

# The Role of APTC in Labour Mobility



## 1. OVERVIEW

APTC's approach to fostering labour mobility includes a training profile that supports labour mobility, strategic positioning and engagement, monitoring evaluation and learning, research and analysis, and gender and socially inclusive initiatives.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Economic growth has been modest for most Pacific Island Countries (PICs) due to their size, geographic, resource and capacity constraints. With growing populations especially, a "youth bulge", employment creation<sup>i</sup> is a priority but it is unlikely to be export driven. Labour mobility as supported by regional leaders and reflected in policy statements,<sup>ii</sup> regional and sub-regional trade agreements and frameworks provides an important source of employment and decent work for many Pacific Islanders. Growing evidence supports the economic and human development benefits of well managed regional labour mobility.

Australia and New Zealand in support of greater regional integration have introduced temporary/circular migration labour mobility schemes for low and semi-skilled Pacific workers building on their seasonal worker programmes. The Australian Government's Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) provides new opportunities for PIC nationals wishing to work in Australia. Managed by the PLF, the PLS helps fill demand in low and semi-skilled employment across all sectors in rural and regional Australia where there are not enough Australian workers to fill employer demand. Support to meet migration requirements will be provided through the PLF to connect Australian employers with Pacific workers and support the administration of the PLS. Skilled workers can also apply for a visa in an eligible skilled occupation in Australia and if they can meet all other requirements.

Similarly, the New Zealand Pacific Trades Partnership and other pilots potentially offer expanded semi-skilled labour mobility opportunities in New Zealand.

## 3. THE ROLE OF APTC IN FOSTERING LABOUR MOBILITY

APTC supports regional and international labour mobility with the strategic intent of a net skills gain for the Pacific.

**A Training Profile that Supports Labour Mobility:** APTC's training profile will respond to market demand, support net skills gain<sup>iii</sup> for PICs and provide Australian Qualifications Framework Vocational Education and Training Qualifications. APTC has created a dual track approach to its training – comprising a domestic track and a labour mobility track. Employer sponsored students will be required to take the domestic track, and students not currently employed will be supported to maximise employability in their home country. For labour mobility track students, additional critical skills for work readiness and employability to prepare for working

will be provided. Labour mobility track students will be charged a modest fee and advised that participation in the labour mobility track does not guarantee employment overseas.

APTC will work closely with partners including the PLF to match qualifications to regional and international industry sector and employer requirements and to link employers with APTC graduates with the relevant skills. APTC will also support graduates (APTC and non-APTC) and labour mobility candidates with pre-mobility training and technical refreshers through co-investment and fee paying. In order to maximise the benefits of labour mobility opportunities, APTC will collaborate with the PLF and other partners in supporting post mobilisation and demobilisation programmes.

***Strategic Positioning and Engagement:*** To ensure regional support for APTC's labour mobility initiatives, APTC will position its contribution as part of the Pacific's broader economic and development agenda. This will include alignment with regional frameworks and key decisions of regional Ministers. APTC will leverage opportunities for support for labour mobility through the Pacific Skills Partnership and its three key deliverables. APTC will undertake high level advocacy and representation and engage and collaborate with key stakeholders in labour mobility. It will also analyse national, regional and international developments impacting on labour mobility. To support country ownership, APTC will develop country-owned labour mobility profiles which outline the country's priorities for labour mobility and the role of APTC.

The APTC and the PLF have been designed to be complementary, making collaboration vital to the success of both programmes. Three areas of particular complementarity are: sharing information on employer demand; ensuring workers have the right skills to meet workforce needs; and collaboration on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL).

***Monitoring Evaluation and Learning:*** APTC's MEL will ensure a better understanding at the country level and minimise the risk of any potential over or under supply to the labour market. This will ensure APTC students will have access to training that aligns with national, regional and international labour markets, thereby having improved employment outcomes. APTC will partner with other institutions, academics and practitioners on research on labour mobility. APTC will collaborate in particular with the PLF's monitoring of the social and economic impacts of Australia's labour mobility arrangements. Where appropriate APTC will engage independent research to support its labour mobility activities and will encourage sharing of both formal and informal information on labour mobility.

APTC, the PLF and DFAT will share high level **communications** to ensure consistent messaging and collaboration.

***Gender and Socially Inclusive Initiatives:*** APTC will undertake research on the barriers and limitations which might limit opportunities for women and for people from marginalised groups to access labour mobility opportunities. Support for women, people with disabilities and students from rural and remote areas might include fee waivers and access bursaries, coaching and mentoring, and encouraging enrolment and retention. Specific cultural and other training for women to assist their smooth transition to work in receiving countries will be included in the labour mobility track. APTC will take a tailored country approach that might include assisting in identifying a work ready pool, and providing refresher and work readiness training. As part of its broader work in coalition building, APTC will work with local champions to promote more inclusive labour opportunities. APTC will also work with the PLF as it develops its strategies to increase employment opportunities for women and people with disabilities.

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<sup>i</sup> Which may include self-employment pathways.

<sup>ii</sup> In 2016, Forum Leaders recognised the potential for increased regional mobility to "contribute to increased economic integration, greater investment and improved business practices."

<sup>iii</sup> Ensuring that labour mobility does not adversely affect skills available domestically (avoiding 'brain drain') while ensuring domestic skills are increased through spillover effects from quality training and additional skills through medium and longer term circular migration.