



Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy and Action Plan

(2025–2028)



Forward

We are honoured to present you the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy and Action Plan (2025-2028)—an initiative designed to maximize the benefits of labour mobility for our people, our communities, and our nation. This Strategy reflects our commitment to ensuring that the gains made through participation in labour mobility schemes are not only sustained but also translated into long-term social and economic development outcomes for Vanuatu.

Labour mobility program has become a pillar for economic and social development providing opportunities to many Ni-Vanuatu citizens. Thousands of our citizens have migrated overseas, particularly to Australia and New Zealand, to participate in existing Labour Mobility program and contributing their skills to foreign labour markets while sending vital remittances home. These remittances have positively impacted household incomes, supported education of children, and stimulated small-scale economic activity throughout our islands.

However, we must now look beyond the immediate economic returns and focus on how to better support the reintegration of returning workers so that they can continue to thrive meaningfully to our national development. This Strategy acknowledges the challenges that many returnees face upon re-entering the domestic economy, including underemployment, limited access to business opportunities, and difficulties in reinvesting savings effectively. It also recognizes the immense potential these workers carry with them—skills, experience, and cultural and international exposure.

The Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy is the product of extensive consultation and collaboration across government agencies, development partners, civil society, trade union, labour agents, community leaders, chiefs, church leaders and most importantly, returned workers themselves. It outlines a clear vision: to create an enabling environment where returning workers are empowered to reintegrate socially and economically, and to build resilient livelihoods for themselves and their families. Through targeted vision and action plans, this Strategy seeks to turn the labour mobility experience into a stepping stone for inclusive development.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs is proud to lead this reintegration agenda in partnership with other key ministries, local authorities, and our partners. I would like to acknowledge the continued support of our development partner, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), for their support through funding for the initial consultation phase for this strategy. I would also like to extend a special thanks to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) mission in Vanuatu for their unwavering commitment in supporting, facilitating, and funding the development of this Strategy and Action Plan.

To all returned workers and families: this Strategy is for you. It is a recognition of your hard work, your sacrifice, and your dreams. It is a commitment from the government to stand beside you—not just when you leave our country, but also when you return home.

I commend this Strategy to all stakeholders and invite your continued collaboration in delivering its objectives and action plans. Together, we can ensure that the benefits of labour mobility are truly transformative—not just for individuals and families, but for the future of our country.

Respectfully,



Leith Veremaito
Director General, Ministry of Internal Affairs
Republic of Vanuatu

Acknowledgements

This Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy (LMRS) was developed at the initiative of the Commissioner of Labour, Department of Labour and Employment Services, working in partnership with key government agencies in Vanuatu, including the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of External Trade, Department of Immigration and Passport Services, Department of Local Authorities, Mental Health Unit of the Ministry of Health, and the Registrar of Cooperatives and Business Development Services.

The key framework for the LMRS was provided by [Vanuatu's Labour Mobility Policy](#), and by the [IOM Integrated Approach to Sustainable Reintegration](#).¹ The strategy development process also benefitted from an in-depth desk review of recent labour migration and labour mobility reintegration studies and policies, which provided key context, frameworks, learnings and recommendations. [The Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers report](#)², authored by Heidi Tyedmers of Natora Consulting was especially helpful in this context.

We would like to acknowledge the substantive input into the strategy that was provided through extensive consultations held between September 2024 and February 2025 with key stakeholders including members of the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Working Group, development partners, local authorities, training providers, returned migrant workers, workers unions, licensed recruitment agents, private sector actors, and key civil society organizations, along with stakeholders involved in provincial consultations on Tanna, Santo, and Malekula Islands. We acknowledge and value the input of stakeholders such as ADRA, APTC, Australia High Commission, Care International, IsraAid, Mind Care Unit, National University of Vanuatu, New Zealand High Commission, Oxfam, Pacific Resilience, Save the Children, Sista, UN Women, UNICEF, VANGO, Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vanuatu Institute of Technology, Vanuatu National Workers Union, VLab, Vanuatu Skills Partnership, Vanuatu Qualifications Authority, Vanuatu Youth Challenge, and World Vision Vanuatu.

The strategy development process was facilitated by Human Capacity Development International (HCDI), with the support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Labour Organization (ILO) through the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MMPTF) project in the Pacific. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of IOM, ILO and MMPTF.

Valuable technical support was provided by IOM Vanuatu and IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; specifically, Arnie Morada, Christina Moly, Geertrui Lanneau and Nissara Spence, the Department of Labour and Employment Services staffs, and the Pacific Labour Facility (PLF).

The collective efforts of all those mentioned above have been pivotal in the development of this Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy (LMRS).

Publisher:

Department of Labour and Employment Services
Port Vila, Vanuatu

Website: <https://dol.gov.vu/>

Cover photo: A seasonal worker returned home to his family. © Vanuatu DOL 2025

© 2025 Department of Labour and Employment Services

All rights reserved. No part of this resource may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior written permission of the publisher.

- 1 IOM defines sustainable reintegration as "Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity".
- 2 IOM (2024). Reintegration for ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers. https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf.

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Acronyms	4
1. Introduction to the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy	5
1.1 Focus on Reintegration	5
1.2 Vanuatu Labour Mobility Programs and Trends	6
1.3 Labour Mobility Regulatory Framework	7
2. Building An Integrated Approach to Reintegration	10
2.1 Vanuatu Reintegration Framework and Provisions	10
2.2 An Integrated Approach to Reintegration	10
2.3 The Reintegration Experience of Vanuatu Migrant Workers	13
3. Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy (LMRS)	16
3.1 Strategy Rationale	16
3.2 Strategy Vision	16
3.3 Strategy Objectives	17
3.4 Guiding Principles	17
3.5 Strategic Priority 1: Economic Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants	18
3.6 Strategic Priority 2: Social Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants	20
3.7 Strategic Priority 3: Psychosocial Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants	21
Annex 1 Action Plan (2025-2028)	23
Annex 2 Guidance for Community-Based Initiatives	29

Executive Summary

This document presents the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy (LMRS) and the 2025-2028 Action Plan. The development of this strategy was guided by the Vanuatu Department of Labour and Employment Services (DOL) and supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) office in Vanuatu.

As stated in the National Labour Mobility Policy (LMP), “Participation of ni-Vanuatu workers in international labour mobility has generated many positive benefits for individual workers, their families and communities, and for Vanuatu’s development as a nation”. It provides “opportunities for Vanuatu’s workforce to gain overseas employment in sectors such as agriculture and horticulture, foster skill development and knowledge transfer, and generate income for workers”³.

At the same time, it is essential that labour mobility programs are carefully managed, monitored, and regulated, ensuring that workers’ rights are protected, their families and communities remain stable and safe, and the country’s overall social and economic development is positively supported. From this point of view, the strategy focuses on labour mobility in general, and reintegration in particular, as a tool to promote individual, family, and community growth and strength.

Labour mobility should be understood as a cycle that includes many different aspects and is frequently a recurring process. Effective labour mobility management therefore includes not only managing workers’ welfare prior to and after departure, but also supporting workers to reintegrate upon their return which generally involves themselves, their family, and the community. Within that context, reintegration is a complex and multi-faceted process. Reintegration, as defined by the IOM, “enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and achieve inclusion in civic life”⁴, and allows repeated migration to be a matter of choice, rather than a necessity, if successful.

The LMP also notes that “(t)he development of a LMRS is critical in enhancing the sustainable reintegration of returning Ni-Vanuatu migrant workers, optimizing the positive impact of labour mobility for Vanuatu’s economic and social development, reducing the negative impacts of labour mobility, and supporting returning migrants and their families to build sustainable livelihoods in Vanuatu”⁵.

Incorporating the core concepts from the IOM’s Integrated Approach to Reintegration and the 2024 Vanuatu Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers Report⁶, the strategy offers an integrated approach to reintegration that is:

- balanced and sustainable, with the ultimate goal being migration by choice not necessity;
- based on evidence and continuous learning;
- nuanced and sensitive to the diversity of experience and context in Vanuatu;
- holistic and based on the needs of returnees, their communities and Vanuatu’s socioeconomic and governance context;
- rights-based and involving the participation and empowerment of all parties, particularly workers, their families, and their communities; and
- built on strong partnerships and coordination across all relevant stakeholders in Vanuatu and overseas⁷.

3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. *Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024-2027*. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>.

4 IOM. Reintegration Handbook <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

5 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. *Vanuatu Labour mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024-2027*. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>.

6 IOM. Reintegration Handbook <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

7 IOM (2024) Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf, p. 3.

Acronyms

AAs	Area Administrators	PALM	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility
AC	Area Council	RBV	Reserve Bank Vanuatu
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency	RTC	Rural Training Centre
APTC	Australia Pacific Training Coalition	SAVE	Save the Children
CEE	Community Economic Enterprises	SEA	Seasonal Employment Act
CLO	Country Liaison Officer	SPC	South Pacific Community
DARD	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (Vanuatu)	TLAC	Tripartite Labour Advisory Council
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australia	UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
DLA	Department of Local Authorities	VAC	Vanuatu Agriculture College
DoCC	Department of Climate Change	VANGO	Vanuatu Association of NGOs
DOL	Department of Labour and Employment Services (Vanuatu)	VCAN	Vanuatu Climate Action Network
DWA	Department of Women’s Affairs	VCC	Vanuatu Christian Council
ESU	Employment Services Unit (Vanuatu)	VCCI	Vanuatu Chamber of Commerce and Industry
HCDI	Human Capacity Development International	VCCRP	Vanuatu Community-based Climate Resilience Project
ILO	International Labour Organization	VIS	Vanuatu Department of Immigration and Passport Services
IOM	International Organization for Migration	VIT	Vanuatu Institute of Technology
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization	VNPF	Vanuatu National Provident Fund
LM	Labour Mobility	VNSO	Vanuatu National Statistics Office
LMIS	Labour Mobility Information System	VSP	Vanuatu Skills Partnership
LMP	Labour Mobility Policy and Action Plan (2024-2027)	VQA	Vanuatu Qualification Authority
LMRS	Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy	VWC	Vanuatu Women’s Centre
MFAICET	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade	WVV	World Vision Vanuatu
MFAT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade – New Zealand	YCV	Youth Challenge Vanuatu
MFEM	Ministry of Finance and Economic Management		
MJCS	Ministry of Justice and Community Services		
MMPTF	Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund		
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training		
MOIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs		
MOH	Ministry of Health		
NBV	National Bank of Vanuatu		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations		
NHRDP	National Human Resource Development Plan		
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan		
NUV	National University of Vanuatu		

1. Introduction to the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy

Vanuatu has formally engaged in labour mobility programs since 2007 and has remained one of the top three largest countries of origin for migrant workers to New Zealand and Australia under the seasonal workers schemes⁸. Recognizing both the value and challenges involved, the Government of Vanuatu has committed to a systematic review of its international labour mobility regulation, programs, and activities. To date, this work has included the latest Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy (2024-2027), the review of the Vanuatu Seasonal Employment Act 2007, and the development of a Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy, the focus of the current document.

1.1 Focus on Reintegration

As noted in the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy, “(t)he participation of ni-Vanuatu workers in international labour mobility and seasonal workers programmes has contributed many positive benefits for individual workers, their families and communities, but also contributed to Vanuatu’s development as a nation. Labour mobility programmes offer significant economic benefits by providing Vanuatu with access to overseas job markets that generate remittances contributing to our nation’s GDP. Labour mobility, particularly the Pacific-Australia Labour Mobility and Recognized Seasonal Employer programs, provide opportunities for Vanuatu’s workforce to gain employment in sectors such as agriculture and horticulture, fostering skill development and knowledge transfer, all of which support sustainable development in Vanuatu.”⁹

To maximize the positive impacts of labour mobility, the process has to be managed effectively using a broad holistic approach, which starts from facilitating workers’ welfare prior to and after departure, up until supporting them to reintegrate upon their return. Described by IOM as “a process which enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and achieve inclusion in civic life”, reintegration is a complex and multi-faceted process¹⁰.

As further explained in the *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers Report*, reintegration is best managed using an eco-system approach that includes not only the workers themselves, but also their families and communities, while considering the broader social, economic, and governance environment. Part of the approach is also recognizing the various phases of labour migration and its circular nature, with many workers returning to seasonal work multiple times¹¹. Successful reintegration then is not only about how people feel, but includes a range of economic, social, and psychosocial considerations and factors.

This section will cover some of those key contextual factors, including the Vanuatu labour mobility history and programs, followed by a review of the Vanuatu regulatory context for labour mobility, a review of the economic context for labour mobility, as well as major social and psychosocial issues related to reintegration.

The next section will focus on developing an integrated approach to reintegration, covering in detail the *Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy*, the *IOM’s Integrated Approach to Reintegration*, and the recommendations from the *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers* report, and additional relevant projects and efforts already happening in Vanuatu.

8 Bedford, C. (2023). Pacific labour mobility over the last year: continued growth. Devpolicy Blog, 8 August.

9 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. *Vanuatu Labour mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024-2027*. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>.

10 IOM. *Reintegration Handbook* <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

11 IOM (2024). *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers*. https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf, p. 3.

1.2 Vanuatu Labour Mobility Programs and Trends

Vanuatu's first engagement in labour mobility schemes (LMS) was through New Zealand's Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, launched in 2007. In 2008, Australia's Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) followed, which evolved into the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). In 2022, the SWP and the PLS were integrated into the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, which included both a short-term and a long-term program¹².

Aimed at providing employment and income for unemployed, unskilled and low-skilled workers in Vanuatu, the RSE and PALM Short focus primarily on agriculture, viticulture and horticulture and provide short-term seasonal work (contracts of less than 1 year). The PALM Long scheme, on the other hand, was initially promoted to provide work opportunities for semi-skilled workers in other sectors including hospitality and tourism, health care and social assistance, forestry and fishing¹³. However, as approved employers became more aware of the option of contracting workers on a longer-term basis (1-4 years), PALM Long has expanded into the same sectors as the PALM Short and RSE, engaging low-skilled workers in long-term seasonal work.

Vanuatu continues to be one of the top three countries of origin for migrant workers to both New Zealand and Australia. Vanuatu workers made up about half of the migrants employed in the New Zealand RSE scheme and a quarter of those in the Australia PALM scheme in 2023¹⁴.

In total 16,562 Ni-Vanuatu workers participated in the 2022–2023 season (7,100 in New Zealand and 9,462 in Australia), accounting for 35 per cent of the total visas issued¹⁵. Looking within Vanuatu, an estimated 11.5 per cent of the overall workforce, and 20.4 percent of men in the working age population (age 20-59) have been engaged in seasonal work overseas¹⁶.

Labour mobility program participation is noticeably gendered, especially in Vanuatu. Over 85 per cent of ni-Vanuatu workers engaged in seasonal work are men. The percentage of women participating is not only low, averaging around 13 per cent, but also proportionately low when comparing to most other Pacific countries which is around 17 per cent¹⁷.

It is not surprising that international labour mobility is popular, as workers from Vanuatu can earn up to ten times more in New Zealand and Australia than they would in Vanuatu. According to one study, SWP migrants increased their incomes by an average fourfold, spent more on their children's education and healthcare, and constructed housing more resistant to cyclones and natural disasters¹⁸. In 2021, remittances to Vanuatu were 22 per cent of GDP¹⁹. Labour migration in Vanuatu is often circular, with many workers returning to seasonal work multiple times. Another study of RSE workers over 16 years indicates that 42 per cent of Vanuatu workers go for one season, 58 per cent go for 2 or more seasons, 19 percent go six to nine seasons, and 5 per cent stay in the program for 10 years or more²⁰.



A participant from Famili I Kam Bak workshop. © DOL Vanuatu 2025

12 Doan, D., M. Dornan and R. Edwards 2023. *The Gains and Pains of Working Away from Home: The Case of Pacific Temporary Migrant Workers in Australia and New Zealand*. Australian National University, Canberra and The World Bank Group, Washington.

13 Curtain, R. (2019), *Labour exports from Vanuatu: past, present and future opportunities*, p. 11.

14 Martin, P. (2023). *Rapid Assessment of Labor Mobility Policy Implementation Arrangements in Vanuatu*. Washington D.C.: World Bank, p. 7.

15 Bedford, C. (2023) Pacific labour mobility over the last year: continued growth. <https://devpolicy.org/pacific-labour-mobility-over-the-last-year-continued-growth-20230808>.

16 Bedford, C. (2023) Pacific labour mobility over the last year: continued growth. <https://devpolicy.org/pacific-labour-mobility-over-the-last-year-continued-growth-20230808>.

17 World Bank. Rapid Assessment.

18 Petrou, K. and Connell, J. (2023a). *Pacific Islands Guestworkers in Australia: The New Blackbirds?* Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-19-5387-3#toc>.

19 Martin, p. 28

20 Bedford, C. and Bedford, R. (2023). How many seasonal workers from the Pacific have been employed in New Zealand since the RSE scheme began? *NZ Geographer*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/nzg.12354>.

1.3 Labour Mobility Regulatory Framework

Key Components of the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Regulatory Framework

The Vanuatu Labour Mobility Regulatory Framework includes a number of different Acts, policies, plans, regulations, and agreements, summarized in the table below, and discussed briefly in this section.

<i>Seasonal Employment Act No. 23 of 2007 (SEA)</i>	An Act regulating the seasonal employment of Vanuatu citizens working abroad, establishing guidelines for their protection, rights, and employer obligations.
<i>Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy of 2019</i>	First Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy providing an enabling mechanism to address Vanuatu's own labour market needs, organise its institutions, strengthen regulation, and level the playing field between employers and workers.
<i>Vanuatu National Labour Mobility Policy & Action Plan 2024 – 2027 (LMP)</i>	A strategic, second, policy aimed at integrating labour mobility into sustainable development, reflecting national priorities and using data-driven, evidence-based approaches.
<i>National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) Vanuatu 2030: The People's Plan</i>	Vanuatu's overarching national policy, emphasizing increased labour mobility through comprehensive labour market data analysis under policy objective ECO 4.7.
<i>Vanuatu Framework for the Reintegration of Agricultural Workers in Labour Mobility Program 2021-2023</i>	Provides guidelines for the reintegration of agricultural workers after their participation in labour mobility programs.
<i>National Trade Policy Framework Update (2019-2025)</i>	This framework recognizes labour mobility as a positive contribution to Vanuatu's economy and identifies possibilities for future schemes and international negotiations.
<i>National Human Resource Development Policy (NHRDP) 2020-2030</i>	The NHRDP outlines the skills required for workers in overseas labour markets and emphasizes skill transfer and reintegration upon their return to Vanuatu.
<i>National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030</i>	Ensures inclusiveness in labour mobility programs, promoting gender equality and addressing the specific needs of women.
<i>National Disability Inclusion Development Policy</i>	Advocates for the inclusion of persons with disabilities within labour mobility programs, ensuring their rights and access.
<i>National Child Protection Policy (NCPP)</i>	Addresses protection of children of migrant workers during and after their parents' employment abroad, ensuring their safety and well-being.
<i>Agreements with destination countries, PACER Plus, international legal standards and instruments</i>	Covers bilateral agreements/Memorandum of Understanding, the PACER Plus regional trade agreement, and adherence to international labour standards and frameworks to enhance labour mobility.

The first component of the Vanuatu regulatory and policy framework is the *Seasonal Employment Act No. 23 of 2007* (SEA). It regulates the recruitment process of seasonal workers, using licensed agents and permit holders. It also provides general regulations concerning seasonal work agreements, seasonal workers, and visas. The SEA was reviewed in 2024 and is currently in the process of revision. Major aims of the revision include updating and addressing gaps in the recruitment and regulation process, and addressing worker rights and responsibilities.

In 2019, the first Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy was issued as an “enabling mechanism to address Vanuatu’s own labour market needs, organize its institutions, boost regulation, and level the playing field between employers and workers. The 2019 Labour Mobility Policy also aimed to guide the management and welfare of workers engaged in labour migration and address the economic and social objectives of the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) in order to increase decent work opportunities”²¹. The 2019 Labour Mobility Policy was updated recently through the Vanuatu National Labour Mobility Policy & Action Plan 2024 – 2027 (LMP). Launched in 2024, it noted that “much progress has been made on the implementation of the LM Policy 2019, particularly in terms of capacity building and resource allocation for the labour mobility operations within the ESU”, but key policy areas remained unimplemented and changes in programs and conditions required a new policy and approach²². Most notably, these changes included:

- The COVID-19 related impact on both the number of ni-Vanuatu migrant workers and length of their service abroad;
- Vanuatu ratification of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus) and its Annex on the Arrangement of Labour Mobility, providing a regional framework for labour mobility cooperation for development;
- The alignment of the Australian SWP and PLS under the PALM;
- The policy review of the New Zealand RSE Scheme.

As will be detailed later, the revised LMP of 2024 introduces five new pillars and an action plan. Among other things, it aims to “refocus Vanuatu’s engagement in labour mobility as a programme for sustainable development that reflects the national priorities and pursues strategic data-driven, evidence-based programme options”²³.

The NSDP or ‘People’s Plan’ launched in 2016 also refers to labour mobility in the Economic Pillar section, policy objective ECO 4.7 *Increase labour mobility nationally and internationally, including through the collection and analysis of comprehensive labour market data*²⁴. More broadly, all three pillars contain goals that are directly relevant to Vanuatu’s overall objectives around sustainable, effective and well-managed reintegration.

The Vanuatu Framework for the Reintegration of Agricultural Workers in Labour Mobility Program 2021-2023 was the first document to explicitly address reintegration. It aimed to “support the reintegration of workers by maximizing skills development and facilitating their investment into the agriculture sector, as well as supporting families”²⁵. The three main goals were: 1) Support skills development and transfer to increase human capital; 2) Increase financial investment into agriculture; and 3) Identify strategies to support seasonal workers and their families to increase agricultural production, food security and income security, and climate change and disaster preparedness training to sustain an agricultural business. The Framework notes that “addressing reintegration must take into account a range of factors including return preparedness, social costs to families, economic opportunities on return, and sufficient data to guide policy and action. It is also necessary to provide support throughout the whole labour mobility cycle, from pre-departure to time overseas to the return home”²⁶. Action steps included training, support, information, and mentoring to workers and families to develop Business Ready Workers, along with structural support by partner institutions and organizations to create a conducive environment for business development. Concurrent actions were to include on-going research and review, along with the development of a National Reintegration Strategy, incorporating not only agriculture but all relevant sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, and meat processing²⁷.

21 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. *Vanuatu Labour mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024-2027*. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>, p. 8.

22 *ibid*.

23 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade. *Vanuatu Labour mobility Policy and Action Plan 2024-2027*. <https://mfaicet.gov.vu/images/documents/Vanuatu%20National%20Labour%20Mobility%20Policy.pdf>, p. 5.

24 Vanuatu National Sustainable Development Plan, 2026-2030. <https://www.gov.vu/images/publications/Vanuatu2030-EN-FINAL-sf.pdf>, p. 17.

25 Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; and the Department of Labour & Employment Services, Government of Vanuatu (2020). *Framework for the Reintegration of Agricultural Workers in Labour Mobility Programs 2021-2023*, p. 7.

26 *ibid*.

27 Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; and the Department of Labour & Employment Services, Government of Vanuatu (2020). *Framework for the Reintegration of Agricultural Workers in Labour Mobility Programs 2021-2023*, p.10-12.

The *National Trade Policy Framework Update (2019-2025)* recognizes labour mobility as a positive contribution to Vanuatu’s economy. The policy mentions the potential of the Pacific Forum Island Countries opening their labour markets to each other. Specific mention is made of negotiations on a labour mobility scheme for semi-skilled and skilled workers under the Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) / Skills Movement Scheme (SMS)²⁸.

The *National Human Resources Development Policy*²⁹ is relevant to labour mobility in terms of preparing and developing the skills of workers to participate in labour mobility schemes and meet the skills requirements of employers in destination countries, as well as in terms of skills transfer and reintegration of returned migrant workers to Vanuatu.

While not explicitly focused on labour mobility, the *National Gender Equality Policy 2020-2030* and the *National Disability Inclusion Development Policy* provide important guidance with regard to inclusiveness within these programs, and the *National Child Protection Policy* aims to protect children of migrant workers during and after work abroad.

Labour mobility is also governed by *agreements with destination countries*, particularly New Zealand and Australia, and Vanuatu at the bilateral level. At the regional level, the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus or PACER Plus “recognizes labour mobility as a vital trade initiative between Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island countries, delivering shared economic benefits across the region”. The *Arrangement on Labour Mobility* forms a non-binding regional framework for labour mobility cooperation, providing support for regional cooperation and learning through the establishment of the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM), and by strengthening the legislative, regulatory and institutional framework in participating countries.

28 Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business, *Trade Policy Framework Update 2019 – 2025*, Vanuatu Government (2020).

29 National Human Resource Development Plan (2020-2030).



A PALM worker in Australia.
© DOL Vanuatu 2024



Family sending off a seasonal worker to Brisbane. © IOM 2024

2. Building An Integrated Approach to Reintegration

In drafting the Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy, the work was framed by the latest [Vanuatu Labour Mobility Policy \(LMP\), 2024-2027](#) and [IOM's integrated approach to sustainable reintegration](#), as well as findings and recommendations from the [Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers report 2024](#)³⁰.

2.1 Vanuatu Reintegration Framework and Provisions

As noted earlier, the [Vanuatu National Labour Mobility Policy & Action Plan 2024 – 2027](#) includes a systematic consideration of reintegration, through Pillar 3, along with related policy provisions and action steps in the other pillars. Under the third pillar, “*Labour Mobility Supply Management and Reintegration Strategy*”, the policy emphasizes Vanuatu’s goal to “increase decent work opportunities, skills transfer and reintegration success”. By placing emphasis on reintegration along with labour mobility supply management and support for workers in New Zealand and Australia, the policy seeks to create a balanced and mutually beneficial approach to labour mobility that mitigates some of the challenges while maximizing the benefits for Vanuatu's citizens and the nation as a whole.

Specific components of Pillar 3 include:

- **Output 1:** Development, launching and monitoring of the LM Supply Management & Reintegration Strategy, supported by Comprehensive Economic Analysis on labour mobility, and Labour Force Survey, with identification of skills development opportunities receiving countries and worker review system and DOL Reintegration SOPs and Officers
- **Output 2:** Integrated Skills Recognition, E-learning and Recruitment Platform, supporting e-learning, course development, and worker profiles
- **Output 3:** Guidelines, training, workshops developed on ‘managing community development through labour mobility’
- **Output 4:** Pilot Projects on community development designed, implemented and monitored, including also private sector development in specific sectors

For the purpose of drafting this strategy, the key components of Pillar 3 were incorporated, along with central elements of Pillars 2 (*Data collection, systems and coordination*), 4 (*Child-centred, family and community social protections*), and 5 (*Worker welfare and benefits*), where relevant. Output 1 of Pillar 3 is the LMRS, which is the focus of this document. Output 2 is addressed in the learning components of the strategy, and Outputs 3 and 4 were used as the rationale for the development of the community-based approach to reintegration, presented in Annex 2.

2.2 An Integrated Approach to Reintegration

The [IOM Reintegration Handbook](#) notes that: “Return migration is a complex phenomenon that takes place in a number of ways and under different conditions, which can create challenges and opportunities for the reintegration process”³¹.

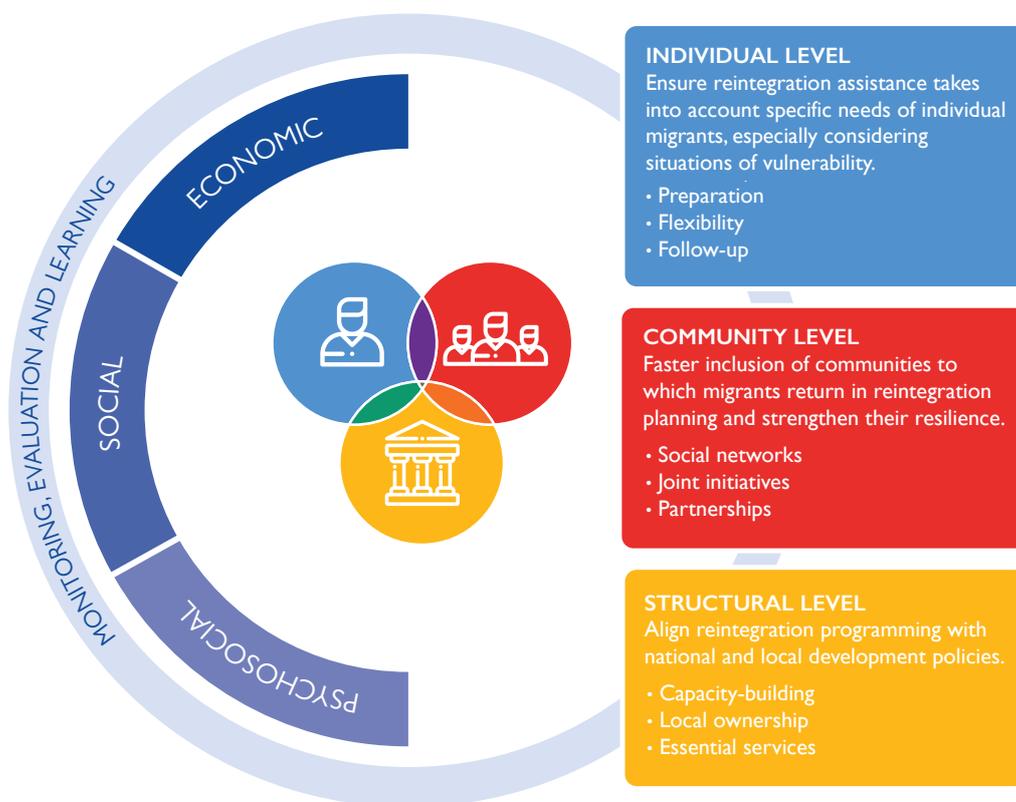
Reintegration itself is understood as a multidimensional process. If successful, it enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and achieve inclusion in civic life.

Sustainable reintegration is achieved when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being that make their further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.

This IOM definition recognizes that returnees need to be able to participate fully in the economic and social activities within the communities they return to, while developing a sense of psychosocial well-being to ensure their successful reintegration. Therefore, the sustainability of reintegration is not only dependent on the returning individual, but also on the local community and the structure in place to support their return (see Figure 1).

30 IOM (2024) Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers. https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf.

31 IOM. Reintegration Handbook <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>. See also IOM and UN Women (2023). Manual for Inclusive and Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrant Workers in South Asia. <https://publications.iom.int/books/manual-inclusive-and-sustainable-reintegration-returning-migrant-workers-south-asia>.

Figure 1: “Visual Summary of an integrated approach to reintegration”

The IOM’s integrated approach to reintegration recognizes that reintegration requires a holistic and a needs-based response at the individual, community and structural levels, addressing economic, social, and psycho-social needs, as reflected in the model above.

Supporting the development of a migrant centered, sustainable, multi-dimensional, strategic, and tailored approach, the model incorporates three dimensions of reintegration:

The **Economic dimension** covers aspects of reintegration that contribute to re-entering economic life and sustained livelihoods. Successful economic reintegration refers to the ability to sustain oneself economically and with dignity, meaning that “economically self-sufficient returnees are able to provide for themselves and their families, and develop a capacity to participate in and benefit from local economic activities in a dignified manner”³².

The **Social dimension** addresses returning migrants’ access to public services and infrastructure in their countries of origin, including access to health, education, housing, justice and social protection schemes. Successful social reintegration means that upon return, workers feel a sense of belonging, social connectedness, and social engagement in their community of return. The migrant’s return should have a positive influence on – or at least not worsen – conditions in the community of return (families and other community actors).

The **Psychosocial dimension** encompasses the reinsertion of returning migrants into personal support networks (friends, relatives, neighbors) and civil society structures (associations, self-help groups, other organizations and civic life generally). This also includes re-engagement with the values, ways of living, language, moral principles and traditions of the country of origin’s society. Successful psychosocial reintegration would mean a returning migrant feels positive about (re-) creating a sustainable lifestyle in their home community, feels safe and secure within themselves, and is able to access basic services that would support their overall sense of well-being (education, housing, water and sanitation, health care).

32 IOM. Reintegration Handbook <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

The model further classifies support initiatives, using three different levels:

The **individual level** has initiatives to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of returnees and returning family members.

Examples of individual level support include:

- Improve pre-return preparation (in destination countries) of the reintegration process to allow for returnees' ownership of their individual reintegration plan, empowerment and increased self-reliance.
- Effectively refers migrant workers to available socioeconomic opportunities and psychosocial support through systematic mapping and collection of information on reintegration stakeholders and type of specialized assistance offered.
- Increase flexibility of reintegration assistance initiatives to allow adaptable provision of support to the returnee's profile, needs and skills, preferences and motivation, and to the return context.
- Ensure adequate follow-up support during the first 12 months following return (to accompany returnees in their reintegration process)³³.

Note: When efforts and assistance are constrained by limited resources and capacity, vulnerability screening becomes crucial in ensuring that support is prioritized for those most in need. [IOM's Screening Form](#) for migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse provides guidance on screening processes and vulnerable indicators that could be considered when allocating resources and prioritizing assistance.

The **community level** encompasses initiatives that respond to the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of communities to which migrants return.

Examples of community-level support include:

- Conduct assessments of the main communities to which migrant workers return to ensure that reintegration activities respond to their needs and priorities.
- Promote reintegration activities linking individual returnees with non-migrant populations (e.g. joint income-generating activities, local employment schemes).

- Encourage the re-establishment of returnees' networks by actively involving family members, friends and the local community in the psychosocial reintegration process³⁴.

Structural level initiatives promote good governance of migration through engagement with local and national authorities and stakeholders and supports continuity of assistance through adequate local public services³⁵.

Examples of structural level interventions include:

- Enhance national and/or local capacities to deliver reintegration-related services through legislative reviews, adoption of guidelines, set-up of interministerial committees, and establishment of referral mechanisms.
- Reinforce the provision of essential services in key areas such as education, health, psychosocial support, employment and housing for returnees and non-migrant populations alike.
- Increase sustainability of reintegration interventions by promoting ownership by local/national authorities and stakeholders in countries of origin³⁶.

Key consideration: Climate adaptation and resilience is critical for Pacific Island countries, including Vanuatu, where extreme weather and environmental degradation threaten livelihoods, infrastructure, and food security. Reintegration strategies should integrate environmental sustainability into its planning, to address the risks by equipping returnees with skills in disaster preparedness, resilient housing, and sustainable resource management to strengthen long-term adaptation and economic stability.

Source: IOM Reintegration Handbook [Annex 11: Guidance for mainstreaming environmental and climate considerations into reintegration programming](#).

The model also emphasizes an evidence-based approach, noting that reintegration interventions should be developed, implemented and adapted using continuous assessment and learning to understand the wider environment and build on existing initiatives, programmes or services. Further, to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of reintegration processes, partnerships and good coordination should be established to enhance the range and quality of reintegration assistance and reduce duplication of effort³⁷.

33 IOM (2017). Towards an integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf, p. 11.

34 IOM (2017). Towards an integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf, p. 12.

35 IOM. Reintegration Handbook <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

36 IOM (2017). Towards an integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf, p. 13.

37 IOM. Reintegration Handbook <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

2.3 The Reintegration Experience of Vanuatu Migrant Workers

IOM's (2024) *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers* report and other resources³⁸ acknowledge that economic factors are a key component in understanding the pull and push factors of labour mobility, and the challenges of successful reintegration. Critical aspects include limited opportunities for local employment and small business development, limited access to secondary and tertiary education, economic poverty and hardship, especially in rural areas, and the economic impact of regular natural disasters and extreme weather events. Given this context, for many ni-Vanuatu workers, overseas employment is initially seen as a necessity rather than a choice in meeting the requirements of everyday life for themselves and their families.

Reports indicate that remittances were used for immediate needs, including everyday expenses, for their children's education, and for building a house. If excess funds are available, possible through several rounds of seasonal employment, longer term plans include starting a family business, continuing to build houses for themselves and family members, and establishing investment or rental properties.

While workers interviewed indicated they had gained new skills while overseas, less than half said they were using those skills after they returned. In the same study and in other consultations, workers also mentioned challenges in finding work upon return, particularly jobs that recognize and remunerate for their skills and experience gained overseas, and effectively investing and managing savings. Lack of financial literacy, dealing with exchange rates, and accessing superannuation (for PALM returnees) were also commonly mentioned issues.

In terms of economic support, there are very few support structures, resources, and programs in place to support returning workers. While the next section will discuss the programs that are being offered, major gaps include no job placement platform, no subsidies or monetary support systems, limited access to loans, limited information sharing,

coordination and collaboration among stakeholders, and a lack of coordinated data collection and sharing.

Looking at the social and psychosocial dimensions of labour mobility, individual gains reported across studies include “experiencing and learning new things, becoming more open minded, developing trust among family members, and better relationships due to improved financial security and stability”.

The IOM reintegration report also mentioned improvements in self-confidence and self-esteem, especially for women, and being able to contribute to community improvements. Recognizing that labour mobility can and does create challenges for family relations, the majority of workers interviewed in the studies indicated that seasonal work had an overall positive impact on their family relationships³⁹, and that they had been able to effectively manage the social reintegration process. It should however be noted though that the Department of Labour and Employment Services (DOL) regularly receives complaints from families of migrant workers, citing issues like lack of support through remittances, marital conflict, abandonment, and more.

At the structural level, government welfare services in Vanuatu are limited to non-existing. Health, education, and justice services are concentrated in the two urban areas, Port Vila and Luganville. Even in those areas, the actual services are often inadequate and have costs associated with accessing them, especially those offered through private entities. Where social services exist in other areas, they are often provided by INGOs, NGOs, churches or communities. Similarly, support for vulnerable populations such as people with disabilities, women experiencing sexual and/or domestic violence, and gender diverse populations rely on support from limited-resource government entities, such as the Vanuatu Women Centre, as well as non-governmental agencies and entities.

38 Sources used for this section include IOM (2024) *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers*. https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf.

Martin, P. (2023) Rapid Assessment of Labor Mobility Policy Implementation Arrangements in Vanuatu. The World Bank Group, Washington <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/88589ca4cc1f0d80d176208c02c80587-0070012023/original/Rapid-Assessment-of-Labor-Mobility-Policy-Implementation-Arrangements-in-Vanuatu.pdf>.

World Bank (2024) Ramping up investments in the Pacific. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/90c7ac09072b46e503c949291d94e80e-0070062024/report-highlights-diminishing-growth-amid-global-uncertainty-ramping-up-investment-in-the-pacific-october-2024>.

Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; and the Department of Labour & Employment Services, Government of Vanuatu (2020). Framework for the Reintegration of Agricultural Workers in Labour Mobility Programs 2021-2023.

IMPACTS OF LABOUR MOBILITY IN THE NATION OF VANUATU https://devpolicy.org/2024-Pacific-Migration-Workshop/PacMigWorkshop_2024_Panel3_Gera.pdf.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2024) Labour market reintegration of return migrant workers and former refugees in origin countries: Concepts and definitions <https://www.ilo.org/media/546176/download>.

<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/290a0acf60126b5b49d0032127fb44c8-0070012024/original/2-Vanuatu-s-Labor-migration-Challenges-and-opportunities.pdf>

Meltenoven, M. Vanuatu's Labor Migration: Challenges and Opportunities.

<https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/290a0acf60126b5b49d0032127fb44c8-0070012024/original/2-Vanuatu-s-Labor-migration-Challenges-and-opportunities.pdf>

39 IOM (2024) *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers*. https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf, p. 6.

The psychosocial dimension of labour mobility may be the most underserved dimension. Not only are psychological issues often stigmatized and underrecognized, meaningful and accessible support is hard to come by. Since 2014, the government Mind Care unit has begun essential education and outreach work in mental health, with a small staff based in Port Vila Central Hospital and outreach officers in Tafea and Torba provinces⁴⁰. As is the case with many social and psycho-social support services, the Mind Care unit is assisted through donor aid, partner organizations like Pacific Medical Association, INGOs like IsraAid, and civil society and community leaders.

The 2024 Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers report offers the following **seven key recommendations for strengthening the reintegration ecosystem in Vanuatu**, which also formed the basis for consultations of the LMRS.

1. Improving the quality of data and access to basic data

The data about migrant workers departing and returning to Vanuatu and their families remains uneven. Ensuring that basic data about workers and their families is collected will allow the Government of Vanuatu and service providers to reach a greater number of workers and will support key stakeholders in developing a better understanding of some of the key dynamics of labour mobility in Vanuatu and in targeting support and additional services more effectively.

2. Supporting better research to inform and understand key areas of concern

Key areas of concern relating to labour mobility such as perceived family breakdown and domestic violence, substance abuse, and impacts on Vanuatu's tourism and hospitality sector should be informed by more comprehensive research.

3. Strengthening the service environment in Vanuatu and destination countries

The service environment and assistance in Vanuatu, particularly for returnees, is poorly resourced and social welfare services in general are largely delegated to a small number of programmatic interventions offered to vulnerable populations by civil society organizations, trade unions, United Nations agencies, NGOs, churches and religious groups, and community leaders. Improving service delivery in Vanuatu will require a long-term approach and strong commitment from government institutions. In parallel, destination countries such as New Zealand and Australia can contribute by providing more accessible and appropriately contextualized support services to workers, particularly to ensure worker safety, wellbeing and skills development, while they are working overseas and connecting this to efforts in Vanuatu.

40 Mental Health Vanuatu. <https://mentalhealthvanuatu.wordpress.com/>

4. Improving the approach to training and skills development across a continuum

While there have been success stories in the area of skills development and training, these efforts could be significantly strengthened and expanded. The skills training that is offered to workers should be hands on, practical, and suited to Vanuatu's context and economic viability, as well as aspirations of individuals. Skills development should span across a continuum from pre-departure to reintegration to ensure that workers are consistently supported. Goals and needs should be identified pre-departure, with skills and training opportunities offered on a range of topics while workers are in destination countries and connected more directly to key service providers and needs within Vanuatu upon return. This should be further supplemented by efforts to recognize skills gained overseas, both technical and soft skills, and the benefits of acquiring such skills and qualifications.

5. Recognizing and harnessing the circular nature of labour mobility in Vanuatu

Programmes and services aimed at reintegration in Vanuatu should clearly recognize the circular nature of labour mobility in Vanuatu and should see pre-departure and reintegration less as discrete phases, but as opportunities to consolidate targeted learning and support over longer periods of time. The circular nature of seasonal work makes the reintegration period a fertile opportunity for setting workers up to leverage gains more effectively in subsequent seasons and consolidate learning and approaches in a more iterative way.

6. Raising awareness and enhancing access to psychosocial support networks and services

Raise awareness of labour mobility workers, their families and communities in general on the importance of psychosocial well-being. Leverage and capacitate existing social support networks, for example pastoral care and community networks, to provide community support, referral, and healthy mindset programmes for workers and families. Expand counselling and psychosocial support outside of the capital, including explore the potential to establish a counselling hotline. Offer workshops to help families understand the challenges faced by returning workers, and vice versa, to foster supportive environments and ease the transition back into community life.



Participants from the Famili I Kam Bak workshop. © IOM 2025

7. Addressing ongoing economic issues at the structural level

There are several issues in the economic dimension, including the cost of remittances, that could be addressed more effectively at the structural level. Further, the Vanuatu and Australian governments should address the ongoing challenges for Vanuatu's labour mobility workers in accessing their superannuation payments in a more comprehensive way⁴¹.

2.4 Reintegration Support Services

Given Vanuatu's limited resources and capacity constraints, it is important to identify and build upon the already existing reintegration support services. While many of the projects show promising and positive outcomes, the challenges affecting all of them include:

1. *Limited scale:* most of these exist at the preliminary or pilot level and expanding the scale to cover the 16,000+ migrant workers is very challenging from a resource and cost perspective.
2. *Limited availability beyond Port Vila and Luganville:* most of the programs are offered only in Port Vila, Efate, with some offerings in Luganville, Santo, greatly limited accessibility to much of the rural population.

3. *Limited applicability:* Most of the projects have a specific focus, such as developing small businesses. While this is an important opportunity for some, for most migrant workers it is not the right option, given limited means, limited education, and limited aptitude in the area.

Further details on preliminary mapping of support and services in Vanuatu can be found in the [Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers Report, Annex 3](#).

One of the key recommendations for LMRS is to “foster the inclusion of communities of origin in reintegration planning and strengthen their resilience”⁴². This approach reflected the critical role identified for communities in the new LMP; yet, community members consulted as part of the LMRS development process indicated their lack of awareness regarding labour mobility. Building on these suggestions, a preliminary outline for a community-based Approach to Labour Mobility and Reintegration is provided in Annex 2, based largely on the provincial consultations conducted between September and December 2024 in Tanna, Santo, and Malekula, as part of the strategy development process, along with subsequent stakeholder consultations completed in November and December 2024.

41 IOM (2024) *Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers*.

https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2024-10/vanuatu-reintegration-report_fa_web.pdf, pp. 37-40.

42 IOM (2017). *Towards an integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return*.

https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf P. 9.

3. Vanuatu Labour Mobility Reintegration Strategy (LMRS)

3.1 Strategy Rationale

A holistic approach to labour mobility recognizes that effective and sustainable reintegration is an integral part of the overall process. To do so, having a Labour Migration Reintegration Strategy in place will ensure that returnees can effectively reintegrate into their home communities, while maximizing economic gains and fostering community cohesion.

A lack of proper planning can lead to missed economic opportunities as the skills and experiences of returnees are not effectively utilized, potentially increasing unemployment, underemployment, and the reliance on remigration. Socially, it can cause disintegration and isolation for returning migrant workers, affecting community cohesion. Additionally, without proper support, returning migrants may face psychosocial challenges, impacting their overall well-being and productivity. Therefore, a structured reintegration strategy, which outlines the support structures and processes, is crucial to maximize the benefits of labour migration for both the migrant workers and for Vanuatu.

3.2 Strategy Vision

The vision of this LMRS is to achieve sustainable reintegration, according to IOM's Integrated Approach to Reintegration, where returnees attain economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being. This strategy aims to maximize economic gains, foster community connection, and ensure productive investment of remittances and skills transfer, thereby enhancing the overall well-being and productivity of returnees, optimizing choice, and contributing to the sustainable development of Vanuatu.



Labour Day 2024 event. © IOM 2024

3.3 Strategy Objectives

The aim of this LMRS is to provide a clear, coordinated and realistic direction to achieve the vision mentioned above, contributing to better decision-making and helping governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to align resources⁴³ and efforts to increase development impacts in Vanuatu. It will do so by providing support in:

1. Economic Reintegration:



Support returning workers and their families to use the remittances, skills and experiences they gained abroad to contribute to sustainable livelihoods for themselves, their families and local communities.

2. Social Reintegration:



Support returning workers in gaining access to social services, education/training, healthcare, and other types of support and services they required.

3. Psychosocial Reintegration:



Support returning workers to effectively (re)connect with and contribute to their families and communities, as well as access to mental health and psychosocial services.

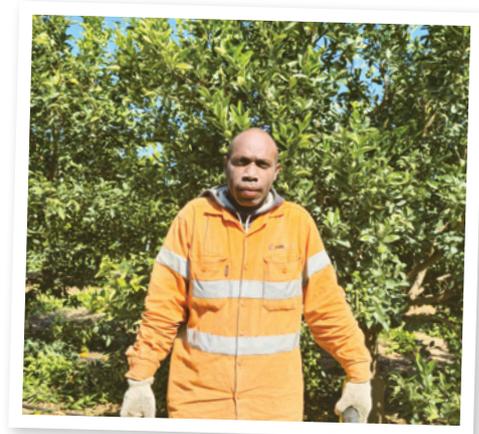
Given the circular nature of labour migration in Vanuatu, the LMRS should promote smooth transitions between Vanuatu and countries or destination, enhancing migrant workers overall experience and productivity. Further, it is key for the strategy to align with Vanuatu NSDP and the LMP, among others, to promote a holistic approach to reintegration that includes economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions.

3.4 Guiding Principles

The development of the LMRS was guided by the following principles, drawn from the Reintegration for Ni-Vanuatu Migrant Workers report, aimed at creating an integrated strategy that is:

- Nuanced and sensitive to the diversity of experience and context in Vanuatu
- Balanced and sustainable, with the ultimate goal being migration by choice not necessity
- Holistic and based on the needs of returnees, their communities and Vanuatu's socioeconomic and governance context
- Rights-based and involving the participation and empowerment of all parties, particularly workers, their families, and their communities
- Based on evidence and continuous learning; and
- Built on strong partnerships and coordination across all relevant stakeholders in Vanuatu and overseas.

Following the rationale, vision, objectives, and guiding principles, the next sections present the 3 strategic priorities of the LMRS, which are economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration. Each priority area includes structural, social, and individual level interventions.



PALM worker in Australia. © DOL Vanuatu 2024

⁴³ After the assessment phase, potential reintegration initiatives will be prioritized according to available budget. Whenever possible, responsibilities and costs should be shared by various stakeholders.

3.5 Strategic Priority 1: Economic Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants

3.5.1 Structural Level Support for Economic Reintegration

1. Ensure strategic economic reintegration planning uses data as a foundation

In order for reintegration to be effective, a framework must be in place at the structural level. Therefore, the first action will be to develop evidence-based and integrated labour mobility policies, strategies, structures and implementation plans that are integrated, informed by data, and executed through meaningful initiatives at all levels.

Specific activities will include the development of adequate data collection mechanisms, including data-sharing agreements between key government departments, and data bases. This entails an integration of labour mobility data bases with other databases, such as civil registry and immigration. It will also include regular review of the implementation of the LMP, revised SEA, LMIS, NSDP, NHRD and other key acts and policies to ensure alignment and coordination between the different components of the overall labour mobility program.

2. Strengthen institutional framework and ensure adequate government resources and services are available to support reintegration services

Once a framework is in place, adequate services and structures must be provided, and institutional capacity be developed to support effective economic reintegration. Another key component of this action is to ensure that adequate funding is available for reintegration support services.

3. Expand and improve accessibility of support services and service delivery to facilitate effective economic reintegration

This set of activities focuses on mapping and substantively expanding existing economic support services, grants, programs, and incentives, including economic support for community labour mobility projects, employer incentives for worker reintegration and worker business support grants. Also included is the development and launch of a skills recognition and certification review system, and finally, the development of more equitable funding, resources and support for pre-departure, pre-return (in destination countries), and reintegration training and awareness raising across programmes. A related set of activities is to work with the Department of Customs and Inland Revenue and other government agencies to allow for duty/customs concessions for returnees to bring back items required for self-employment and livelihood opportunities.

4. Promote access to training, education, employment opportunities and employment pathways

This set of activities focuses specifically on mapping of existing reintegration service providers, programmes, and training/education and employment opportunities to support economic reintegration, both in Vanuatu and in receiving countries, and develop a system for effectively integrating these services and programs into the pre-departure, the migration period, and the reintegration portions of the labour mobility cycle.

5. Promote enhanced access to and support from the banking system, including access to bank accounts, loans, and saving systems

To promote effective reintegration workers and returnees must be provided with better access to bank accounts, bank loans, and saving systems. This part of the strategy focuses on working with receiving countries and with Vanuatu banks to provide increased and more effective regulation in and support of exchange rates and remittance transfers channels and fees.

Economic Reintegration



1.1 Structural Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Ensure strategic economic reintegration planning uses data as a foundation

ACTION 2: Strengthen institutional framework and ensure adequate government resources and services are available to support reintegration services

ACTION 3: Expand and improve accessibility of support services and service delivery to facilitate effective economic reintegration

ACTION 4: Promote access to training, education, employment opportunities and employment pathways

ACTION 5: Promote enhanced access to and support from the banking system, including access to bank accounts, loans, and saving systems

1.2 Community Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Optimize access to information to make informed decisions on LM and reintegration options and opportunities

ACTION 2: Pilot, support, and optimize community-based economic reintegration projects and support services

1.3 Individual Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Ensure access to training, education and skills development opportunities to support economic development

ACTION 2: Provide economic support services to facilitate effective reintegration of returnees



Mama kitchen participants. © IOM 2024

3.5.2 Community Level Support for Economic Reintegration

1. Optimize access to information to make informed decisions on LM and reintegration options and opportunities

The main focus for community level interventions for economic integration is first on enhancing community awareness of labour mobility and labour mobility reintegration, and second, on developing and implementing community-based approaches to labour mobility and reintegration.

The first action will be an awareness campaign at the national, provincial and community level, designed to provide communities with fact-based information on labour mobility – the programmes themselves, the recruitment process, contractual and financial components, and other relevant factors. Having an accurate understanding of the programs and factors involved is essential to promoting informed decisions on LM and LMRS options and opportunities.

2. Pilot, support, and optimize community-based economic reintegration projects and support services

The second action will be to assess, pilot, support, and over time, scale up a community-based approach to labour mobility and reintegration, with an emphasis on collaborative economic projects, with investments from both the community and the workers. Details on the proposed approach can be found in Annex 2.

3.5.3 Individual Level Support for Economic Integration

1. Ensure access to training, education and skills development opportunities to support economic development

The focus of the individual level interventions for economic reintegration is first on providing migrant and returning workers with access to training, education and skills development opportunities to support economic development. Key areas for training would include financial literacy, workplace environment and life skills, and training related to specific occupations, business start-up and projects, consistent with individual and community needs. Training delivery should include face-to-face and digital platforms, and cover training during pre-departure, while overseas, and upon return. Support from employers overseas, for example access to skills training, would be particularly encouraged especially where worker needs and interests are clearly identified.

2. Provide economic support services to facilitate effective reintegration of returnees

The second action in this area deals with providing various direct forms of economic support and incentives to individual returnees and their families to support income generating opportunities.

3.6 Strategic Priority 2: Social Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants

Social support and social services are crucial for the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants. It will help returnees feel a sense of belonging and enable them to positively influence their community of return. Assistance will take effect through strengthening the availability, access and referrals to services (i.e. housing, legal, health, food, water and other public services) for returnees and their families, and where possible, enhancing social security schemes.

Given Vanuatu's vulnerability to extreme weather events and natural hazards, this area will also incorporate disaster preparedness and resilience-building measures, ensuring that migrant workers and families have access to information and resources to prepare for and respond to natural hazards and integrating disaster risk reduction into housing and infrastructure investments.

Close collaboration with local government, NGOs, INGOs and communities working in these areas will be essential to ensuring success in social reintegration.

3.6.1 Structural Level Support for Social Reintegration

1. Data collection, review and enhancement of government systems and processes

To ensure structural level support for social reintegration, a review is needed of institutional frameworks, infrastructures and systems to better manage social services and address diverse needs of returnees, with the aim of enhancing government systems and processes to assess and manage social impact of labour migration. This will involve first data collection and review designed to inform enhancement of governmental and non-governmental systems, processes and resources, followed by the design and systematic enhancement of adequate services and institutional capacity to support social reintegration.

3.6.2 Community Level Support for Social Reintegration

1. Develop and implement effective and collaborative community-based social integration models

The main focus here will be on the development and implementation of effective and collaborative community-based social integration models. Specific examples include community planning for cyclone resistant housing and evacuation centres, community development of local clinics and community schools, community savings programs for times of disaster, community food security and water supply projects.

These activities will not only engage and empower local communities, but they will also strengthen bonds within the community and provide a special role for migrant workers to be involved and to contribute, prior, during and after their work abroad.

3.6.3 Individual Level Support for Social Reintegration

1. Expanded delivery and accessibility of pre-departure and reintegration workshops, information, and services to support workers and families to mitigate negative impacts of labour mobility

At the individual level, the major focus will be on supporting access to existing and needed social support services for returnees and their families. Action steps include raising awareness on available social services and assistance and identifying existing and possible support mechanisms. Also, work is needed to expand accessibility to social services, including mobile and digital platforms, and supporting new services and initiatives informed by the needs of returnees and their families.

Social Reintegration



2.1 Structural Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Data collection, review and enhancement of government systems and processes

2.2 Community Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Develop and implement effective and collaborative community-based social integration models

2.3 Individual Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Expanded delivery and accessibility of pre-departure and reintegration workshops, information, and services to support workers and families to mitigate negative impacts of labour mobility



A returned migrant worker.
© DOL Vanuatu 2024



Food preservation class for Mama's Kitchen.
© IOM 2024

3.7 Strategic Priority 3: Psychosocial Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants

Psychosocial reintegration aims to support the psychosocial well-being of returnees and their families, encompassing emotional, behavioral, and cultural aspects. It focuses on enhancing returnees' ability to form and maintain positive social networks within communities, to foster wider acceptance and counteract the negative stigma towards returnees, and to enable them to cope with potential drivers of (re)migration.

The major challenge in this area is the limited existence of mental health services and infrastructure in the country.

Support in the psychosocial area will therefore aim to strengthen access to existing psychosocial services and support programmes, explore expansion of services, improve awareness and support of communities in relation to psychosocial needs and issues, and encourage the development of personal and social support networks.

Public awareness campaigns, community-level support groups, and participatory activities will strengthen the returnee's reengagement with the values, ways of living, language, moral principles, and traditions of Vanuatu.

3.7.1 Structural Level Support for Psychosocial Reintegration

1. Review existing framework, networks and plans to integrate and/or expand psychosocial needs into programs, systems and support services

At the structural level, the objective will be to review and enhance country-wide supportive and accessible psychosocial reintegration assistance for returnees and their families, through 3 related sets of actions.

In addition to review and expansion, consideration will be given to training programs for counsellors and/or stakeholders providing counselling support, to better equip them in addressing the specific needs of returnees and their families. Ideally this will be done in collaboration with donor agencies, international education partners, and INGOs.

A farm in Australia employing Vanuatu workers.
© DOL Vanuatu 2024

Psychosocial Reintegration



3.1 Structural Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Review existing framework, networks and plans to integrate and/or expand psychosocial needs into programs, systems and support services

3.2 Community Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Identify and build local psychosocial capacities to address needs of returnees and families

3.3 Individual Level Priority Areas

ACTION 1: Integrate psychosocial needs into programs, systems and support services



A returned migrant worker in North Efate.
© DOL Vanuatu 2024



3.7.2 Community Level Support for Psychosocial Reintegration

1. Identify and build local psychosocial capacities to address needs of returnees and families

At the community level, the main need to be addressed is for communities to develop a better understanding of psychosocial needs of workers and families back home, and to develop enhanced capacity to collectively address their psychosocial needs. Activity areas include needs assessment, building on existing resources such as World Vision Vanuatu's Pastoral Care study, strategy development, and capacity development initiatives.

3.7.3 Individual Level Support for Psychosocial Reintegration

1. Integrate psychosocial needs into programs, systems and support services

Looking at the individual level support for psychosocial reintegration, it is essential that support is provided for returnees and their families throughout the labour migration cycle. To that end, the strategy proposes three interrelated sets of activities. The first one proposes the development and/or strengthening of networks of returnees and their families, particularly women and youth to ensure social contact, sharing of experiences, providing mutual support and more, along with other support and integration activities.

The second area involves the development of comprehensive referral systems to direct returnees and their families to available and relevant support services, including counselling services, including at the community level.

Lastly, expanded delivery and accessibility of pre-departure, pre-return and reintegration workshops, information, and services must be ensured to help migrant workers and families mitigate the negative impacts of labour mobility participation.



Cooking class for Mama's Kitchen.
© IOM 2024



A PALM worker and DOL officer in Australia.
© DOL Vanuatu 2024

Annex 1 Action Plan (2025-2028)

Strategic Action Area 1: Economic Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants



1.1 Structural Level

Objective: Integrated LM policy, reintegration strategy, support structure, and support services, informed by data

ACTION 1: Ensure strategic economic reintegration planning uses data as a foundation (LMP Pillar 2)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Data Collection activities		
1. Conduct Labour Force Survey (LMP P3O1(3)) (C1.1) including labour migration reintegration questions	VNSO, DOL, DLA, VCCI, IOM, DoCC, ILO, SPC	2025–2026
2. Conduct comprehensive Market Demand Analysis (LMP P3O1(2)) (C1.1) to determine economic sector gaps and opportunities (the current and future demand for products or services within specific markets/communities)		
3. Promote data collection at national, provincial, and area council level and establish protocol links with appropriate resource services (LMP P2O3(1))		
2. Data base systems and integration activities		
1. Review of existing platforms to better collect and connect labour migration reintegration data, including workers registered on IRD (LMP P2O1/O4), community profiles (managed by AAs), immigration database (MIDAS), and data that can be captured from other programmes/agents.	DOL, DLA, VIS, other government offices, Recruitment agents	2025–2026
2. Further develop and strengthen the IRD as a fit-for-reintegration database system, to continuously consolidate up-to-date labour migration data collected from available sources to get a comprehensive view (LMP P3O4) (C1.1)		
3. Regular review of design, functioning, interface, coordination and protection of databases		

ACTION 2: Strengthen institutional framework and ensure adequate government resources and services are available to support reintegration services (LMP Pillar 3)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Policy implementation, integration and funding activities		
1. Establish Labour Mobility Supply Management and Reintegration Committee under the Labour Migration Council (LMP P102/02, see also LMP Implementation Arrangements 4.2.1)	DOL, DLA, AAs, Customs Department, Trade unions, MFEM, IOM, ILO, VCCI, TLAC	2025–2028
2. Develop M&E framework for the implementation of LMRS, which will be operationalized and overseen by the above-mentioned Supply Management and Reintegration Committee.		
3. Regular monitoring and evaluation of LMRS in alignment with other related policies including LMP, revised SEA, NSDP, NHRD and coordination		
4. Regular review of LMRS resource allocation for implementation and funding of key initiatives		
5. Assist registration for return workers of LM programmes accessible at AC / Provincial level (LMP P2O3)		
6. Support the recognition of skills and experience gained by returnees, for example through promoting for the establishment of sectoral or skill-based minimum wage that better recognize experience and skills of workers		
7. Explore duty/customs concessions for returnees to bring back items for self-employment and livelihood opportunities		

2. Human resources, SOPs and Institutional capacities	DOL, DLA, AAs	2025–2026
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase Reintegration Officers within ESU and stronger collaboration with provincial labour officers and area administrators to improve accessibility of services at provincial level (LMP P1O4 P3O1(7)) 2. SOPs for economic, social and psychosocial reintegration case management and referral services (P3O2-3/02-3) 		
ACTION 3: Expand and improve accessibility of support services and service delivery to facilitate effective economic reintegration (LMP Pillar 3)		
Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Map existing reintegration service providers, programmes, and training/education opportunities to support economic reintegration (in Vanuatu & destination countries), including financial literacy, investment strategies, job and workplace skills, business skills and more (LMP P3O1)	UNCDF, DOL, DFAT, MFAT	2026–2028
2. Map and expand existing economic support services, grants, programs, and incentives, including employer incentives for worker reintegration and worker business support grants (LMP P3O1)	DOL, V-LAB, VCCI, DARD, APTC, NUV, VIT, RTC, VQA, Trade Union, VAC, TLAC, MoET, DFAT, VNPF	
3. More equitable funding, resources and support for pre-departure, pre-return (in destination countries), and reintegration training and awareness raising across programmes, including union-supported programs		
4. Improve access to and the range of superannuation services and information sharing during pre-departure, overseas migration and upon return (LMP P5O2)		
ACTION 4: Promote access to training, education, employment opportunities and employment pathways (LMP P3A3)		
Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Develop and launch skills recognition system, including recognition of prior learning and experience, and certification review system (LMP P3O1(4)), jointly with employers, countries of destination, and VQA	DOL, MFAT, DFAT, VQA, VCCI, Oversea Employers, Agents, MoET	2025–2028
2. Better engage with employers in destination countries, through dialogues and informational materials, to promote workers access to skills and training opportunities overseas and available reintegration support		
3. Provide quotas for scholarships for secondary and tertiary education enrolment in Vanuatu for returnees (LMP P3O4(7))		
ACTION 5: Promote enhanced access to and support from the banking system, including access to bank accounts, loans, saving systems (LMP P5O2)		
Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Support increased access to bank accounts, loans, pension, and savings systems before departure and upon return (LMP P5O2)	DOL, Banks, UNCDF, VNPF,	2025–2028
2. Increase transparency and access to information on remittance options and fees (LMP P5O2)	RBV, Money transfer providers	
3. Review and provide improvement suggestions on the remittance options, service providers and fees (LMP P5O2)		

1.2 Community Level

Objective: Enhance community awareness of labour mobility and reintegration and expand on community-based approaches to LM and reintegration

ACTION 1: Optimize access to information to make informed decisions on labour mobility and reintegration options and opportunities

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and roll out LM communication and awareness campaigns targeting migrant workers, their families and communities, particularly on LM cycle, planning and preparation, existing reintegration service providers, training/ education opportunities to support economic reintegration (in Vanuatu & destination countries) (LMP P3O1/O3) 2. Increase public awareness about the contribution of migrant workers through annual sharing of labour migration statistics and update them every year, and publishing success stories 3. Promote decentralisation and localization through training Provincial and Area Council officers and community leaders on reintegration strategy and resources (LMP P3O1(7)) 	DOL, WVV, IOM, VSP, DoCC, DLA, AAs, other partners	2025–2026

ACTION 2: Pilot, support, and optimize community-based economic reintegration projects and support services (LMP P3O3-4)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot, support, assess, and scale up a community approach to labour mobility and reintegration development and economic interventions, through initiatives like ‘canvas based PHRIA support’ (LMP P3O3-4) 2. Provide needed training, economic incentives, capacity development support and guidelines for community-based approach (LMP P3O3-4) 3. Document learnings and share experiences and success stories to replicate initiatives in other communities 	DOL, VCCI, DoCC, DARD, DLA, AAs, Cooperatives, VCAN, VCCRP, USP	2026–2027

Seasonal workers returning home. © IOM 2024



1.3 Individual Level

Objective: Improve access to livelihood development opportunities and economic support services for returnees

ACTION 1: Ensure access to training, education and skills development opportunities to support economic development (LMP P3)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Map existing training/education opportunities that support economic reintegration (in Vanuatu & destination countries) for returnees, including job/workplace and business skills (LMP P3O1)	DOL, V-LAB, VCCI, DARD, VSP, APTC, YCV, USP, NUV, IOM, WVV, SAVE, Overseas employers, DFAT and MFAT	2025–2028
2. Expand finance and investment related programs, access and platform (including e-learning), with a focus on financial management (budgeting, exchange rates, remittance costs, investment and savings goals and strategies) across provinces, with the families (LMP P3O2)		
3. Provide technical, vocational, and skills-based training programs at central and provincial levels for returnees; linking with an inventory of existing courses in destination countries and upskilling opportunities, including apprenticeships, internships, on-the job training, professional mentorship programmes, followed by employment pathways (LMP P3O1-2)		
4. Develop and enhance recruitment/job matching platform to link skills acquired overseas with employment opportunities in Vanuatu, including career guidance and counselling for returnees (LMP P3O2)		

ACTION 2: Provide economic support services to facilitate effective reintegration of returnees (LMP P3)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Expand economic support services, business opportunity grants, and other economic incentive programmes for returnees (LMP P3O4(5-6))	DOL, VCCI, VLAB, Cooperatives	2025–2028
2. Design, expand, and develop industry/sector-based pilot business development and mentorship projects, such as VLAB Yumi Grow Vanuatu and VCCI Work Ready Investment Ready, during pre-departure, pre-return and reintegration stages, focusing on specific sectors such as agricultural, construction, eco-tourism, elderly care, carpentry, automobile and equipment mechanics (LMP P3O4(5))		
3. Support/involve local employers to develop labour mobility best practices, and awareness, including job creation incentives and job security/protection where possible (LMP P3O4(5))		

Strategic Action Area 2: Social Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants



Structural Level

Objective: Review and enhance government systems and processes to assess and manage social impact of labour mobility

ACTION 1: Data collection, review and enhancement of government systems and processes

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Enhance capacity and resources (funding and human resource) for governmental and non-governmental systems to provide social support and welfare, including case management, to effectively manage family and child welfare cases, labour disputes, and other social needs (LMP P4O2)	VWC, Child desk MJCS, DOL, DWA, UNICEF, INGOs/ NGOs, Trade Unions	2025–2028
2. Conduct gender and social impact assessment, including review of Vanuatu's engagement in labour mobility schemes to address social, gender, family, and development impacts, and/ or engage with and respond to existing social impact research (LMP P4O2)		
3. Provide access to and guidance on the development of climate resilient infrastructures and community preparedness, particularly housing plans using good practices and existing blueprints (LMP P4O4(1-2))	DOL, DARD, DoCC, IOM	

Community Level

Objective: Support communities in developing awareness and processes for managing social issues related to labour mobility

ACTION 1: Develop and implement effective and collaborative community-based social integration models

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Develop, publish and distribute guidelines, including models, stories and examples, of how communities and community associations can effectively support social reintegration, particularly on community projects (clinics, schools, water supplies) and climate resilient and preparedness (LMP P3O3)	DOL, Malvatumauri, VCC, MJCS, DLA, AAs, other partners	2026–2028
2. Encourage and incentivize community development initiatives in collaboration with Area Councils to address needs and challenges facing migrant workers, their families and communities as a whole during overseas employment and upon return (LMP P3O3)		

Individual Level

Objective: Map and enhance existing and needed social reintegration support services for workers and their families

ACTION 1: Expanded delivery and accessibility of pre-departure and reintegration workshops, information, and services to support workers and families to mitigate negative impacts of labour mobility (LMP P3O1)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Map and provide information on existing social reintegration support, services and training opportunities (in Vanuatu & destination countries) (LMP P3O1)	DOL, DFAT, MFAT	2025–2027
2. Mainstream social reintegration content into all pre-departure and reintegration briefings/trainings and service providers activities (working with Community of Care model (LMP P3O1)		
3. Expand family-centred labour mobility support programmes, such as Famili I Redi and Famili I Kam Bak, to all provinces, using provincial training centres, Area Councils, returned workers, community leads and INGOs/NGOs and explore minimum training modalities for worker registration (LMP P2O3-4)	DOL, IOM, WVV, Agents, trade unions, INGO/NGOs, AAs, Malvatumauri, VCC	
4. Ensure workers are fully supported in understanding and handling issues regarding contracts, managing injuries, death, criminal charges or imprisonment, prior departure and upon return (LMP P5O2)		

Strategic Action Area 3: Psychosocial Reintegration of Returning Labour Migrants



Structural Level

Objective: Enhance sustainable, collaborative, and accessible psychosocial support country-wide

ACTION 1: Review existing framework, networks and plans to integrate and/or expand psychosocial needs into programs, systems and support services (LMP P3O1)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Map existing and needed services, including provincial counselling centers, referral pathways, and potential expansion of mobile and/or remote psychosocial (i.e. mindcare unit) services (LMP P3O1)	DOL, MindCare, MOH, Child desk MJCS, REACH centre, WVV, VWC, UNICEF	2025–2028
2. Identify possible international support for the expansion of mental health services in the country, to work with MindCare unit (LMP P4O2)		
3. Review existing agreements on the provision of psychosocial support to workers both pre-departures, in destination countries and upon return (LMP P5O1)	MOH, MFAICET, MOIA,	
4. Build capacity for Country Liaison Officers (CLO) in destination countries to better respond to the psychosocial needs of migrant workers (LMP P5O2)	DOL	

Community Level

Objective: Communities understand and are involved in addressing psychosocial needs of workers and their families

ACTION 1: Identify and build local psychosocial capacities to address needs of returnees and families (LMP P5O2)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Build capacity for Area Councils and community leaders on referral pathways, psychosocial well-being, issues and needs (LMP P3O1 / P4O1)	DOL, DLA, AAs, MindCare Unit, MOH, Police, Child desk MJCS	2026–2028
2. Roll out community awareness programmes to address LM compliance issues e.g. alcohol and substance abuse, violence and other anti-social behaviours, and family support systems (LMP P4O1)		
3. Develop community-based psychosocial care, by leveraging the Community of Care models and explore pastoral care from clinics, schools and churches to address psychosocial needs (LMP P4O1)		
4. Provide psychosocial support and counselling training to team leaders and CLOs		
5. Establish and/or strengthen provincial level support desks to address family issues (LMP P3O1 / P4O1)		

Individual Level

Objective: Effectively support workers and families' psychosocial needs throughout the LM cycle

ACTION 1: Integrate psychosocial needs into programs, systems and support services (LMP P4O1)

Activities	Key Implementing Partners	Timeframe
1. Integrate psychosocial components into LM awareness programs, pre-departure briefings/ workshops, and reintegration workshops (LMP P4O1)	DOL, DLA, AAs, CLOs, Trade Union, MindCare Unit, VWC, Child desk MJCS, INGOs/ NGOs, other partners	2026–2028
2. Ensure family and community psychosocial training and support is offered at the community level (LMP P4O1)		
3. Develop platforms and events where workers can stay connected with other workers for support, assisted by social workers, trade unions, and CLOs in destination countries where possible (LMP P5O2)		
4. Develop support services, including in-person and online counselling and hotline, to address issues related to psychosocial well-being, substance abuse, family concerns, violence and access to justice/legal aids while overseas and upon return (LMP P4O1)		

Annex 2 Guidance for Community-Based Initiatives

A key component of the 2024 Labour Mobility Policy is on managing community development through labour mobility. Recognizing that labour mobility has had both positive and negative impacts on workers, families, and communities, it is felt that altering how we think about and how we implement labour mobility programs in the country may significantly change the way in which they contribute to development, at the individual, the community, and the national level.

This guidance note is provided as a resource for stakeholders to support decision-making and implementation of community-based initiatives and actions. It is based on provincial consultations with community members on Tanna, Santo, and Malekula islands; and to be used for information purposes only as it is yet to be piloted in practice.

Key components of the shift in perspective include the following:

The cycle of labour mobility

- Labour mobility, especially in Vanuatu, must be understood as a cycle, and as a cycle that often repeats. A singular focus on one aspect of labour mobility, such as recruitment, preparation, or reintegration is not effective, as each component is affected by other components in the cycle.

Labour mobility as a complex process, affecting workers, families and communities

- While labour mobility is and will remain an individual choice, its impact goes far beyond that of the individual, affecting the well-being of the family, available resources within the community, and more.

Community-based initiatives area core component of the new LMP

- Pillar 3, Output 3: Guidelines, training, workshops developed on 'managing community development through labour mobility'.
- Pillar 3, Output 4: Pilot Projects on community development designed, implemented and monitored, including also private sector development in specific sectors.

Community-Based initiatives are consistent with the principles of the VLMRS, especially

- Rights-based and involving the participation and empowerment of all parties, particularly workers, their families, and their communities.
- Holistic and based on the needs of returnees, their communities and Vanuatu's socioeconomic and governance context.
- Balanced and sustainable, with the ultimate goal being migration by choice not necessity.

Provincial and community level consultations showed:

- There is a substantial lack of fact-based information and awareness raising regarding labour mobility.
- Positive and negative impacts of labour mobility are recognized, consistent with the research reports.
- Area Councils and communities have a strong interest in being involved in data collection for labour mobility, potentially filling an important data gap.
- Area Councils and communities also have a strong interest in identifying a community-based model, and being trained to support migrant workers and their families throughout the LM cycle, including through community investments in the workers by providing funding for initial travel costs, family support during travel, and more.
- Communities are interested in finding an approach that would allow labour mobility to be community-supportive and community-strengthening initiatives.

In order to implement a community-based approach to labour mobility, including in reintegration phase, the following components are proposed:



1. Awareness Campaign at the national, provincial and local level

In spite of the many years that Vanuatu workers have participated in labour mobility schemes, provincial consultations indicated that there was a lot of misinformation and incomplete information at community level, ranging from mis/incomplete understanding of the schemes, the selection methods, the contracts and conditions of work, deductions and deducting parties, actual monetary gain from participation and more.

Awareness campaigns should include:

- Information about the labour schemes, requirements and conditions for participation, selection process, preparation requirements and options, reintegration programs, support services, etc.
- Realistic and accurate information about recruitment fees and migration related costs, i.e. initial expenses, expenses to be reimbursed (through deductions), living costs and living cost deductions, actual net income post-deductions, exchange rates, cost of remittance, and cost of importing tools, equipment, etc.
- Better understanding that the positive impacts of participating in labour migration programs for migrant workers cannot be acquired in isolation from the need to act on the reality of their personal and community lives.

The DOL has already begun a national social media campaign focusing on worker experiences and success stories. This campaign should continue, but be complemented by awareness raising sessions and trainings at the provincial level, jointly with Area Councils, chiefs and community leaders. Trainers should include DOL/DLA staff at the local level and returned workers, and where possible to also include trade unions and focus on basic facts about the labour schemes, success stories, the labour migration cycle, key concepts of reintegration and available support services. This effort can also include data collection at the local level, to complement and support national level data collection.

The intended outcome of this is to promote fact-based, complete and up-to-date information sharing and community understanding of labour mobility schemes, processes, costs, benefits, requirements, and conditions and entitlements.

2. Community-Investment in Workers

Work with the Area Council, returned workers, DOL, and other partners to develop partnerships between workers and communities, that include:

- Community investment in the individual workers through:
 - Contributions to covering up front fees and costs for labour mobility.
 - Commitment to care for and support worker families during their absence.
 - Community planning for worker supported projects upon return, aligned with community needs, and worker skills and interests.
- Community-based training on labour mobility for migrant workers and their families, using adapted versions of Famili I Redi and Famili I Kam Bak programs, delivered by DOL, community organizations/members, Area Council, and returned workers.
- Community awareness and training on labour mobility to include modules on economic development and project planning, in partnership with VCCI and DARD.

3. Involve communities in labour mobility recruitment

- Jointly with DOL, agents, and trade unions, involve communities in planning for labour mobility, particular during the recruitment process.
- Work with communities and agents to develop guidelines for well-planned and inclusive recruitment that support:
 - Small groups of workers from communities, to allow for social support and network while overseas.
 - Inclusion of women and other groups in recruitment plan.
 - Avoid over recruitment from single communities.
 - Adequate preparation for and understanding of employment contracts, terms and conditions.
- Working with DOL, agents, and trade unions to ensure adequate preparation and time for pre-departure briefing.

4. Community-based enterprise and social project planning and implementation

In order for labour mobility to be a positive force for community development, early training, consultation, and planning of economic and/or social initiatives at the community level should take place. Such initiatives can build on DARD and VCCI's Worker Ready Investment Ready model, adapted for community use. Other support can be drawn from DLA, Area Councils, Community leaders, DOL (National/Provincial), agents, IOM, WVV, APTC, VIT, and RTCs. Key components include:

- Develop community level planning by identifying major needs, priorities, and opportunities.
 - Develop and register community associations, cooperatives, and social enterprises.
 - Identify viable collective social projects and/or businesses and income generating activities.
 - Identify skills needs, resources and capital, and ways to have this supported through labour mobility.
- Enhanced financial management training for workers, their families and the communities, covering financial literacy, savings and investment strategies.

5. Training and Support for Community Economic Enterprises and Social Projects

Through the government and other educational, training providers, and business development agencies, support the growth and functioning of CEEs and/or social projects through training, mentorship, grants, incentives, and other support.

- Training on CEEs and social projects development and planning.
- Government incentives or small grants for community initiatives and/or community associations.
- Government support to facilitate bringing back tools, equipment, supplies, without import taxes and with reduced costs.

6. Support structures for workers and families

Put in place community supported processes and structures, particularly for families back home, while the worker is abroad.

- Interfamily support networks (i.e. the Strengthening Seasonal Workers Family Programme).
- Regular community communication, dialogues and updates.
- Care and initiatives for families and children.
- Worker support structures with examples of how they might be activated or support in different situations.

7. Worker Reintegration upon Return

Through the government and other educational, training providers, and business development agencies, support the growth and functioning of CEEs and/or social projects through training, mentorship, grants, incentives, and other support.

- Mandatory return briefing, planning and data collection through provincial DOL and/or with support from AAs and community leaders.
- Community level return ceremony, community planning for CEE and/or social projects, return support network for workers and others.

8. Follow-up and support

Upon worker return, ensure adequate follow-up and support to allow for:

- Effective national, provincial, and community data collection on reintegration, labour mobility, worker and family well-being.
- Support grants and incentives for reintegration projects:
 - Individuals and communities receive financial, educational, and skills-based support for the implementation of planned collective projects, or guidance on choices for remigration.
- Knowledge sharing sessions for the community once workers come back, e.g. around agriculture skills, packing skills, etc.
- Community savings programs for small business loans, support for new initiatives, etc.
- Community-based counselling support for workers and their families.



www.iom.int