

## Public, Private and People Partnership (PPPP) for Manpower Development of the Tourism Industry in Sri Lanka

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### Introduction

Sri Lanka, a country which had a thirty-year horrendous war, enjoyed permanent peace since 2009. Being one of the most peace-benefited industries, Sri Lanka tourism has started rekindling its position back as one of the top best destinations in the world. As a result, Sri Lanka has now been recognized as one of the sought after destinations in the world recently (New York Times, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2010).

Having identified the multiple contribution of tourism industry on socio-economic development in Sri Lanka, Mahinda Chinthana Development Framework expects to increase international tourist arrivals to 2.5 million while increasing tourist receipts to USD 2500 million by 2016.

As being a labour intensive industry, one of the critical factors to determine whether Sri Lanka could achieve the expected targets in tourism industry is the availability of skilled manpower for tourism development in Sri Lanka. It is expected to increase up to 500,000 trained human resources by 2016 to satisfy the manpower requirement of the industry at which time it reaches 2.5 million tourist arrivals.

The major challenge is how to provide the required 500,000 human resources while ensuring quality of such manpower. Service attraction of the industry is mainly determined by the availability of high quality trained manpower to the industry. Ironically, majority of tourism employment opportunities available in Sri Lanka are currently representing low-wage, low-skilled, low paid, temporary and seasonal jobs. A very small segment in tourism employment seeks high quality trained skills and competencies.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine how effectively helpful public and private partnerships to meet the emerging manpower requirement of Sri Lanka tourism industry by 2016.

## Methodology and Data

This study has employed a mix of both Descriptive and Exploratory Research methods. The study carried out a field survey while reviewing the available secondary data published by related institutes and organisations. Travel Agencies and Air Lines, Accommodation Sector, both public and private training institutions, government and non-government tourism organisations and other related institutions were included into this survey. Both primary and secondary data sources were used to collect necessary information for the study.

## Findings and Conclusions

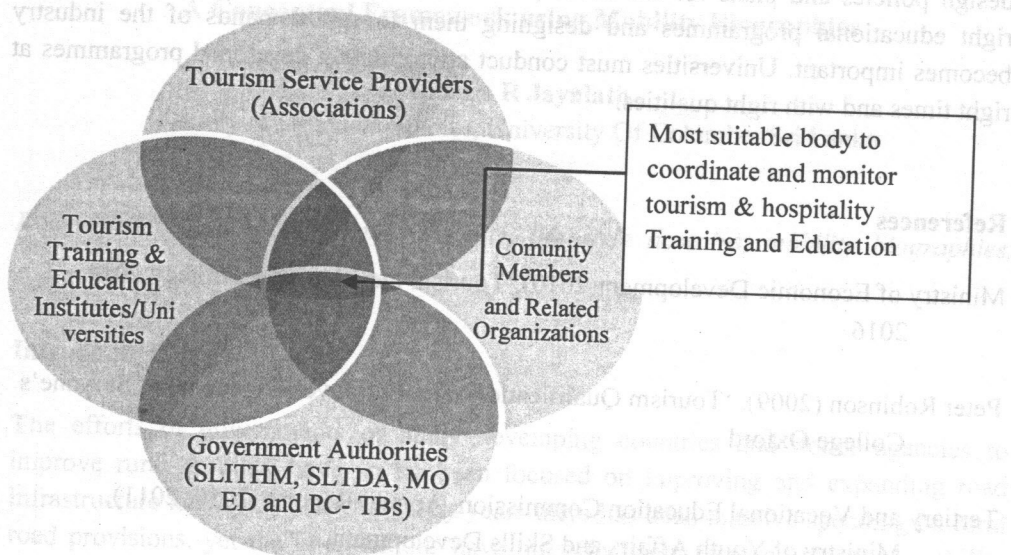
According to the findings of this study, a severe deficit of manpower at managerial levels, much more than at operative level, is likely to be experienced in the future. This will be due to the high demand for experienced and skilled employees by star graded internationally recognized hotel chains. In this context, strategies to provide the required manpower for the tourism industry cannot be effectively implemented by public sector or private sector alone. A proper coordination between both sectors and quality assurance monitoring system are needed. Tourism service providers, government, tourism education and training institutes and community organizations, must work together aiming at well focused targets through a process of Public, Private and People Partnerships (PPPP).

These four stakeholders are:

1. Tourism Service Providers (e.g. Hoteliers, travel agency operators, guides etc.)
2. Government Authorities and Organizations such as SLTDA, SLITHM, SLTPB, SLCB, the Ministry of Economic Development, and provincial level tourism authorities
3. Tourism Education and Training Institutes/Universities
4. Community Members and Community Organisations

Furthermore, such partnerships must ensure (1) Developing partnerships among vocational training institutes, universities and high educational institutes; (2) Introducing of accreditation and franchise operations; (3) Introducing new training programmes by addressing the emerging requirements of tourism manpower; (4) Provide Train the Trainers Programmes and (5) Conducting effective awareness programmes through the collaboration of national and regional educational institutes and related community organisations.

Figure 1: Key Stakeholders for Tourism Manpower Development in Sri Lanka



These key strategies must be incorporated with an effective community participation to provide required manpower for the industry. Contribution of community members and related organisations are vital in developing positive attitudes among youths to engage with the industry as employees or resource persons. The industry's direct partnership with community members and related organisations is a must in this context.

Developing partnership between internationally recognised tourism manpower training institutes and universities will provide opportunities to gain exposure to international training programmes. This could also provide an opportunity to understand industry practices at international level.

One of the key challenges found in this study is the maintaining quality and standards of training programmes conducted by private sector institutes. Usually, it was public sector training programmes on quality and standards which were considered outdated and less market demand driven. As at present, such situations can often be seen with many private sector training programmes as well. Developing quality and standards training programmes through private sector participation is to be done with a properly coordinated mechanism.

The study also revealed that the expected role of universities by the industry is completely different to what the majority of Sri Lankan national universities are currently offering to the industry. Instead of providing technical training for the craft level manpower development to the tourism industry, they are expected to provide

training for higher managerial levels, conduct necessary research activities and to design policies and plans for the development of the industry. Therefore, identifying right educational programmes and designing them to suit demands of the industry becomes important. Universities must conduct appropriately developed programmes at right times and with right qualities.

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