



JÖNKÖPING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL  
JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY

# **The Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Worker:** Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending

Master Thesis within:	Political Science
Author:	Lina Ericsson
Tutor:	Benny Hjern
Edited by:	Irma Janet Oropeza Eng and Vivian Nilsson
Jönköping:	Spring 2009

# Magisteruppsats i statsvetenskap

**Titel:** The Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Worker

**Författare:** Lina Ericsson

**Handledare:** Benny Hjern, Professor

**Examinator:** Benny Hjern, Professor

**Datum:** 2008

**Ämnesord:** Vanuatu, Ni-Vanuatu, Recognised Seasonal Employer, RSE, RSE-arbetare, Nya Zeeland, NZ, Kiwiindustrin, Tauranga, Bay of Plenty, Big Toe, Pastoral Key-agency, Remitteringar, Utveckling, Autonomi, Söderhavsöar, Mindre Fältstudie, MFS.

---

## Sammanfattning

I april 2007 så startade Nya Zeeland (NZ) sitt Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) program. Programmet tillåter lågutbildade arbetare från Söderhavsöarna att erhålla fördelaktigt säsongarbete i NZ:s jordbruks industrier med upp till sju månader per arbetsperiod. Ett av de uttalade syftena med programmet är att avancera utvecklingen i arbetarnas hemländer, för vilket penningförsändelser från säsongarbetet har lyfts fram som huvudsakliga förmåner. Trots att tidigare insamlad data och intervjuer som berör dessa delar av programmet är marginella, så har alla studier indikerat klara förmåner för säsongarbetarna. Till skillnad från tidigare resultat, så påvisar denna studie nya insikter skildrade från ett perspektiv av 23 Ni-Vanuatu arbetare, och deras uppfattning om möjligheter till inkomst, sparande, och att kunna skicka penningförsändelser under en arbetsvistelse i juni 2008. Resultaten från studien pekar på en frånvaro av autonomi hos arbetarna att bestämma över hur deras inkomster skall spenderas, med negativa följder av att inte kunna skicka hem tillräckligt med pengar till sina anhöriga. Den identifierade primärorsaken till detta är framförallt den dubbelroll som NZ baserade företag, å ena sidan, kan spela som rekryterare av arbetskraft i Vanuatu, och å andra sidan, som förvaltare av arbetskraft i NZ. Denna dubbelroll skapar en mellanhandssituation som hindrar säsongarbetarna från att tillgå sina inkomster under sin vistelse i NZ. Slutsatsen, i detta exempel av 23 Ni-Vanuatu arbetare, påvisar att nivån utav penningförsändelser beror på typ av anställningsform, istället för individuellt sparande eller spenderande av inkomster, skillnader i inkomst, eller skillnader i tillgängligt arbete för respektive arbetare.

# Master Thesis in Political Science

**Title:** The Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Worker

**Author:** Lina Ericsson

**Tutor:** Benny Hjern, Professor

**Examiner:** Benny Hjern, Professor

**Date:** 2008

**Subject terms:** Vanuatu, Ni-Vanuatu, Recognised Seasonal Employer, RSE, RSE-Worker, New Zealand, NZ, Kiwi-industry, Tauranga, Bay of Plenty, Big Toe, Pastoral Key-agency, Remittances, Autonomy, Development, South-Pacific Islands, Minor Field Study, MFS.

---

## Abstract

In April 2007, New Zealand (NZ) launched the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. The scheme allows for unskilled workers from the Pacific Islands to enjoy the benefits of seasonal work in NZ's horticulture and viticulture industries for up to seven months at a time. One of the articulated objectives of the scheme is to advance the effects on development in the countries of origin of the workers, for which remittances have been stressed as key-benefits. Although previous data and interviews concerning these aspects are marginal, all studies indicate clear benefits for Pacific Islanders. In contrast, this study provides the novel insight to the individual views and perceptions of the earning, saving, spending and remittance possibilities of 23 Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers in June of 2008. The findings indicate an absence of autonomy among the individual RSE workers to decide over and manage the spending of their respective incomes, along with negative implications on the potential for workers to send remittances while working in NZ. Identified as the primary cause of this outcome, is the dual and simultaneous role that NZ based companies, on the one hand, can play as recruitment agents in Vanuatu, and on the other hand, as pastoral care agents in NZ. This twofold capacity creates a middle hand situation that severely restricts the possibilities for the workers to access their wages while in NZ. The conclusion therefore holds that, in this example of 23 Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers, the degree of remittances depends on the type of employment governing the participation of the workers in the scheme, as opposed to the individual spending and saving patterns, differences in earnings, or differences in the availability of work of each worker respectively.

## **Preface**

This thesis has been submitted to the Department of Political Science at Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master Degree in Political Science. The work of this study is awarded the equivalent weight of 15 Swedish University Credit Points, which according to Swedish standards roughly mounts to 10 weeks or 400 hours of work. As part of the study, travels to Vanuatu and New Zealand have been undertaken. Although the total amount of time spent in preparation of the field study, and in planning travel arrangements, scholarship applications, conducting actual travels, interviewing respondents, carrying out research, transcribing interviews, analyzing and reworking material, and so on, well exceeds the time officially accredited this thesis, the scope of the study should be viewed in light of the credit requirements. Moreover, to cover accommodation costs and travels from Sweden to Vanuatu, to New Zealand and back to Sweden, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has bestowed with a Minor Field Study (MFS) grant. Also, the Swedish National Board of Student Aid (CSN) has made funds available. Nevertheless, the amount of funding provided by these institutions has not covered the total costs of the study. Therefore, personal funds, although marginal, have been used. Accordingly, the limited scope of this thesis is well justified in light of the available funding and official accreditation requirements.

## **Acknowledgments**

There are some individuals that should be acknowledged in regards to this study, as it would not have been possible without them. First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Benny Hjern, who throughout the journey of this research has provided his expertise, assistance and advice. I would also like to give special recognition to Mrs. Chantal Côté, as she has been more than generous in assisting me throughout the application process for the MFS grant in her capacity as Head for the International Office at JIBS. Furthermore, since this thesis is the last part to be completed in fulfillment of the degree requirements, I would like to thank all faculty members of the Department of Political Science at JIBS that have served as my teachers during the track of my education. They have continuously contributed to my growing interest in the field. Also, I would like to thank David Vaeafe who is the Program Manager of the Pacific Cooperation Foundation, as well as Mr. McKenzie Kalotiti in his capacity as the Honorary Consul of Vanuatu to NZ, and Lesley Haines from NZ's Department of Labor, as they all have assisted me in my research while in NZ and back in Sweden. Finally, I would like to thank the most important contributors, namely all Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers that I have had the privilege to meet and who voluntarily choose to participate in this study.

## **Permission to Use**

Due recognition must be given to the author and the Department of Political Science at JIBS in any scholarly use which may be made of the material in this thesis.

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>AiP</b>	Approval in Principle Scheme
<b>ATR</b>	Agreement to Recruit
<b>DoL</b>	The New Zealand Department of Labor
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>INZ</b>	Immigration New Zealand
<b>MCXRC</b>	Medical and Chest X-Ray Certificate
<b>MOTU</b>	Motu Research Institute
<b>MWA</b>	Minimum Wage Act
<b>NRSEO</b>	National RSE Officers
<b>NZ</b>	New Zealand
<b>NZC</b>	The New Zealand Cabinet
<b>NZHRC</b>	The NZ Human Rights Commission
<b>NZWPA</b>	The NZ Wages Protection Act
<b>PCI</b>	Pacific Islands
<b>PFC</b>	Pacific Forum Countries

<b>RSE</b>	Recognised Seasonal Employer
<b>RSEs</b>	Recognised Seasonal Employers
<b>RSEREP</b>	RSE Research and Evaluation Program
<b>SWP</b>	Seasonal Work Permit Pilot Scheme
<b>SWV</b>	Seasonal Work Visas
<b>TBC</b>	Tuberculosis
<b>TRSE</b>	Transitional RSE
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UW</b>	University of Waikato
<b>VCL</b>	The Vanuatu Commissioner of Labor
<b>VDL</b>	The Vanuatu Department of Labor
<b>VoC</b>	Variation of Conditions
<b>WB</b>	The World Bank

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1	General Aim & Purpose of the Study	10
1.2	Demarcation & Target Group	10
1.3	Research Question	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Previous and Ongoing Areas of Research</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Method &amp; Design</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1	Operationalization of Concepts	14
3.2	Allocating the Ni-Vanuatu RSE-workers	14
3.3	Anonymity & Principles of Ethics in Interviewing	15
3.4	Comparative Design and Follow-ups as a Method	16
3.5	Language Barriers & the Role of a Researcher	17
3.6	The Variables	18
<b>4</b>	<b>The RSE Scheme</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1	Requirements for RSE Employers	22
	Agreement to Recruit	23
	Recruitment Process of Ni-Vanuatu Workers	23
	Pre-Departure Orientation Sessions & Compliance	24
	Pastoral Care	24
	Rescinding RSE Status	25
4.2	Requirements for RSE Employees	25
	Health & Character Requirements	26
	Restrictions on Limited Purpose Visas and Permits Holders	26
4.3	Transitional RSE Scheme	27
<b>5</b>	<b>The Ni-Vanuatu RSE-worker</b>	<b>28</b>
5.1	Te Puke	29
	Complementing Information from Respondents	29
	Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending	35
5.2	Te Puna	36
	Complementing Information from Respondents	36
	Earning, Spending, Saving, Sending	50
5.3	Papamoa	51
	Earning, Spending, Saving, Sending	51
	Summary of Key-points	52
<b>6</b>	<b>Combined Statistics</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Analysis &amp; Discussion</b>	<b>57</b>
	Remittances: answering the research question	59
	Following up on some of the findings	60
<b>8</b>	<b>Summary of Key-findings &amp; Recommendations</b>	<b>62</b>
	<b>References</b>	<b>64</b>

## Figures and Tables

Figure 4.1: The RSE Work Policy Process.....	21
Table 5.1: Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers: Te Puke.....	29
Table 5.1.1: Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending: Te Puke.....	35
Table 5.2: Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers: Te Puna.....	36
Table 5.2.1: Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending: Te Puna.....	50
Table 5.3: Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers: Papamoa.....	51
Table 5.3.1: Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending: Papamoa.....	51
Pie Chart: Overall RSE Experience.....	53
Pie Chart: Savings .....	54
Pie Chart: Remittances.....	54
Pie Chart: Expected Earnings Compared to Actual Earnings.....	54
Graph: Amount of Work Compared to Expectations.....	55
Graph: Percent of Ni-Vanuatu Willing to Return Under RSE.....	55
Graph: Percent of Ni-Vanuatu Willing to Recommend RSE.....	56

## Appendices

1: Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers.....	65
2: Design of Survey and Interview Questions.....	66

# 1 Introduction

In April 2007, New Zealand (NZ) launched the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. The scheme allows for unskilled workers from the Pacific Islands (PCI) to enjoy the benefits of seasonal work in NZ's horticulture and viticulture industries for up to seven months per occasion. One of the articulated objectives of the scheme is to advance the effects on development in the countries of origin of the workers, for which remittances have been stressed as key-benefits (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008; Maclellan, 2008).

While government statements and literature on the link between remittances, development, and its capacity to reduce poverty are plentiful, no comprehensive evaluation of the earning, saving, spending and remittance patterns of RSE workers has been conducted. Although previous data and interviews concerning these aspects are marginal, all studies indicate clear benefits for Pacific Islanders (Maclellan, 2008).

Meanwhile, this kind of seasonal work policy is increasingly recommended by international aid agencies. It is commonly believed that seasonal migration work programs, based on highly mobile and unskilled labor, functions as a synergy process between developed and developing countries. While the demand for flexible labor in developed countries is an evident driving force behind these policies, the main benefits for the workers are articulated as being the opportunity to send home remittances and to gain new skills. When returning home, the workers thus add to the pool of labor with newly acquired skills, furthering the development process of their country. For the host country, another benefit is the decrease in long-term assimilation costs (<http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz>). In addition, some scholarly literature has stressed the valuable security aspects of the RSE for the larger PCI region as it is assumed to foster reciprocity and good governance (Ware, 2007). Nonetheless, despite all these theoretical assumptions, evidence of the development impact of seasonal worker programs is scarce (<http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz>).

Yet, it is of great interest to identify results and possible impacts of the RSE scheme, in particular as this type of compensational labor shortage program has become increasingly popular in many countries. In the region of Oceania, for instance, Australia has expressed interest in the RSE scheme and discussions on the possible implementation of a similar project are currently taking place (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008; Maclellan, 2008).

## **1.1 General Aim & Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to remedy the insufficient empirical aspects of the RSE debate to a certain extent. Since previous studies concerning the development impact of seasonal work programs are marginal, and as no comprehensive evaluation of the patterns pertaining to the earnings, savings, and possibilities of spending and sending remittances of RSE workers has been conducted, the general aim and purpose of this study is to determine the actual earning, saving, spending and sending possibilities of some RSE workers in NZ. And, to do so by investigating what the views and experiences of these workers are in regards to their earning, saving, spending and sending possibilities while in NZ under the RSE-scheme.

## **1.2 Demarcation & Target Group**

Because of time constraints and financial limitations, the study has been demarcated to Vanuatu's participation in the RSE scheme. The target group for this investigation is therefore Ni-Vanuatu workers. Three weeks of the field study was allocated to general acquaintance with Vanuatu, in order to get a better idea of the current socio-economic situation in the country. In Vanuatu, contacts were made with many Ni-Vanuatu in the informal settlement of Black Sands and in the center of the capital, Port Vila. Also, contacts were established with Vanuatu officials at the Cultural Center in Port Vila. Another three weeks were allocated to actual research and data collection in NZ.

## **1.3 Research Question**

The research question is: *What causes high and low degrees of remittances respectively?* This question will be explored by looking at possible factors such as:

1. Differences in earnings, and;
2. differences in the amount of available work, and;
3. differences in individual spending and saving patterns, and;
4. by identifying other possible causes of observed variances in degrees of remittances.

## 2 Previous and Ongoing Areas of Research

Since the RSE scheme is a considerably young policy initiative, very little scholarly research has evaluated its performance. Nonetheless, along with some local media coverage in NZ and the Pacific Islands, the NZ Department of Labor (DoL) currently undertakes an ongoing research program of the RSE, entitled the RSE Research and Evaluation Program (RSEREP). The RSEREP purposes to represent and assess parts of the RSE policy process and implementation. It also includes evaluation of short-term results and the governance of recognized as well as inadvertent hazards. As part of this broader research program, a partnering initiative between the DoL, the World Bank (WB), the University of Waikato (UW) and Motu Research Institute (MOTU) has been established. This latter enterprise aims to survey the initial economic and social impact of the RSE scheme on development outcomes in the PCI (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz>).

Connected to the broader RSEREP, UW has initiated a Working Paper series, which cover an in-depth formal evaluation of the RSE scheme (<http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz>). In order to examine who utilizes the opportunities to RSE work and how it affects them and their families, the evaluation process comprises several levels throughout a period of some years. Along with this investigation, another aim is to pursue an analysis of the economic decisions and outcomes generated by the scheme on individual levels, and how it impacts on the communities and nations in question (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

So far, a Working Paper in Economics from UW has specifically looked at Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers. The paper was published online in June of 2008, under the title “Who is coming from Vanuatu to New Zealand under the new Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Program?” In their research for this paper, the authors, David McKenzie, Pilar Garcia Martinez, and L. Alan Winters initiated the first step of a long-term evaluation process by exploring who the Ni-Vanuatu are that wishes to partake in the scheme and who of them eventually end up being recruited (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

One of the baseline surveys conducted through this project was confined to Vanuatu in late 2007 and early 2008. The survey showed the main Ni-Vanuatu RSE participants to be males in their late 20s to early 40s. Out of these, the majority was married with children. Most of the recruited workers were subsistence farmers in Vanuatu. In general, most of the workers had not concluded more than 10 years of

schooling, and, as pointed out by the authors, it is doubtful that such employees would enter NZ via other migration channels. Nonetheless, compared to the Ni-Vanuatu that did not apply to the RSE scheme, on the whole, the approved workers came from more affluent households, had higher English literacy, and better health. The main hindrances averting poorer individuals from applying were insufficient understandings about the policy and high costs related to the application process (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

Another finding showed that the approved Ni-Vanuatu workers were more likely to have a relative in NZ, and that the recruited male workers are less likely to smoke and drink Kava or alcohol. Also, if the applicant holds a clean health complaints record for the past six months, the likelihood of becoming an RSE worker increases (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

Moreover, female applicants, although largely underrepresented, were less likely to be married than female non-applicants. Nevertheless, by the end of the agricultural season the work became less physically demanding and as a result more women partook in the scheme. Another important finding indicated that pre-departure orientations need refinement, as many of the employees had inadequate knowledge about the minimum wage standards pertaining to NZ (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

Furthermore, despite the highly communal nature of Vanuatu society, the decisions to partake in the scheme tended to be a highly individual or household based decision. Among the reasons given for wanting to participate in the scheme were financial motives and a desire to learn English. One exception to the individual based decisions were noted in Lolihor, where the community explicitly sought to collect some of the benefits from the RSE by expectations of future donations to community funds (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

While the baseline survey was limited to the three islands of Efate, Tanna, and Ambrym, three future rounds of surveys are planned over the next two years, including many of the already baseline surveyed households. In conducting further surveys, the UW Working Paper series purposes to identifying effects from the scheme on the lives and prospects of the residents of Vanuatu in a formal and rigorous way. In doing so, the aspiration is to assess the broader societal changes triggered by the scheme as well as the development impact relative to particular households already surveyed and relative to similar households that did not participate in the RSE scheme (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008).

Besides from the broader RSEREP, in May 2008, Nic Maclellan published an independent assessment of the RSE scheme's first year. Titled "Workers for all Seasons? Issues from New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) program", the study was made to contribute with insights to the Australian policy discussion concerning the creation of a similar program. Maclellan identifies a number of issues of concern both to NZ and Australian policy makers. To further improve the program, Maclellan suggests to engage unions in the scheme and to increase involvement of the community sector. He also recommends increasing workers access to welfare services and improving the provision of pastoral care (Maclellan, 2008).

Another possibility of the scheme, is to link it to the broader development assistance programs on the ground in the countries of origin of the workers to help maximize flows of remittances. There is also a need for monitoring remittances in order to understand how they are being spent, saved, and invested in the home country. Also, in order to make it easier to send remittances, Maclellan argues for the implementation of favorable money transfer rates between NZ and the PCI. Maclellan further raises concern over the inadequate monitoring of licensing of recruitment agents in Vanuatu, which needs to be improved to evade preferential treatments and corruption in the recruitment practices of workers (Maclellan, 2008).

So far, recorded disputes between employers and workers have concerned housing conditions, long periods with no work while still having expenses for housing and food, contracts being set by commission rates rather than market rates, and insufficient information concerning deductions to cover accommodation and transportation costs. To address these issues, Maclellan suggests further government inspections of workplaces, drastically improved pre-departure orientation sessions, and standardized dispute support services (Maclellan, 2008).

Of major concern to Pacific Governments are situations of overstaying and substance abuse. There is a general fear that such incidents may create a reaction that will end the scheme. Diasporas in NZ have therefore been lobbied to impose visa conditions and to support the fast return of workers that violates them. Nonetheless, Maclellan also raises serious concern over the autonomy of workers in cases where they have been sent home for drinking off-orchard during their private leisure time. Maclellan concludes that since there is a current inequality in power between employer and workers, standardized and just dispute processes have to be established, which should be used prior to any repatriation (Maclellan, 2008).

### **3 Method & Design**

This study departs from the micro-level views of some of the Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers in the Bay of Plenty area, NZ, in June of 2008. The focus has been to explore the worker's perspectives, reflections, and experiences from the RSE scheme while in the working environment, which has been pursued by means of in-depth interviews. In doing so, an exploration into the causal relationships that yield high and low degrees of remittances has been made. The purpose of this causal exploration has served as a foundation for the design of a survey used in the interviews. The survey is provided in appendix 2. Based on the information obtained through contact with Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers, both in response to the survey and in regards to what they have chosen to fill me in with, the next step has been to follow-up the research by looking at agreements between the NZ Labor Department (DoL) and the Vanuatu Labor Department (VLD), and by requesting information from the DoL. In short, the systematic method of working this research forward has been from the bottom-up, which is from the micro-perspective of things.

#### **3.1 Operationalization of Concepts**

For the purpose of this study the concept of remittances is defined as a sum of money earned by the RSE-worker, through RSE-related work, while in NZ, and that is sent home to family members and relatives, via formal or informal channels, while the RSE-worker is in NZ. The operationalization of this concept has been covered by questions developed in the survey and via in-depth interviews. By asking about the amount of money that the workers have been able to send home, and the frequency of this activity during their stay in NZ, the concept of remittances has been operationalized and empirically measured. The operationalization of the concept has been placed into context of the earning, spending and saving patterns of each worker, also outlined as questions in the survey.

#### **3.2 Allocating the Ni-Vanuatu RSE-workers**

In order to obtain information about the exact locations of Ni-Vanuatu workers in NZ, a formal request has to be submitted to the DoL. According to NZ legislation, the DoL requires the person submitting the request to be located in NZ. It takes a minimum of 20 days to receive a reply. Considering the scope of this study, there was no

such time available for communication with NZ bureaucracies. It was therefore Mr. McKenzie Kalotiti, in his capacity as the Honorary Consul of Vanuatu to NZ, who provided me with the information necessary to allocate the Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers. When the first contact had been established a test interview was conducted with one Ni-Vanuatu worker. This was done in order to see how well the survey worked in the interviewing environment. The test interview has not been included in this thesis. After the test interview, a second part of the survey was dropped as it became redundant. Snowballing has been the main method used to allocate respondents: after every interview I asked if the respondent knew someone else that might be interested in participating in the study, or if the respondent knew about other locations where Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers could be found. This approach generated a total of 23 interviews, some of which were in-depth and took several hours.

### **3.3 Anonymity & Principles of Ethics in Interviewing**

Throughout the process of interviewing, several of the workers expressed great concern in regards to the anonymity of the study. As explained to all Ni-Vanuatu partaking in this study, no names will be displayed, merely age and gender. In fact, they were never asked to tell me their names. While extra information that can connect the respondents with this study exists, and while I have been given permission to use it, I have chosen to leave it out. The reason for this is simply because I do not believe that it is of particular relevance for the study. What are of importance in this study are the stories told by the respondents.

Because of the strong concerns over anonymity, I have occasionally avoided the use of digital recording. Simply because the respondents were uncomfortable knowing that their voices were being permanently captured. In cases like these, I have chosen to rely on handwritten notes. After each session, however, I immediately recorded my own reflections and additional information of relevance. After every interview, the questions and answers were read back to the respondent to make sure that there was no misconception in the information being transferred. This information, together with the information provided in the actual recordings is listed in the empirical sections of this thesis (Chapters 5 and 6).

Considering the circumstances, I am confident that sporadic use of digital recordings was the only way to pursue the study. Perhaps, someone could say that it would have been better to make digital recordings of all interviews. But as the topic of

this thesis has shown to center around very sensitive issues for many of the workers, a decision to record might, instead, I think, have contributed to flaws in the data. Given the desired anonymity, it could be assumed that digital recordings would have made many of the respondents feel uncomfortable and inferior in their answers. And, most importantly, to record interviews against the will of any respondent is highly unethical and not something that I as a researcher would feel comfortable with. I have also explained to all participating respondents that the information they decided to share with me would be made accessible to the general public first after they had returned to Vanuatu. It has also been agreed that I will send a copy of this study to the National Library of Vanuatu located in the Cultural Center in Port Vila, Vanuatu, where the respondents will be able to access it. As part of the accessibility agreement, I have also been asked to send copies to other specific locations in Vanuatu.

Prior to all interviews, I have given a short introduction of myself, who I am, where I am from, and what the purpose of this study has been. I have also informed every respondent that participation is absolutely voluntarily. They were always given a choice not to engage in the role as respondent and were informed that they could leave the session whenever they liked. No financial, or other kind of compensation, have been provided in return for the interviews, it has been a completely voluntarily commitment. The purpose of this approach has been to find out the workers' perspectives and perceptions of how well the RSE work is aiding them in sending home remittances and supporting their families financially while working abroad.

### **3.4 Comparative Design and Follow-ups as a Method**

As pointed out by Svenning (2003), all methods should be able to be mixed and combined in any research. The idea is to transcend boundaries. This has been the approach of this study too. While this thesis by no means represents a quantitative study it has some quantitative features. Questions like how many and how much allows for answers of a quantitative nature, and questions like why, how come, and what do you think about this, provides for answers of a qualitative nature. This combined approach has been highly beneficial, since the qualitative insights have aided me in establishing the causal mechanism necessary to explain the correlation I found in the analysis of the quantitative aspects obtained from the interviews.

In light of this combined approach, there are naturally two underlying and fundamental assumptions that have formed the basis of this study from the outset.

Firstly, from an ontological perspective, it is assumed that a reality separated from our own consciousness does exist. Secondly, from an epistemological viewpoint, it is believed that systematical observations of this reality yield knowledge about the reality observed (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerud, 2007).

Based on these fundamentals the study is designed to be comparative. In contrasting and comparing different locations (Te Puke, Te Puna, and Papamoa) with different workers and different employers (Seka/Opac and Big Toe), assessments on both geographical and organizational levels have been made. With the exception of Papamoa, roughly 2-3 days were dedicated to interviews at each location. This allowed for an environment where some of the respondents were given the opportunity to add information the next day upon my return. While this was not a structure that I initially intended to follow, I soon realized that in a few cases the respondents had thought about our previous conversation and therefore approached me the next day as they felt that they had more to say. It is my impression that in these cases the first meeting started a process of reflection within the respondent, which created an initial feeling of trust and confidence in my project and me. As a result, the respondent becomes a subject when taking on the initiative of returning to me with more information. These follow-ups have been very beneficial as a method and are important to emphasize as the information obtained from these short sessions has enabled me to explain the outcome and answer the research question. In short, besides from the quantitative figures obtained in the surveys, the data collection process has largely been hermeneutic in the sense of Max Weber's cultivated tradition of *Verstehen*. Essentially, the idea of this method is based on the three fundamentals of *Erkennen* (to get to know, to sense and to interpret), *Erklären* (to explain), and *Verstehen* (to understand) (Svenning, 2003). The challenge of this method has thus been to get close enough to the respondents to capture their sincere thoughts and opinions (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerud, 2007).

### **3.5 Language Barriers & the Role of a Researcher**

The official languages spoken in Vanuatu are Bislama (a form of local pidgin), English, and French. Fortunately, the majority of the respondents spoke very good albeit uncomplicated English and the communication aspect of the study was therefore not very difficult. In a handful of cases the workers did not speak English, in which instances a friend of the respondent acted as translator. As the role of a researcher demands a rather neutral and objective stance to the situation under scrutiny, some

situations became very emotionally challenging on an individual level. Many of the respondents shared such disheartening and overwhelming information that it was very hard to remain in a professional character. Although I was constantly aware of these invisible boundaries between the workers and me, and I consciously sought to avoid any form of bias in the collection of data, I have to admit that I have spent many nights thinking about their stories and experiences. I often wished that I could have done something to ease their situation or to change the unpleasant conditions that they revealed to me. It is my hope that this study will transmit their voices and make their views known to others in an effort to improve future aspects of the RSE scheme. This will be my contribution.

Despite these difficulties, I have been really impressed by many of the Ni-Vanuatu workers and their rather positive attitudes given the circumstances. It has become clear to me that, in an effort to dress the RSE-scheme in words of development, we largely put our western value bases on the workers. While many of the workers recognized the importance of earning money they also pointed out other aspects of the scheme that they thought were valuable, which to us may seem as rather simple things, such as having the opportunity to try kiwi for the first time or to experience NZ.

Since it has been my objective to transmit the voices of the workers, I have deliberately chosen to rely on as many quotations as possible. Therefore, in the empirical section, of Chapter 5, the interviews have been largely narrated with additional information entered only to clarify the context for the reader. As will be seen, because of this approach, grammatical errors have been captured as the text moves between present tense quotations and my own reflections and comments written at a later point in time, referring back to the occasion of the interview in past tense. Also, since the English skills of many of the respondents were rather marginal, the citations reflect their spoken grammar mistakes.

### **3.6 The Variables**

At the point of departure of this study only the *dependent variable* was specified. The *dependent variable* under investigation is *degree of remittances* and the *independent variable* was largely unknown. After conducting empirical investigation, however, the *independent variable* turned out to be different from any of the suggested causes. To be exact, the *independent variable* is neither differences in earnings, differences in amount of available work, or differences in individual spending and saving patterns. Instead, the identified

cause of varying degrees of remittances is *type of employment*. Two main types of employments have been identified to govern the Ni-Vanuatu worker's RSE-participation. These are either direct employment with Seeka/Opac, or indirect employment via a middle hand named Big Toe.

The findings show that direct employment is favorable as it yields higher degrees of remittances, whereas indirect employment via Big Toe is correlated with fewer remittances. The macro-micro-macro level mechanism that explains this correlation not to be spurious is the restriction on weekly allowances imposed by Big Toe on the individual level of the workers (macro going to micro). This restriction eventually generates fewer remittances on an overall level, recognized as a general pattern among Big Toe workers when compared to Seka/Opac employees (connecting to macro again).

## 4 The RSE Scheme

The decision to proceed with the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Work Policy was first established on 16 October 2006, when the New Zealand Cabinet (NZC) approved the initiation of a temporary seasonal work program (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008). One of the main reasons for initiating the policy was NZ's internationally fading competitiveness in the horticulture and viticulture industries, mainly due to labor shortages. Therefore, in order to maintain a competitive industry, the aim of the policy is to compensate for domestic labor shortages by inviting unskilled workers from the Pacific Islands to enjoy the benefits of seasonal work for up to seven months at a time. The work includes "planting, maintaining, harvesting and packing crops" (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

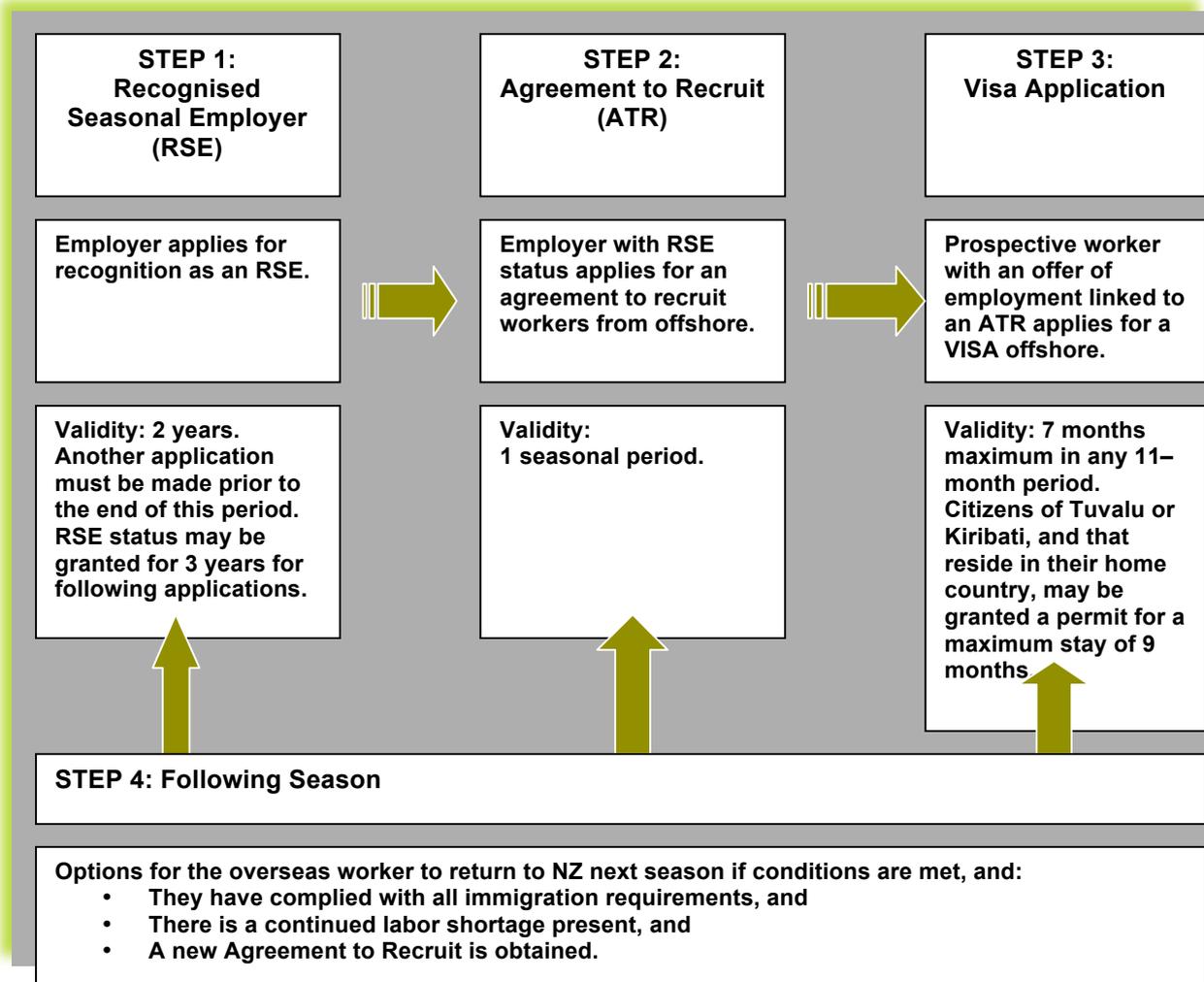
Other unambiguous objectives are "to improve development outcomes in sending countries" (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008, p.7) and to support "regional integration and good governance within the Pacific" (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz>). Accordingly, every one of the Pacific Forum Countries (PFC) is qualified for participation in the scheme. Fiji is the only apparent exception to this rule, as its partaking in the scheme has been postponed because of political instabilities. Nonetheless, as part of the coherent strategy to launch the scheme, the five countries of Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu have received "so-called kick-start status" (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008, p. 3). To ensure efficiency in the policy implementation process, the RSE scheme follows principal key-knowledge gained from previous experiences and analysis from similar initiatives undertaken elsewhere. Many of the core-aspects of the scheme therefore "constitute current ideas of best practice in seasonal worker schemes" (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008, p. 1).

Nonetheless, on 30 April 2007, six and a half months after the NZC had approved the initiation of the RSE scheme, the policy was officially launched (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008). Since then it has been updated twice. For the first year a quota of 5,000 seasonal workers was established. For the following 2008-2009 period the quota was upgraded to 8,000 workers (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz>). Based upon the preferential assumption of giving New Zealanders firsthand access to NZ job openings, the RSE scheme follows a four-step procedure as outlined by the figure on next page<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Figure is modeled upon an almost identical diagram provided by NZ Department of Labor (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

**Figure 4.1 The RSE Work Policy Process**



1. NZ horticulture and viticulture companies apply to become Recognised Seasonal Employers (RSEs).
2. When an Agreement to Recruit (ATR) is obtained by the RSEs they can proceed to employ overseas workers.
3. Workers apply for Seasonal Work Visas (SWV). In order to receive a SWV, applicants have to guarantee that they intend to leave NZ when the Work period expires. In addition, certain health and character requirements have to be fulfilled.
4. If all requirements are met and the need for labor remains, workers are permitted to return next season and the employer may re-recruit.

## 4.1 Requirements for RSE Employers

In order for an employer to obtain RSE status, a completed application has to be submitted to the NZ Department of Labor's (DoL) RSE Unit. After having assessed the application, DoL will make a decision based on the RSE Work Policy requirements. In order to become a successful applicant, employers must show to be "in a sound financial position, have human resource policies and practices of a high standard, have demonstrated a commitment to recruiting and training New Zealanders, have good workplace practices, have, in the past, met all relevant immigration and employment laws" (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

Other requirements that need to be satisfied by RSEs are to pay market rate wages and caring for the needs of the workers. Responsibilities also include covering half of the international airfare for the workers arriving in and departing from NZ (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>). According to NZ's Minimum Wage Act (MWA), the minimum wage is set to NZ\$12 per hour and it applies to all employees in NZ including RSE workers. In compliance with market rate wages, a guaranteed minimum pay for a RSE contracted period of six weeks or longer has been established. Depending on what yields a higher salary, regardless of the actual hours worked, there are two options for the RSE; the employer has to pay for a minimum of either 240 hours of work, or for 30 hours of work per week at the per hour rate, which can be no less than the minimum wage. In any case, the final pay is always the higher option of the two. Sometimes, RSE workers are paid per piece (for example per box of kiwi or apples that they pick). In such circumstances, where piece rates apply, those amounts must be the equivalent of, or in excess of, the requirements of the MWA (Haines, Department of Labor, private communication, October 3, 2008). If the employment is less than six weeks, the worker is entitled to a minimum payment of 40 hours per week. The only exception to when payments may fall below the minimum wage is when the RSE is recovering the share of the airfare previously put out for the worker by deductions (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

Moreover, the RSEs also have to provide appropriate pastoral care services for their workers such as "suitable accommodation, translation and transportation, opportunities for religious observance and recreation, and induction to life in NZ" (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>). In case of workers overstaying their Visa permits, the RSEs have to contribute to the costs of repatriating workers. While RSE status is at first approved for two years, subsequent applications may be granted for a period of three years (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

## **Agreement to Recruit**

An Agreement to Recruit (ATR) is an official authorization for a RSE to offer employment in NZ's horticulture and viticulture industries to non-NZ nationals or resident workers (Department of Labor, 2007). In order for an RSE to obtain an ATR, a completed application has to be submitted with supporting evidence of having met the RSE requirements. In general, the application has to specify the job vacancies that the RSE need to fill, the terms and conditions offered to workers, and from where the RSE plan to recruit (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

## **Recruitment Process of Ni-Vanuatu Workers**

After having obtained RSE status, and an ATR, the employers have to carry out their own recruitment processes. The DoL offers assistance and professional advice in regards to recruitment by the provision of specialized National RSE Officers (NRSEO). Nevertheless, there are in general two recruitment options:

### **Option A**

- The RSEs can contract an agent in Vanuatu to perform the recruitment activity. Out of the five “kick-start” countries this option is unique to Vanuatu (McClellan, 2008).

### **Key points:**

1. All Vanuatu recruitment agents must possess an authorized license provided by the Vanuatu Commissioner of Labor (VCL). The licensing process is intended to safeguard both RSEs and potential workers.
2. A list of licensed recruitment agents is available from the VCL.
3. The contracted agents conduct registration and screening of workers after a consultation with local Chiefs and Church leaders.
4. The RSEs and the agents negotiate the recruitment activities, although it is illicit to claim commission from the workers to secure employment.
5. Following the recruitment selection, RSEs have to provide signed employment contracts to verify the job offer.

## **Option B**

- The second option for the RSEs is to recruit directly in Vanuatu. In order to pursue this option, the RSEs need to obtain a permit from the VCL. In this case, the VCL will aid the RSEs in connecting with community contacts, such as Chiefs and Church leaders.

### **Pre-Departure Orientation Sessions & Compliance**

After having finalized the recruitment process, the Vanuatu Department of Labour (VDL) is required to oversee pre-departure orientation sessions held for all workers by VCL licensed agents. The orientation “covers matters such as climate, clothing and footwear requirements, taxation, insurance (particularly health insurance), health and wellbeing, accident compensation, banking and remitting, budget advice and travel arrangements” (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>). During the orientation the workers also receive a pre-departure pamphlet containing useful information for their time in NZ. One of the main issues stressed in the orientation session is the importance of compliance with NZ laws and rules governing the RSE scheme. Accordingly, the workers are also briefed on the penalty of any overstaying in NZ. Another important factor entailed in the orientation is the importance of “displaying a good work ethic and protecting Vanuatu’s reputation as a source of seasonal labor” (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>). Moreover, while it is the responsibility of the RSEs to guarantee that workers comply with the immigration requirements and do not overstay after the expiration of their visa, they are also responsible for providing pastoral care (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

### **Pastoral Care**

According to the RSEs Work Policy, RSEs are required to supply appropriate pastoral care to their non-NZ or resident workers. This includes provision of food, clothing, and access to health services and suitable accommodation at a sensible cost throughout the period for which the workers’ RSE permits are valid (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz>). Moreover, Ni-Vanuatu workers are also fully covered by NZ employment and workplace legislation, in particular legislation pertaining to a healthy work environment and safe work conditions. If a situation of concern appears during the employment period, the Department of Labour is available for consultation (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

## **Rescinding RSE Status**

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) may rescind an employer's RSE status if any of the following two options occur:

1. A significant violation of the RSE or ATR requirements appears, or;
2. intolerable risks to the integrity of NZ's immigration or employment laws, or policies, arise due to the performance of an RSE employer.

### **Key points:**

- If an employer's RSE status has been rescinded, the employer is not permitted to re-apply for RSE status until a one-year period has past from the date of which the RSE status was rescinded.

## **4.2 Requirements for RSE Employees**

Once a job offer has been prearranged, each worker must apply for a NZ work visa in order to finalize the recruitment process. For Ni-Vanuatu workers the application should be submitted to the New Zealand High Commission in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The general visa conditions for applicants are as follows:

- The applicant must be at least 18 years old, and;
- have an employment agreement, and;
- show possession of a return ticket to Vanuatu, and;
- meet health and character requirements, and;
- show a genuine intend of temporary stay in NZ.

## **Health & Character Requirements**

The regular character requirements for work permits stipulates that the applicant should have no criminal record or previously been deported from another country (Martinez, McKenzie & Winters, 2008). As standard operating procedure, Ni-Vanuatu applicants need to test for Tuberculosis (TB) before being issued a visa. To show compliance with the TB health requirement, a Medical and Chest X-Ray Certificate (MCXRC) serves as sufficient documentation. Occasionally, HIV tests are also performed (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

## **Restrictions on Limited Purpose Visas and Permits Holders**

While most SWV and permits are limited to a maximum of seven months over an eleven-month period, workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu are granted RSE status for nine months over an eleven-month period. This is due to additional traveling costs because of the remote proximity of these countries to NZ since there are no direct flights connecting them (McLellan, 2008).

Nonetheless, as RSE workers are expected to leave at the expiration of their visa period they are not permitted to transfer their status to another type of visa or permit while in NZ (McLellan, 2008; <http://www.dol.govt.nz>). Moreover, in order to obtain a RSE permit the applicant must submit the application in their country of citizenship. Nevertheless, in some circumstances where a worker already is in NZ under RSE status, it may be possible to arrange with an extension. For instance, one exceptional case where an extension may be granted occurs when employees may be offered to transfer between employers due to failed crop in the first location and labor shortages in another area (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

Leaving exceptional cases aside, “workers’ work permits are for a specific location, type of work and employer” (<http://www.dol.govt.nz>). Therefore, the worker is automatically linked to the employer listed on their work permit. Nevertheless, it is technically feasible for two or more employers to submit joint applications to recruit. Accordingly, a group of seasonal workers might work for one employer the first two months and then transfer to another employer for the next two months. While a new ATR must be obtained for each season, the idea is to have the same workers returning for subsequent seasons as it reduces training costs and increase skills-efficiency. As such, the risk of overstaying is also reduced since the workers can be confident in being able of return in up-coming years (McLellan, 2008; <http://www.dol.govt.nz>).

### 4.3 Transitional RSE Scheme

One of the initial aims of the RSE was to gradually replace the existing Approval in Principle (AiP) scheme and the Seasonal Work Permit (SWP) pilot scheme. The plan was to have these existing schemes, which permitted NZ horticulture and viticulture employers to hire backpackers and overseas workers, replaced by September 2007. Nevertheless, since the initiation of the RSE, the original plan has been revised twice. As a result, by September 2007 there were quite few employers officially registered as RSEs. Therefore, a Transitional RSE (TRSE) scheme was launched to run in parallel with the RSE from November 26, 2007 until 2009 (Maclellan, 2008).

The conditions of the TRSE allows for anyone that has entered NZ on a visitors permit to submit an application for a Variation of Conditions (VoC) status and a TRSE visa. The TRSE visa gives the holder permission to work anywhere in NZ's horticulture and viticulture industries for up to four months (Maclellan, 2008). Unreservedly, a TRSE work visa may, however, only be obtained once per individual. Moreover, there is one specified restriction on TRSE visas. An applicant will be denied TRSE status if she or he has worked in the horticulture and viticulture industry "for more than seven months in the twelve months preceding their TRSE work permit application on work permits granted for the purpose of seasonal work" (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz>).

While the number of places available for workers under the TRSE policy is limited, in February 2008, the nation-wide check on one employer per worker was cancelled. Consequently, this allowed for backpackers and non-RSE workers to move freely along the NZ harvest trail. As recognized by DoL, these changes may have a negative impact on the integrity of the RSE scheme as it lessens employers' incentives to recruit locally, develop pastoral care skills and cultivate workforce advancement. Moreover, the adoption of an onshore work permit policy in conjunctions with the RSE may cause tensions with RSE participating Pacific countries working to facilitate a steady supply of RSE workers. Potentially, the TRSE may even compromise the integrity of NZ official visitors policy by appealing to non-bona fide visitors and by placing RSEs recruiting from the Pacific Islands in a unfavorable cost situation (Maclellan, 2008).

Nevertheless, the main idea of the TRSE is to aid employers that are unable to recruit New Zealanders and that are not yet equipped to use the RSE policy to access workers but intend to eventually become full RSEs. Moreover, since the TRSE is a temporary program, it expires in November 2009 (<http://www.immigration.govt.nz>).

## 5 The Ni-Vanuatu RSE-worker

This chapter is the first out of two empirical sections of the thesis (Chapters 5 and 6). It outlines the information obtained from respondents when interviewing in the Tauranga area of the Bay of Plenty region in NZ between June 16, 2008 and June 20, 2008. Three geographical locations are listed as places visited when interviewing (Te Puke, Te Puna, and Papamoa). Interviewing in these different locations has allowed the design of the study to be comparative in nature. In contrasting and comparing different locations with different workers and different employers (Seka/Opac and Big Toe), assessments on both geographical and organizational levels are later made in the analysis.

The structure for the interviews centers on the survey listed in appendix 2. Besides from the structured questions in the survey, crucial information surfaced when the respondents were allowed to speak freely about whatever they wished following the structured questions. These aspects have been transcribed and are provided as they pertain to each location, where they are listed as complementary information. The focus of the interviews has always been on the Ni-Vanuatu workers, they have been the center of attention as I have made great effort to capture their personal thoughts and views. In short, besides from the quantitative figures obtained in the surveys, the challenge of this method has thus been to get close enough to the respondents to capture their genuine thoughts and opinions (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerud, 2007).

Since it has been my objective to transmit the voices of the workers, I have intentionally chosen to rely on as many quotations as possible. Additional information has only been entered to clarify the context for the reader. Because of this approach, grammatical errors have been captured as the narrated text moves between present tense quotations and my own reflections and comments written at a later point in time, referring back to the occasion of the interview in past tense. Moreover, since the English skills of many of the respondents were rather uncomplicated, the citations also mirror their spoken grammar mistakes.

Apart from Papamoa, where interviews were conducted during one day, approximately 2-3 days were spent interviewing at each location. For the cases of Te Puke and Te Puna, returning visits allowed for collection of additional information from previously interviewed respondents. These sessions are listed as follow-ups. In these cases, the possibilities to reflect on our previous conversations allowed for the respondents to take the initiative of approaching me the next day, as they felt that they had more information to share.

## 5.1 Te Puke

In the area of Te Puke interviews were conducted during three sequential days, between Monday, June 16, and Wednesday, June 18, 2008. As outlined in table 5.1 below, a total of 12 respondents participated in the study, 5 male and 7 female. Half of the respondents were interviewed one-on-one and the other half in groups. The groups were divided into 2, one with 4 respondents and the other with 2 respondents. The last day, 2 of the previously interviewed respondents approached me by own initiative for a follow-up, as there was some additional information that they wished to share.

Table 5.1 Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers: Te Puke

No.	Age	Gender	Location	Type of Interview	Date
1	25	Male	Te Puke	Individual <sup>2</sup>	June 16, 2008
2	50	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 16, 2008
3	43	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 16, 2008
4	38	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 17, 2008
5	24	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 17, 2008
6	19	Female	Te Puke	Group 1 <sup>3</sup>	June 17, 2008
7	34	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
8	29	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
9	22	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
10	22	Female	Te Puke	Group 2	June 17, 2008
11	28	Female	Te Puke	Group 2	June 17, 2008
12	39	Female	Te Puke	Individual	June 18, 2008
13	25	Male	Te Puke	In-depth follow-up to No. 1 <sup>4</sup>	June 18, 2008
14	38	Male	Te Puke	Short follow-up to No. 4 <sup>5</sup>	June 18, 2008

### Complementing Information from Respondents

#### *Complement to interview No.3.*

The respondent, who is also the leader of the group of people living with him in the same motel room, explained that they were paid once a week. They also receive pay slips regularly on a weekly basis. He also provided me with his pay slip, so that I could

<sup>2</sup> Individual interview refers to a one-on-one interview using the survey, which is found in appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup> Group interview refers to an interview session with two or more respondents using the survey form in appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup> In-depth follow-up refers to a repeated face-to-face encounter with the respondent. In which no pre-determined structure is guiding the conversation. Instead, the focus is solely on the respondent's perspective and what the respondent desires to highlight as important in view of to the previously structured survey-session. For these sessions notes as well as digital tape recordings were made.

<sup>5</sup> Short follow-up differs from the above-explained in-depth follow-up in that the session was very short, simply because the respondent only had a few more things to add to the previous session. Besides from this difference, the Short follow-up is based on the same philosophy and approach as the in-depth follow-up.

see how it was outlined. On the pay slip, it showed how the company they work for, Opac, deducts money for accommodation, medical insurance, some extra fee, as well as tax. After all deductions had been made, they received \$150, or less, in weekly allowance. The remaining money was transferred to a locked savings account. According to the respondent, this account was not accessible to the workers, only by the company they work for. After having finalized the 6 months RSE-period and the workers had returned home, the money would be transferred to Vanuatu for the workers to access.

The respondent also mentioned that sometimes money was missing on the pay slips, sometimes as much as \$800 or \$900. He also claimed having been in contact with the farmer that owns the Kiwi orchard where he works, because the agreement regarding their salary was not accorded on the pay slips. In particular, the respondent pointed out that the agreement with the farmer was to get paid per pruned bay, or kiwi-basket that they fill up, whereas on the pay slip it said that they got paid per hour. The benefits from efficient work and high productivity, connected to a system of commission, were therefore neutralized when they received their paychecks.

Some days, he said, he had worked “15 hours per day”. Usually, he worked no less than “10 hours, the days the weather is good for work”. Since the efforts made when working were absent from the pay slips, a feeling of great concern and insecurity were apparent among the workers. The workers had also raised their concerns with Seeka/Opac. However, according to the respondent, Seeka/Opac had not returned their inquiries with any comprehensible reply or explanation. Throughout the past 2½ months, the workers had made several attempts to contact their employers regarding this error. Despite these efforts, however, they still did not know if any measures had been taken to resolve the problem on the company’s side. Many of the workers felt that this was a constantly surfacing problem around payday.

In view of these concerns, the respondent also told me that they needed a contact person that could function as a Human Resources manager, or Ombudsman, on their behalf. He also asked me if I had the possibility to assist them in this matter. Furthermore, he asked if I could contact “NZ politicians to ask them to review their Labor Act” in order to ensure that RSE-workers will be paid what they have “been promised”. In particular, as they were promised much more in wages during the recruitment process in Vanuatu compared to what they actually received when in NZ. This, he said, was “a huge disappointment”.

Besides from these concerns, the respondent expressed no other discontent with the situation other than that of a higher cost of living in NZ compared to Vanuatu. “The work is not demanding in any way, and it is ok to be here and work, it is just that we do not get paid what we were promised.” I was also showed a statement from his savings account, which indicated that money was not being transferred weekly. He explained that during those weeks, there had not been enough work to make his weekly allowance. When asked about the reason for the small earnings, he said that “maybe it was raining”, or it belonged to one of the weeks that they had noted that money was missing and for which they were waiting for an answer from Seeka/Opac management.

It should be noted that Seeka and Opac did not make deductions for the cost of food, as the workers had to arrange with their own meals. Another issue concerned the weekly allowance, which, at its best, was set to \$150; because of the small amount it became hard to send money to dependants in Vanuatu. Especially since they had to purchase food and cover all other personal expenses with their weekly allowance. On the other hand, a quite optimistic attitude in regards to the locked savings was expressed, although not without worry. As the workers could not access their savings, the respondent said, they “fear” that there might be some errors in regards to their savings too, just like it has been with their regular payments. In fact, they are “not sure” that the money really exists. Despite these conditions, however, many of the workers had still been able to send home small amounts of money, ranging from \$30-\$100, to their dependants on 1 or 2 occasions, but not as frequently as they had wished.

The respondent also invited me into the workers private living area, where they also slept. In general it seemed very crowded, with quite a bit too many people living together in such a small place and there was no room for privacy. Neither was there any doors that could be closed to separate the sleeping areas, which may be particularly disturbing if someone wants to sleep when the remaining 15 people sharing accommodation wants to do other things, like watching TV or just socialize. The sleeping areas were about 10-15 square meters, in which 4-6 people sleep. Also, the lockers provided for each worker seemed relatively small, considering the duration of their stay. On an estimate they were about 70 centimeters \* 70 centimeters and about 70 centimeters deep.

*Complement to interviews: No.4 and No.5.*

Respondents No.4 and No.5 told me that they had been promised \$30/bin of kiwi that they pick, but that they had received \$10/bin when they got paid. Also, No.5 said, “we do not get paid when it rains because when it rains we cannot work. The kiwi has to be dry when picked.” When asked what it says in his contract regarding how much the salary is, he had no idea of how much he was contracted for. But he did know that instead of \$30/bin he got \$10. This change in information, at first, he claimed had come as a surprise to them when they arrived in NZ. No.5 said, “other workers that have been here for a longer time explained to us that it is only \$10/bin, but in Vanuatu they told us \$30/bin. Now, that we also get our pay slips every week we can see that it is only \$10/bin.”

Another concern raised by the respondent was that recent reductions had appeared in the weekly allowance, going from \$150 to \$100. This decrease had been justified as a collective punishment toward the male Ni-Vanuatu workers because some of the male workers had been drinking inside of the motel-compound. According to the respondent, however, it was unsure whether or not the people drinking had been Ni-Vanuatu workers.

*Complement to: No.6-9; group with 4 women and: No.10-11; group with 2 women.*

These women all worked in the same pack house. Since a week back they had been out of work, as there was no demand for their services. Because of this situation, they had not received any pay. When I asked if they were provided with any compensation during downtime one woman said “if we do not work they do not pay us. But before coming to NZ, in Vanuatu, they promised to pay us even if there would be no work.” Evidently, the situation was disappointing to the female workers, as it was unclear when they would be able to return to the pack house for work.

Moreover, since they had been unable to work for the past week, they were unsure if they would receive their weekly allowance of a \$150. The women explained that the weekly allowance is based on a certain amount of work conducted the week prior to payment. Clearly, this uncertainty caused frustration and stress, as the allowance from last week was almost gone. At the point of the interview they were planning to discuss the situation with their manager from Seeka to see if they could access some of their savings.

*Complement to interview No.12*

The respondent explained that she had traveled to NZ from Vanuatu in a larger group of 40 women. Together, this group had coordinated the application process back home and submitted their applications to the Vanuatu Department of Labor (VDL). At the time of the interviews, the entire group shared accommodation.

In general she experienced a great confusion surrounding the deductions on their pay slips. Some of them had noted up to 8 deductions per week whereas others had not had any deductions listed. The situation had become more confusing when some of the women that previously had not experience any deductions, now recognized an increase in deductions on their pay slips. The respondent found the situation very incomprehensible, she said, “all of us work together at the same pack house, and live together, and therefore we should have the same deductions”. Clearly, since this was not the case, the women felt insecure about the rules governing the deductions.

Another aspect that further added to the frustration was that some of them did not speak English, or very little English. Others had a very good command of the language. Because of the language barriers, the respondent told me, many of them felt inferior in communicating with management about the situation. These two aspects combined created a quite complicated position for many of the workers. The respondent stressed that it would have been better if all of them had experienced the same deductions every week. Since they all worked together and lived together, and therefore also had similar expenses. She also said that “it would have been better if [the conditions] would have been the same for all of us, [since] we came here and stay here as a group”.

*Complement to interview No.13: In-depth follow-up to No.1.*

“I feel like a slave here, I feel like a real slave.”

When approached by respondent No.1 two days after the first interview, many new aspects were exposed. He confessed to me that he felt like a slave. This was expressed in the context of shoving a desire to return home to Vanuatu. The main reason being that his cousin had been deported just two days ago because he had been drinking a beer inside of the motel compound. Although his cousin was not the only one drinking, as workers from other countries of origin had been drinking as well, the motel manager had decided to make an example of his cousin and another person by repatriating them back to Vanuatu.

The respondent also said that they had been working within the motel compound without receiving any payment. The work had consisted of cleaning the motel compound area, cutting the grass and taking care of gardening related tasks like pruning of bushes and so on. In total, the work had been in process for the whole first week of their stay at the motel. The respondent also explained that the motel manager repeatedly and openly expressed a great negativity against the Ni-Vanuatu workers and of people from Vanuatu in general. In the respondent's words the manager had said, "people from Vanuatu are really bad people and no good."

Another thing that seemed to trouble him was that when picking kiwi, the truck that they filled up with kiwi fruits only took 3 baskets. While working and filling up the truck, the manager that oversaw their work, "just sits and watch us work", he never gave them a helping hand. Then, when the truck finally was full, sometimes the manager removed one basket from the truck, which put them in a position where they would not get paid for that basket. The pay for each basket was 10\$, or \$30 for one loaded truck.

Another thing that bothered the respondent was that they were not allowed to drive the truck, or operate any vehicle in NZ, although he had a driving license and were used to driving in Vanuatu. None of them, he said, were allowed to drive in NZ according to the company they worked for. Moreover, there were weekly deductions of \$26 made for fuel to the truck on their pay slips and there were also deductions made for transportation costs to work of \$10/week, although they always walked to work.

The respondent also said that "the motel manager is very mean" and that he made them "feel unwelcome". "Every night, many of us cry because we want to go home". Finally, the respondent said that he is "absolutely sure" that he "will not come back to NZ under the RSE".

*Complement to interview No.14: Short follow-up to No.4.*

"About the work here, in Vanuatu, they told us that they would pay us per hour. When we pick the Gold Kiwi, they do pay us per hour. When we pick the Green Kiwi, they pay us per hour + bins picked. But when we do pruning, in Vanuatu they told us that they would pay per hour, now they pay us per bay (roughly 4 \* 5 meters) that we prune. Before coming here we did not know about the bay. But here they tell us that they will pay us \$8/bay, which is different in the time it takes to finish a bay, depending on the person pruning. Some of us make 1½ bay/hour, some people do less, like 1 bay/hour, and others do 2 bays/hour."

## Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending

This section outlines the above listed respondents' perceptions of their earning, spending, saving and sending possibilities at the time of the interviews. Table 5.1.1 lists the quantitative results from the survey, which will be further elaborated on by means of a compiled and comparative approach in Chapter 6.

**Table 5.1.1 Earning, Spending, Saving, and Sending: Te Puke**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Weekly Allowance</i>	<i>Agent/Employer</i>	<i>RSE-permit</i>	<i>In NZ for</i>	<i>Savings</i>	<i>Remittances</i>
<b>1+13</b>	NZ\$150, or less	Seeka	6 months	2 months	\$1800	3 x \$100
<b>2</b>	NZ\$150, or less	Seeka/Opac	6 months	2 months	?	1 x \$180
<b>3</b>	NZ\$150, or less	Seeka/Opac	6 months	2 months	\$1500	1 x \$80
<b>4+14</b>	NZ\$150, or less, but decreased to NZ\$100 at the day of the interview as a collective punishment because some workers had been drinking inside of the Motel compound.	Seeka/Opac	6 months	2 months	?	1 x \$150
<b>5</b>	Same as No.4+14	Seeka	5 months	2 months	?	No
<b>6</b>	Normally NZ\$150 but since there has been no work since last Thursday, this weeks allowances will be withdrawn. This will be the condition until work picks up again.	Seeka	7 months	2 months	No	No
<b>7</b>	Same as No.6	Seeka	7 months	2 months	No	No
<b>8</b>	Same as No.6	Seeka	7 months	2 months	No	No
<b>9</b>	Same as No.6	Seeka	7 months	2 months	No	No
<b>10</b>	Normally NZ\$150 but since there has been no work since last Wednesday, we are unsure if we will get this weeks allowance.	Seeka	6 months	2 ½ months	?	No
<b>11</b>	Same as No.10	Seeka	6 months	2 ½ months	\$3389	2 x \$70
<b>12</b>	NZ\$150 but permanently decreased to NZ\$100 at the day of the interview because the loan was too high and had to be repaid before going home to Vanuatu.	Seeka	3 months	1 ½ months	?	1 x \$80

## 5.2 Te Puna

In the area of Te Puna interviews were conducted during two sequential days, between Thursday, June 19, and Friday, June 20, 2008. As outlined in table 5.2 below, a total of 7 respondents participated, 5 female and 2 male. All of the respondents were interviewed one-on-one. Out of these, 2 of the respondents interviewed the first day approached me by own initiative the next day for a follow-up.

Table 5.2 Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers: Te Puna

No.	Age	Gender	Location	Type of Interview	Date
15	31	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 19, 2008
16	41	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 19, 2008
17	28	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 19, 2008
18	41	Female	Te Puna	In-depth follow-up to No. 16	June 20, 2008
19	49	Female	Te Puna	In-depth <sup>6</sup>	June 20, 2008
20	34	Male	Te Puna	In-depth	June 20, 2008
21	38	Male	Te Puna	In-depth	June 20, 2008
22	42	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 20, 2008
23	28	Female	Te Puna	Short follow-up to No. 17	June 20, 2008

### Complementing Information from Respondents

#### *Complement to interview No.17.*

The respondent said that she felt “very worried” about their payments. According to her, large amounts of money were missing from their pay slips, and they did not understand all the deductions. Many of them had approached the representatives from Big Toe about these issues. According to the respondent, Big Toe had answered by threatening them to be sent home if they did not stop asking questions about their earnings and deductions. Because of this apparent tension, they had asked for assistance from the Honorary Consul of Vanuatu. The Consul had promised to arrange with a meeting with Big Toe to discuss the concerns raised by the workers. At the point of the interview, they were still waiting for the Consul to return.

<sup>6</sup> In-depth refers to a one-on-one interview session with the respondent. In which the main questions from the survey, found in appendix 2, have been covered, although this type of session did not strictly adhere to the pre-determined structure set out in the survey-sheet. Instead, the focus was on the respondent’s perspective and what the respondent desired to highlight as important. Meanwhile, partaking in this free-going conversation the most important questions from the survey were appropriately integrated. For these sessions only digital tape recordings were made.

Meanwhile, however, two workers had already been sent home because they had been drinking beer. The respondent said, “we are afraid of Big Toe”, the reason for this fear was the strict rules of the agency that they felt encroached on their liberty. They did not feel as free as they were used to in their every daily lives in Vanuatu. Therefore, they felt that it was necessary to keep a very low profile while in NZ. As explained to me by the respondent, this basically meant, “to stay inside of the house and try to keep quiet” in order to avoid unnecessary attention.

Regarding their earnings, the respondent said that she “really hope that we will be given the money they promised us before coming here, but if not, then, will never return to NZ again”. Moreover, she also said that if they had been lied to in regards to the financial aspects of the RSE agreement and eventually would end up with much less money than expected, then she was quite sure nobody from her village would ever attempt to enter the RSE again. She had given the situation some thought and she added that, “in my own mind I feel that if in the end they will not compensate us, [in accordance with prior promises], then I will feel used, like a slave.” After a moment, she again expressed hope that the Honorary Consul would mediate the situation.

Another thing that she mentioned was the difficulties in coping with the language barriers, as many of the workers had marginal command of English, which was usually the case when they were francophone. Because of these communication problems, it became complicated to stress their concerns and raise issues with the pastoral key-agency representative. Some of them did, however, speak excellent English and had therefore assisted others in their contact with management. When this had been the case, I was told that the Big Toe representatives had been very impatient and had not cared to have someone translate. In general, from the experience of the respondent, it seemed as if the Big Toe management had behaved in a very unprofessional and rude manner. The frustration over the marginal possibilities to engage in dialogue was apparent and the respondent claimed that many of the workers were afraid to approach Big Toe out of concerns of becoming deported.

*Complement to interview No.18: In-depth follow-up to No.16.*

After having left Te Puna the evening before, Big Toe had called for an urgent meeting with the Ni-Vanuatu workers to inform them that there was not enough work for everyone. They had therefore decided to send home 38 of the workers. The respondent was personally affected by this decision, as she was one of the selected. She

was very upset about the short notice. Apparently, she was to fly out of Auckland at 4 am on the 21<sup>st</sup>, which had given them less than 24 hours to prepare for departure, packing, and saying goodbye to friends. The respondent had been in NZ for 2½ months despite entering the RSE on a 6-months contract. The contractual aspect seemed to be particularly upsetting and the workers had asked Big Toe if they would be financially compensated with the equivalent of what they had been promised to earn for the remaining part of the 6 months period. The answer was no.

Some of the workers wanted to have a minimum of \$2000 in compensation, but Big Toe had decided to give out a compensation of \$1000 per person. Also, some of the workers had very limited savings. For instance, the respondent claimed to have saved \$220-\$400 in her locked savings account, she had however managed to pay off her loan and debts to Big Toe. In general, the woman said that this was a “big disappointment” as the 38 workers that were leaving early “will not return with the money they promised us in Vanuatu”. Moreover, as there had been no work for the past week, they had been denied their weekly allowance of \$40 for this week. The \$1000 promised in compensation would be sent to them in Vanuatu upon their return. Big Toe did not specify a date for the transaction.

The respondent was very upset, as she because of the early departure could not bring all of her belongings with her back home. Another issue of concern was the airport fee, since they had not received their weekly allowance they would not be able to pay for it. Moreover, because of the limited amount of cash, the workers were unable to pay for extra luggage. Big Toe had instructed them to bring a maximum of 20 kg. While in NZ, many of the workers had purchased second-hand clothes for their children and family members, or had been given clothes from the Church in NZ, which they had to leave behind. This was particularly distressing since “clothing is hard to find in Vanuatu”, and especially nice clothes that have been donated. Troubled with these issues, the workers had raised their concerns with the Big Toe representatives at the meeting, whom had responded by saying: “that’s your business”.

Sharing this experience with me made the respondent burst into tears and she was very troubled because the situation was so difficult for her to handle. She explained that she had been looking forward to bringing the cloths with her home. She said: “I feel very bad, very bad, all of us feel very bad. We feel bad because what they said to us in Vanuatu is different; when we come here they make everything different to us. They treat us different, that is why we feel very bad. Maybe next time we are not coming again.”

The respondent continued as she said, “this situation is bad for us because most of us are ladies and we have families in Vanuatu, and some of us are crying because it is like we go home without any money”. In Vanuatu they had been promised to go home with approximately \$4000. “But now for me it is only going to be \$1400 the most. [For] the other [workers], about 3 of them already have \$1000 in their saving account, but the others have very little, less than \$400. This is not a lot of money in Vanuatu, in VATU it is about 20 000. It is very small.” When I asked her what she could get for VATU 20 000, in Vanuatu, she said: “maybe only food”.

*Comment:*

The above can be compared to the earnings made by the workers at the Melanesian Hotel in Port Vila where I lived when visiting Vanuatu a few weeks earlier. At that time the weekly wage was VATU 5000 so roughly VATU 20 000/month. From this it can be concluded that \$1000 in compensation would be equivalent to approximately 2 months salary in Vanuatu. Though they had been away for 2 ½ months and worked many more hours per day, and many more days in a row than a job in Vanuatu would demand. Although jobs are scarce in Vanuatu, in this case it is apparent that the work provided by the RSE scheme is very unreliable, and it can hardly, in the case of these workers, be considered a great opportunity to make money.

*Complement to interview No.18: Continued*

Again, the respondent started to cry, as she told me that she had purchased a \$10 phone card earlier in the month, by which she this morning had attempted to call a friend from the Church in NZ, “but when I rang him I only had \$2 left on the phone card”. The money left on the card was enough for her to ask for \$40 so that she could pay for extra luggage at the airport. She had explained to her friend that, “we found out with very short notice and we do not have enough money”. The person from the Church had asked how many of them would be going home to Vanuatu. She had replied, “from Te Puna we are 18 all together” (the remaining workers were from other locations, but also contracted for Big Toe). She had told her friend from the Church that she understood if it would be “too much money to support everyone”, but if it was possible could they at least help her out? The phone call had been disrupted, as there was no money left on the card. The woman had told her friends that she did not know if the Church was coming, but that they had to “wait and see”. “The church is the Seventh

day Adventist”. This was the same Church that had helped them with warm clothes earlier in the season.

The woman recalled when they had made a record in the pack house, “that day we worked from half past seven in the morning until half past seven in the night time, we were making \$1,5 million for them. But we do not understand how they say that they do not have enough money to give to us, not even for the access to the airport and \$40 for our extra luggage to bring home. This is very hard for us.” She then continued by saying, “today, when the boys went to work they had told the manager that they could not stay and work the whole day because they felt so sorry for us that are going home today, so they came home early from work because we are their friends and we are leaving today.”

Also, she said that she felt bad thinking about the interview that she had done with me the day before, since she had given me such a nice picture of how things were, “but now today things are different.” The day before, she had been unaware of Big Toe’s plans to send her back to Vanuatu. “Like yesterday when we are talking I don’t want to make like bad thinking about NZ, like I just said some good things about NZ, but inside we feel like very bad, we do not want to tell nobody how they treat us, or how they doing to us in the work of place, but yeah I just say like this. Now when they make us like yesterday we just feel very badly, like when we go there they just cut off all the things they do not want us to question anything. When we ask questions they do not want to like answer good answer to us. They just shortly talking, they just dismiss us like they do not want to give us a good answer. But I did not want to tell you yesterday because I did not want to say anything bad about NZ, but this is only the Big Toe people. Like we have been talking about this before like it is if there is something underground, like if they hide something from us. Our leader wanted to find out and was going to the accountant and asking them, and they said that they had already made agreement with the Vanuatu Government for that arrangement. This was 2 weeks ago. One of us they had to take out \$1400 in one week for deductions from our wages. We do not know where the money went, then we find out that maybe that’s why they are making us like this going back quickly to Vanuatu, and they take all of our leaders to go, because our leaders are trying to talk to them about the problems. We are surprised because they chose only those leaders, one from here, one from Te Puke, and the lady leaders from Vanuatu, those two of them and one Chief of us. Maybe we have been too much talking.”

*Complement to interview No.19: In-depth.*

This respondent was not leaving for Vanuatu; she had been told that she could stay for the whole 6-month period. Nevertheless, she was very unhappy with how Big Toe was treating her and her friends. “Because they promised us that we were going to stay here for 6 months, but we did not stay here for 6-months yet and they are going to send our friends back, so I think it is not fair they do this to us here. We should stay together and go back together like we came here, and we know them, we are friends of them, therefore we should go back together. We came here because we need money, and sometimes we work sometimes we did not work, and we must pay for our rent and for our food and fuel and we have not got enough money to pay for all the other things, so...”

“Because in Vanuatu they told us that when we come here we are going to pay a lot for only 3 weeks. But we have stayed here for 3 months now and our loans just finished, after 3 months not 3 weeks. They told us that the loan was going to be finished in 3 weeks, and the loan was in total \$1700, I think. This was supposed to cover the airfare back and forth to Vanuatu, but also for our work cloths and shoes. So it has taken 3 months, or actually 2 ½ to be exact, to pay of the loan.”

“Because I understand now, like we work in DMS pack house we make money, for one week we make about \$600, it all depends on how many hours we work. Usually we work 12 hours/day. But it depends on the weather, sometimes when the boys did not pick kiwi fruit, when it is bad weather so we cannot work. So when it is bad weather nobody works, and when we do not work we do not get paid. But we still have our expenses even if we do not work, we have to pay for accommodation fuel and everything else.” (By fuel the respondent was referring to rent and gas for some mini-vans that were shared between the workers as a means of transportation).

“When we came from Vanuatu we did not work for 2 weeks, sometimes we worked sometimes we did not work, so it has not been a lot of work. For the last 2 months it has been a bit rain. Before we came here we thought that we were going to work a lot more, because they told us that we were going to have only 2 days for training, but we did not work for almost the whole first 2 weeks, and now this week we did not work again. And sometimes during the weeks that we have worked we have had 2 days off, or 3 days, it depends. We have been here for 2½ months now. We all came together, all 65 of us. Now, 38 are going home tomorrow.”

“Because they told us maybe after 1 month and 2 weeks, again some of us will have to go home. But Big Toe did not tell us this, some of us got the information from

the manager when they were doing pruning, they had been told that they are only going to work there for 7 weeks and then finish. So they know that there will be no more job for them after 7 weeks.”

“Because we came here we thought that we would get good money to bring back to our families. But we think now that if we go back maybe we will not get enough money for our families, like they promised us. They promised us that we would return with something in between \$3000 - \$5000, after 6 months. Now I think that none of us will make that money, because some of us are leaving now with only \$1000 and some of them with less. Because we come here because all of us have needs, all our kids are in secondary school, and we come here we thought that we were going to have some money to pay for the school fees, but it seems that we come here we did not earn any money. In Vanuatu the school fees are different depending on primary school and secondary school. My firstborn son is in year 13, and the school fees are \$280 for 1 term, but we have 3 terms in Vanuatu. So my second born is in year 11 and the fees are the same. So we just came here to earn some money for our kids for their school fees. But I also have one child in kindergarten school, which is different because it costs \$100 for one term and it is 4 terms. In primary school it is \$85 per term and it is 3 terms. So I have a lot of school fees to pay. But this is the situation for most of us. We all have children in our families that we are here to support to go to school. But now it is going to be difficult.”

“I would like to add that working here is good, they pay \$12/hour, very good, it is good. But we should work every day, because we come here we need money, and now we do not have any work and we do not know when we will go back, maybe we will only have a small amount of money. Because next time if they recruit people from Vanuatu, they should know how much work there will be before they recruit us, because too many of us came here. Maybe 400 something, we came here, Big Toe brought around 400 people from Vanuatu here to work. This is a lot of people and now there is not enough work so they are sending some of us home. So next time when they want to recruit people they have to check how much work there is here in NZ first, so that they recruit enough people for the whole 6-month period, like they promised us. Not to come and send some of us back and some of us to stay, because it makes our friends feel sad. So next time when they want to bring people they have to find job enough for us to stay 6-months before they send us back from NZ. They should do what they promised us. It makes us feel sad, in the night we did not sleep, some of us were crying for our friends,

because all of us we came here because we have needs, but some of us are going back, so... We do not know, maybe we will stay until 6-months or maybe sometime next month we are going back too.”

“And we all have 2 suitcases in here, and like one of our friends she went home and she left everything behind, she only brought one suitcase with here. And all the other things stay in the motel. They told us to take only 20kg. And what about the other things? If we buy cloths for our kids and we did not bring it back home. All our children will come and say mom you work to bring us things but we have not got anything, everything is left behind. They say we only got 20kg to take with us. And the rest is going to stay. We are not going to bring it to Vanuatu. But because our weekly allowance is only \$40 so it is too small for us to pay money for extra luggage. And our savings are locked in an account where we cannot access them. And that’s why we have to leave everything behind, and we came here and wanted to find clothes to our kids, to bring it back to them. And now they did not give us the allowance for this week, and we have asked Big Toe if they can give us money to pay for the airport fee and extra luggage but they will not give it to us. Big Toe said to our friend, who already left, that everything is going to stay, you are not going to take anything, only 20kg, give all the things to other people. That’s what they said. They say you can share all your things to other friends, or you can bring your things to the second hand shop and sell it to them again, and maybe you can get small money from them again. So it makes her upset and she already gone and 3 bags are still left in her cabin until now. She left last weekend because she is pregnant.”

“The loan should have been paid in 3 weeks but we do not know how it has been going. I have calculated my payments and I have paid back double the money.” Next, the respondent showed me her pay slips. There were two different piles; one of them was from the DMS pack house. On the DMS pay slip, the hours worked was listed, how much they were being paid per hour and the total, a rounding and a net pay, all paid out in a check to Big Toe. The other paper was a transaction statement from Big Toe, where Big Toe stated the sum transferred from DMS and a list of the following deductions:

1. For the flight costs,
2. Vanuatu domestic transport, (0 for this person)
3. NZ domestic transport,
4. VISA application,
5. Clothing and Shoes,
6. Travel gear,
7. Set up gear,

8. International drivers license, (0 for this person)
9. First to second week petrol,
10. First to second week accommodation,
11. First to second week food,
12. First to second week vehicle lease,
13. First to second week travel insurance,
14. Other,
15. Accountant,
16. Loan fee.

In total, the loan was listed as \$1752,13. The women explained that she had been re-calculating her statements from when she first came to work in NZ, from April to May, “my earnings were \$4132,61, but when deducting the total loan it says that I have \$1252,13, but I should have \$2380,48 in my savings and I have not got any savings yet. Just recently, just in June 2<sup>nd</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> I received \$752 in my savings, and then I have had one more deposit on June 15<sup>th</sup>, which totals my saving to \$1154,46. But when I calculate it, it should be \$2380,48, so there is money missing.”

When I asked the respondent if she had talked to anyone about this she said “no, just to calculate by myself.” I then asked her what she was planning to do about it, now that she had recognized that there was a lot of money missing on her account. She said, “because we cannot talk to anyone in here, because when we talk they talk hard to us, so we cannot explain things to them”. I asked what she meant by that “they talked hard” to her. She said, “yeah like all our leaders tried to talk to them but they cannot do anything for us”. I asked who their leaders were and she said, “our leaders here in the group that come here to work with us, we have some group leaders looking after us. They went last week to talk to Big Toe, to talk to our accountant to talk about this situation, but Big Toe was there too. So they cannot talk to them about anything because Big Toe was there and she would not let them talk. She said something to them so they had to come back home. And when our leaders came back they told us that we couldn’t go through with Big Toe because she is a bad lady.”

“But almost all of us have the same experience of missing money from our earnings. And the other people that they are sending home now they also tried to talk to the accountant before, but Big Toe would not let them. But we are also paying for the accountant. Our leader told us that we are paying for the accountant because they are making deductions for it. Big Toe deducts a fee for the accountant from all of our paychecks. Now they are sending some of our leaders home and nobody is going to help us anymore, we just stay here like this.”

“At one time our leaders also called Big Toe to arrange with a meeting here, to ask her to come and talk about the situation. So, two times we try to talk with them. Also, our agent, our agent is from Tanna and he also lives there, he never comes and visits us in here. Like the other agent he has did come and visit us here, but the other one he never came he just left us like this. So now we have nobody to share our concerns with. So he should come here and visit us. He promised to come and visit us but he has not come. Both of them are working to recruit for Big Toe. But one agent was here visiting us and he was very upset because Big Toe is only paying us \$40 in weekly allowance, but other workers in NZ get \$150. But he went home last week to Vanuatu.”

“Two of the girls from here phoned the agent from Erakor Island from Efate, an agent from Vanuatu, to tell him about what is going on here. He said that it is not fair that they are sending some of us back because we signed a contract for 6 months. This morning the agent is going to call the Labor Office and maybe also they have to find a lawyer to deal with this case about Big Toe, because the contract is not finished yet and Big Toe should give more notice or something like that to those people going home today.”

*Complement to interview No.20: In-depth.*

“I came here to work under the RSE 2½ months ago. We have a contract with Big Toe and the DMS Company for 6 months. We have signed an agreement for an hourly rate of \$12, which is good. And we think that with the money that they pay to us we will bring back and help our communities, families, and some other needs, maybe school fees, and to help our communities to do some small projects back home. It is my expectation if I go with a good amount that will satisfy some needs of the community. That is what I have planned for.”

“And now that we come here we see that our loans are so high and we have to fix the loans, so now that I am looking for that maybe we have come here to complete the contracts. So we have not any amount in our savings now, we are still paying the loans. So it is giving me some pictures that I cannot do anything when I go back to my community in Vanuatu, or even in my family. That is why I am now feeling that maybe I must go somewhere else to sign an agreement with another agent. To go somewhere else and work, maybe here in NZ, or somewhere else. Because we came here thinking that we would bring back a good amount to satisfy our needs but now we are still paying the loan, including accommodation. Our loan is roughly \$2000. In Vanuatu they said to us

that we would be able to bring back in between \$3000 and \$4000, after 6 months. Now I do not know if I will go back with that amount or not.”

“Also last night the company had a notice for us, just to notify us about these changes, so they just tell us that there will be changes, some of us will be returning. So now I feel that it is not a proper way to do that. You, as a company, you have to notify that there will be a change in the future, to give out a notice. The notice was now just the night before they have to leave the next day. Last night Big Toe phoned us to assemble a very urgent meeting and we just go to the meeting. And they told us that 38 of you will be traveling home to Vanuatu tomorrow. Although they have only been here for 2½ months and some of them have not completed their loans, and they came here to make money and now they are sending them back.”

“We all signed the contract for 6 months, all of us. But now there is a change the people that are going home, they will give them only \$1000 as compensation and Big Toe will also pay their loans. So they will not have any debts. I cannot say that this is good or bad, but in my feeling we have signed for the 6 months to complete that. So now we came here, it is our first time to stay here in NZ with the Big Toe company. So we know that we have done a good job here, for the NZ government or the companies here to work for them and the owners of the orchards, we know that we have done many good things here for them.”

“We also found that some of the wages, or our money that they pay us, that there is a high deduction from our wages. So our leader went to the office of the Big Toe and trying first to ask the questions for our accountant, but she, the leader of Big Toe, do not want to have the meeting. She stopped our leader not to ask that question. Our leader wanted to know how much are the deductions that Big Toe are suppose to take from our wages. How much is the percentage, he wants to know. And now they are sending him home. It has been 2 weeks since he tried to talk to them about this situation.”

“The other thing that I think is important to say is that the Big Toe must be willing to talk to us about any confusions. They have to share more information with us about whatever we have confusion. Because there is a lot of confusion, because the leader of the Big Toe does not explain anything. But I think it is much better if Big Toe would come here every week to explain what is happening to us. She has only been here about 2 times in 2½ months. It is much better if the company has to come here every week to talk to us, because it is very confusing so we can ask the questions and then they can explain. Now there is no communication. So now everybody does not work because

we are worried about the others that are going home tomorrow, because we came here as a family, we all came in a group. So now that some of us are going tomorrow we feel sad. Therefore, we cannot do our job well, so that is why we must stay together. We decided not to go to work today because of this situation. We told our boss about that we will have to stay with our friends because tomorrow they will depart. But I feel that all of us are discouraged because of the actions taken yesterday, it is not a proper way and some of us will not come back to NZ again.”

“There will be some change, some of us maybe will change to another agent, not Big Toe. We heard that Big Toe is the last agent in here so we heard another story about another agent, they told us that if we go to another agent they might provide us with a good wages. Our weekly allowance here is \$40. Before we come here we were hoping to have good wages and send some money back home, but with only \$40 you cannot do anything with that. We cannot get money here, it is our money in the savings but we cannot get it, we will have it in Vanuatu. I think it is better to let us have some access to our money. I feel that I have no control over that money, it is for another person who is controlling that, but I work for that money. In Vanuatu when you work to one company, it is the wages they pay you, they pay to your account. And you have signed for your account you are responsible for that. Anybody cannot force with your savings or whatever. So you have the right for your savings. Here it is different. To me, I think to compare in my home country it is different. Maybe they must allow me or to give me a chance to have control over my savings to understand. I own that money.”

*Complement to interview No.21: In-depth.*

“I came here 3 months ago and my contract is for 6 months, we signed the contract for 6 months back in Vanuatu. I am working here in the pack house in the DMS pack house, picking the kiwi fruits, but I am not a picker, I stack the fruits in the pack house. In Vanuatu when they recruited us they told us that we are going to earn about \$9000, but we have a lot of payments in here like the accommodation, cost of living, the fans, and petrol, so it would be reduced to \$3000 to bring home after 6 months. They promised us to be able to bring \$3000 back home, when we were in Vanuatu. That’s what they told us. But now that I have been here for half the time of my contract I don’t think it is going to be possible to bring home \$3000. Because for these past 3 months that I have been working in the DMS pack house I have been paying back my loan, and I have finished my loan.”

“And now I am not working for DMS anymore, now I am working for Southern Cross and I meet with them this morning and talked to them about this situation and I asked if they would be able to give me job for another 3 months and they said no only for another 6 weeks maybe 7. After that, maybe I have to pack my bag and go back in Vanuatu. At the moment I am doing winter pruning at the Southern Cross. I started last Saturday and they promised me to pay me this coming Thursday and I did not get any money yet, so I do not know how much they pay me. I was also supposed to get my paycheck on Tuesday, but I did not get it. I went to see them this morning to ask about it too and they told me that I would get it next Tuesday, this coming Tuesday. Because of this my weekly allowance is also finished before last week. And last week I did not get any allowance. Before that my weekly allowance was usually \$40, that’s the amount that they promised us every week, but sometimes they reduced the allowance down to \$30 or \$20.” When asked why his allowance had been reduced, he said, “That’s the question. We have asked them and they told us, the big boss from Big Toe told us that we had been there taking out \$40, but we did not. So this is a big confusion. I feel angry, because we cannot live without money, but we are lucky because the manager looking after us in here he is delivering our food every Tuesday, so we have food. But we pay for the food they deduct it from our paycheck.”

When asked if he had been able to send money to Vanuatu, he said, “no, my mom rang me and told me to send some money, but I told her that there is no money here, so how can I send money when I only get \$40 and sometimes \$20 a week, there is no chance to send money home.” When asked about his savings, the respondent said that it had started last week and that he had about \$30 or \$40 in his savings account. “With the savings we cannot access them, it is the same for all the people here, we all signed up for the same with Big Toe, there are about 430 of us here working for Big Toe. It is the same system for all the other workers in Papamoa and other places too.”

“Sometimes we have tried to ask some questions about some problems that happens sometimes. They always say that it is not the right time right now, or I do not have enough time to talk about this. We have tried to talk to the accountant in there about our allowance and some other problems we found out, so we wanted to ask them. But the people from Big Toe told us that if you have a complaint to raise with the accountant you have to pay \$15 in a fee per person. So I am just thinking, because we are paying the accountant every week \$16, they are already deducting it from our paycheck.”

When asked how he felt about the situation he said, “sometimes, I think that, in my opinion I am thinking that it is like slavery, yeah it is slavery because slavery stopped in 1700, or 1800, I do not know, but I feel like the people from NZ are not kind, they are not good to black people, that’s my opinion.”

“When I was back in my country, it was good back in my country with my family, and then those guys came and told us hey come and work in NZ you will earn a lot of money, that’s how we came here. I do not know how to do it, because I was, I really want to get back, I want to go home to Vanuatu but the problem is that I am not on the list to go home. So that’s it, I just have to finish this contract and go back home and I will tell my family that I was in NZ and that the people in NZ have done this to me, and that they treat me like this, so maybe, yeah, I will tell my family and friends back in Vanuatu.”

“And when people will find out in Vanuatu, Big Toe will finish, no more Big Toe there. But Big Toe has a contract for 5 years to recruit from Vanuatu, but he told us that he is learning too, this is new to him too. But maybe next year, I think, he will not have the opportunity to learn any more because I think that the people from Vanuatu will not want to come here anymore. Because in Vanuatu, people live in a community and they respect each other, and sometimes when the white guys come in Vanuatu sometimes they are not good to black people and sometimes they get angry. In Vanuatu, the reaction is strong if you are not good to us, but now that we are here, we feel that we are in a new country and we feel like prisoners here, we feel like we cannot do anything. So we will just sit and wait until tomorrow, all our friend will leave, and stay and wait, maybe in a next couple of weeks it will be our turn to go. Like I told you, maybe Big Toe will come next year, but I do not know if they will recruit some other people because the news will spread very quickly over the country, and they will mark this company, and I do not know if they next year will get some people. Maybe some people back in Vanuatu will come, they will follow them, but the people that are here now, the first 400, I think they will not do it another time.”

*Complement to interview No.23: Short follow-up to No. 17.*

This woman approached me, as she was very upset about what had happened last night. The notice put out by Big Toe did not personally affect her, so she did not have to go back to Vanuatu. But she was very frustrated because there had been no work for

the past week and they had not received their allowance. She said that, “it feels like a waste of time because we only sit in the house and cannot go anywhere, or do anything. In my thoughts, I think that they are treating us like slaves, and now some of us have to go home without the money they were hoping for and with one day notice.”

### Earning, Spending, Saving, Sending

This section outlines the above listed respondents’ perceptions of their earning, spending, saving and sending possibilities at the time of the interviews. Table 5.2.1 shows the quantitative results from the survey, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Table 5.2.1

No.	Weekly Allowance	Agent/Employer	RSE-permit	In NZ for	Savings	Remittances
15	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	2 ½ months	\$1300	1 x \$100
16+18	Normally NZ\$40, but since there had been no work for the past week, this weeks allowance had been withdrawn.	Big Toe	6 months	2 ½ months	\$220 - \$400	No
17+23	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	2 ½ months	Paying the loan	No
19	Normally NZ\$40, but since there had been no work for the past week, this weeks allowance had been withdrawn.	Big Toe	6 months	2 ½ months	\$1154.46	1 x \$40
20	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	2 ½ months	?	No
21	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	3 months	\$30 - \$40	No
22	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	2 ½ months	\$110	1 x \$40

### 5.3 Papamoa

In the area of Papamoa 4 interviews were conducted in one day, on Friday, June 20, 2008. As outlined in table 5.3 below, 2 of the respondents were female and 2 male. All of the respondents were interviewed one-on-one. As I did not return to Papamoa for further interviews there was no opportunity for any follow-ups. In this location, the structured questions from the survey were used when interviewing and no additional information was revealed, as there was no time for deeper and freely moving interviews.

Table 5.3 Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers: Papamoa

<i>No.</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of Interview</i>	<i>Date</i>
24	25	Female	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008
25	33	Female	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008
26	34	Male	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008
27	53	Male	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008

#### Earning, Spending, Saving, Sending

This section outlines the above listed respondents' perceptions of their earning, spending, saving and sending possibilities at the time of the interviews. Table 5.3.1 shows the results from the survey. As in the previous sections, this information will be further analyzed in the following chapter.

Table 5.3.1

<i>No.</i>	<i>Weekly Allowance</i>	<i>Agent/Employer</i>	<i>RSE-permit</i>	<i>In NZ for</i>	<i>Savings</i>	<i>Remittances</i>
24	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	3 months	\$400	No
25	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	3 months	\$1000	No
26	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	2 months	\$1700	No
27	NZ\$40	Big Toe	6 months	3 months	\$1000	1 x \$80

## **Summary of Key-points**

This Chapter has outlined the key-empirical aspects of the study, both quantitative and qualitative in nature. In view of this information, it is clear that what separates the workers in Te Puke from the workers in Te Puna and Papamoa is their type of employment. While Seeka/Opac directly employs all workers in Te Puke, the workers in Te Puna and Papamoa have been recruited via a middle hand named Big Toe, which also functions as a pastoral care-agency in NZ. This is a rather crucial finding that will be further analyzed in Chapter 7, which will tie the findings presented here to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The main analysis will be summarized and connected to some final recommendations in Chapter 8.

Another notable aspect concerns the restricted access that pertains to the worker's savings, regardless of whom they work for. Also, the officially determined allowances given on weekly bases differ among employers. In general, the pattern is \$40, or less, if any, in weekly allowances for Big Toe workers and \$150, or less, if any, for Seeka/Opac workers.

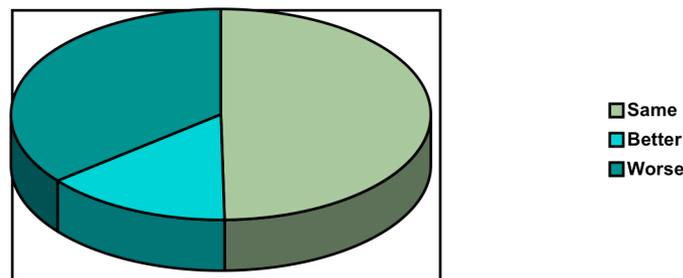
Furthermore, it has become clear that there are great confusions surrounding the Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers' wages, especially in regards to the deductions and savings of the workers' earnings. Many of the workers have expressed distress concerning their situation and feel that they have been unfairly treated at several occasions. Some aspects that have surfaced indicate direct violations of human rights standards and will be further elaborated on in the analysis outlined in Chapter 7. One evident example of such a violation was presented by the case in which the female Big Toe worker, asking to use some of her savings in order to pay for extra luggage upon the 24 hrs notice of being sent home, was denied access to her earnings.

## 6 Combined Statistics

This chapter builds upon Chapter 5 by outlining combined statistical analyses of the empirical findings. It is intended to serve as a visual overview of some of the main data. The percent rate is calculated on the sample size of 23 respondents.

Overall experience from RSE so far compared to expected:

Better:	Worse:	Same:
26%	65%	9%



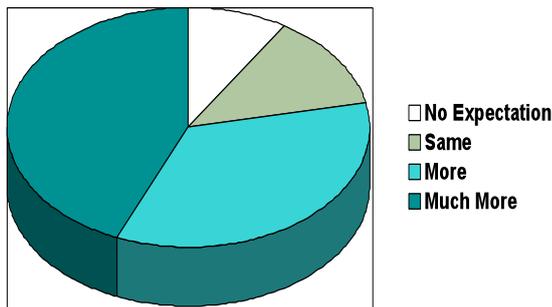
*Comment:*

It is remarkable to note that 65% of the interviewed workers found their RSE experience to be a disappointment, mostly for reasons already mentioned in the previous section. Nevertheless, 26% of the respondents considered their overall experience to have been better than expected. Among the explanations provided for this positive attitude were friendships made with workers from other PCI and learning about other cultures and customs. Once a month, one of the motels organized a cultural evening to which all-neighboring RSE-workers were invited. At these occasions, the workers from different PCI communities shared their traditional dances and songs by performing for the invited guests and preparing traditional dishes. Moreover, at several occasions, I was informed about the good intercultural exchange and friendships that had developed between local Maori communities (the NZ indigenous population) and the Ni-Vanuatu workers. Also, being able to travel to NZ, to learn about the country, and to eat kiwi (one worker particularly loved the taste of kiwi) for the first time, were all reasons given for why the overall experience had been better than expected.

Before coming to NZ under the RSE did you expect to be able to save up:

Much less: 0%  
 Less: 0%  
 Same: 13%  
 More: 35%  
 Much more: 44%

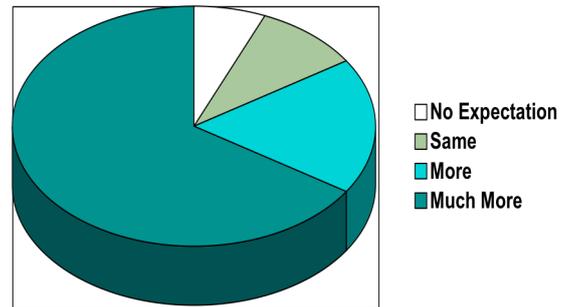
8% claimed to have had no expectations



Before coming to NZ under the RSE did you expect to be able to send home:

Much less: 0%  
 Less: 0%  
 Same: 13%  
 More: 26%  
 Much more: 52%

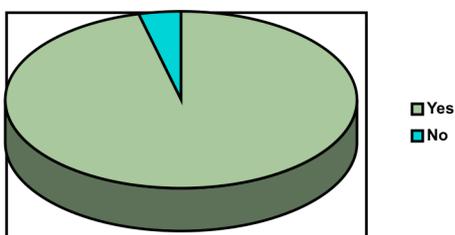
8% claimed to have had no expectations



Again, it is notable that except for 8% of the workers all the respondents found the financial aspect of the RSE scheme to be a disappointment.

**A)**  
 Before coming here were you ever promised a certain amount of pay?

Yes: 96%  
 No: 4%  
 All except 1 respondent knew in

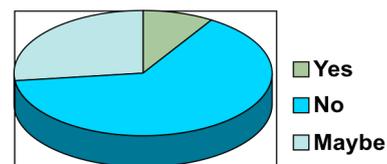


advance that the final pay could vary. Prior expectations of final sums to take home ranged from \$3000 - \$10000.

**B)**  
 If yes, so far, have you been able to earn the same amount as you were told?

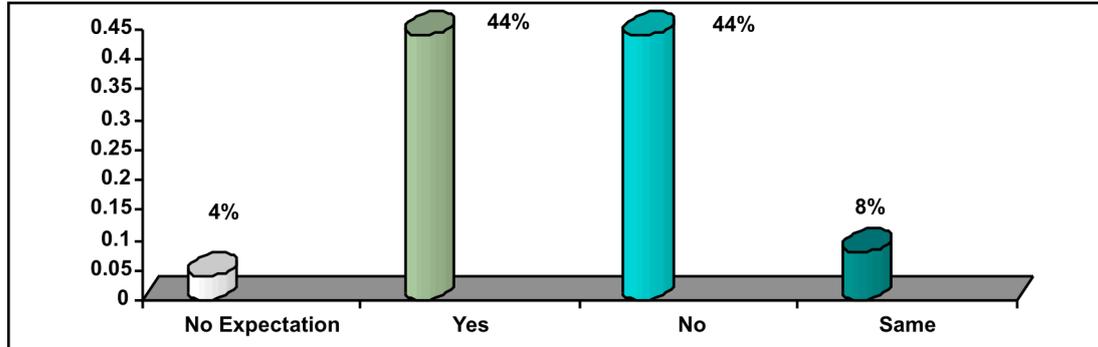
Yes: 9%  
 No: 64%

27%: It depends on the weather/hard to say if it will be what promised in the end because of the irregularity of the work.



Do you work more than you expected to before coming here?

Yes: 10/23      No: 10/23      Same: 2/23      1/23: had no expectation

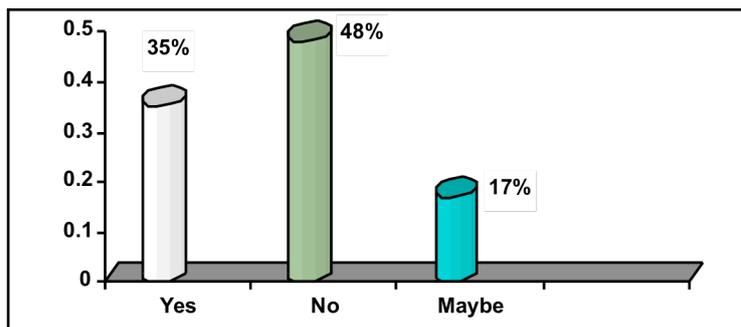


*Comment:*

It may seem contradictory that as much as 44% of the respondents found that they worked much more than expected before coming to NZ, yet also claiming to be earning less than anticipated. This discrepancy can be explained by the intense work schedule in periods with work and long periods without work during down time. Many of the workers did not know beforehand that workdays could include as much as 12-15 hrs of work. In Vanuatu, the standard is 8 hours of work per day. Some of the Ni-Vanuatu had previous work experience from different sectors in Vanuatu, although the work often had been of a sporadic nature, such as working in construction or selling produce at the market, one woman had her own established shop in Port Vila. All these experiences, from different types of work in Vanuatu, served as individual benchmarks to which the workers also compared their RSE experience.

Would you like to come back as an RSE worker?

Yes: 8/23      No: 11/23      Maybe: 4/23



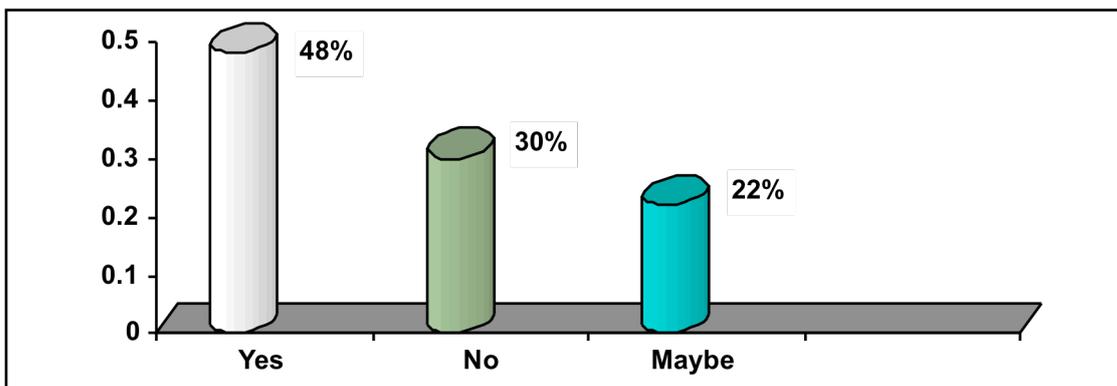
Clearly, most of the respondents found the RSE scheme to be too disappointing to give it another attempt in the future.

Nevertheless, 35% still considered the benefits to exceed the negative aspects of the scheme, and 17% wanted to see the final financial result before deciding.

---

Would you recommend other Ni-Vanuatu workers to join the RSE?

Yes: 11/23                      No: 7/23                      Maybe: 5/23



*Comment:*

Again, it may seem contradictory that as much as 48% would recommend other Ni-Vanuatu to join the RSE scheme while only 35% would like to come back a second time. This discrepancy can be explained by the recognition that their experiences not necessarily were representative of the scheme at large. Many of the respondents wished to come back a second time if they could be recruited directly by the pack-houses or orchard owners, instead of working for a middle hand like Big Toe. Also, some of the workers would recommend their friends to join the scheme but not to work for Big Toe.

When asked if he would recommend other Ni-Vanuatu workers to join the scheme, one man said, “maybe, I will tell them my experience and then they will have to decide for themselves if they want to give it a try or not”.

## 7 Analysis & Discussion

This chapter purposes to link the empirical findings with the research question outlined in Chapter 1. In light of some results from other research projects, this chapter also connects the broader research on the RSE scheme to the findings presented in this study. In order to clearly highlight the answers to the research question, the conclusion of this analysis will be presented in the following and final chapter. Chapter 8 also purposes to put forward relevant recommendations and important aspects to be considered both in the development of the RSE-scheme and for future research.

From the analysis of the collected information presented in this thesis, it is clear that what separates the workers in Te Puke from the workers in Te Puna and Papamoa is their direct relationship with their NZ employer. While all the workers in Te Puke work for Seeka/Opac directly, who is a relatively large and well established employer in the NZ kiwi-industry, the workers in Te Puna and Papamoa were all recruited by Big Toe, who also functioned as their pastoral care-agency in NZ. This dual role of being an agent recruiting directly in Vanuatu and overseeing the workers in the form of a pastoral care agency in NZ constitutes a very noteworthy aspect of the findings. This dual role of Big Toe, as a Vanuatu RSE agent and a “NZ based private sector organization”, has been recognized before by Martinez, McKenzie & Winters (2008) in their pre-departure and recruitment study of the RSE scheme in Vanuatu. In their UW working paper entailing information from the first part of their base line survey, Martinez et al., noted that Big Toe was actively recruiting in Vanuatu.

The other large recruiter using direct recruiting was Big Toe, a “New Zealand based private sector organization with a focus on community development in [sic] Third World”, which served as a link between Vanuatu and employers in the Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand. Big Toe worked closely with World Vision in Vanuatu to target areas in Vanuatu with limited employment or income generating opportunities to recruit workers from. Tanna was identified as one such location, and some other smaller island groups, with the ‘shortfall’ of workers recruited from other areas, mainly Port Vila and its surrounding area. ... As of April 2008, there were 22 licensed RSE agents in Vanuatu, with ten securing places for Ni-Vanuatu workers. Many of these agents have secured workers with Seasonal Solutions or Big Toe (p.5).

Interestingly, from the above, it is clear that Big Toe is a NZ based private sector organization that, on the one hand, has been recruiting directly in Vanuatu, and that, on the other hand, have relied on local agents in Vanuatu to secure workers for their NZ

job-vacancies. As noted by Nic Maclellan (2008) in his formal assessment of the first year of the RSE scheme, the system of having agents recruiting workers is unique to Vanuatu. While all other PCI have relied on formal recruitment processes performed by government units, Vanuatu uses both. Nevertheless, a closer examination of Martinez, et al. (2008) also reveals the following:

Some workers have complained that, despite being explicitly forbidden, some agents have tried to charge an additional fee to workers for their services. ... The role of agents continues to evolve, and their worth in the second year remains to be seen. It is likely that many employers will re-employ workers from the first year, and ask trusted workers to recommend others from their villages. Along with direct recruiting from larger employers, this will limit the space available for agents to add value. The area where some agents are still likely to retain business is in recruiting for smaller employers, especially first-time employers. However, they will face competition from co-operatives such as Seasonal Solutions and Big Toe. ... As of May 22, 2008, 1, 698 Ni-Vanuatu workers had been approved to come to New Zealand through the RSE. As of April 19, 2008, twenty-one different employers had recruited from Vanuatu, although this includes five employers where the recruitment was carried out by Big Toe (p.5-6).

It is clear that Martinez, et al. (2008) identifies the possible problem of having agents recruit as they may try to add fees for their services despite legal prohibitions. Nevertheless, as indicated by the information in this thesis, the Big Toe workers in Te Puna expressed similar concerns of additional fees being charged and having deductions made from their wages without knowing why, or having someone explain to them for what reason. Clearly, the possibility that larger agents based in NZ will try to maximize their profits is also a potential problem that is overlooked by Martinez, et al. (2008). Nevertheless, since Martinez, et al. (2008) states that they will continue to study the role of Vanuatu agents in their up-coming rounds of surveys, I would recommend to add a comparative section where the evolving roles of NZ based agents will be scrutinized.

To add such a section would be particularly feasible as it is clear from reading the study by Martinez, et al. (2008) that the Big Toe workers recruited from Port Vila in late March and early April of 2008 were a big part of their sample. It is therefore also very likely that some of the Ni-Vanuatu workers that have participated as respondents in this thesis are part of their sample. One of the main ideas with the long-term study undertaken by Martinez, et al. (2008) is to compare the results of the first survey with three up-coming rounds of surveys in order to identify possible effects of the scheme on

the lives of the Ni-Vanuatu workers. It would therefore be interesting to see if the findings pertaining to the treatment of Big Toe workers participating in this study are representative of the larger sample in Martinez, et al.'s (2008) study in upcoming rounds, especially as the encounter with Big Toe have left great imprints on the workers interviewed here.

In judging from the findings in this thesis, some of the limitations on access to the Ni-Vanuatu worker's earnings by the workers may be due to the private sector recruitment strategy, where NZ based Pastoral care-agents, in this case Big Toe, can maintain a dual and simultaneous role as recruitment agents in Vanuatu on behalf of larger RSE employers. This seems to have created a sort of middle hand situation that severely restricts the worker's possibilities to access their wages while in NZ. Also, this became particularly evident in the case of Te Puna where the workers were denied access to their savings to pay for extra luggage when having to depart to Vanuatu, given less than 24hrs notice.

Nevertheless, none of the workers that were interviewed claimed to have access to their savings account regardless of whom they worked for. What is evident, however, is that there is a clear correlation between having a middle hand functioning in a dual capacity of recruitment agent and Pastoral care agency (Big Toe) and the amount of remittances that the workers are being able to send home. This identified relationship is explained by the weekly allowance determined to \$40 or less, if any, in the case of the Big Toe workers. In contrast, when working directly for the NZ kiwi industry, in this case Seeka/Opac, the recruitment process had occurred via formal institutions such as the VDL, and in those cases the workers' weekly allowances were also higher.

Whilst Seeka/Opac give their workers a weekly allowance of \$150 or less, if any, it is clear that this option is financially beneficial for the workers in terms of their earning, spending, saving and sending possibilities. For instance, while the 11 interviewed Big Toe workers had been in NZ for 2 – 3 months, they had combined managed to send home a total of \$260. This can be contrasted with the total amount of remittances sent home by the 12 Seeka/Opac workers, who had been in NZ for a much shorter time, 1 ½ - 2 ½ months, and that had sent home a combined sum of \$930.

### **Remittances: answering the research question**

To answer the research question in terms of variables: if the *dependent variable* under investigation is *degree of remittances* and the identified *independent variable* is type of

employment (direct employment with Seeka/Opac, or indirect employment with Big Toe), then, we can establish that having a middle hand *causes* less remittances. In short, Big Toe employees send home fewer remittances. The *counterfactual scenario* therefore, which as pointed out by Fearon (1991) is a “parallel universe” where everything is identical, except for the independent and dependent variables of interest, is in this case is provided by the case where Seeka/Opac employees send home more remittances.

Nevertheless, as emphasized by Hedström and Swedberg (1996) and Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson & Wägnerud (2007), among others, the empirical test of causality through counterfactuals is essentially only testing a correlation. Therefore, in order to establish causality, a macro-micro-macro level mechanism need to be outlined that explains the correlation not to be spurious. With respect to the case given above, the causal mechanism that I propose is the restrictions on weekly allowances imposed by Big Toe on the individual level (macro going to micro) of the workers, which eventually generates less remittances on an overall level (connecting to macro again).

In regards to the possibility of spending portions of their earnings while in NZ, it could be largely argued, by following the same logic as above, that working via a middle hand severely restricts the workers possibilities of spending their earnings while in NZ. This is simply because Big Toe provides their workers with a maximum of \$40 in weekly allowances. It is therefore of significant importance to note that it is *not* the case (as initially proposed as hypothetical answers to research question in Chapter 1) that the workers individual spending patterns, saving patterns, or differences in availability of work, or differences in earnings, determines the amount of remittances.

### **Following up on some of the findings**

One of the findings that caused great concern is the cancellation of pre-established work periods with only 24 hours notices. Arguably, this occurrence greatly decreased the expected earnings of the Big Toe workers. In view of this fact, combined with the revealed uncertainties regarding the conditions of the workers savings, the case would benefit from a formal investigation. As noted previously, however, none of the interviewed workers claimed to have access to their savings. Therefore, in a formal inquiry directed to DoL on June 18, 2008, I raised the concern over how the Ni-Vanuatu workers’ autonomy to control their own earnings was severely hindered by the use of locked savings account. In the reply, which I received on October 3, 2008, I was informed that according to NZ Wages Protection Act (NZWPA):

“no employer shall impose any requirement on any worker about how they shall spend their wages. The Department of Labour is aware that there are some situations where workers agree to arrangements of this nature as it assists them to meet debts which they might have incurred in order to take up the opportunity to carry out seasonal work in New Zealand. Workers can, and do, voluntarily enter into such arrangements but they have a right to withdraw consent at any time” (Haines, Department of Labor, private communication, October 3, 2008).

Clearly, the Ni-Vanuatu workers participating as respondents in this study were unaware of having entered into such an agreement. Moreover, when the Te Puna worker demanded access to her savings account in order to pay for extra luggage to bring her private belongings home to Vanuatu, she was denied the possibility of withdrawing “consent” from the agreement she was unaware of having entered. To deny the workers their right to access their earnings raises serious questions of credibility towards the employers. If this type of legal compliance is missing there are serious reasons to worry about the actual transfers of the final payments too. (In light of the findings provided here, however, it is impossible to say anything about the final payments of the workers wages).

Nevertheless, not only are actions of denying workers access to their earnings in violation of NZ domestic law, they are also in breach of international human rights law, set down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), *Article 23*, and international labor standards law, negotiated by the International Labor Organization (ILO), *Article 6 of the Migration for Employment Convention, Revised, of 1949 (No.97)*, both ratified by the NZ government. As these are all legally binding documents, it is the responsibility of the NZ government to make sure that they are followed. In light of the results from this study, I recommend a formal investigation by the DoL.

Furthermore, the stress and frustration expressed in regards to the uncertainties surrounding the locked savings accounts, deductions, and earnings, should not be underestimated as it clearly has had a very negative impact on the experiences of the Ni-Vanuatu workers. When 65% of the respondents are disappointed with their overall RSE experience and 79% unsatisfied with the financial aspects of the scheme, it should be of interest to the DoL to undertake a formal investigation concerning these aspects. Workers must be properly informed and have access to neutral actors mediating their concerns to properly ensure their autonomy and legal rights. Logically, these concerns

are also of significance to the reputation and long-term success of the RSE scheme. I recommend that an organization similar to an RSE-workers union be established to ensure the legal rights and proper communication flows between workers, employers, and government departments. Appropriately, (although it is hard to generalize the findings presented here to all PCI) such an organization should have subsidiaries in all PCI countries in order to monitor recruitment agreements and to follow up with transfers of final payments. In NZ, a close cooperation with the independent NZ Human Rights Commission (NZHRC) is encouraged (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, n.d.).

## 8 Summary of Key-findings & Recommendations

This final chapter presents a summary of the research results of this project along with my recommendations in regards to future research. Also, listed are some of the rather worrisome aspects that have surfaced, which pertains to the legal rights of the Ni-Vanuatu workers.

### *Summary of Key-findings & Recommendations:*

- Based on the Big Toe Sample in the working paper by Martinez, et al. (2008), I would recommend adding a comparative section where the evolving roles of NZ based private sector organizations/RSE agents are scrutinized. Mainly to see if the findings pertaining to the treatment of Big Toe workers participating in this study are representative of the larger sample in Martinez, et al.'s (2008) study in upcoming rounds of surveys.
- The *degree of remittances depends on type of employment*. It has been established, based on the small sample used in this thesis, that having a middle hand (Big Toe) *causes* fewer amounts of remittances. In short, Big Toe employees send home less remittances compared to directly recruited and employed workers. Further investigation into as if this finding is representative of a larger sample is recommended before any generalizations can be made.

- The causal mechanism that I propose is: the restriction on weekly allowances imposed by Big Toe on the individual level (macro going to micro), of the workers, eventually generates fewer remittances overall (connecting to macro again).
- Following the same logic as above, working via a middle hand severely restricts the workers possibilities of spending their earnings while in New Zealand. This is simply because Big Toe provides their workers with a maximum of \$40 in weekly allowance. It is therefore of significant importance to note that (for the small sample examined in this thesis) it is *not* the case that the individual spending or saving patterns, or differences in earnings, or differences in available work of Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers, determines the amount of remittances.
- To ensure compliance with NZ domestic law and internationally ratified legal instruments, it is recommended that the DoL conduct a formal investigation concerning the access to the workers' earnings and the amount of deductions being made.
- To ensure the long-term success of the RSE-scheme, and to ensure that RSE-workers have access to proper information and support in mediating conflicts of interest, it is recommended that an independent NZ – based RSE workers union, with subsidiaries in all PCI states, is created. Appropriately, (although it is hard to generalize the findings presented here to all PCI) such an organization should oversee the financial aspects of recruitment agreements and have the authorization to follow up with final transfers of workers' earnings. In NZ, a close cooperation with the independent NZ Human Rights Commission (NZHRC) is encouraged.

## References

- Esaiasson, Peter., Gilljam, Mikael., Oscarsson Henrik & Wägnerud Lena. (2007). *Metodpraktikan* (tredje upplagan). Vällingby: Nordstedts Juridik AB.
- Fearon, James. (1991). Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science. *World Politics*, 43: 169-195.
- Hedström, Peter & Swedberg, Richard. (1996). Social Mechanisms. *Acta Sociologica*, 39: 281-308.
- International Labor Organization. (1949). *C97 Migration for Employment Convention, Revised, 1949 (No.97)*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labor Organization
- Maclellan, Nic. (2008, May). *Workers for All Seasons? Issues from New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) program*. Retrieved January, 07, 2009 from [http://www.sisr.net/publications/0805maclellan\\_RSE.pdf](http://www.sisr.net/publications/0805maclellan_RSE.pdf).
- Martinez, Pilar Garcia. McKenzie, David & Winters, L. Alan. (2008, June). *Who is coming from Vanuatu to New Zealand under the new Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Program?*. Retrieved July 3, 2008, from <http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Marsden+Fund+Project/Seasonal+Work.htm>
- New Zealand Department of Labor. (2007, April 20). *Recognised Seasonal Employer: Inter-Agency Understanding: Vanuatu*. Auckland, NZ: New Zealand Department of Labor & Republic of Vanuatu Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). *New Zealand: A credible, consultative and committed candidate for the Human Rights Council*. Wellington, NZ: New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Svenning, Conny. ( 2003). *Metodboken* (femte upplagan). Eslöv: Lorentz Förlag.
- United Nations. (1948, December 10). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. General Assembly Resolution 217A (III). NY, USA: United Nations Department of Public Information.
- Ware, Helen. (2007, October 3). Melanesian Seasonal Migration as a Potential Contribution to Security. *Global Change, Peace and Security*, 19: 221-242.

## Appendix 1

### Division of Interviews with Ni-Vanuatu RSE-Workers

<i>No.</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of Interview</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	25	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 16, 2008
2	50	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 16, 2008
3	43	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 16, 2008
4	38	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 17, 2008
5	24	Male	Te Puke	Individual	June 17, 2008
6	19	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
7	34	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
8	29	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
9	22	Female	Te Puke	Group 1	June 17, 2008
10	22	Female	Te Puke	Group 2	June 17, 2008
11	28	Female	Te Puke	Group 2	June 17, 2008
12	39	Female	Te Puke	Individual	June 18, 2008
13	25	Male	Te Puke	In-depth follow-up to No. 1	June 18, 2008
14	38	Male	Te Puke	Short follow-up to No. 4	June 18, 2008
15	31	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 19, 2008
16	41	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 19, 2008
17	28	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 19, 2008
18	41	Female	Te Puna	In-depth follow-up to No. 16	June 20, 2008
19	49	Female	Te Puna	In-depth	June 20, 2008
20	34	Male	Te Puna	In-depth	June 20, 2008
21	38	Male	Te Puna	In-depth	June 20, 2008
22	42	Female	Te Puna	Individual	June 20, 2008
23	28	Female	Te Puna	Short follow-up to No. 17	June 20, 2008
24	25	Female	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008
25	33	Female	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008
26	34	Male	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008
27	53	Male	Papamoa	Individual	June 20, 2008

## Appendix 2

### Design of Survey and Interview Questions

#### PART I

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Island of Origin: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: Male  Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you here under the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme? Yes  No

Is this your first time in New Zealand (NZ) under the RSE? Yes  No

If No, how many times have you been here under the RSE before? \_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_

This time, when did you arrive in NZ under the RSE? \_\_\_\_\_

For how long is your RSE permit valid? \_\_\_\_\_ When will you return home? \_\_\_\_\_

During the time of the RSE permit, is it possible to extend your stay, or to continue to work for a longer duration? Yes  No

How did you find out about the RSE? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who are you working for while you are here? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who recruited you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Has your RSE experience so far been:

Better than expected  Worse than expected  Same as expected

During your time here have you been able to save up some money? Yes  No

Have you had the possibility to send some money back home? Yes  No

If Yes, have you done so on a regular basis? Yes  No

If Yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_ If No, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately, how much money have you been able to send home until now? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately, how much money have you been able to save up until now? \_\_\_\_\_

How much do you estimate that you will be able to save up in total when returning home? \_\_\_\_\_

Before coming to NZ under the RSE, how much money did you expect to be able to:  
Save up? \_\_\_\_\_ Send home? \_\_\_\_\_

Much less  | Much less

Less  | Less

Same  | Same

More  | More

Much more  | Much more

Before coming here were you ever promised a certain amount of pay? Yes  No

If Yes, is it your experience that you, so far, have been able to earn the same amount as you were told? Yes  No

How many hours per day do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you get paid for overtime? Yes  No  I do not work over time

In your opinion, do you work more than you expected to before coming here?

Yes  No  Same

