



MTSRR BRIEFING NOTE #1

Myanmar Tourism HR Development

MYANMAR TOURISM STRATEGIC RECOVERY ROADMAP (2020-2025)

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While tourism has been identified as a crucial component of Myanmar's future economic development, the government faces an enormous challenge in realising its ambitions. Not only must it modernise its creaky infrastructure and develop tourism products to attract and encourage travellers to return, it must also address a talent shortage that makes it difficult for tourism-related businesses to find and retain the staff they need. Moreover, it must do so while meeting its own commitments to developing an industry that is sustainable and treats its workers responsibly (*Oxford Business Group, 2020. COVID-19 Economic Impact Assessments*)

Tourism is a diverse and labour-intensive activity which provides significant potential to create employment opportunities, improve household incomes and reduce poverty in Myanmar. One in four net new jobs created in Myanmar over the past five years were in the tourism sector, with tourism's contribution to employment at 1,073,500 jobs in 2019 (4.8% of total employment).ⁱ

However, COVID-19 has severely impacted the tourism sector globally, and Myanmar is no exception. Over the past months all schools, colleges and universities have been closed to minimise the risk of COVID-19. Online learning has been implemented by a number of institutions with mixed success.

A Myanmar Tourism Impact Survey indicated that sixty percent of tourism businesses had to reduce their workforce either by laying off staff, putting staff on furlough or with unpaid leave.ⁱⁱ These numbers will have increased month by month during the pandemic as international travel, hotel closures, shutdowns of restaurants and lockdowns restricted business and tourism.

In order to meet current and future post-COVID tourism demand, and to provide quality of service and products, Myanmar's tourism and hospitality education and training system is in need of considerable development due to lack of

The primary issues for Myanmar tourism are protecting jobs, providing skills for the new normal, and getting people back to work. The industry needs to ensure the future quality of trained people for tourism and hospitality that will be ready for tourism reset and the projected growth and the fulfilment of the GoUM vision of a high quality, service-oriented tourism sector.

CURRENT STATUS OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

Technical and vocational education in Myanmar is provided by government ministries and the private sector. Currently there are more than 375 technical and vocational schools and training centres overseen by 18 ministries and the private sector.

Public Sector Tourism Education & Training

The Department of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DTVET) from the Ministry of Education has been establishing hospitality training some of its GTHS and GTI institutions close to tourism destinations such as Inle, Bagan and elsewhere. DTVET also plays a key role in the reform of TVET in Myanmar.

MOE and MOBA have supported the retraining of vocational trainers from their institutions in

hospitality teaching in order to offer hospitality courses at their colleges or institutes. Along with personnel from the MOHT, over 75 trainers from the three ministries completed a 9-month long train-the-trainer course and returned to their schools or colleges during 2019 and 2020.

The MOHT has established a tourism TVET institution at the Centre for Tourism Development (CTD) in Yangon and trained almost 1,600 young people and industry staff in tourism, travel, hospitality and culinary skills. This initiative was conducted with the support of Lux Development.

A tourist guide training school was set up by MOHT in 1992 and has trained 9,860 national, regional and local tourist guides and licenced 4,982 tourist guides by mid-2020. This school has now been merged with CTD.

MOE has responsibility for all public higher education and TVET establishments, including those focused on tourism. Myanmar has over 170 higher education institutions (HEIs) (colleges, degree colleges and universities), which are overseen by eight ministries.

Since 2019 the government allowed private institutions to apply for registration as universities and most of these offer overseas franchised qualifications rather than home grown degrees. There are now more than 20 private universities registered with DICA (Directorate of Investment and Company Administration) or with the Ministry of Education.

The key higher education institutions focusing on tourism are the National Management Degree College (NMDC) which is affiliated with Yangon University of Economics and the Mandalay Degree College in Mandalay. These two higher education institutions deliver a four-year Bachelor of Arts degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management.ⁱⁱⁱ

Private Sector Training

There are over 20 tourism and hospitality training providers clustered mainly in Yangon and Mandalay delivering a variety of mainly short, in demand courses for the hospitality and tourism sectors. Many of these private training providers belong to the MTHRDA (Myanmar Tourism HRD Association). However, over the past few years a number of small private training companies have also opened to offer training in travel, tourism or hospitality.

Training providers vary significantly in their focus and can be divided into two categories, those that offer further or higher education generally through diploma courses, which includes around eight institutions, and those who provide technical and vocational education and training, which embraces around 15 institutions.

Training by INGOs and Development Agencies

Non-formal TVET is also offered by local NGOs and INGOs. There is little coordination of the training provided and no regulation, apart from the government higher education and training providers which are controlled and, to an extent, quality assured centrally. However, the actual quality of provision is considered to be poor and the government sector seriously under resourced.

Significant training in hospitality has been conducted by SwissContact through their Hospitality Industry Training Initiative. Some 850 instructors were trained in local hotels from 2015 to 2019 and through these instructors, over 2,000 hotel staff were trained as trainers. They in turn trained around 5,700 young people in hospitality skills. Lux Development also trained 2,500 managers, supervisors and trainers during a four-year period from 2016 in almost every state and region in Myanmar.

Ad hoc training also takes place for hotels across the country by MOHT or their designated course provider, often trainers from the tourism associations or the private tourism colleges. Additionally, INGOs, NGOs and other development partners provide short courses on demand.

Apprenticeships. & On-the-job Training

Apprenticeships and on-the-job training programmes have been introduced into Myanmar by German and Swiss organisations, the most well-known being at the Centre for Vocational Training in Yangon. CVT students can undertake a two-year professional hospitality programme which includes 21-months of dual training: five days working and practicing at the training company and one day per week at the vocational school.

SwissContact have also introduced Dual Apprenticeship Training, where the workplace is the key learning location. The training follows an agreed training curriculum and is complemented by basic, generic and theoretical training modules delivered in a Government training institution. The

purpose of the dual approach is to supplement company-specific training with general transferrable skills.

Remote/Online Learning

Since the closure of training and education institutions in March 2020 due to the pandemic, teachers and students in Myanmar have been adapting to the situation where face to face classes are not permitted, and alternative methods of learning are needed.

Since March, many institutions in Myanmar have closed their facilities but some continue by offering online learning for their students, either exclusively or as a complementary measure that supports smaller class sizes and less physical presence in classrooms.

However, as the recent global human experience has already shown, remote learning poses many challenges in implementation, measurement of its effectiveness, especially for technical training, and in reaching areas where access to the Internet is limited - rural areas, Rakhine State and where families cannot afford access.

To address the closure of educational institutions, Myanmar has opted for multi-modal approaches that include high tech, low-tech and/or traditional paper-based dissemination. However, for tourism education and training, remote learning has been left mainly to the private sector apart from the MOHT Centre for Tourism Development which has piloted online courses for tourism and hospitality in partnership with Typsy - an Australian hospitality e-learning company.

QUALITY & STANDARDS

The GoUM conducted a Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR, 2015) which has led to the drafting of a National Education Strategy Plan (2016-21).^{iv} The TVET component aimed to have a TVET curricula in place that meet local needs and quality-assured TVET institutions and graduates achieving national skills standards.

The Tourism National Hospitality and Tourism Curriculum Framework has been developed by MOHT with support from Lux Development and agreed in principle by MOHT, MOE and NSSA in 2019.^v For quality assurance of the non-formal TVET sector, the National Skills Standard Authority (NSSA), authorised by the Employment and Skills Development Law (ESDL), plays a central role.

Formed in 2007 and headed by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population (but comprising various other stakeholders), the NSSA is mandated to develop occupational competency standards for levels 1 to 4 of the draft Myanmar Qualifications Framework^{vi} (MNQF), design curricula and required training materials, conduct skills assessments and issue national certificates. A National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (NAQAC) was also established.

National tourism occupational standards are under development for hospitality and tourism, with seven occupational areas - housekeeping, front office, food & beverage service, food production, spa, leisure & wellness, travel & tour operations and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions).

In total 55 standards should be completed by early 2021, along with a system for Recognition of Prior Learning at levels 3-4 for experienced but unqualified workers.

CONCLUSIONS

In the short, medium, and longer-term, remote and blended learning will need to be further developed to support and strengthening the tourism and hospitality education and training system in Myanmar over the coming months and years.

Myanmar has insufficient training and development opportunities provided by the public or private sector or within the industry. Training is limited by a shortage of qualified, experienced trainers, inadequate facilities and equipment and an outdated curriculum and teaching methodology.

There is weak national coordination, no implementation of a national tourism curriculum or tourism qualifications at this point in time, slow development of occupation standards and lack of a robust quality assurance system. However, these challenges are being addressed though delayed by the COVID-19 crisis and lack of sufficient funding.

Of particular concern is the lack of engagement between the tourism industry and the education system and its providers. Many of the current hospitality training courses are not accessible to the broader population, especially to rural, regional and disadvantaged groups that would greatly benefit from education and training and the concomitant employment opportunities.

It is essential to support the projected post-pandemic growth in the tourism sector and enhance employment opportunities for young people across the nation.

Education and training providers, officials, industry associations, teachers and students agree that the tourism education and training system is not currently capable of producing the quantity and quality of trained people for tourism and hospitality that will meet its projected growth and

the fulfilment of the GoUM vision of a high quality, service-oriented tourism sector.

There are not enough training and development opportunities provided by the public or private sector or within the industry. The provision is limited by a shortage of qualified, experienced trainers, inadequate facilities and equipment, outdated curriculum and teaching methodology, the absence of national coordination, a recognised set of standards and qualifications or a quality assurance system.

KEY ISSUES

Strengthening tourism education and training is absolutely critical to meet tourism growth and industry expansion and the demand for qualified workers. Many institutions involved in tourism training are in their infancy and under-resourced, making it difficult to deliver quality skills and knowledge and ensure trainees are competent when taking up jobs in hotels or other tourism businesses.

The current tourism training landscape is beset with problems: shortages of qualified teachers; outdated 'theory based' curriculum and teaching methods; lack of practical training facilities, equipment and learning resources; student inability to pay the real cost of training; and, low public financial support.

To meet industry needs, tourism education and training providers require supportive government policies and investment in higher and TVET tourism education provision. Particular importance should be placed on capacity building for teachers and trainers, as well as support for curriculum development, teaching and learning resources, library materials and systems.

Access to tourism tertiary level education is difficult for women due to the expense and need to travel and stay in other locations (women are restricted by a need for trusted accommodation choices such as staying with family or friends).

A lack of opportunity to study in their own languages are particular challenges for education and training in ethnic areas. Opportunities to learn English are also hampered for some ethnic groups due to a requirement to learn English through Burmese, their second language.

Challenges in developing and implementing remote online learning for technical subjects such as hospitality require more investment and piloting of new methods and curriculum as well as training of teachers to facilitate online classes.

REFERENCES

ⁱ World Travel & Tourism Council (2020), Myanmar 2020 Annual Research: Key Highlights (As reported in March 2020)

ⁱⁱ Ministry of Hotels & Tourism (2020) COVID-19 Myanmar Tourism Impact Survey, May 2020

ⁱⁱⁱ National Management Degree College. (n.d.). Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management - NMDC. Retrieved 24 August 2020, from <https://www.nmdc.edu.mm/en/bachelor-of-tourism-and-hospitality-management/>

^{iv} Myanmar National Education Strategic Plan_2016-21.pdf. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 August 2020, from https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/myanmar_national_education_strategic_plan_2016-21.pdf

^v Introduction to the Tourism and Hospitality National Curriculum 2020. (n.d.). Issuu. Retrieved 24 August 2020, from https://issuu.com/cliff.lonsdale/docs/presentation_booklet_v11_feb_2020

^{vi} The MNQF will comprise eight levels, which address basic education, TVET and higher education from level 1 (entry) to level 8 (PhD).