- What is the legal status of RSE workers?
  - Do you retain your passport?
  - Are there any problems

### **Exploration of Perceived Benefits**

I now want to look at the benefits to you and your family of your involvement in the RSE

*Looking more closely at economic benefits, what are the most important benefits for you?*

Important to let interviewee nominate. Possible prompts may include questions about:

- Remittances to meet immediate family expenses (eg housing, education, medical).
- Savings to take back as tools and/or cash.
- Possible longer term migration: Experience may assist finding job in NZ or elsewhere (e.g. Australia); (may return or migrate elsewhere with spouse/family)

*Have you gained any knowledge or skills that you may be able to use you back home or in another job or just in your everyday life?*

Important to let interviewee nominate. As interviewee nominates areas of learning, researcher to ask:

*Have did you gain that knowledge or those skills?*

This section of the interview will include prompts to ensure that the interviewee covers the following:

Knowledge related to agricultural work:

- Knowledge about agriculture in general
- Knowledge about methods of farming (e.g. What do they do different here from what you do back home?)
- Structured/semi-formal education/training; that is specific courses
- Mechanical skills (e.g. using equipment/tools)
- Technical agricultural skills (e.g. pruning, harvesting etc)

Knowledge related to the day-to-day conduct of work:

- Communication skills (including better facility in English)
- Organisational and teamwork skills
- Skills in working with people from other cultures and languages (e.g. backpackers and local farm workers)
- Leadership skills (if appropriate)
- Skills that could be used to run a small business back home

Knowledge about conditions of work and workers' rights:

- Health and safety and accident prevention
- Information about pay and conditions
- Information about workers' rights
  - Unions and reemployment contract rights
  - Role of Labour Department

Any formal or organised learning opportunities:

- Demonstrations or field days
- External workshops or outreach programmes
- On site instruction in groups or individually
- Peer learning (includes other RSE members, locals, other non-New Zealanders, e.g. backpackers)

Technology transfer:

- Prompts will also probe technology transfer with questions about usefulness back home of ideas or experiences from NZ.

*In addition to the above, what benefits has your family and/or your village gained as a result of you coming to NZ?*

Let interviewee nominate; follow up with prompts as appropriate.

### **Exploration of Costs, especially social costs**

*What has been the impact on your family of you coming to work in New Zealand?*

Prompts will be open ended but will also encourage exploration of:

- Financial situation of family;
- Role of spouse/mother;
- Role of children (e.g. did an older child have to pull out of school to help mother with younger children?)
- Day to day dynamics of family, including family discipline, behaviour of older children etc;
- Work on family farm/plot/business;
- Maintenance of house;
- Care for older relatives

*What has been the impact of you of coming to work in New Zealand on the RSE?*

Important to let interviewee nominate. As interviewee nominates prompts to explore:

- The impact of being away from family for a long time.
- The impact on religion/opportunity to go to church.
- General day-to-day living such as domestic duties, meals, washing etc.
- Recreation time/interests.
- The attitudes of others towards interviewee:
  - Other RSE workers?
  - Other non-NZ workers?
  - Locals?
  - Employer and managers?

*Do you think it is a good thing for Vanuatu for workers to come to NZ on the RSE?*

Important to let interviewee nominate.

Prompts to include:

- exploration of whether or not the absence of males in this age group is a good thing for Vanuatu;
- the risk associated with returnees eventually migrating (brain/skill drain).

*When you go home, will you encourage other men from your family or village to come to NZ on the RSE?*

*Why/Why not?*

*When you go home, will you encourage women from your family or village to come to NZ on the RSE?*

*Why/why not?*

Conclude with thanks; get interviewee to complete personal details sheet

## *D2: Interview Schedule - Bislama version*

### **Riset Kuesten/ Gaide bilong stori wantem yu**

Toksave: Ki kuesten sowim long 14pt leta krugut

### **Het tok i go pas**

*Gutpela dei long yu, kuesten bilong redim man long stori/kisim tok orait long em...*

*Tokim mi, hamas mun nau yu stap long Nu Zelan?*

*Wanem kain wok yu bin wokim bipo long yu kam long Nu Zelan?*

*Hau nau yu save long Risinol Sisonal Woka Skeme?*

*Hau yu kisim dispela wok?*

Impoten long sutim bel bilong husait yu stori wantem long tok klia long rot em painim dispel wok:

- Husait i givem em dispel wok o em wokim pepa wok wantem husait?
- Wanem kain promis ol is makim; wanem ol halivim long mani mak o narapela samting tu ol it ok long givim long taim bilong sinim pepa?
- Wanem em wok bilong sios na/o wanpisin na/o leader long ples (i gat sampela narapela man/merit u is kisim sampela halipim)
- Ol wokas kam olsem wanpela lain grup or wanpisin? (e.g. long same ples long dispel taim o long pastem)

*Wai yu kamap wantem dispela tingting long jonim RSE?*

(Givim plenti taim long woka long painim tingting long tokim yu; traim na noken givim ansa; noken give up long hia, go ken long ol risons taim yu painim aut ol halipim insait tru tru long stori wantem em)

### **Painim insait tru long sait bilong wok**

*Toksave long mi long wanem kain ol wok yu save mekim long hia Nu Zelan*

Givim plenti taim long woka i toktok long kain wok; sapos wok i bin organise long wanwan sison, orait askim woka long stori dispel kain ol wok insait long wanwan mun.

Kuesten bai halipim tu long kliarim tingting:

- Husait i save mekim wanem kain wok. Lukluk na painim tru tru insait stori bilong ol wok ol i mekim, na sampela wok lida ol i holim tu.
- Ol Melanesia RSE woka i kisim wankain ol wok or narapela kain wok long ol asples lain o turist o lain i no RSE wok man/meri?
- Ol meri i save mekim wankain wok olsem ol man o?
- Wanem ol dei na taim bilong wok?
  - Yu ting wanem long dispela dei na taim?
  - I gat sampela hevi yu painim?
- Wanem kain kar ol stretim bilong yupela long go kam wok?
  - Yu ting hau ol stretim kar em gutpela tasol o?
  - I gat sampela hevi yu painim?
- Wanem lo i luksave long RSE woka's
  - Yu yet save holim passport bilong yu?
  - I gat sampela hevi yu painim?

**Painim aut insait tru long sait bilong halivim yu kisim**

Nau yet mi laik lukluk long mani mak na halipim yu na femili bilong yu bai kisim taim yu wok long dispel RSE Skeme.

*Lukluk moa klostu long sait bilong ekonomik halpim, wanem ol impotent mani mak bilong yu?*

Impotent long larim woka i tokaut. Wei bilong kirapim tingting em long askim kuesten long dispela:

- Mani woka i salim long femili long ples long stretim haus, skul na sut marasin)
- Mani yu savim long karim go long ples na tu ol samting olsem tuls
- Yu gat tingting long wok na stap olgeta long hia: Yu ting eksperens bilong yu long wok ken painim narapela wok long Nu Zelan o narapela hap (olsem Australia); ( yu ken go bek o painim nupela ples long wok na stap wantem meri na pikinini).

*Yu kisim sampela save, skul na nupela wei bilong wokim kainkain samting bai yu kisim go bek long ples o narapela wok o yu ken usim long olgeta dei long laip na stap bilong yu?*

Impotent tru long larim woka yet i painim tingting long ol askim. Long taim woka painim tingting long sait bilong lainim ol nupela samting, riset wokman/meri i askim:

*Wanem ol save, skul or wei bilong wokim nupela samting yu lainim long han mak bilong yu yet?*

Dispela seksen bilong stori bai kirapim tingting bilong woka long luksave olsem ol askim bai karamapim dispela aria:

Skul save bilong wok agrikalsa:

- Save bilong wok agrikalsa long olgeta taim
- Save long sampela nupela kain wei bilong wok long fam ( e.g. sampela nupela rot bilong wok agrikalsa yu lukim long hia wei long ples bilong yu in no kamap)
- Skul na save lo i luksave; na ol lainim kos bilong stretim ol hevi na wari bilong fama stret)
- Skul na save long sait bilong usim masin na tuls i no wankain olsem yu gat long ples
- Teknikal skul na save ( olsem, katim han bilong diwai olsem kiwi prut, kamautim kaikai long gaden taim em i redi)

Skul na save yu usim long olgeta dei na wok bilong yu:

- Hau long toktok wantem narapela, i gat hap bilong yu lainim tokples bilong waitman/meri
- Skul na save bilong hau long oganesim wok na tu pasin bilong wok long grup
- Skul na save long wok wantem ol man/meri long narapela ples, kalsa na tokples (e.g. ol turist na asples fam woka)
- Skul na save long kamap lida (sapos em stretim tingting na laik bilong woka)
- Skuls na save bilong usim long ronim binis taim yu go back long ples
- Skul na save long sait bilong wok na lo i banism raits bilong woka
- Helt, lukaut bilong woka na rot bilong abrusim hevi na birua
- Infomesen long pei na lo bilong banisim woka
- Infomesen bilong woka raits
  - Woka club na kontrak raits
  - Wok bilong labour Dipatment

I gat narapela wei woka i kisim skul ol save:

- Sowim long gaden o fam usim han bilong yu
- Ausait Skul o wei bilong lainim samting through long wokshop o long raun lukim projek long narapela hap.
- Long givim tingting na save long grup or wanwan woka long hau bilong wok insait long hap yu wok
- Bung wantem pren na wanlian bilong yu na lainim nupela skul na save. (Putim ol narapela kain wei RSE membas, asples lain, narapela ol lain ausait long Nu Zelan, e.g. turist).

Karim Skul, save, masin, tuls and marasin i go bek long Kantri bilong yu

- Kirapim tingting bilong woka wantem askim o questens long skelim tingting bilong ol long skul, save, masin, tuls or marasin ol i kisim na lainim long Nu Zelan bai halipim Kantri bilong ol yet.

*Long putim dispel wantem ol toktok yumi stori pinis, wanem halipim bai femili na /o ples lain bilong yu bai kisim bicos long wok yu mekim long NZ?*

Larem woka skelim tingting bilong em; yu bihainim wantem toktok bilong kirapim tingting wei yu ting bai halipim woka long givim ansa long yu.

### **Painim aut insait tru long kost, long sait bilong sosel kost stret**

*Wanem ol sampela samting i kamap long femili bilong yu taim yuk am wok long Nu Zelan?*

Kirapim tingting bilong woka wantem toktok i op na painim aut:

- Mani mak bilong femili
- Wok bilong meri/man/mama bilong woka stap long ples
- Wok bilong ol pikinini (e.g. Sapos bikpela pikinini i lusim skul na stap aut long halipim mama na ol narapela liklik pikinini).
- Wanwan dei wok, pawa is tap wantem husait, stap na lukaut bilong femili na sait bilong stretim wrong pasin bilong bikpela pikinini na lainim em gutpela pasin.
- Wok long femili fam/gaden/bisnis;
- Lukaut na stretim haus sapos i bruk
- Lukaut long olupela na lapun femili memba

*Wanem ol samting i givim hevi long yu taim yu kam wok stap long Nu Zelan?*

Impotent long larem woka yet i painim tingting na stori. Yu olsem Woka stretim tingting na painim aut dispela ol samting:

- Wanem bai kamap sapos yu stap longwe long femili longpela taim
- Wanem bai kamap long lotu/pasin na wei yu save bihainim long sios bilong yu
- Long wanwan dei stap na wokabout bilong yu long wok bilong haus, kaikai, wasim klos etc.
- Taim bilong bungim ol prens, pilai spot, stori, kaikai na hamas wantem)
- Pasin bilong ol narapela i kam long yu olsem woka
  - Ol narapela RSE woka?
  - Ol narapela NZ woka?
  - Ol asples woka
  - Wok oganesian na manesa?

*Yu ting em gutpela long Vanuatu long ol woka long kam long NZ ananit long RSE?*

Impotent long larem woka yet i tingting na toktok. Kirapim tingting bilong woka wantem:

- painim aut sapos ol man husait i gat dispela krismas wei ol i gat strong yet long wok i no stap long ples bilong ol long Vanuatu em i gutpela long Kantri)
- Yu ting bai i gat sapos plenti woka i lusim ples na kam painim wok ausait.

*Taim yu go bek long ples, bai yu tokim ol narapela man long femili bilong yu long kam wok long NZ ananit long RSE?*

*Bilong wanem as/Bilong wanem yu no inap tokim ol?*

*Taim yu go long ples, bai yu tokim ol meri long kam long kam wok long NZ ananit long RSE?*

*Bilong wanem as/bilong wanem yu no inap tokim ol?*

Pinisim wantem tok tenk yu; tokim woka long pulmapim pesonol infomesen pom

*E1: Personal Detail Sheet-English Version*

Identification Code.....

Contact Phone number.....

*Please complete the following background details*

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

1. What is your age.....

2 What is your current marital status? .....

3. Do you have children in Vanuatu?      Yes/No

4. If yes, what are their ages? .....

5 Which are of Vanuatu are you from?

Espiritu Santo.....

Malekula.....

Pentecost.....

Port Vila.....

Tafea Islands.....

Other, please specify.....

6. What is your clan/tribe name? .....

7. What is your religion? .....

8 What level of education have you completed?

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary College

University

Other, please specify.....

11. When does your employment contract expires?

12. What was the cost of your return airfare from Vanuatu to New Zealand?

13. Do you have excess to doctors and medical services? Yes  or No  (Please tick answer)

14. Who pays your medical insurances?.....

15. How much money do you earn from your work each fortnight? (Please tick your answer)

Below \$500-00 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$500-\$1000-00 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$1500-00-\$2000-00 <input type="checkbox"/>	over \$2000 <input type="checkbox"/>
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16. How much do you pay for the accommodation each fortnight? \$.....

17. How much do you have to pay for travel to and from work? \$.....

18 Are you sending money back home while in New Zealand? Yes  or No   
(Please tick answer)

19. How much in savings do you hope to take back home

Contact phone number.....

*E2: Personal Detail Sheet-Bislama Version*

Pesonol Stori Bilong Wanwan Wokman

Luksave namba: .....

Kontak Pone namba: .....

*Plis pulmapim fom toksave long laip stori bilong yu*

*Pesonol Stori Bilong Yu*

1. Wanem Krisma bilong yu? .....

2. Nau yet yu marit or nogat? .....

3. Yu gat pikinini long Vanuatu o? Hes/Nogat (Plis tikim ansa)

4. Sapos hes, wanem krismas bilong ol pikinini bilong yu?.....

5. Yu bilong wanem hap long Vanuatu?

Espiritu Santo.....

Malekula.....

Pentecost.....

Port Vila.....

Tafea Islands.....

Narapela, (plis toksave).....

6. Wanem em wanpisin or hausline bilong yu?  
.....

7. Wanem lotu yu save redim baibel na prai?.....

8 Wanem mak bilong skul save bilong yu? (Plis tikim ansa)

Primari

Sekondari

Kolege

Univesiti

Narapela, (Plis toksave).....

11. Wanem tain bai wok kontrak bilong yu I pinis?.....

12. Wanem mak bilong mani sas long baim balus ticket long Vanuatu long kam long Nu Zeland?.....

13. Yu gat dokta bilong yu yet long givim sut marasine long taim yu gat sik? Hes  
 Nogat  (Plis tikim ansa)

14. Husait baim helt insurans bilong yu?.....

15. Hamas mani yu save kisim long wok yu mekim long wanpela fortnite wok?  
(Plis tikim ansa)

Mani mak tambilo long \$500-00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$500-\$1000-00 <input type="checkbox"/> \$1500-00-\$2000-00 <input type="checkbox"/> Over \$2000 <input type="checkbox"/>
---

16. Hamas mak bilong mani yu save paim long haus yu slip?  
\$.....

17. Hamas yu save paim kar long go kam wok long wan dei?  
\$.....

18. Yu save salim mani go long ples taim yu stap long Nu Zelan?

Hes  O Nogat  (Plis tikim ansa)

19. Hamas mani yu ting bai yu savim long long karim go bek long ples?.....

Kontak Pone Namba: .....

*F: BRCCS Seminar PowerPoint Slide Presentation, November, 2008*

“Benefits and Social Costs of Fly-in, Fly-out (FIFO) Seasonal Work: Melanesian Migrant Farm Workers’ Experiences (MFWS) in New Zealand” by Daisy Lepon

Building Research Capabilities for Social Science (BRCCS) Seminar: 24<sup>th</sup>  
November, 2008

**ABSTRACT:**

This paper present the views of the FIFO Melanesian MFWS about the benefits and social cost (SC) associated with their employment in Recognised Seasonal Employers Scheme (RSE) in New Zealand (NZ). It will highlight the significance for FIFO workers from the Pacific to provide their excess labour services to the Horticulture and Viticulture Industry in New Zealand as a policy option for further development. Based on qualitative research strategies, the first part was preliminary findings through the literature review which stresses the benefits evolving around the main themes: “economic base strengthened”, “knowledge gained”, “skills acquired”, and “technology transferred” as discussed, while the second part of the study is based on SC incurred by FIFO MFWS which was the limitation of the literature. In the second part, I attempt to interview and conduct in- depth study of four (4) male married FIFO MFWS in New Zealand using qualitative research design and methodology and discourse analysis. I will explain in depth the importance of understanding the benefits and social cost (SC) associated with the FIFO MFWS in their employment in RSE in New Zealand (NZ). Some preliminary findings from the secondary sources and studies from Canada, Mexico, Australia, United Sate and Spain will also be discussed. This research will explore whether FIFO MFWS employment in the RSE in New Zealand context about their benefits are in balance with the SC, and to what extent the benefits out weight the SC or vice versa, will be the central issues the paper will address.

**1) Introduction/ My interest**

- Policy Officer - Department of Agriculture & Livestock, in Papua New Guinea
- Policy documents and consultation meetings about the topic and other related issues
- Now studying at Waikato University
- Significance of the topic
- Pacific Island/Australia/New Zealand trying to establish Pacific Labour Mobility for Seasonal employer scheme
- Some Pacific Islands have a scheme already
- Can aid policy development

## 2) Purpose

The purpose of this seminar is to present a research project which studied the benefits and social costs of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) seasonal work as experienced by Melanesian migrant farm workers' (MFWs) in New Zealand

## 3) Literature Review & Critique

The majority of the literature:

- Stresses the benefits
- Was located in Canada, Mexico, Ohio, Australia, US & Spain
- 4 major benefits are identified and discussed:
  - “economic base strengthened”
  - “knowledge gained”
  - “skills acquired”
  - “technology transferred”

Critique:

- Little discussion of social costs
- Benefits not translated back to country of origin

## 4) Concepts/Definitions

Social benefit

the total increase in societies' welfare that results from some economic activity, equal to benefit to the person or company introducing it as well as the resulting benefit to society (Clark. 2006, p. 257-8)

Social cost

the total cost to society of some economic activity, including the direct cost to the person or company performing it as any resulting cost to society (which cannot seek compensation) (Clark. 2006, p. 257-8)

## 5) The Research Question

What are the views of FIFO MFWS in seasonal employers' scheme about the benefits and social costs of their employment in New Zealand?

## 6) Research Design

Qualitative research strategy

Data collection

Technique

Research considered for ethical approval

Acquaintances-snowball sampling/identify/contact them

1 to 1.5 hour/person interview

Unstructured/open-ended questions as Interview guide  
Tape recorded & transcribed (entire process in Pidgin/Bislama  
& translated into English, pseudonyms used)  
Between Aug & Sept 2008

## 7) Research Design (cont'd)

### Respondents

4 x Melanesian FIFO MFWs (males)  
Recruited from Vanuatu - Melanesian  
6 months contract  
Set income targets to achieve  
Expenses paid e.g. airfares, insurance  
Work days are organized by production targets

## 8) Selected Findings

### Theme 1: Our religion is not acknowledged

We struggle to maintain our Christian faith

We have to work 24/7

*...every growers want workers to work every day 24/7...one thing is religious rights for workers...if you do not want to work, all of them (company & grower)... force you to work...do not have choice... (I have) struggle with my boss...not happy...(about the work which interferes with our religion & Christian faith, values & principals...to attend church on Saturday...& Sunday.... (Tovos)*

We feel guilty

*...we come to work here, most of us broke some of the (religious) laws already...lost respect for Saturday & Sunday...feel guilty already...farm work is seasonal thing & not like this all the time (Aitis)*

We aren't given information about our church

*I do not know where my church is & if only someone come and saw us...I will be happy.... (Alfred)*

## 9) Selected Findings (cont'd)

### Theme 2: We are happy to earn so much money

We will take the money back home for self-employment projects

*...after the seasonal work...create my own self employment....orange growing & family trade store...(Tovos)*

*... chance for me to come here...earn some good money... to build trade store or set up self-employment business...help my family... (Morris)*

We send the money home for family & household needs

*...when I get my first pay, I sent home for school fees for my son and also saved some money....(Aitis)*

*...money sent home is use to pay for kerosene, soap and school fee. The school fee has increased so we are here to work and address that....(Alfred)*

We like to have our own money

*...good for us to work in the farm & earn lots of money for ourselves. If we are in our country we will not earn this kind of money (Morris).*

*...(it is nice to have) individual money because the politicians are...giving projects to the community and not for individual....(Aitis).*

## **10) Selected Findings (cont'd)**

Theme 3: We have to learn a lot of things

We have to learn new agricultural farming method

*The work is new & when we arrived here, first of all they taught us how to work...pick kiwi fruits...& we are still pruning. (Morris)*

*...tell us & demonstrate what to do like Kiwi fruit, pruning, tie in method, how to climb using ladder.... Later check...whether we are doing the right thing or not & tell us to do again...follow instruction...solve problem & learnt from that. (Tovos)*

We have to learn a different work ethic

*...work here is not easy...money is good, work, work, time, time, you work behind 2 days, ...it's not like home where we work, feel tired go away & rest then come back & work...here is after 2 hours of ...lunch you must continue to work. This is a new era (work ethic) for us in the Island . (Tovos)*

## **11) Selected Findings (cont'd)**

We have to learn better time management

*Time management is one of the important things learnt & is touching me...(I will) break the law if (I) don't manage time well...(Aitis)*

We have to learn better dedication

*...we have to sacrifice our time and dedicate ourselves and put more of our effort to make things happen, these are good qualities of work I have learnt (Aitis)*

We have to learn how to take care of ourselves

*...you have to be strong & healthy because there are tasks that are heavy & very demanding requiring... energy & strength like lifting...bunch of fruits & carrying it. (Aitis)*

## **12) Selected Findings (cont'd)**

We have to learn better ways to maintain high standards

*... every growers like the fruits to be dry...ratio 5:1 standard required and every workers has...to achieve standard set ...at \$20-00 / sq meters bin...no scratch or crush...bonus \$5-00/bin... (Tovos)*

We have to learn better English Language

*Some of us our English is not that good & we speak... Simple English...when we feel ashamed...we do not talk...when we do not feel ashamed...we talk with the boss. The boss knows what you are trying to tell him & he understands. (Alfred)*

### 13) Selected Findings (cont'd)

#### Theme 4: We fill the labour market gap

We do the work for which there are no other workers

*farms here...established long time ago... some farms which are newly established . & others...growing into bushes,...no one attending to it...farm left unattended due to no workers to work... (Alfred)*

We do the work that white men/women don't want to do

*...that's why white men are afraid & do this arrangement for us to come and work with them. They know that we are real man from the village & can clip the vine & do pruning...(Aitis)*

*...white man did not like pruning...feel tired...neck gets steep...hands get sore. That's it, it's very hard...they switch to other work... (Morris)*

We do the work when backpackers move on

*...it is a problem for growers here. Backpackers can leave at anytime...for us we are here to work...as long as our contract warrants us too...some backpackers have left the farm & some growers are struggling now...(Tovos)*

### 14) Selected Findings (cont'd)

#### Theme 5: The arrangements for us are poor

Support services are inadequate

*...all of them should assess the situation properly & make policy to improve the workers' lives here considering the living condition whether it's meeting the standard & requirements.... (There are) huge complains out there and it is my first time...not aware of different contracts signed & how they operate....If you get a copy of the policy, it will be good for us to see...(Tovo)*

*I think that they (company) though we are from another country, also the culture is different...no good response to attend to our health conditions and assist us... (Aitis)*

### 15) Selected Findings (cont'd)

Labour inspectors do not involve us enough

*they came and did their investigation on how life at the camp is like...just talk to 1 or 2 people...they should not draw their conclusion on every one based on life here & that is not right...need to get feedback from us also and ask themselves whether 'Is this life or what?'... (Tovos)*

We are not given good information

*...couple of us who was sick & ask the company/grower to take us to the hospital & with no success...just left like that to find our own way to get treated...not aware of where the hospital was (Aitis)*

## 16) Selected Findings (cont'd)

Living conditions are poor

Accommodation

*...overcrowded, there is no proper room to store our tools and dirty clothes after work...currently, we are keeping our dirty things inside the caravan and it stinks and smells...unhygienic & not good for health... (Aitis)*

Kitchen and cooking facilities

*...common kitchen...when we cook we feel ashamed because as Melanesian our way of cooking food is different from the white man... Dining table for eating is not enough...(Morris)*

Toilet & bathroom facilities

*...not enough... We are many and it takes time for us to wait for the next person in the queue to bath then followed by the next and so forth. (Morris)*

Recreation facilities

*...everyone use ...common room for TV, news and other leisure activities...we need for more of the services. (Aitis)*

Transportation is unreliable

*... One concern is when we finish work and don't go home quickly. After work we wait for the truck to pick us...till 5:30 or 6pm... (Alfred)*

## 17) Discussion 1

Religious beliefs & collectivist values -- conflict with capitalist, individualistic values and work ethic

Short term contract work, production line and targets set makes hard to keep Melanesian values

Inequality is justified through opportunities available to “fulfil their desire for earning”, “employment” and “enjoyment” (Millbank,2006; Maclellan & Mares, 2005, p.2)

## 18) Discussion 2

The work confuses gender, social & cultural roles

Male respondents positive about economic gains

BUT

Gender, social and cultural impacts are complex

Traditional roles for men reinforced -- traditional male bread winner

Traditional roles for women changed – female-only household at home

The work helps them to learn

New skills/attitude & behavioural changes & work ethics adopted through frequent interaction/socialization at the work place.

## 19) Discussion 3

Benefits are not in balance with the social costs:

Service providers aren't doing their jobs

DOL

Policy makers (NZ govt & labour sending govt's)

Individual & organisations (e.g. RSE Scheme, Internal/External Social partners, Contractor / Lodge owners etc)

Melanesian FIFO workers are caught in complex power relationship

## 20) Implications

My study supports De la Briere et al. (2002) & Oxfam Australia (2006) that economic/capitalist theorists focused to strongly on defining people's economic benefits rather than social cost involved.

It also proves that in order for FIFO MFWS to benefit from RSE scheme/social costs have to be considered and recognised the dynamics within which they occur, we can effectively make

Suggestions of some specific points of change & resistance:

- Support Service providers (e.g. DOL, Policy makers, (NZ & labour sending govt's))

- Individual & Org. service providers - RSE scheme, internal/external social partners, contractor / lodge owners etc)

- All need to work in collaboration/consultation & address the critical issues highlighted:

- Particularly in the way the scheme is organised & operated.

- Changes/economic benefits translated into Melanesian workers country of origin/impact on family member's life/local economies are interesting idea's to explore.

Recommend for further research & development of culture specific support services.