



GOVERNMENT OF NIUE



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SIGNING OF THE FIRST MANAGED INTRA-PACIFIC LABOUR MOBILITY PROGRAMME

Alofi, Niue – 25 July 2024 – The Inter-Agency Understanding (IAU) which governs the Niue-Solomon Islands Labour Mobility Pilot is being signed today in Tamakautoga, Niue by the governments of Niue and Solomon Islands. The Pilot is the first managed intra-Pacific labour mobility programme for the Pacific and is facilitated through the PACER Plus Labour Mobility Secretariat under the framework of the PACER Plus Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM).

The movement of Pacific workers to find employment in other Pacific countries is not new. For centuries this has been the practice and in recent history was largely subject to individuals responding to job opportunities advertised or inter-departmental arrangement for Pacific individuals. While such movement has its benefits, there is consensus that managed labour mobility programmes administered through bilateral labour migration agreements can deliver triple wins for the workers, their countries of origin and the countries of destination that receive them. These mutual benefits have prompted the proliferation of labour mobility schemes such as the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme and the New Zealand Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme. However, there has been limited effort to progress bilateral intra-pacific labour mobility programmes until the Niue-Solomon Islands Labour Mobility Pilot signed today in Tamakautoga, Niue.



Niue was formally recognized as a labour receiving country during the 2022 Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM), where they registered their interest to receive labour from other Pacific countries to meet acute labour shortages in the country. A scoping study by the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU) in early 2023 identified the health sector as priority and recommended a short-term pilot programme to trial intra-Pacific labour mobility and to later inform the design of a more sustainable longer term labour mobility scheme for the country. In November 2023, the Niue government endorsed the proposal for a pilot programme for the health sector and the PPIU then worked with the governments of Niue and Solomon Islands to develop an Inter-Agency Understanding (IAU) that would deliver mutual benefits to both governments particularly the Solomon Island workers and the Niue Health Sector which will employ them. The Pilot covers 4 Solomon Island nurses who will work in the Niue health sector for 6-months commencing from August 2024.

The Permanent Secretary for the Solomon Island Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade (MFAET), Mr. Colin Beck stated that *“the Solomon Islands population is growing faster than the world average and the country is unable to generate sufficient employment for the high number of school leavers each year. In the case of nurses, about 100 nurses graduate from local training institutions each year yet only 20 can find employment in the local hospital. To relieve pressure on the civil service, the retirement age in the Solomon Islands is 55 years old thus forcing many able and experienced nurses out of jobs each year. The Niue-Solomon Islands Labour Mobility Pilot provides a much-welcomed employment opportunity for the surplus supply of Solomon Island nurses, an opportunity that will significantly benefit their households and local communities back home”*. As requested by the Niue government, the Pilot will target retired Solomon Island nurses below Niue’s retirement age of 60 due to their vast experience. The nurses will predominantly work in the Niue aged care unit but will also serve as general nurses in the main hospital in Alofi.

For Niue, acute labour shortages exist as a critical development constraint across all sectors. Honourable Crossley Tatui, Minister for Infrastructure and Finance in Niue stated that *“the Niuean population experienced a dramatic decline in the 1970s and has remained relatively stagnant at around 1600 in the past 20 years. The working aged population has seen a consistent decrease over the last decades while the retired aged group has consistently increased, with about 20% of the population above retirement age. Labour shortage is therefore a very real problem for Niue and labour mobility provides the only viable solution to addressing this development constraint”*. The Minister further highlighted that labour shortage exists throughout key economic sectors and there is great interest to expand the intra-pacific labour mobility programme to other sectors based on the learnings from this initial pilot in the health sector.

The PACER Plus Implementation Unit recognizes the importance of intra-Pacific labour mobility to delivering mutual wins for PACER Plus Parties by creating employment for labour sending countries with surplus labour supply whilst alleviating labour shortages that constrain sustainable development in Pacific labour receiving countries like Niue. The PPIU extends its gratitude to the Niue National Labour Mobility Steering Committee and the Solomon Islands Labour Mobility Unit for the collaborative efforts to make this Arrangement the first of its kind in the Pacific. It is committed to working closely with the governments of Niue and Solomon Islands to monitor the Pilot and to ensure that mutual benefits for both countries are sustained.

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For further information, please contact:

Dr ‘Alisi Kautoke Holani, Labour Mobility Specialist, Email: alisi.holani@pacerplus.org

Anzee Mougavalu, GON Communications Officer, Email: NiueGovernment.Media@gov.nu