

Making Tourism Count

for the Local Economy in the Caribbean

Guidelines for Good Practice

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Brief 4

Employing local staff

The Issue: The main cash injection into the local economy from tourism is from the wages of local staff. This linkage is already very significant, but ways to increase it should be encouraged.

It is important for employers to recognise the impact of HIV/AIDS in the region. After sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean is the region most affected by HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS is most prevalent amongst people of a working age and recent estimates from Jamaica suggest that a quarter of workplaces have at least one HIV-positive employee. Employers must understand the issues involved and take action responsibly.

What can you do?

Good practice approaches

The following key approaches can significantly improve the wages and conditions of employment of low paid workers:

- ✓ **Reassess your recruitment:** What jobs are available to skilled and unskilled local people? Are there opportunities for local people to be employed as new entrants to the industry with secure employment? Are locals employed just as seasonal casuals or part-time workers with no security of employment?
- ✓ Pay a **living wage** to 'low-paid' staff and include health and welfare benefits.
- ✓ **Ensure** un-skilled and semi-skilled people can progress through promotion to more skilled and better paid jobs.
- ✓ **Invest in training:** It can transform the employment prospects of poor people, contribute significantly to local economic development, reduce poverty and enhance workforce performance. Training is required for progression at all levels not just management training for graduates.
- ✓ **Develop and implement** a policy which encourages openness and lack of stigma towards HIV. Educate managers as well as staff about HIV/AIDS, safety in the workplace and working with HIV+ colleagues.

Consider the opportunities

There is a need to invest in new local linkages, but the importance of local employment and wages should not be ignored. Tourism wage rates generally exceed agricultural wages and there is often high local recruitment in the Caribbean. But there is more to do on training and career progression for less-skilled staff so that local staff can occupy more senior posts. On some Caribbean islands, inward migration is an issue.

Strong local employment linkages build a sense of place in the community which encourage people to stay in the area. The more local people earn, the more cash benefit flows into the local community from tourism.

Investing in local training and employment: *working examples*

Training apprentices and unskilled staff

In **Jamaica**, the Sandals Montego Bay START programme offers training positions to young people from the nearby community of Flanker. These posts provide training on every aspect of running the resort, from catering to scuba instruction. On completion of their training, apprentices are employed by Sandals or given certificates and recommendations to work in other hotels in the area (with which Sandals management have developed links in order to place trainees).

- ✔ Create training posts and follow-up work opportunities for locals

A study of all-inclusive resorts found that at Sandals' resorts, employees who are recruited completely untrained can achieve salaries of between US\$450 and US\$900 per month through career progression. All line staff receive at least 120 hours of training each year valued at US\$85/year. Furthermore, the company contributes to training centres and higher education for its staff.

- ✔ Ensure unskilled staff are included in training

Investing in local training for top and middle management

In **Antigua**, at the Curtain Bluff Resort, top and middle managerial positions are occupied by Antiguans. Some have come through tertiary education facilities and some are locals that have a firm grasp of business and have risen through the company via local training programmes. This training and promotion process has been assisted by the Old Road Fund, which was established 20 years ago in recognition of the benefits of investing in the surrounding community of Old Road. The fund supports a number of community programmes, including support to students from Old Road pursuing degree programmes.

In **St Lucia**, The Village Inn & Spa (locally owned) has invested in local staff who have gone on to pursue training opportunities that have benefited the property. The skills gained have been used to enhance the operation of the property or enhance its marketing potential.

- ✔ Think long-term: support tertiary education as well as short-term training

Tackling HIV/AIDS

In **Jamaica**, Sandals Montego Bay has implemented workplace HIV/AIDS programmes that include regular staff training by peers, confidential advice and support for HIV-positive employees and support for staff in the face of sexual intimidation or harassment by guests.

- ✔ Don't ignore HIV. Develop workplace policies and practice

The Appendix provides more details, further examples, sources and useful contacts.

About the Briefs ...

- Brief 1:** Overview: tourism and the local economy – building linkages
- Brief 2:** Bringing local producers into the supply chain
- Brief 3:** Building links with local farmers
- Brief 4:** Employing local staff
- Brief 5:** Involving local people and products in tours, packages and excursions
- Brief 6:** Encouraging tourists to spend in the local economy
- Brief 7:** Building neighbourhood partnerships
- Brief 8:** Managing internal change for developing local linkages.

The eight Briefs in this series provide practical tips on how to develop different types of local linkages, drawing on experience in several different countries in the Caribbean. All the Briefs and further information are available on www.propoortourism.org.uk/caribbean