



Agenda item 11: Immigration and the Labour Market

Proposed Recommendation

The PIDC Regular Annual Meeting is invited to **welcome** and **note** experiences shared by Members in managing the challenges of foreign workers as labour receiving countries.

Purpose

To discuss the role of immigration in facilitating incoming labour migrants to Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

Background

2. Labour mobility schemes are important mechanisms for promoting economic growth and sustainable development for both sending and receiving countries in the region¹ and are recognised in regional trade agreements such as PICTA and the PACER Plus. While Australian and New Zealand seasonal worker schemes have become crucial economic drivers in the region benefiting many Pacific island communities², PICTs have also used skilled migrant workers to fill labour shortages in the medical, teaching, and tourism sectors to name a few.

Immigration agencies role in labour mobility

3. Immigration agencies play an important role in supporting and managing the international movement of labour in both sending and receiving countries and this is evidenced by a significant number of PIDC Members having institutional links with their national labour counterparts.

4. To better manage this important role, PICTs need to develop streamlined processes and robust information systems to support the application, vetting and verification processes. For temporary labour migration programmes in particular, both sending and receiving countries need to develop the capacity to manage such programmes effectively³. In the Pacific, however, there are a number of administrative and institutional limitations that challenges the ability of PIDC Members to manage foreign labourers.

¹ PIDC (2017) PIDC Labour Mobility Survey.

² PIDC (2017) Labour Mobility Survey noted that Cook Islands, FSM, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau and the Marshall Islands did not participate in offshore labour mobility schemes, primarily because they already have temporary and permanent migration access to other countries as part of their established mobility clusters: Cook Islanders and Niuean's are New Zealand citizens; nationals of New Caledonia and French Polynesia are citizens of France; and FSM, Palau, and the Marshall Islands nationals have visa-waiver status and access to employment in the United States under the Compact of Free Association.

³ Hugo (2009, p. 69).

5. Key challenges at the domestic level include (but are not limited to): non-streamlined processes and limited single window mechanisms between PIDC Members and labour often leading to duplication and delays in the application and processing stages; limited capacity to provide information to foreign labourers and agents, about processes, fees and the receiving country; need for more effective regulation of local and foreign recruitment agents; limited capacity to monitor the compliance of employers and foreign workers on visa conditions, limited information management systems to collect, store and analyse migration data; and limited support services and planning for reintegration of abused foreign workers amongst.

6. For this session, panellists have been invited to speak of national challenges they face when managing foreign labour as receiving countries and the Membership will seek to explore possible solutions. These discussions will feed into an initial list of best practices developed by the Secretariat in this area based on discussions held in Suva during a 2017 PIDC Regional Workshop on Labour Mobility.

Policy Impacts

7. The discussion outcomes for this session are expected to support and guide the organisation's work in advancing Key Activity Area 1.3 of the PIDC Strategic Plan 2019-2021 to support social and economic development.

Resource Implications

8. There are no specific financial implications identified at this stage. However, it is envisaged that at the conclusion of this panel discussion, Members may decide to implement activities based on the discussion outcomes. Should this be the case, the Secretariat in consultation with the Board will subsequently review session outcomes and explore resource support required.