

Employment and Labour Migration Policies discussed at MoEHR Workshop

On July 22nd SHTA attended, on behalf of our members, a consultation workshop hosted by the Ministry of Employment and Human Resource Planning, the objective being to review two hefty employment documents. The first was the National Employment Policy and Strategies, previously adopted in 1999 and reviewed in 2016. The second was the Seychelles National Migration Policy, last dusted off in October 2019. The plan is to validate updated versions of both policy documents later this year.

The intention was to create a meaningful conversation between public and private sectors, however those in attendance were overwhelmingly from the public sector. Major private sectors were either absent or minimally represented. Doubtless they were invited, so one question which we can ask about the validity of the consultation is why did more private sector actors not attend? Is it, SHTA posed, because they see employment policies are being imposed upon them rather than developed with them? If so then this can be seen as a misconception; there seems to be a genuine intention on behalf of the Ministry to listen to and consider seriously the private sector voice.

Later in the week the SCCI re-shared a communique originally written for the attention of the previous administration in the aftermath of the pandemic, which advocates the creation of a Jobs and Enterprise Growth Task Force (JEG Task Force), which would broaden the scope of the existing consultation platforms and give the private sector more opportunity to contribute to policy formation. In his email accompanying the re-presented document, Mr. Bastienne, SCCI Chairperson, wrote; *The submission emphasises the value of bringing Government, employers, workers and other stakeholders together to develop practical solutions for employment, skills development and enterprise growth.* Presumably at the time this fell on deaf ears so let's see what happens in response to the SCCI re-heated initiative, which is directed at the government.



Back to the meeting;

PS Morrell stated that the ministry is also revising Human Resources Development policy statements and identified this work as being complementary to the two policies being discussed.

Regardless, the first session of the consultation saw Mr. Mario Dupres present aspects of progress (and concerns) over the last decade in reference to the National Employment Strategy. He also identified what he termed 'key constraints' to progress – in other words objectives set ten years ago which have not been fully realised. He also stated that much of the 2016 version would remain in a revised version of the policy, which suggests that many of the challenges identified a decade ago (or even longer) remain concerns today.

As is often the case with such events there was a sense of déjà vu; a sense that the agenda could have been cut and pasted from previous consultation events, and that – with one exception (the potential impact of AI and technology upon our labour market and the national economy) discussions mainly explored long-standing topics such as education, localisation and performance/productivity.

As always the question is this; how will any revised policy impact upon the tourism sector – especially revisions which could be made to labour migration policy and legislation, which directly impacts tourism businesses? SHTA gave its customary intervention, calling for tourism content to be embedded in the Primary and Secondary curricula, better post-school tourism training and the need to 'stress test' all policy through a formal consideration of the likely impact of rapid technological advances upon the employment landscape. SHTA continues to promote progressive measures in our schools and – as things stand – our tourism Professional Centre – as a key way in which young Seychellois can be better informed about employment opportunities within the tourism sector. If this is prioritised we can expect to see mindset negativity in young Seychellois regarding a career in tourism reduced.

The second morning session saw Mr. Dupres present proposed policy statements, fifteen in all. These reinforced long-standing priorities but also noted the importance of technological advances and digitalisation, which was welcome and important. There was no indication as to how the effect of these policies might be measured and evaluated if and when they are adopted; we can assume that Key Performance Indicators etc will be added once the general direction of the new policy is agreed.

The afternoon saw the focus shift to labour migration, something which impacts upon the staffing of tourism businesses, particularly the larger ones. We need to be mindful of the fact that policy is similar to a MOU in that it has no regulatory status. But policy can inform and lead to legislation, at which point the private sector is obliged to follow new laws.

So tourism needs to keep a close eye on policy development and promote positive outputs and common sense.

The afternoon session addressed the revision of the Labour Migration policy. We learned that successful localisation is most seen within the tourism sector, with between 200 – 300 instances recorded in 2024, whereby a position originally identified as expatriate being filled by a local. Nevertheless, the tourism sector remains the second largest employer of expatriates (after construction). In 2019 our sector employed 4147 expatriate workers. This had risen to 5205 by 2025. One specific example given was that of the post of chef, which saw the largest single increase in specific occupation applications – 764 in 2019 rising to 1087 in 2025.

Recent feedback from external stakeholders eg business associations included a need to consolidate the GOP application process and post-application services under a single ministry or department. SHTA notes that the launching of a single digital platform which would achieve this (and more) is still pending, as has been the case for some years.

Feedback also proposed that a better framework be created to address employer responsibility for the health of migrant workers. There is great disparity across employers, with some covering costs 'out of pocket' and others adopting a more formalised system. The tightening up of health checks prior to a worker flying to Seychelles was also advocated, as well as enhanced protection of the rights of migrant workers (this being very much in line with ILO advice).

One policy priority (Number 3, titled Attracting, Retaining and Developing skills) contains some elements which could be of concern to our sector. For example this section advises... *the exploration of sector-specific caps on post-application approvals in sectors with a high concentration of non-Seychellois workers, particularly in occupations where greater localisation opportunities may exist.* This does, of course, assume that the local labour market has sufficient skilled workers to fill the gap between any 'cap' and the real needs of the sector, which it demonstrably does not. In tourism this would be a totally false assumption. At the workshop it was explained that this was a feedback proposal and not confirmed policy. SHTA stated that such an idea, if adopted, "would be a disaster".

So...we await the follow up from the government. SHTA remains 'on board' with any meaningful collaborative opportunities and has demonstrated its forward thinking on many of these problems in previous strategic plans and proposals.

Both documents which sat at the centre of the consultation are attached with this update by the way, and members are invited to submit responses to the ministry through the offices of the SHTA.

The two presentations made by the Ministry are also attached for your consideration.