FACILITER UNE GESTION RESPONSABLE ET EFFICACE DE LA MIGRATION CIRCULAIRE DES TRAVAILLEURS MAURICIENS VERS L’ITALIE
Mauritius: geography, population and economy

Mauritius is an island in the Indian Ocean about 2,000 kilometres off the southeast coast of the African continent and its capital is Port Louis. The nation’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) covers about 1.9 million square kilometers of the Indian Ocean. The country’s population reached 1.3 million in 2012 and is composed of several ethnic groups, mostly people of Indian, African, French, and Chinese descent. Most Mauritians are multilingual; English and French are the two international languages more commonly used by the majority of the population. Mauritius has a GDP (PPP) per capita income of over $15,000 in 2012, which is one of the highest in Africa.

Since independence in 1968, Mauritius has developed from a low-income, agriculture-based economy to a middle-income diversified economy. The labour force which was initially concentrated in sugar cane production was gradually absorbed into labour intensive textile and garment production and in tourism. Today, while still producing sugar and textile in capital intensive factories, Mauritius has moved to a full service oriented economy based on tourism, financial services, information and communication technology and business process outsourcing. The seafood, hospitality and property development, healthcare, renewable energy, and education and training are other emerging economic sectors, attracting significant investment from both local and foreign investors. With one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world, in 2012 the government announced its intention to develop the ocean economy.

558000 persons are in employment. 8% of this labour force is employed in the primary sector, 25% in the secondary sector while the tertiary sector absorbs 68% of the labour force. The number of unemployed is estimated at 49700, which represents 8.3% of the total workforce in 2013.

The Mauritius Circular Migration Project with Italy

An agreement was signed in September 2012 between the Government of Mauritius, and the Government of Italy, which provides a framework for the management of circular migration and for optimizing the mutual benefits of circular migration on economic and social development, and thus preventing illegal and unplanned migration.

Within the framework of this Agreement, a pilot Circular Migration Project between Mauritius and Italy was launched at the beginning of May 2013 and is presently being implemented by the International Organisation for Migration with funding to the tune of 75% from the European Union and 25% from the Government of Italy. The total project cost is € 842,635.

Objectives of the Project
The project aims at achieving the following objectives:
(i) reinforce the capacity of Mauritian authorities in managing planned migration and preventing illegal migration
(ii) promote circular migration as a means to prevent brain drain and reinforce the capacity of local people in key sectors namely agro- industry, fisheries and tourism
(iii) enable the Italian private sector to draw from the pool of human resources available in Mauritius to meet part of its needs for seasonal labour

Activities of the Project
The pilot project provides for the following activities:
(i) exposure of 30 Mauritian public officials to the Italian legal and institutional framework on labour migration management
(ii) development of an online system to facilitate the registration of job applicants and the selection by Italian employers
(iii) training in agribusiness for 30 Mauritian growers, agro-processors and institutions supporting these operators, at the Instituto Agronomico Mediterraneo di Bari, a privileged partner in this pilot project
(iv) seasonal employment in Italy for 70 Mauritian workers to acquire experience in the fields of tourism and fisheries (35 in each field)
(v) Reintegration of workers on their return and assistance in setting up business enterprises
Tourism is one of the most important pillars of the Mauritian economy contributing significantly to economic growth and has been a key factor in the overall development of Mauritius. Its contribution to GDP stands at around 10%. In the past two decades tourist arrivals increased at an average annual rate of 9%. The number of international tourist arrivals increased from 422,463 in 1995 to nearly 1M tourists in 2012 (965,000). Europe remains the largest tourist foreign market for Mauritius, with France representing 28% of the total number of visitors and Italy 7%. The peak season for tourism in Mauritius is in summer, with nearly 60% of tourists visiting Mauritius during the period extending from October to March. Mauritius is predominantly a holiday destination for beach-resort tourists. It possesses a wide range of natural and man-made attractions, enjoys a sub-tropical climate with clear warm sea waters, attractive beaches, tropical fauna and flora complemented by a multi-ethnic and cultural population that is friendly and welcoming. These tourism assets are backed up by well-designed and run hotels, excellent service, and reliable operational services and infrastructure. Mauritius received the World Leading island Destination award for the third time and the World's Best Beach at the World Travel Awards in 2012. Mauritius has also one of the highest rates of returning tourism visitors in the world.

The circular migration project with Italy is the first project in Mauritius which will focus on the whole process from the selection of workers through to their pre-departure training and monitoring of their stay in Italy, and up to the follow up and reintegration on their return. Prior to their departure, the workers will be given language training and a cultural orientation to facilitate their integration in Italy. IOM will arrange for their airtickets. The Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies will facilitate the processing of visa and work permits. During their stay in Italy, they will be offered job related training and will be supported and monitored by an official from IOM. On their return, the project provides for training for reemployment, and financial and technical support to those who are willing to set up a business related to the area where they have acquired experience.

A website to facilitate recruitment and selection of workers

An interactive website and job portal is being specially developed to facilitate the recruitment and selection of workers under the circular migration programme with Italy. It is expected that the website will go live in January 2014. A national campaign will be launched by the Mauritian Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment to encourage jobseekers to register on this new website. The latter will be able to upload and update their CVs and access the website from a PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone. Italian employers will also be able to access the website on the following URL address: www.mauritiusjobs.mu. After registration, employers will be able to post a job advertisement and search for candidates corresponding to the profile they are looking for, and view their profiles. They can shortlist the candidates and monitor the selection process. The Mauritian Ministry of Labour & Employment and IOM will assist the employers in their selection and interview processes.

The following background on the Tourism and Fisheries sectors highlights their importance for the Mauritian economy and identifies the skill gaps that can be addressed through the circular migration project with Italy.

Tourism

Faciliter une gestion responsable et efficace de la migration circulaire de travailleurs mauriciens vers l’Italie
Mauritius is internationally recognised as being an outstanding example of high quality tourism development. Selective, up-market, quality tourism is favoured, and although such tourism is not the only type, it constitutes the major segment of the tourists who stay in high class hotels.

The hotel infrastructure ranges from 5 star luxury resorts to small to medium-sized hotels and villas. There are twelve major hotel groups in Mauritius, of which the most internationally known are: Accor, Beachcomber, Club Med, Indigo Hotels and Resorts, Lux Island Resorts, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Sun Resorts, Heritage Resorts, and One &Only Resorts. Some reputable international hotel chains are also present such as Four Seasons, Hilton, Intercontinental, Maritim, Le Meridien, Oberoi and Sofitel. Tourism in Rodrigues has a different attraction. Rodrigues is known for the warmth of its ‘gites’ (resting place) and ‘chambres d’hote’ (guest house) where tourists eat the fresh products from the back yard garden and home farm and the sea food prepared in these family businesses. Rodrigues has a good potential for agri-tourism.

In 2012, the total workforce in hotels and restaurants represented 40000 workers (7% of total workforce). The workforce is known for its high level of customer care and for its ability to speak at least two international languages, namely English and French. About 7500 unemployed have acquired work experience in the hotel and restaurant sector.

Mauritius aims at reaching a target of 2 million tourists annually. Human resource development is fundamental to the further growth of the tourism sector and for the sustenance of the high quality service.

Mauritius has a number of high level training institutions, both public and private, offering both formal and on the job placement in the hotels for operational, supervisory and managerial personnel. Some are specialised technical and vocational training institutions and others are universities:-

- Hotel School of Mauritius
- University of Mauritius
- University of Technology
- Charles Telfair Institute
- Mauritius Employers’ Federation with the University of Birmingham
- Institut Vatel

The Hotel School of Mauritius, known as the Ecole Hoteliere Gaetan Duval (EHGD), which is a government funded institution, offers post-secondary certificates and diplomas. The NTC 3 certificate is of one year duration with an apprenticeship scheme whereby the trainee goes for formal training once a week at the Hotel School and works under the guidance of a mentor, 5 days a week in a hotel. This certificate admits mainly school leavers aged 17 and above who have completed at least 4 years of secondary schooling and who speak English and French.

The NTC 3 certificate is offered in the following trades:

- Food production
- Pastry production
- Restaurant & bar service
- Front office
- Housekeeping
- Bakery
- Butchery
- Butler service
- Laundry
- Tour guiding
- Leisure & entertainment

Around 700 of them complete their NTC 3 level courses every year in June and look for jobs.
The diploma courses are of three year duration and are offered in the fields of Hospitality management (culinary arts), Tourism Management, and Hotel Management. The Hotel School also offers some non award courses, including in languages (German, Italian, and Spanish).

The Hotel School produces a total of 1500 graduates annually but intends to raise its output to 3,000 a year in view of reaching the target of 2 million tourists. To deliver on this target, the Hotel School requires the hotel industry to offer appropriate placements. The hotels are not yet able to absorb such numbers. Hence the need to look for opportunities abroad which will increase the demand for further trained personnel. The international cruise ships are already recruiting massively from Mauritius. Some of these cruise ships offer their own tailor made training to their new recruits, using the facilities of the Hotel School.

In addition to the Hotel School which offers mainly technical level training in the trades related to the tourism sector, a few private and public universities offer courses at management level in the field of Tourism. In 2012, there were some 1500 students enrolled in tertiary level courses in the field of Hotel/Travel/Tourism. The Vatel Business School, Hotel and Tourism Management, is a private training institution of international reputation. This institution offers training at bachelor and master level in International Hotel Management, with practical internship in hotels. There are currently more than 200 students enrolled, of whom 136 are Mauritians.

The University of Technology Mauritius is one of the two public universities offering full time and part time training in tourism. Its School of Sustainable Development and Tourism offers bachelor and master level degrees, with some 175 students enrolled in 2012 in the following courses:

- MSc Tourism Management and Marketing
- MSc Integrated Resort Management
- Postgraduate Diploma Integrated Resort Management
- BSc (Hons) Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Diploma in Tourism Management

The University of Mauritius, the other public university, offers at its Faculty of Law and Management the following courses:

- MBA Specialisation: Hospitality & Tourism
- BSc (Honours) Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Management
- BSc(Honours) Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Management

Some 200 students were enrolled in the field of Travel/Hotel/Tourism at the University of Mauritius in 2012.

There is a keen interest among Mauritians who have either completed their training or who are working in the tourism sector to join the circular migration programme and work in the same sector in Italy.

Fisheries

Mauritius including its outer islands of Rodrigues, St Brandon, Agalega, Tromelin and Chagos Archipelago has an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of around 1.9 million square kilometers. The EEZ of Mauritius has a reasonable stock of various fish, including pelagic and demersal species.

The Fisheries sector makes a contribution of around 1.3% to GDP and contributes to 14.8 % of national exports. 6 000 persons are employed in seafood processing, while indirect employment in the seafood sector (ancillary services) number 10 000. Direct employment linked to fishing activities in Mauritius EEZ (including Rodrigues) represents 6 000. Tuna constitutes about 96% of the total export value of fish and fish products from Mauritius.

Artisanal fishing

Mauritius is very dependent on the sea and its resources mainly for its fisheries and tourism industries. But there has been over the years a decline in fish production, mainly in the fresh coastal fish catch. On the mainland of Mauritius, some 2250 fishermen are involved in the artisanal fishery, while on the island of Rodrigues, there are some 1000 fishers. In the lagoon the fishing is done using small boats (pirogues) of 6 to 7 metres and by means of basket trap, line large net and gill net. In 2012, total fish production was around 5500 tonnes, while total fresh fish production from the artisanal fishery was 705 tonnes.

The literacy rate of the artisanal fishermen is low. A few has studied up to secondary level and the large majority has studied up to primary school level. In Mauritius, around 50% are aged below 50 years (with 30% in the age group of 40 to 50 years). In Rodrigues, around 80% are aged less than 50 years. Around 20% of the fishers are women.
With a view to reducing fishing effort in the overexploited lagoon areas, several strategies have been adopted to provide them with an alternative means of earning their living in the same sector. Fishers are being encouraged to catch pelagic fish around Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) moored around the island at a distance ranging between 1.5 to 12 nautical miles (nm) outside the fringing reef at depths ranging from 400m to 3000m. Other alternative options include aquaculture and off-lagoon fishing.

Aquaculture

Mauritius has a strong potential for aquaculture with an estimated annual fish production of 29000 tons for the medium term growing up to 39000 tons in the long term (Mauritius Aquaculture Master Plan 2007). Prospects in aquaculture exist in the field of high value aquaculture of species which are regarded as delicacies besides culture of sea cucumber, eels, urchins, ornamental fish, oyster and oyster pearls for the lucrative global export markets. To date, only 2 aquaculture sites with in lagoon cage culture are operational in the South East of Mauritius with a yearly production capacity of 1 000 tonnes. The Ministry of Fisheries has set up floating cages on a small scale and experimental basis in 8 sites to encourage fishermen cooperatives to learn aquaculture farming. All the fishers need to gain experience working in fish farms

Semi-industrial fishing

20 semi-industrial fishing vessels operate on the banks located in the exclusive economic zones of Mauritius. The length of these fishing vessels varies between 12-24 metres. These fishing vessels are operated by qualified skippers. But there is an acute shortage of skippers as only some 25 skippers are available to operate the fishing vessels in the semi-industrial fishery.

36 candidates aged between 35 and 50 and with middle secondary education have recently followed a skipper’s training course at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy but they need to undergo further training and on the job placement so as to obtain a Certificate of Competency to operate the semi industrial fishing vessels.

Seafood Hub

Mauritius is diversifying its economy by developing a Seafood Hub for trading, warehousing, processing, distribution and re-export of fresh, chilled and frozen or value added seafood products. The fish products in the seafood hub includes canned tuna, pre-cooked vacuum packed tuna loins, frozen fish fillets, fresh chilled whole fish/fish fillets, cured fish, smoked fish, salted fish, pet food, fish oil and animal feed. The main market for canned tuna is the EU whilst tuna loins are mainly exported to the US.

25% of the overall canned tuna imported by the European Union (EU) comes from the Indian Ocean canneries. Mauritius is one amongst the two biggest ACP exporters of canned tuna to the EU market and Mauritius ranks 3rd in terms of overall EU canned tuna external supply.

The seafood hub requires trained labour to work in the tuna processing plants. Currently the processing plants are importing labour to be able to operate on a 24 hour shift.

Ocean Economy

With one of the world’s largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.9 million square kilometres, the government of Mauritius has declared its intention to develop an Ocean economy, and to make of Mauritius, within the next ten years, a nation fully conscious of its immense potential as an Ocean State. This will include development of fisheries, seafood processing, aquaculture, marine constructions and engineering (jumborisation), water-based tourism (big game fishing & leisure) and other marine services – (boat building, repairs and maintenance, ship chandlery, retail of seafood) and development of value added activities including processing of - 40 degrees sashimi grade tuna and better fish oil and fish meal. The development of the ocean economy will require expertise, and both capital and human investment.
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