SEYCHELLES SKILLS MOBILITY FRAMEWORK

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Seychelles Skills Mobility Framework

1. Introduction

Representatives from across Government, organized labour and business emerged from a workshop in Mahe, Seychelles on 9 May 2024 broadly endorsing the draft Seychelles Skills Mobility Framework coupled with an agreement to move ahead and begin to implement some of its core components.

The workshop organized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) through the European Union - funded Southern African Migration Management (SAMM) project, sought to bring the social partners together to validate the findings outlined in the draft Framework. The notion of drafting a framework to address skills and mobility emerged out of a request from the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs (MESA).

This led to a process of engagement and interviews with a range of stakeholders in the broader skills ecosystem (government, labour, business, community-linked organisations, education and training providers and several related institutions such as the Seychelles Qualifications Authority) during 2023. Subsequent to this, the issue of the Framework and the skills mobility action plan were the subject of discussion in various workshops in the build-up to the May workshop.

At the workshop, the tripartite stakeholders, mainly from the Labour Migration Advisory Committee (LMAC), discussed the findings of the research process which informed the drafting of the framework and agreed that the research effectively captured the existing challenges facing the Seychelles economy, subject to strengthening some areas of the research and associated problem statement. The revised Framework (outlined in section 3 and 4) encapsulates the final input and feedback from key stakeholders so that it can be adopted, and implementation can continue.

2. Towards a skills mobility framework

The research process which informed the drafting of the Framework pointed to the existing and anticipated skills shortages and provided some indication of interventions in place to mediate supply and demand. The picture which emerged is that the country will need to continue recruiting migrant workers in the short to medium term, whilst building local human resource capacity (including deepening expertise and knowledge in sectors such as the blue and green economy). In view of this, it is therefore recognized that these processes are better managed through a Skills Mobility Framework.

The aim of this Framework is to **create a balance between addressing the need for building an appropriate local skills pipeline (and both protecting local workers and preventing a brain drain), whilst recruiting migrant workers where relevant**, in a manner that ensures this is undertaken in ways that **supports fair recruitment and workplace conditions; and that**

supports sectors to efficiently access individuals with the requisite skills. This Framework seeks to ensure that the positive developmental effects of improved mobility of skills benefits migrants and local workers, employers and the overall development of the economy.

The Framework was drafted factoring in the country's National Labour Migration Policy, Labour Migration Action Plan[1] (and related Skills Mobility Action Plan); Vision 2033, the National Development Strategy 2024-28 and the countries Decent Work Country Programme. It should be noted that parallel to the drafting of the Seychelles Skills Mobility Framework, the country's Human Resource Development Strategy is currently being updated.

The Framework recognizes the intersection between the priorities relating to migration and those outlined in the HRD strategy, which is being refined to align to Vision 20333. In line with this Framework, these revisions will take stakeholder views into account and create a basis for many of the actions outlined within the Skills Mobility Framework. This includes: the identification of skills shortages and the implementation of different interventions to address these shortages, such as apprenticeships, other forms of access to workplace experience, building foundational and digital skills and providing more focused career guidance to promote priority sectors amongst youth. The HRD strategy also indicates the mechanisms that will be used for the on-going identification of demand coupled with measures to address this demand: this includes tripartite sector-specific skills councils that have strong private sector representation as agreed upon in the NLMP Action Plan. These sector-specific skills councils can play a role in supporting the systems to identify skills shortages and the strengthening of labour market information requirements.

3. Cross cutting principles underpinning the Framework

Three cross-cutting principles underpin and guide the realisation of the intentions of this Gender-Sensitive Skills Mobility Framework:

- *Facilitating social dialogue on skills mobility within Seychelles;*
- *Enhancing local skills development and capacity building;*
- *Strengthening labour migration governance*

Facilitating social dialogue on skills mobility

Social dialogue (within tripartite structures) is the cornerstone of this framework. Social Partners emphasized the need for more consistent conversations amongst stakeholders

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[1] The key elements of the LMAP include Gender-responsive labour migration policies and/or strategies regulate labour migration at national level in a manner that contributes towards the effective implementation of SADC's Labour9 Migration Action Plan; International labour standards and national legislation on the protection of migrant workers; Bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs) across the region and with third countries; Fair recruitment and decent employment for migrant workers including regulatory legislation on Private Employment Agencies (PEAs), and strengthening of Public Employment Services *(PES) capacity; Social Security Portability of Benefits for migrant workers at the national level through the SADC Code on Social Security and the piloting of SADC Guidelines on the Portability of Social Security Benefits; Skills matching, skills profiling and recognition of qualifications of migrant workers at national and bilateral level, as well as support to SADC Qualification Framework and Labour migration statistics (indicators, module, inclusion in labour market information systems, etc.) and the support on the establishment of SADC Labour Market Observatory

including government officials (policy makers), employer and trade union organisations as well as key institutions linked to the broader skills ecosystem. They emphasized the need to strengthen engagements in the Labour Migration Advisory Committee (LMAC) and the Committee for the Employment of Non-Seychellois (CENS). Social Partners also indicated the need to include labour migration topics on the agenda of the National Consultative Committee on Employment (NCCE).

Promoting social dialogue recognises that to successfully implement this framework there is a need to find ways to encourage open conversation and build a collective approach to defining the problem and possible solutions. This will allow for the systematic analysis of the intersectionality between labour migration and employment/unemployment, skills development, the labour market and inclusive growth.

Enhancing local skills development and capacity building

The second cross-cutting principle focuses on the need to ensure that enhancing local skills development is integral to a migration policy. The Framework (outlined in the next section) proposes several elements to give effect to this principle with a focus on ways to understand the level of demand and shortages, developing, attracting and retaining skills in demand and support for the recognition of skills. The other dimension of this principle pertains to the need to ensure that all stakeholders have the capacity to engage in the different processes and engagements outlined in this Framework. Giving expression to this principle requires a mechanism to be in place within the country that ensures all stakeholders have the information they require about the topics under discussion and the space to internally reflect on these issues to be able to effectively engage.

Strengthen Labour Migration governance

The third principle underpinning the Framework relates to the need to ensure that there is effective governance of all labour migration policies, plans and interventions. This includes the imperative to give expression to the shared commitment to migrant workers' human and labour rights including the eradication of gender-based discrimination with the aim of moving towards gender equity. Other ways that this principle will be operationalized – and outlined in the Framework – relate to exploring bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs) and reviewing the existing Diaspora Programme.

4. Key elements of a Gender-responsive Skills Mobility Framework

The previous section outlines three cross-cutting principles which underpin, guide and support the implementation of this Framework. In giving effect to these principles, this section unpacks three core components and ten associated elements (actions) of the Framework:

Component 1. SKILLS ANTICIPATION: Addressing Labour and Skill Shortages at all Skill Levels

Element 1.1. Enhancing the identification of labour shortages or labour market needs (if possible, by economic-sector, industry and occupational-level) at all skill levels through the elaboration of lists of occupations in high demand (OHD), critical skills lists and other means.

Element 1.2 Improving skills profiling of the national workforce as well as of migrant workers through labour market information systems (LMIS), particularly through labour migration statistics (including data that is disaggregated by gender).

Element 1.3. Establishing systematic information flow between the private sector and educational institutions to address skills mismatch and better meet industry requirements and needs.

Component 2. UPSKILLING: Developing, Attracting and Retaining Skills in Demand

Element 2.1. Strengthening secondary and tertiary education systems particularly through vocational and professional training as well as technology (digital) programmes.

Element 2.2. Implementing student exchange programmes, international scholarships, and professional exchange, (e.g. trainee, mentoring, internship, apprenticeships programmes) between countries.

Element 2.3. Fostering skills transferability between migrant and national workers,

Element 2.4. Review where shortages of teachers and professors exist in relation to the secondary and tertiary education systems with a view to exploring arrangements to share resources across the region.

Element 2.5. Reviewing existing conditions of employment to ensure parity between wages paid to locals and migrants.

Component 3. PORTABILITY OF ACQUIRED SKILLS: Ensuring Skills Recognition to improve Employability

Element 3.1. Improving the portability of skills[1] (e.g. equivalence and comparability) by ensuring the recognition of foreign qualifications (diplomas, certificates) and non-formally acquired skills (e.g. job experience) through credential evaluation, mutual or bilateral skills recognition agreements, qualification frameworks, the harmonization of occupational labour standards and the recognition of prior learning systems.

Element 3.2. Promoting joint efforts to ensure that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes are coupled with reskilling and upskilling initiatives to improve the employability of national and migrant workers.

Component 1. SKILLS ANTICIPATION: Addressing labour and skill shortages at all skill levels

Element 1.1. Enhancing the identification of labour shortages or labour market needs (if possible, by economic-sector, industry and occupational-level) at all skill levels through the elaboration of lists of occupations in high demand or critical skills lists.

To give effect to this element, there is a need to s*trengthen skills anticipation systems* that support planning for current and medium to long-term skills needs (with a focus on potential growth sectors considering anticipated investment aligned to the SDGs, as reflected in the SDG Investor Map).

These systems should take the Sector Skills Councils into account and explore how they can be established initially in priority sectors. As part of this, there should be a focus on developing an understanding of the workplace of the future. This includes a focus on changing technology (linked to digital advancements and requirements of the green and blue economies), where skills can be sourced and the ways in which interventions can be implemented such that they give expression to the above-mentioned principles.

Element 1.2 Improving skills profiling of the national workforce as well as of migrant workers through labour market information systems, particularly through labour migration statistics.

To develop *a reliable labour market information system* that can be used in the skills anticipation systems (outlined above) to determine immediate, medium and long-term skills needs. These skills needs should be captured through the drafting of a critical skills list, and shared in ways that help shapes skills programme interventions. In taking forward the drafting of a critical skills list, stakeholders need to agree on how often they should be reviewed.

This could be supported by a national Labour Market Observatory to function such that there is up to date skills and labour migration data (collected from across government departments and the private sector) which is disaggregated in a way that takes gender into account. This evidence-based data is central to the success of social dialogue processes on skills mobility and improved labour migration governance. As such, stakeholders should agree on a plan to support capacity for analysis and effective utilization of the data.

Element 1.3. Establishing a systematic information flow between the private sector and educational institutions to address skills mismatch and better meet industry requirements and needs.

Conduct engagements with officials from key government departments (education and training, economic growth and job creation), industry and union representatives to collectively engage education and training institutions to ensure higher levels of coordination and alignment between education and vocational training centers' curriculums and the local job market. Such engagements should have a sector focus to meet immediate demand in key sectors (based on sectors identified in the HRD Plan),

As a basis for these conversations, the skills in demand that are identified (as above) should be mapped into the key emerging occupations which can then be used to inform the review of relevant qualifications and curricula.

The other action to be taken is a review of existing career counselling interventions with the aim of opening up alternate pathways for young people. This is key given that the research highlights that youth are not sensitized to the changing needs of the labour market and stakeholders suggested that

there is a need to refocus and sensitise youth about the priority sectors such as construction and tourism.

Component 2. UPSKILLING: Developing, Attracting and Retaining Skills in Demand

Element 2.1. Strengthening secondary and tertiary education systems particularly through vocational and professional training as well as technology programmes.

Stakeholders need to explore how to strengthen current vocational training that supports the development of the skills sets for the future (such as digital skills and skills as the green and blue economies) as well as those required by other priority sectors.

To affect this, Seychelles training institutions will need to actively engage in exploring partnership arrangements to access programmes as well as capacity building opportunities for their lecturers. This should be preceded by a review to assess existing capacity within the institutions with regard to lecturer capacity, the standard of programmes and the extent of their alignment with labour market demands.

In terms of the building of partnerships, consideration should be given to drawing on initiatives that are unfolding at a regional level within the context of the Indian Ocean Commission's proposed regional vocational training programme. These initiatives will make it possible for institutions in Seychelles to focus on the development of their capacity in areas of specialisation, while providing students in the Seychelles wider access through partnerships with institutions that are located elsewhere in the region (for example awarding bodies).

Beyond this it was also suggested that in cases where it is not cost effective for local training providers such as Unisey to develop diploma or degree programmes, strategic partnerships with foreign training institutions are required to ensure that the necessary skills can be developed, e.g. medical doctors.

Finally, some consideration should be given to exploring what kind of support and assistance government can provide to NGOs to address the social issues that young people face to enable them to access opportunities in the labour market.

Element 2.2. Promoting and implementing student exchange programmes, international scholarships, and professional exchange, (e.g. trainee, mentoring, internship, apprenticeships programmes) between countries.

Actions to give effect to this element should focus on ensuring that young people are exposed to the workplace through quality workplace experience and other learning opportunities (both inside the country and across countries in the region and beyond). This should ensure that young people are work ready (have the needed transversal skills), gain exposure to occupations/professions in demand as well as contribute towards changing mindsets.

Where young people access this experience outside the country, this should be done with the understanding that the young people will bring these skills back to the Seychelles. Such agreements could take the form of BLMAs that could optimize student, professional and trainee/apprenticeships/internships exchange programmes. This action should be guided by the deliberations on BLMAs as reflected in the labour migration roadmap and should go beyond discussions with the East to also include a focus on SADC countries. In addition, as per the principles guiding this framework, such engagements should involve the tripartite partners.

Seychelles should also continue to work actively with development partners such as the IOM and ILO, that are committed to developing fair labour migration practices, while building skills and facilitating skills exchange in priority sectors aligned to the SDGs.

Element 2.3. Fostering skills transferability between migrant and national workers as well as facilitating migrant entrepreneurs.

Ensure that migrant workers contribute to skills transfer programmes and support succession planning. Key to this is finding resolution around the implementation of the Localisation plan. Building capacity across various stakeholders is key to effecting skills transfer. These include providing capacity building to Seychellois training institutions - many of which may lack sufficient expertise in new technologies and in areas of high specialization; support, both technical and financial, should be provided to SMMEs to conduct training and skills transfer, as they are unlikely to do it due to financial and capacity constraints and broadly, within companies, includes targeted interventions for HR officers and managers such that they can facilitate skills transfer while also building employer engagement and enabling change management. As part of this, the respective responsibilities of the trainee, mentor, employer and employment services in relation to localization placements should be formalized in written contracts.

Element 2.4. Review where shortages of teachers and professors exist in relation to the secondary and tertiary education systems with a view to exploring arrangements to share resources across the region.

A review of existing capacity should be conducted across educational institutions to determine supply and demand. Depending on the outcome, the Seychelles should then explore BLMA's to support mutually beneficial arrangements to encourage both the development of local resources through skills transfer arrangements and/or encourage the recruitment of foreign teachers and professors. This will require work on the formulation and effective implementation of BLMA's with targeted countries of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and within SADC.

Element 2.5. Review existing conditions of employment to ensure parity between wages paid to locals and migrants.

Social partners engage proactively to promote parity between the wages and employment conditions between Seychellois and migrant workers. Key to this activity is conducting a study of wage differentials between locals and migrant workers; build agreement on ways to communicate around the issue of skills and wages for Seychellois and migrant workers to build transparency and ensuring on-going monitoring of companies (with the aim of imposing sanction) to ensure they do not perpetuate restrictive and unfair labour practices.

A related activity (and also highlighted in the Labour Migration Action Plan is putting in place measures to ensure the fair and effective recruitment of migrant labour. To action this, the Seychelles can draw on the code of conduct for a Fair and Ethical Recruitment of Migrant Workers being finalised at the sub-regional level. At the same time, Government should continue and strengthen – through the WINS programme - to educate migrant workers about their rights whilst there should be broader engagement with workers and employers' organizations and civil society organizations to formalize their role in assisting in the detection of rights violations and in disseminating information to migrant workers on their rights, including freedom of association.

Component 3. Ensuring Skills Recognition and Employability

Element 3.1. Improving the portability of skills[2] (e.g. equivalence and comparability) by ensuring the recognition of foreign qualifications (diplomas, certificates) and non-formally acquired skills (e.g. job experience) through credential evaluation, mutual or bilateral skills recognition agreements, qualification frameworks, the harmonization of occupational labour standards and the recognition of prior learning systems (RPL).

Proactively promote RPL for both local (and migrant) workers to ensure the optimum utilization of existing labour. As the Seychelles Qualifications Authority reviews the existing recognition guidelines and policies, it should factor in investigating the viability of putting in place flexible mechanisms for the recognition of experience against agreed upon 'standards' rather than only qualifications (noting that the definition of standards differ from industry to industry and could include competencies, micro-credentials etc). And as part of this review process ensure social partners can input into the process.

Element 3.2. Promoting joint efforts to ensure that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes are coupled with reskilling and upskilling initiatives to improve the employability of national and migrant workers.

Upskill and reskill workers by encouraging industry to offer and provide quality workplace experience such as internships. A related activity is utilizing BLMAs with other countries either within the IOC and/or SADC to ensure young Seychellois can access internships and workplace learning opportunities to improve their access into the labour market.

Finally, stakeholders need to ensure that discussions on wages linked to recognition and pathways are referred to a relevant forum for discussion (as well as monitor any implications for skills and mobility).

5. Next Steps

This revised Skills Mobility Framework reflects not only on the key policy documents relating to migration, skills and human resource development and economic growth but factors in the discussions during various consultation and engagement processes. During the validation workshop in May 2024, stakeholders agreed on several key immediate actions (highlighted in the attached report) which should be implemented in the short term and would be discussed at the next Labour Migration Advisory Committee (LMAC) – which had been set up to drive implementation of the Labour Migration Action Plan. It is proposed that during that meeting, stakeholders should decide whether this committee would – going forward – be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Framework. Ultimately, implementing such a framework in a coordinated and integrated way (together with other key policies) could ensure that the key sectors in the economy have the skills necessary for industrial transformation and growth leading to overall development in the country.

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[2] The ILO Human Resources Development Recommendation concerning human resources development: education, training and lifelong learning, 2004 (No. 195) defines portability of skills along the following two dimensions: (a) employable skills which can be used productively in different jobs, occupations, industries; and (b) certification and recognition of skills within national and international labour markets.