

Submission to the aid review

Sirs,

My contribution to the aid review team focuses on the human resources development strategies used by Australia in the form of the Australian Pacific Technical College (APTC) concept. My attached letter I shared through the PATVET network some years ago contains the gist of my submission. The APTC concept holds the key to maximizing the potential for labour mobility within the Pacific including Australia and New Zealand. Australia pours in a lot of aid money to the Pacific region on HR development, but in a backdoor approach dishes out 'left right and center' work permits and PRs to qualified personnel from the region, depriving the small island states of qualified people to man their economy. In other words brain drain is a perennial problem for the smaller Pacific nations. Australia can do justice in this area by negotiations with each Pacific countries on the issue of expanding the APTC concept in key common interest areas eg. tourism, engineering, nursing, medicine etc. A combined effort by Australia as well as NZ and the pacific island nations shall be a win win situation for everyone. Since Australia is losing labour to other developed nations this system will address the shortfall at home and in all Pacific nations.

Kolinio Meo

Retired Director of the Fiji Institute of Technology

Dear Editor,

PACIFIC SKILLED LABOUR MOBILITY PLAN

Late last year, through the PATVET network (a network used by TVET educators in the Pacific including Australia and NZ) the users were informed of the need for about 5000 construction workers to be recruited to help build the new US military base in Guam to accommodate all the military personnel and equipment being relocated from Okinawa in Japan. There was an initial indication that the Guam government would be recruiting the required workers from the Philippines.

I had queried then through the PATVET Network whether there would be opportunities available for skilled workers from the Pacific and was glad to be informed that opportunities would also be available at a later stage when the needs arise. This of course would be up to the Guam government to decide on. Through the PATVET Network I raised for discussions a concept of what I may term as a 'Pacific Skilled Labour Mobility Plan' This plan would be in many ways be similar or an extension to the Australian ex PM John Howard's 'Australian Pacific Technical College (APTC)' concept, now located in various countries in the Pacific region including Fiji, established with a view to imparting Australian standard skills. The graduates from such institutions would have an easy access to the Australian labour market. If the APTC concept is replicated, with some agreed procedures, with all existing Technical Colleges throughout the Pacific region, the resultant graduates from all these colleges would create a cohort of Pacific skilled workers, whose names and profiles would be entered into a shared database where all countries can access to hire workers to undertake national capital developments where additional labour is required from outside, like the current Guam case. Collectively all Pacific Island

Countries could advertise their excess skilled labour through the Worldwide Web as export commodities to developed countries in the Americas, Europe, Middle East etc. Most Pacific Island Countries are too small to undertake all the above processes on their own and a collective approach is required either through a PATVET, SPC or Forum Secretariat initiative. The spin-offs from such ventures would raise the economic benefits and hence better the quality of life in the Pacific region. A 'Pacific Skilled Labour Mobility Plan (PSLMP)' will be a good topic for discussions at the relevant Pacific forum meetings.

Kolinio Meo