Local hospitality: Developing local employment in India’s tourism sector
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Chris Gale, Piera Freccero, Philippa Melaniphy and Joe Shamash, the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development (CSD)
Aditi Chanchani and Swath Seshadri, EQUATIONS

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Above: Participants at the roundtable event on skills development and community engagement, in Bangalore in September 2012

EQUATIONS

Equitable Tourism Options (EQUATIONS) is a research, campaign and advocacy organisation. EQUATIONS study the social, cultural, economic and environmental impact of tourism on local communities, through a belief that tourism should be non-exploitative, equitable and sustainable. A question that has been central to our work and directs much of it is “Who Really Benefits from Tourism?” Our work is focused around three areas; Research and analysis, Campaigns and Advocacy and Networking.
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Perspectives on the report

Dr Harold Goodwin, 
Professor of Responsible 
Tourism Management, 
Leeds Metropolitan University

“This review of the training needs of hospitality businesses operating in rural areas is long overdue. There has been too much emphasis on traditional training and qualifications – I have seen a training manual on silver service used with teashops on the trekking route to Everest base camp. This research is important because it looks at the issue from the point of view of the businesses and their staff and it points to the importance of soft skills and empowerment too. There is valuable knowledge in the report about the needs of enterprises, as well as the needs of local people entering the tourism sector.”

“Our work on tourism and poverty reduction (www.propoortourism.info) has pointed to the importance of employing local people in tourism enterprises in order to ensure that they benefit from tourism development and that the standard of living of them and their families rises. This clearly requires that there are opportunities for progression; education and training are critical to support this process. Perhaps the biggest value of this report is that it will open the eyes of those who fund, organise and provide training to the importance of considering the real needs of employees and the employers. This report deserves to be read widely in the industry, in the education and training sector and by governments and donors; and similar research needs to be done elsewhere.”
Prem Subramaniam, Independent Consultant in Responsible Tourism, India

“The report encapsulates the challenges of attempting to use tourism as a vehicle for the economic benefit of local communities through recruitment, training and skill development. Often there is an attempt to force processes on communities but the report highlights the need to exercise flexibility based on cultural issues. Since tourism brings about an interaction with clients from very diverse backgrounds, negative outcomes could be irreversible and there is a need for greater commitment from the industry to curb these. Spending money through welfare schemes and trying to motivate and develop people with different aspirations requires a commitment which is in conflict with the timelines desired by government agencies and entrepreneurs. This report highlights a number of practical approaches which can bridge this gap and work for the private sector and communities.”

Garry Wilson, Product and Purchasing Director, Tui Travel PLC

“The publication of this report is wholly welcomed. It provides a solid reference point for all stakeholders in India and beyond, who are committed to more sustainable forms of tourism, including the elimination of inequality and discrimination within tourism, wherever it may exist. I firmly believe that sustainability and quality go hand in hand, and that quality is not just the physical product, but also the memorable experiences created by motivated, well-trained hotel employees. There is no place for discrimination or inequality in modern tourism, particularly in developing nations where tourism enterprises can potentially offer so much to destination communities. At TUI Travel PLC, amongst other initiatives we’re working with hotel partners to help them achieve sustainability certifications, so that they can better measure and manage not only their environmental, but also their socio-economic impacts, including employee recruitment, development, and ongoing welfare.”
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Executive summary

This report shows that potential opportunities exist to improve the impact of employment in tourism for local and marginalised communities.

We studied four hotels in Kerala and Karnataka, Southern India, that implemented recruitment and training programmes which target local individuals. The research aimed to identify good practice as well as to understand the challenges and benefits of implementing the programmes.

Each of the case study hotels initially subscribed to a community-targeted recruitment and training approach to fulfil organisational social commitments. The focus on local communities was maintained however, because it was found to be good for business. The research suggests that these organisations are not ‘special cases’, and that the approaches taken by them provide practical options for the development of the tourism sector in India and further afield.

Key conclusions

Social considerations

An important challenge for the case study hotels was ensuring that external social conflicts didn’t occur in the organisation. Caste-based disputes are still widespread in India, particularly in rural areas, and were cited as a challenging issue for tourism organisations. However, two basic strategies were identified as having a positive impact on mitigating social conflicts in the workplace. Firstly, senior staff and managers needed to take a leading role in discouraging discrimination by leading through example. Secondly, managers needed to provide opportunities for interaction between different social groups, for example through practices such as encouraging eating and socialising together, and working as a team.

Women appeared to encounter specific issues that act as barriers to securing employment in tourism. Within the case study hotels, the highest percentage of female staff was just 28 per cent, and at one hotel it was as low as 6 per cent. The low uptake of women was partly attributable to social stigma, and perceptions of risk and promiscuity that surround the tourism industry. Additionally, the practicalities of employment are restrictive to women. For example long hours and late finishes may not be compatible with the domestic demands women experience when they marry or have children. Successful approaches used by one case study hotel to increase the number of women in employment included visiting the home of potential female employees to discuss concerns with the family, as well as actively encouraging women to bring their parents and husbands to the hotel. Other measures were important, including introducing policies and procedures on sexual harassment. Exploring the possibility of flexible working arrangements would also allow women to balance work and family commitments.

In general, the experiences of staff and management across the case study organisations revealed that the motivations and expectations
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of recruits from local communities can conflict with those of their employers. For example, family and community concerns were often prioritised by local people above their work responsibilities, leading to different expectations about work behaviours such as punctuality, attendance and time off. To address the disparity, management and community representatives must commit to ongoing dialogue. In practice, one outcome of constructive dialogue has been that business decisions have been made by the case study hotels with the expectations and needs of the communities in mind. For example, one management team now aims to recruit and retain individuals from diverse backgrounds to ensure business continuity to cover unexpected staff absence. We believe that resources must be committed by new organisations to engage in two-way dialogue with local communities from the outset. Initial investment in such activities can provide a strong foundation for recruitment, and for constructive long-term community relations. This, in turn, can strengthen business prospects.

Recruitment

All the case study hotels said they successfully recruited from the local community through sharing potential employment opportunities by word of mouth via existing staff. However, this approach has limitations. The word-of-mouth strategy often caused roles to be shared through existing networks, meaning that some sections of the local community were excluded from employment opportunities. Job roles should ideally be communicated via a variety of different channels, to reach different groups of individuals within the local community. Possibilities include advertising via community leaders and their networks, and through local institutions such as schools, local government and credit unions.

The majority of skills required for entry level roles in tourism are relatively basic and can be developed without formal training, as discussed in Section 2. Each of our case study hotels hired individuals who had not been through formal training for entry level roles, thereby eliminating a barrier to recruitment whereby applicants need to invest money and time in obtaining a qualification in order to meet basic job criteria. This inclusive approach was an important enabling factor for the recruitment of poor and
marginalised individuals from the local community. Making qualifications a pre-requisite for jobs (as many tourism organisations currently do), virtually eliminates poorer communities from entry into even the lowest skilled jobs. Instead of prior qualifications, the case study hotels favoured evidence of soft skills such as motivation, capacity to learn, and personal motivation.

Training
The orientation programmes at each case study hotel were primarily used to outline management expectations of staff on commencing employment, as well as to begin embedding the values of the organisation from day one. This aim is important because the majority of staff do not have prior experience of working in a formal environment. The orientation, therefore, provides a good opportunity to explain expectations around process and procedure, as well as professional standards and behaviours. However, we didn’t find evidence of a two-way exchange of information between staff and managers about different expectations which could help to overcome mismatches. Also, additional processes could be explored to support the orientation process for new recruits with low levels of literacy.

The view of management at the case study hotels was that the majority of skills required for entry level roles are relatively basic and can be developed without formal training. External training was rarely used by the case study organisations. Instead, developing technical skills in-house was not seen as a challenge, even when there was limited capacity for structured training. Analysis of the hotels’ approaches to training showed that technical skills were generally developed through incremental growth in staff responsibilities through on the job training. For example, a housekeeping trainee will be responsible for a couple of rooms, and more rooms will be added as their competence grows. Management favour on the job training as they are able to immerse recruits in the organisational culture whilst they are learning operational processes. Theoretical knowledge was also learned on the job, with emphasis on practical application. For example where health and safety aspects of cleaning chemicals were learned, the methods involved demonstrating, imitating, and explaining using imagery where needed.
Although the on the job approach to learning was considered effective by managers, there was a desire for greater standardisation of the processes to ensure all trainees have the minimum required technical skills. Steps to standardise on the job training can include the development of manuals and documented frameworks for training – an approach which one of the case study hotels implemented with success. Additionally, training could be linked to Recognition of Prior Learning programmes. The extent to which training should be standardised or flexible will vary depending on the purpose of training. Health and safety training, for example, may require a highly standardised approach, potentially leading to a qualification, while soft skills training requires a degree of flexibility.

The relevance of existing qualifications to meet the needs of the industry was consistently questioned by managers. In particular, there was a perception that formal training courses impart outdated and irrelevant skills resulting in the need for retraining. This contributed to a conscious decision by management to focus on recruiting locally and providing on the job training. Closer engagement between training providers and employers is required to ensure that qualifications are relevant to the needs of the industry, and within reach for potential learners from local communities.

**Opportunities for progression**

While career progression was encouraged at every case study hotel, relatively little progression appears to have occurred. The absence of structured training courses may have been a contributing factor, with unstructured approaches making it more difficult for management to assess progression potential. One important aspect as an enabler for progression was for people to recognise and acknowledge the specific skills they have developed, and this can go a long way in increasing their own sense of confidence and perceived ability to progress. In order to support staff progression, on the job training programmes should seek to incorporate, where possible, processes for formal recognition of the skills of learners.

At the case study hotels, poor English language skills were considered by staff to be the single most significant barrier to career progression. This was primarily because English skills improve the likelihood of staff gaining ‘higher status’ jobs where they work directly with customers. Employer-based training programmes should consider how best to support the development of English language skills for staff. Informal peer to peer approaches are potentially a valuable way to support such learning, particularly as they negate the need for classroom-based learning which many learners may not be comfortable with.

Lack of soft skills was highlighted as a significant barrier to career progression by most of the stakeholders interviewed in the research. However, soft skills received relatively little attention from management as part of training. On the job training programmes must factor in soft skills development, particularly around communication and confidence building. Ensuring soft skills needs are addressed early on in recruitment and training can help improve both performance and prospects for staff progression.
Definitions

The views of pro-poor tourism expressed in the introduction and literature review are entirely those of CSD.

Before we begin to discuss the findings from the research it is important to outline and clarify some of the terms which are used throughout the report. Where there are differing meanings or schools of thought we have outlined our perspectives which guide our thinking throughout the research.

Poverty and marginalisation

In this report we utilise a multidimensional understanding of the concept of poverty that goes beyond the mere capacity to gain an income. When referring to those in poverty in this report we mean individuals who have limited access to a number of assets that are considered to be crucial for human wellbeing including education, health, water and sanitation, and nutrition (UNDP, 2011).

We recognise that communities are not homogeneous; they are instead a combination of different classes, castes, genders and ethnic origins, with different and sometimes unequal, power relations among them. In this study, where possible we try to unpack challenges and opportunities related to specific social groups. We often refer to them as ‘marginalised groups’, referring to an understanding that they are characterised by specific forms of social disadvantage.

In the research, we have explored practices and policies related to ‘scheduled castes’ and ‘scheduled tribes’ (SCs, STs). As reported in the India Human Development Report (Gandhi, Kumar, Saha, Kishore Sahoo & A. Sharma, 2011), despite a sharp reduction of poverty in the last 10 years “the incidence of poverty among SCs and STs, is much higher than the national aggregate by 8.5 (SC-rural) and 19.4 (ST-rural) percentage points” (ibid., p. 4). “SCs and STs have higher unemployment rates than the national average, even if their situation has improved noticeably in both rural and urban areas in recent years” (ibid., p. 6). In addition, individuals from SCs and STs have lower levels of literacy and numeracy than the national average (ibid.).

In this research, we also consider the particular challenges experienced by women living in rural India. For example, the stigma attached to women who are employed in tourism, and the social constructions that limit their employment opportunities. The employment situation for women in India remains extremely difficult:

“The huge gender disparity that existed in 1993 to 1994 continued in 2009 to 2010 in both rural and urban India – with women’s workforce participation rates being almost half of that for men in rural areas, and less than a third in urban areas, with almost no change taking place over this decade of relatively rapid GDP growth.”

(Gandhi et al., 2011 p. 99)

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1 Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are historically disadvantaged people recognised in the Constitution of India. They, altogether make up to 24 per cent of the population of India.
Dalit

The word ‘Dalit’ comes from the Sanskrit prefix ‘dal’ and means ‘broken, crushed, downtrodden, or oppressed.’ Those previously known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, and Harijans have today increasingly adopted the term ‘Dalit’ as a name for themselves and as a mark of protest. ‘Dalit’ refers to one’s caste rather than class, it applies to members of traditional menial castes which have born the stigma of ‘untouchability’ because of the ‘impurity and pollution’ connected with their traditional occupations.

Local and non-local

Throughout the report, the definition ‘local’, as opposed to ‘non-local’, is used to refer to a geographical perspective. When we talk about ‘local employees’ we refer to people living within 15 kilometres of the hotels studied. We are aware, however, that the definition ‘local people’ might carry many more meanings than that. In particular, very often this distinction is used to express the gap between urban and rural lifestyles, beliefs, and values.

Because of the characteristics of the communities in which the case studies are located; (primarily rural areas dominated by traditional industries and fishing and agriculture) the individuals we refer to as ‘from the local community’ typically have not been through formal secondary education or training. This was the case at every case study site, and all hotels had made distinctions between formally qualified individuals and individuals recruited from the local community.
Introduction

Tourism is widely recognised as one of the largest and rapidly growing industries in the global economy. The diverse nature of the tourism industry, which incorporates many different sectors and types of jobs, means accurate statistics on employment are very difficult to ascertain. Estimates suggest, however, that tourism employs at least 255 million people throughout the world and contributes more than 9 per cent of global GDP (WTTC, 2012a). In addition, in many developing countries, tourism plays a principal role in economic development. For example, across all developing countries, tourism was the third highest export earner in 2000 (WTO, 2002).

While tourism has made an important contribution to economic growth in many countries, the industry’s rapid expansion has had a significant social and environmental impact, while critics also argue that growth has generally not filtered down to the poorest (Ashley, 2006). In many circumstances evidence suggests that tourism growth has actually had a detrimental impact, as communities are fragmented and land has been bought up and transformed (Harrison, 2008). Increasingly, however, debates have been ongoing as to what approaches might be effective to enable tourism to be a catalyst for
development. Results have, however, been mixed. The UNDP, for example, initiated a large scale ‘pro-poor tourism’ project throughout India from 2002 to 2008. However, in the five years that the project ran, only 5 per cent of the villages involved actually received tourists.

One of the key areas through which tourism can provide development opportunities is through employment, but the issue of who benefits is important to consider. For example, if a hotel opens in a rural area in India, it is possible that only a small proportion of the community has been through formal training or even completed high school. In these circumstances the potential for members of the community to take advantage of employment opportunities is often limited due to stipulations from employers for minimum levels of education. This is the starting point for this report.

Although there is a significant amount of literature assessing opportunities to link communities into hotel supply chains and develop community-led tourism initiatives, there is very little research into how to improve employment prospects for local communities through recruitment and training practices.

The report provides important insights for the pro-poor tourism agenda, but notably focuses on discussions around informal training. The case study organisations, located in Kerala and Karnataka in Southern India, provides perspectives on how other organisations might look to develop similar systems. The case studies also provide insights into the benefits and challenges which the organisations faced in implementing a community-targeted recruitment and training model, and offer some thought provoking insights on the state of the current formal training system in India. The report also discusses the impact on the individuals employed by the organisation and their ability to develop the technical and soft skills required for their role and to progress in their careers.
This chapter looks at the debate surrounding tourism as a tool for development. We review the existing literature to identify the factors driving the debate, focusing primarily on the employment opportunities created by the sector rather than exploring aspects such as improving access to supply chains in depth. There is a vast amount written about tourism’s impact on local communities, particularly in terms of the negative social, environmental and economic effect that it can have. We highlight these debates but go on to assess some of the approaches which have been used to provide more positive benefits for the poor and marginalised, this being the key focus of this report.

Why look at tourism and local employment?

Tourism is one industry that has continued to grow despite the global economic slowdown, accounting for more than 9 per cent of global GDP in 2011 (WTTC, 2012a). The beneficiaries of this growth have, however, largely been multinational corporations, with local communities often seeing little growth in income. Ashley, Boyd & Goodwin (2000), estimate that on average around 55 per cent of tourism expenditure goes outside the destination country. Meanwhile local communities frequently raise concerns about the negative impacts of tourism.
on the environment and on local community access to land. Perceptions of tourism as a threat to local culture are also widespread.

Hotels and resorts undoubtedly have significant impacts on the local economies and societies within which they operate. The extent to which these are negative or positive impacts is heavily debated and depends on the local context in which tourism is developed. One of the key issues in assessing the impact of tourism is whether local communities are in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that tourism might offer. These opportunities can only be accessed with the support and motivation of tourism operators.

There has in recent decades been a greater drive from international organisations, governments, the tourism industry and its customers, to encourage more sustainable approaches to tourism, particularly since the late 1990s when the UK Department for International Development (DFID) focused attention on whether tourism could be a force for poverty reduction. These initiatives have ranged from local procurement, to more sustainable environmental practices, to employing a greater number of local people. Such initiatives, however, have more often been approached as corporate social responsibility activities, rather than as a core part of an organisation’s business model. In general, there is a lack of understanding of the potential business benefits and shared value arising from improving community relations.

As a snapshot of the scope of tourism as a force for employment, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (2005) estimates that 8.3 per cent of the total global labour force is employed in tourism. The industry is largely labour intensive, employing high numbers of unskilled and low-skilled workers. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2001) estimates that wages are at least 20 per cent lower than in other service industries, and jobs are often typified by relatively poor working conditions (Meyer, 2008).

Tourism businesses often source staff from outside local areas because of a perceived lack of suitable candidates in local communities (Ashley, De Brine, Lehr & Wilde, 2007). In order to improve employment opportunities for local communities there is, therefore, a need to better understand effective approaches to improving capacity within local communities. With this in mind, the following sections explore:

1. The motivations for engagement between the tourism industry and local communities;
2. What is already known about the impacts of tourism on local communities;
3. The role of skills development as an enabler in transforming the impact of tourism;
4. Tourism in the Indian context and the particular challenges the sector faces;
5. The contribution of this study to the wider debate surrounding the role of tourism in development.

The focus throughout this report is on the ways in which hotels and resorts can develop local capacity for direct employment into hospitality roles, rather than on value chains servicing the sector.
What is pro-poor tourism?

In this report CSD refers to the notion of pro-poor tourism as we believe that it provides an appropriate theoretical framework for our work, which aims to provide recommendations about ways of unlocking employment and training opportunities in the tourism sector.

“Pro-poor tourism is defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor. [...] Pro-poor tourism is not a specific product or sector of tourism, but an approach to the industry. It involves a range of stakeholders operating at different levels, from micro to macro. Stakeholders include government, the private sector and civil society, as well as the poor themselves who act as both producers and decision makers.”

(Ashley, Roe & Goodwin, 2001, p. 2)

The notion of utilising tourism as a tool for economic growth was led by the World Bank in the 1970s, by providing lower income countries with credit to develop local infrastructure and promote foreign investment. In recent years the World Bank has moderated its involvement to focus on addressing concerns about the social and environmental impacts of tourism (Harrison, 2008). The concept of pro-poor tourism has been promoted in the UK since the end of the 1990s, and its implementation by numerous aid agencies “seem[s] to have led to a popular, simple, sharper and more appealing moral focus on the links poorer residents in destinations have with tourism enterprises” (Harrison, 2008, p. 855). The concept of responsible tourism, meanwhile, stemmed from consensus that green, eco, and community tourism did not consider the full range of impacts and development needs of the poor (Ashley et al., 2000). In addition, where commercial viability has been emphasised from the beginning of the pro-poor tourism movement, other related concepts² have been criticised for marginalising commercial interests of the tourist industry by “lack[ing] market and commercial orientation” (Goodwin, 2008b).

In 1999 DFID issued a challenge to the tourism sector to provide approaches through which tourism could contribute towards poverty alleviation (Goodwin, 2008b). Goodwin, (ibid., p. 869) goes on to note that: “The question was not ‘should tourism be developed?’ but rather, ‘where tourism exists as a largely private sector activity, how could the tourism system in a destination be used to ensure a contribution to poverty elimination?’”. The concept of pro-poor tourism emphasises ways in which tourism can be integrated into social and economic development strategies. According to Robinson (1999), “[i]t aims to focus on the needs and development aspirations of local people rather than on protecting resources for the value of the tourism industry” (Robinson, 1999 in Meyer, 2008, p. 560).

Many critics have questioned the extent to which mass tourism can have a positive impact on development and whether it can provide opportunities for the poorest members of society. Ashley (2006, p. 10)

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² Such as ‘community-based tourism’ and ‘eco-tourism’. For a thorough explanation of the differences between pro-poor tourism and other forms of alternative tourism please refer to Ashley et al., 2001, p. 2.
notes that pro-poor tourism is: “not an appropriate tool for reaching the poorest – those with fewest assets and skills who are least able to engage in the commercial economy”. Although concepts such as eco and community-based tourism brought attention to the debate, Harrison (2008) argues that they also deflected attention away from the more specific question of how tourism can contribute to poverty alleviation and this is where the pro-poor tourism movement emerged from.

Tourism is, however, one of the few industries through which locations with few exports and diversification options are able to thrive, as a location’s lack of development may be the destination’s key selling point (Ashley et al., 2000). However, on-going growth that lacks focus on sustainability can rapidly erode this key selling point. To emphasise this EQUATIONS (2008a) note that merely introducing tourism to rural settings does not lead to greater economic benefit. On the contrary, they argue, the rise of a mainstream tourism economy, which is outside the control of local stakeholders, can serve to exacerbate existing class differences and income inequalities. Tourism development cannot help overcome basic causes of rural inequality that have their roots in structural constraints like inequitable land ownership patterns. However, the introduction of tourism may also create expectations within a community, and when these expectations are not met it can heighten legitimate animosity (ibid.).

Alongside the debate between researchers and practitioners there is evidence that tourists are increasingly considering environmental and social impacts when booking holidays (Ashley et al., 2007). Lack of engagement with the community may result in social tensions, which if left unchecked can lead to crime and potentially violence. Good community relations are also important for the tourist experience. For example, limited local economic benefits and high income inequality can foster resentment and hostility among employees and local communities. This can lead to poor levels of customer service and, more seriously, theft, harassment and the potential for violent crime (ibid.). Awareness of these potential risks to tourists can rapidly draw local tourism industries to a complete halt. There is, therefore, increasingly a business case, in addition to ethical considerations, for tourism businesses to improve engagement with, and opportunities for, the surrounding community.
How are the poor particularly affected by tourism?

Developing the capacity of local communities to take advantage of tourism opportunities involves a stark change in the way that hotels and resorts conduct their business. Ashley et al., (2000) point out that the majority of tourists stay in accommodation that is owned by “outsiders and elites,” and spend time in “attractions from which the poor...are excluded”. This often means that very few people in destination communities actually benefit from tourism activities, and it may even further marginalise certain members of the community.

Tourism may well deplete local resources, and social and cultural norms may not be adhered to by tourists. For the poorest people in local communities there are often very few chances to engage with tourists and it is often actively discouraged by resorts (Harrison, 2008).

Ashley et al., (2000) outline four ways in which tourism can generate local income:

1. Wages from formal employment.
2. Earnings from selling goods, services or labour.
3. Profits from locally owned enterprises.
4. Collective income through community owned enterprises.

All four sources of income rely on key actors in tourism businesses to provide pathways in for local individuals. “Successful [pro-poor tourism] depends on the poor having access to markets, on the commercial viability of [pro-poor tourism] projects, on a policy framework that provides a secure investment (including access to land), and effective stakeholder co-operation and strategy implementation”, according to Harrison (2008, p. 855). In practice, this combination of factors is rare. In addition, many projects that have focused exclusively on engaging the poor in tourism activities have failed because they have tried to re-orientate an area’s entire economic activity towards tourism. However, Ashley et al., (2000) assert that “tourism is generally an additional diversification option for the poor, not a substitute for their core activities”.

Tourism activity is also generally seasonal and so cannot be an effective livelihood strategy on its own for the majority. Meyer (2008) estimates that only around 50 per cent of tourism employment is on a full-time basis. Foreign investment is prevalent in the tourism sector, with many of the higher level employment opportunities being taken by foreign individuals or those from large urban hubs, and, therefore, even growth in employment opportunities, a common repost for those in favour of tourism expansion, is possibly also limited. Shah & Gupta (2000, p. 39) state that in fact, “this type of intervention does not tend to alleviate poverty, but is likely to be exploitative and leave the poor worse off in economics terms”. The belief that revenue will ‘trickle-down’ to the poor, meanwhile, has been labelled tenuous at best (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007).

Hotels and resorts may not see the benefits of engaging with the community, but existing case studies demonstrate that there may be significant business benefits from doing so. For example, working proactively with the community can make a destination more appealing to tourists and can provide a greater selling point within an ever more competitive tourism environment (Ashley et al.,
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Ashley et al., (2007) found that some companies have begun to integrate development objectives into their business model. There is, however, limited research into business benefits for hotels in utilising development approaches. Robust evidence is needed for large scale hotels and tourism agencies to engage meaningfully in community development.

As tourism reaches new frontiers and the developing world gains an ever increasing proportion of tourism receipts, tourists, at least in the short term, will increasingly encounter inequality and poverty. The industry cannot ignore this. As tourists themselves become more aware of social and environmental responsibility there will not be a place for tourism’s extractive approach which is prevalent in many locations. Ensuring that opportunities are commercially viable and sustainable is a real challenge, and there is the potential for projects to have a negative impact in the long term if this challenge is not met. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2002), cited in Zhao & Ritchie (2007), reinforces this, noting that commercial viability is crucial because the poor do not have sufficient resources to risk engaging in initiatives which do not have strong and sustained demand for their goods and services.

How can skills development improve access to income generation opportunities?

Poor people living in tourism destinations in developing countries rarely have access to institutions that can help them develop the skills and financial capacity needed to take advantage of potential opportunities afforded by tourism (Ashley et al., 2000). Even in terms of low-skilled employment opportunities, of which there are many in...
the tourism sector, low levels of functional literacy and numeracy put entry-level positions out of the reach of many (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). This is exacerbated by the fact that employment in the tourism sector is often perceived as low paid, demanding, and in some contexts, associated with anti-social activities (Zampoukos & Ionnaides, 2011).

Finding ways to help the poor develop skills for jobs in tourism is not a straightforward process. Individuals who are below the poverty line do not have time to spare, as “time spent training … is not time spent securing food” (Goodwin, 2008a, p. 58). When time is taken up without sufficient livelihood benefit to repay that time, then the poor have endured a net loss as a consequence (ibid.). This means that even when the motivation is there to assist local individuals to take advantage of employment and income generating opportunities, there is little capacity for those individuals to engage in this activity without financial support or guarantee of return on investment. For training to be a viable option, the benefits must be tangible and achievable within a short timeframe.

Policy change must underpin sustainable skills development and employment. Zhao & Ritchie (2007) indicate that tourism projects that have sought to be pro-poor are generally “induced and coercive”, encouraging local communities to take part with limited engagement. For programmes to actively help the poor into work, there needs to be willingness from private enterprise and governments, as well as accountability to meet the committed aims (EQUATIONS, 2008b). At the moment this is a weak link for many programmes. As Zampoukos & Ioannides (2011, p. 32), state: “Employers have a myopic view of employment, regarding their workers as substitutable. Workers are treated as costs, not as a long-term resource and this becomes a disincentive for higher wages”. With this in mind it is not surprising that employers rarely prioritise sustainable local recruitment policies for their staff. However, organisations which have a short-term profit focus may “rape and pillage … the natural capital on which tourism depends [and are] destined for long-term failure” (Ritchie and Crouch 2003, p. 33 cited in Zhao & Ritchie, 2007).

The tourism sector in India

In the context of the challenges outlined above, India has its own distinct challenges, as well as sharing many similar concerns, particularly in terms of the pro-poor tourism agenda. India’s tourism industry relies predominantly on domestic tourists, who account for 82 per cent of all income from tourism (WTTC, 2012b). International tourism in India is by comparison still relatively small, but has grown rapidly in the last decade, from an estimated 2.5 million international visitors in 2002 to over six million in 2012 (ibid.).

Currently, the benefits of this growth are largely not being felt by the poorest. EQUATIONS (2008b) point out that some of India’s key tourist areas, including Bodh Gaya, Nalanda, Darjeeling, and Sikkim are all on the list of India’s one hundred poorest districts. Tourism developments are being prioritised as a key avenue for economic growth by the central government as well as many state governments – but it is leadership that is required to ensure that growth is channelled in the right way (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Evidence suggests that current developments are generally not having the required impact at grass roots level, and anecdotal evidence of
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increasing hostility is becoming more prevalent in some communities, further emphasising a perceived negative impact for local communities.

Even in Kerala, which is well known as an international tourism destination, tourism contributes less than 1 per cent to the state’s GDP. If the Indian government is to utilise tourism as a catalyst for economic growth, rapid expansion of existing facilities is required, alongside policies to promote inclusion and investment in tourism, and mechanisms to assess the social and economic impacts of these policies.

As an indication of some of these challenges, a report by EQUATIONS (2008b), discusses a development strategy for environmentally sustainable tourism in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal. The strategy was intended to support local development, but it was undermined by a failure to consult with local communities. The outcome was a strategy that did not take account of local community needs for access to natural resources, or local social and cultural concerns. Rural and heritage tourism are central to the Indian Government’s plans to expand the sector. The evaluation of the development strategy for the Andaman Islands highlights the importance of including local communities in the planning and management of such expansion.

If tourism development is managed correctly, there is potential for employment and income-generating opportunities to reach local people. This is especially important because isolated rural communities in particular may have few other economic opportunities, and the arrival of locally-based work could, therefore, reduce rural-to-urban migration, which in turn could help to strengthen traditional village communities (Tresilian, 2006). It is important that funds are directed in the right way, with focus on commercial viability and sustainable linkages to local markets for local people. EQUATIONS (2008b) commented that this approach has been overlooked in the past, because a large proportion of funds have been directed “into building infrastructure, and in overseas promotional campaigns”. A deep understanding of what approaches make pro-poor tourism commercially viable for local people is, therefore, needed to demonstrate shared value to the organisations holding the purse-strings.
At present, only 2 per cent of the working age population in India have undergone any formal training (OECD, 2012). The technical and vocational education and training system (TVET) in India is structured around a three-tier system:

1. Graduate and post-graduate level specialists (e.g., Indian Institutes of Technology, National Institutes of Technology, and engineering colleges) for training as engineers and technologists.

2. Diploma-level graduates who are trained at polytechnics as technicians and supervisors.

3. Certificate-level for higher secondary students in the vocational stream and craft people trained in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) as well as through formal apprenticeships as semi-skilled and skilled workers.

There are more than 17 Indian Ministries and Departments providing or funding TVET programmes. Currently these TVET programmes have capacity for about 250,000 learners each year. However, the quality, structure, and management processes for TVET programmes in India vary considerably (Goel, 2009).

The Indian tourism and hospitality training system

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) is the central agency in India responsible for the development and promotion of tourism in the country. Current formal training is primarily offered through the government funded Institutes of Hotel Management (IHM), which offers up to post-graduate qualifications, and Food Craft Institutes (FCIs) which offer shorter training of between three to six months, and diplomas lasting up to 18 months.

In addition, there are a variety of new policy initiatives underway designed to develop skills for the tourism and hospitality sector, such as:

- Central Financial Assistance to Institutes – The MoT offers financial aid to IHMs and FCIs under the Central Financial Assistance to Institutes scheme in order to stimulate and support the rapid growth and development of professional education and training exclusive to the hospitality and tourism industry in the country.

- Scheme of Capacity Building for Service Providers – There are a large number of service providers in India that work in the informal sector, such as, road-side eateries, small hotels and ticket offices. As a way to improve service levels in these enterprises, the MoT introduced the Scheme of Capacity Building for Service Providers, through which informal organisations are able to select modules and programmes to develop their specific needs.

- Hunar Se Rozgar Tak – This initiative launched in 2009 by the MoT targets skills development for individuals from the age of 18 to 28 who are in ‘economically weaker strata of society’ to address the overarching skills gaps in the sector. Training courses are conducted through the IHMs and FCIs.
This report focuses on understanding and documenting the approaches taken by tourism organisations in India that have:

1. Targeted recruitment towards their local communities; and
2. Implemented effective training programmes for staff.

Identifying case studies

In order to cover an adequate cross-section of the different types of approaches taken for such activities, we initially identified a large number of tourism organisations in India that were targeting recruitment at local communities. From this group several organisations were identified as potential case studies, based on the following criteria:

- A large proportion of staff were recruited from the local community for an array of positions.
- A positive social (and environmental) purpose was embedded into the business plan of the organisation.
- Employer-based training programmes were in place for staff.
- Employees included individuals with little formal education.
- Clear procedures for ongoing community engagement were in place.
- Opportunities for career progression had been integrated into recruitment and training programmes.

Following this process and visits to each of the case study candidates, three organisations were selected as case studies for the research:

1. CGH Earth (CGH), based near Kochi in Kerala.
2. Our Native Village (ONV), based near Bangalore in Karnataka.
3. Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR), covering two hotels based in Karnataka.

Two hotels were selected from JLR in order to compare the implementation of recruitment, training and community engagement strategies in two different hotels in the same organisation, and to understand how learning in a company can be shared effectively. One hotel had been established relatively recently (River Tern, circa six years), while the other had been established more than 30 years ago (Kabini River Lodge). The research does not seek to provide answers to all of the issues noted above but presents the experiences of each of the organisations in understanding and addressing these factors with the key focus on approaches to training. This report discusses the potential benefits and challenges of community-based recruitment and training (both for businesses and for communities) and draws recommendations for tourism organisations seeking a greater focus on improving employment opportunities in the communities in which they operate.
Data collection
The following approaches were used for the primary data collection that forms the basis of this report:

- Interviews
- Participant observations
- Focus groups

The research was conducted with employees at all levels, from entry level positions to director, in order to compare organisational perspectives with the perspectives of individuals going through, and having completed training. Prominent community members were also interviewed to gain their views on the organisation and its position in the communities in which it operates. Access to school and training opportunities was very limited in all of the communities surrounding the case study hotels in this report. It is important to note, therefore, that the locally targeted recruitment discussed in this report focuses almost exclusively on engaging with those with limited formal education.

Key research questions

**Recruitment**
How have the case studies adapted recruitment practices to target employing staff from local communities who have not had prior experience of working in the sector?

**Training**
What approaches to skills development have proved most effective for the case study organisations for entry level roles? How have these systems been developed and to what extent have they been embedded into the organisation?

**Progression**
Have the case study organisations integrated opportunities for career progression and what systems need to be in place to encourage ongoing progression?

Roundtable views

Throughout this report we highlight interesting discussion points taken from the roundtable event on skills development and community engagement in tourism that we co-hosted with EQUATIONS, in Bangalore in September 2012. One of the aims of the roundtable was to understand the perspectives of individuals from across the sector. Attendees included hoteliers, NGOs, government representatives, qualifications organisations, training bodies, and colleges.
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Overview of the case study organisations

Setting the scene: locations

This report looks at employment and skills development practices in two states of India: Karnataka and Kerala.

Karnataka’s economy has changed dramatically in the last 50 years, moving from an agricultural base to a primarily service based economy, particularly fuelled by the rapid growth in India’s ‘silicon valley’ in Bangalore. As in most Indian states, however, Karnataka’s rapid economic growth has not translated into improvements in the equality of the distribution of income (Ghosal, 2012). Karnataka’s current literacy rate of 76 per cent (83 per cent of males and 68 per cent of females), meanwhile, is slightly higher than the national average of 74 per cent (2011 census).

Karnataka is one of the top tourism destinations in India. In 2011, the number of foreign visitors to the state increased dramatically, with more than a 50 per cent growth in the number of tourists visiting in 2011 than the previous year (Ministry of Tourism, 2011). The state’s tourism policy realises this increase of visitors as an opportunity to ‘exponentially enhance and tap the tourism potential of Karnataka’ (Ministry of Tourism, 2009).

Kerala’s economy is dominated by the services industry which has driven economic growth in recent years. Alongside strong economic growth, Kerala is one of the few Indian states that has made steep progress in reducing inequality. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India (almost 100 per cent). It also scores higher than any other Indian state on the UN’s Human Development indicators and higher than many developed countries.

The Government of Kerala declared tourism as a focus industry in 1986, now almost 30 years later, the ‘God’s Own Country’ marketing campaign is internationally renowned and Kerala has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in India.

CGH Earth, Kerala

CGH Earth (CGH) started in 1954 with the establishment of the Casino Hotel in Kochi, Kerala. CGH now has 11 resorts and hotels and a variety of houseboats spread across Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The organisation conducts almost all training in-house and recruits a mix of locally sourced staff as well as individuals who have graduated from training colleges.

The research was carried out at CGH’s Marari Beach Resort, located in a coastal village called Mararikulam in Central Kerala. Over 90 per cent of the tourists that Marari receives are international.

Traditionally, a large percentage of the people in the village are employed in fishing, as well as local trades such as carpet making from coconut fibre, agriculture, toddy tapping (local beverage making), masonry and a small percentage in tourism related activities.

Of the people employed in the resort 40 per cent come from villages within five to ten kilometres of the hotel. Of the remaining 60 per cent, the majority are from within the state, with a small number of employees originally from Tamil Nadu. Housekeeping and other low-skilled service areas are where the largest number of individuals from nearby communities are employed.
Jungle Lodges and Resorts, Karnataka

Jungle Lodge and Resorts (JLR) was formed in 1980 as a public private partnership between the Government of Karnataka and Tiger Tops, an enterprise specialising in environmental tourism. Since 1987, the organisation has, however, been solely owned by the Government of Karnataka. JLR promotes itself as a responsible ecotourism company and has properties in Karnataka’s prime wildlife destinations.

JLR has an almost entirely community-based model to recruitment and training and has established a less structured system than the other organisations in the study. Training is largely ad hoc and needs driven, although external training colleges are also used to develop skills in certain key areas.

The research was carried out at Kabini River Lodge and River Tern Lodge:

- **Kabini River Lodge** (KRL), located on the banks of the Kabini reservoir in Mysore district is part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve which was declared an official Tiger Reserve in 1999. Kabini is the oldest of the JLR resorts and is the central hub for other JLR properties to establish their operational procedures from.

- **River Tern Lodge** (RTL) opened in 2006 and is located on the edge of the Bhadra Tiger Reserve in Chickmanglur district in the Western Ghats. River Tern is relatively new and is, therefore, still establishing itself, both in terms of its presence in the wider community and as a destination.

The two lodges are at very different stages in their development and, therefore, provided an opportunity to understand how learning can be shared within organisations, and whether temporal factors have an impact on establishing community-targeted initiatives.

**Our Native Village, Karnataka**

Our Native Village (ONV) is located 40 km outside Bangalore in Karnataka state. The land on which ONV is located was originally purchased for agricultural purposes but paucity of yields meant that the owner looked for an alternative source of income. The resort is marketed as a wellness retreat and the majority of guests are individuals from Bangalore, with around 20 per cent of guests coming from outside India.

ONV currently employs 31 people (24 men and seven women) across eight departments. The resort recruits individuals with experience of working in tourism to meet immediate skills needs and to help train new members of staff recruited from the local community.
Case study findings

The case study findings are split into four sections. The first section establishes an overview of the organisational motivations for targeting local recruitment and some of the key social challenges which affect the organisation’s abilities to deliver and target their training and recruitment systems.

The sections are then structured to reflect the key stages at which organisational changes are required to develop an effective community-targeted recruitment and training programme:

- Section 2 discusses the initial recruitment process.
- Section 3 goes on to discuss skills development, particularly highlighting the training differences required for individuals from a lower formal education background.
- Finally, in Section 4 we discuss progression pathways for employees, and the extent to which the case study organisations have been able to integrate this into their overall approach, as well as the role of training in assisting this progression.
Social considerations

“I’ve never experienced discrimination between castes here. Yes, we have small arguments over work now and again, but nothing is personal. Here we really are like family.”

Maintenance supervisor
There were a number of social considerations that emerged during the research that had an impact on the approaches taken across recruitment, skills development and progression. This section outlines these key issues and provides an insight into some of the drivers for them.

Organisational interest in community-based recruitment

A commitment to local recruitment is stated as an outright policy in CGH and ONV’s strategic plans and is similarly embedded in JLR’s business practices. Across the organisations, the percentage of people recruited from the local community is between 40–58 per cent. Three of the four resorts have introduced strategies which balance a majority of employees from the local community with some individuals sourced from outside who have normally had previous experience in the industry and are, therefore, able to offer training and guidance. JLR Kabini relies on local recruitment for almost all roles apart from senior management.

The development of this integrated approach has not always been a straight forward process. In JLR Kabini, for example, an employee said that in the

Key findings

▷ A mismatch between management and local employees’ expectations of workplace behaviour and work routines was observed across the case study hotels. For example, it was reported that many local staff took leave without notice to attend family or community events. Fostering strong relationships and ongoing dialogue between organisations and local communities appears to be an essential component in resolving disparities. ONV reported good results when they adapted their own work practices to fit better with the lifestyle of villagers.

▷ Caste based discrimination is still widespread in India, particularly in rural areas. Instances of caste based discrimination in the case study hotels were limited, although there were reports by employees from the Dalit community at Kabini. Positive steps were made by management actively discouraging discrimination within the work environment and ensuring interaction and cooperation between people of different castes.

▷ Women are underrepresented in the work force at the case study hotels. Long hours and late finishes are often not compatible with women's domestic situations. There was also concern about the stigma that surrounds females working in the tourism sector. To address this issue, CGH started an outreach programme through which management visit the family home of potential female employees to discuss the realities of working in the sector. They also encourage women to bring their parents and husbands to view the hotel work environment.
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initial years of construction, when staff from the resort would cross the village, they would be abused and often had stones thrown at them. Interviewees attributed this behaviour to perceptions among locals that the resort was a threat to the community. The director at the time acknowledged that there was a need to engage directly with the community in order to get their buy-in. These issues had not been fully resolved at the time the case study was conducted, as one community member highlighted:

“Rooms are reserved two to three months in advance. When they are earning so much of profit, what are they doing with it? All public money should be accountable. That is why we demand that they should bring in more transparency and accountability.”

However, at the same time, many community members reported positive feelings about the number of local individuals who had managed to secure employment in the hotel.

The Director at ONV also highlighted the business drivers behind their approach to local recruitment:

“It was logical, we started to do work there, we had to get people who would come and work. There was nothing more than that. Today we can say that we are employing local people, but then [when the resort was established] it was just the thing to do. It is a little more organically done these days. They (local staff) are starting to understand the value systems a little more and with that we have been able to work with them more easily.”

In each of the case study organisations, the commitment to local hiring had become embedded in the day-to-day running of the hotel. These practices had evolved from a varied set of circumstances, and had been retained over time due to the subsequent benefits to the business, and to help meet the social objectives of each organisation.

Employment opportunities in the local communities around each case study resort have grown, although opportunities for direct employment were limited by the size of each organisation. Alongside the direct benefit of employment opportunities, indirect benefits were also identified. For example, many staff who had previously travelled to large urban areas in pursuit of day labour work were able to move back to their village, allowing them to spend more time with their families. Furthermore, when permanently employed, individuals are able to rely on a consistent and stable income which is not the case in day labour roles which many individuals had previously worked in, particularly with no prior qualifications or substantial education.

Disparities between expectations

Each case study revealed gaps between the expectations of employers (as formal organisations) and communities (with little or no exposure to formal employment). This led to a level of conflict in some circumstances and a frustration from both sides, and there were indications that if left unchecked such disparities could lead to communities and organisations disengaging from local recruitment and training.
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For example, a problem which ran across Kabini, River Tern and Our Native Village was that local staff often took leave without any prior notice, primarily to attend family or community events. The manager at River Tern Lodge reported that: “The local people take repeated leave for marriages and other social commitments. However, staff not from the region take time off to meet their families a few times in a year. Therefore, to ensure that there are enough staff available in the lodge, a balance between local and non-local staff is maintained to address the issue of shortage of staff at any given point of time.”

The Director at Our Native Village highlighted the impact of similar issues on the organisation’s initial ideological perspectives on their community-targeted approach: “[I can] probably hire a few senior people from outside and I will ensure that they will transfer the learning downwards. Over time [people from the community] will run the place. The whole pattern of taking up people, training them and getting them to the top level is something which is not alien to me”.

This perspective had, however, changed over time to an approach that emphasised the need for ‘a balanced’ team to mitigate some of the idiosyncrasies of life in rural India: “One thing I had told myself was, the average villager is as ambitious as an urbanite … [However], it is not necessarily the same as far as the rural space is concerned. They didn’t necessarily want to own a motorbike or a car; they were very contented where they were. Initially I used to be judgmental and say, ‘come on, move up in life.’ [Later] I realised that it is the perfection of life. When you are content, when you have enough resources to keep your body and soul together, to look after your family [and] children, what more do we want?”

The issue of workplace discipline was also highlighted: “There was a village festival and a [team member] didn’t come the next day. We didn’t have anybody to cook breakfast. He didn’t come back for two days. I asked him what happened. He replied, ‘I met my friend, he invited me to his village, so I went, stayed a night, so what is the problem? Anyway you are going to cut my salary.’ OK, what’s the big deal? For [staff from urban backgrounds] our first priority is work and then family, and then friends and then the community. For [individuals from rural villages] the first priority is the community and family”.

It is clear from these examples that there is a need to better understand motivations of staff from local communities, and to question the assumptions held by tourism businesses about the capacities of new recruits. The relationships established between supervisor/trainer and trainee/employee were essential to address this in ONV. They started understanding the community a little better, learnt to manage their expectations and changed business processes in line with this information. During the initial years of the business there were some negative impacts on service delivery to visitors as the management began to learn these lessons. JLR management revealed similar
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Local hospitality experiences. As hotels enter into more and more marginalised communities, it is critical to commit resources to understanding local community cultures, and to adapting business processes such as recruitment and training to ensure compatibility with these cultures.

Overarching social challenges

As mentioned above, one of the key challenges observed in all case studies was that of aligning the expectations of employees and employers. Alongside these employment expectations, local social and cultural norms represented significant challenges for each case study organisation. One area in which this was particularly difficult was ensuring that community tensions or disputes didn’t manifest themselves in the work environment.

Caste-based disputes are still widespread in India, particularly in rural areas. In CGH Earth, River Tern Lodge and Our Native Village discrimination between staff from different backgrounds was generally not perceived as an issue. A staff member at Our Native Village noted that the non-discriminatory attitude they receive from management and co-workers is greatly valued:

“Here there is no difference between workers, like seniors and juniors. All of us work together, we have food together. The food is the same for everybody including the manager, guests and us.”

In Kabini, however, caste discrimination was an issue that many of the interviewees identified. One of the clearest examples involved employees from the Dalit community (see p11 for a definition), who were predominantly found in more menial jobs. Although the management did not support caste discrimination, and at times actively discouraged it in the organisation, many of the Dalit staff expressed concerns that there would be a backlash if they were to report discrimination. This issue may be reinforced by recruitment practices, which are discussed in greater depth in the next section. Locally recruited staff tended to be recommended by their friends or family for a specific role. This meant traditional social hierarchies were likely to be reflected in workplace hierarchies, with lower caste individuals entering employment in lower status roles.

Practices of ‘untouchability’ are still prevalent in some circumstances, as one employee indicated:

“The staff keep telling us not to touch this, not to go there, don’t eat on that plate and so on. If we complain to our manager,
he will scold them. Then the problem starts between us and other employees. Now we have to eat separately. Now we don’t have food here, we have it in our houses. If we want to eat here we have to bring separate plates from our houses and keep it separately.”

When combined with the impact of a growing tourism sector on local economies, the challenges faced by lower caste communities can be severe. Dalit communities, for example, have traditionally been prevented from owning land, and primarily earning a living as agricultural labourers. Through tourism growth in Karnataka, many organisations have purchased land to construct resorts, thereby reducing significantly the area under agriculture, and by extension, an important source of income for Dalit communities.

**Issues for women working in the sector**

Another issue for the tourism sector as a whole is the low numbers of women entering into employment. There are a variety of issues which affect the numbers of women working in tourism, some of which are discussed in depth in the following section. Issues for women working in the sector, particularly in terms of social stigma were emphasised at every organisation. Three women working in the massage, Ayurveda and naturopathy centre at Our Native Village indicated that they were not happy discussing their jobs with family and friends. One of the ladies said:

“Because of our profession certain guests and other people are biased and do not relate to us in a nice way. We feel hurt about this”.

There are a variety of issues faced by women seeking to work in, and currently employed in, the tourism and hospitality sector. Across the case study hotels the highest percentage of female staff was 27 per cent and in one hotel it was as low as 6 per cent. None of the case study organisations had a formal approach to target hiring of people from particularly disadvantaged or vulnerable groups in local communities. CGH had, however, introduced a target for the ratio of women working in the organisation to be no less than 30 per cent. Currently female employment is at 27 per cent, with the highest numbers in housekeeping. A similar trend for ‘genderisation’ of skills was prevalent across all case study hotels and from discussions with other stakeholders from the sector such trends are the norm throughout the industry.
The key issue that prevents women seeking employment in the sector is the stigma and misconceptions that surround the industry. A female staff member said:

“My family and my friend’s family don’t know that we’re working in a resort. They think we’re working as pharmacists”

A perception of promiscuity seems to be widespread, particularly in Kerala, and was consistently discussed in interviews at all levels as one of the key reasons for the low numbers of women in the industry. To quote a female staff member from CGH:

“My [female] friends were working in the hotel industry, and it affects their marriage. [Men] say, ‘oh you are working in hotel … so I don’t want to consider this marriage alliance’.”

This issue of male perceptions and possible impacts on social norms and expectations was highlighted in a number of interviews, suggesting extensive engagement with communities is needed to improve perceptions of the industry. In addition there is a need for policy initiatives that target the exploitation which does go on in the industry. This issue merits further attention outside of the parameters of this study.

The practicalities of employment in the sector also has an impact on the number of women seeking employment. For example, the numbers of women who were employed on permanent contracts was significantly lower than men across the case study hotels. This is primarily because the organisations offer permanent employment only to individuals who have worked in the organisation for a minimum number of years. Many women leave employment after marriage or child birth and may return again after a number of years. There are, therefore, fewer opportunities for women to become permanent employees so women have less job stability.

There are incentives for organisations to create working environments that enable women to seek productive and consistent employment. Attrition is a major concern throughout the tourism sector, and seems to be far higher for women employees. Case study interviews revealed that women often left soon after joining, as they rapidly grew concerned with the long and late hours. To try to address this CGH have started a programme through which staff members visit potential female employee’s families to discuss any issues. They actively encourage women to bring their parents and husbands to show them the hotel, the accommodation, the staff, as well as demonstrating what the job entails to address any fears over safety. Dispelling some of the myths that surround the tourism industry should be a priority for efforts to support access to employment.
for women. Approaches to improving exposure to the realities of the tourism experience are an important way of addressing this and improving community understanding as a whole.

Clear policies around sexual harassment, followed by clear action, can also encourage women to consider tourism jobs as a viable career pathway, and increase their retention. At JLR, while there were no formal policies at the time the research was conducted, a ‘Sexual Harassment Committee’ was in place. All the case studies have a zero tolerance sexual harassment policy and they also adhere to the ‘Shops and Establishments Act’ that requires that women do not work early morning and late night shifts.

Although River Tern has only a small number of female staff they have been able to adapt their systems to accommodate domestic circumstances for those that are employed. This is an extremely important point to encourage female recruitment, but is also a factor which emerged as important in general for recruiting individuals who may well not have worked in formal employment previously. Allowing flexibility in job roles can boost staff retention and strengthen community and employee buy-in to the organisation. A female staff member at CGH captured the benefits for her in gaining employment in the sector:

“I was able to support my family when my father was admitted to hospital twice. [I have] taken a loan and got my older and younger sisters married. I use my salary for the household and keep tip money for myself.”

The likelihood of external social hierarchies such as those of caste and gender-based discrimination reflecting and replicating themselves in organisations are high, and there is a need to address these issues directly. Creating and encouraging spaces for sharing, reflection and discussion between staff is potentially an important investment.

One important measure to address these issues is effective dialogue to discuss the values of the community and the organisation, as well as a commitment, to reconcile the value-sets, with each necessarily influencing the other. Longstanding social systems cannot be changed overnight and there is a need for both sides to understand each other’s motivations to be able to reconcile disparate perspectives.

The issues outlined above and the motivations for the organisations in establishing a community-targeted recruitment approach have directly influenced the training and recruitment approaches taken.
2

The recruitment process

“I’m the only person in my family who’s got a permanent job. It’s given me independence because I can manage my finances. I paid for my sister’s wedding which meant a lot.”

Housekeeper
This section analyses the approaches taken by our case study hotels to recruit individuals from their local community who lack sector-specific qualifications. The effectiveness of each approach is assessed from the perspective of employees, management, and the broader community.

**Key findings**

- Minimum qualifications are required for every job role, including those at entry level. The requirements are, however, rarely enforced by the case study hotels. Employees felt their grasp of soft skills was more important than technical skills in securing employment.

- The primary approach for communicating employment opportunities for ‘non-technical’ (primarily entry level) jobs is by word of mouth. Although this keeps recruitment focused in the local community, it can be seen as an ongoing barrier to employment for individuals who do not have existing connections at the hotels.

- Recruitment for roles that require technical skills or professional knowledge is usually done via colleges, to target course graduates who have the desired competency levels already. However, the case study organisations have reported positive results from blending community-based recruitment with college recruitment.

Sourcing the right staff for jobs is a critical business need for any organisation. A sector specific qualification should provide management with assurance of an individual's competency and suitability for employment in tourism. However, the extent to which this assessment is valid depends upon the extent to which colleges and qualification bodies have developed their offering to meet industry requirements. A significant mismatch in expectations can occur when qualifications and teaching and learning methods don't meet industry needs. Many employers we spoke to for this study told us there is a mismatch between what is learned in the classroom and what is required from their hotel staff.

At the same time a common employer concern about recruiting staff from outside of the college route is that additional intensive training may be required to ensure unqualified individuals can perform effectively in their role. Evidence from our case study organisations suggests this is not the case, as we shall explore in detail in Section 3.

**Advertising of jobs**

In all of the case study organisations, for ‘non-technical’ jobs, the primary approach for communicating employment opportunities is by word of mouth, primarily through sharing opportunities with existing staff and asking them to communicate this information to others in the community. For roles that require significant prior technical skills or professional knowledge, recruitment is done through colleges and existing networks.
For some lower level management roles CGH Earth are targeting colleges, particularly the Institutes of Hotel Management, in which courses range from two to four years, as well as institutes that have short term vocational courses ranging from three to twelve months. For non-management roles, CGH usually recruits individuals without previous experience and knowledge of the sector, as well as minimal formal education. Job opportunities are shared by word of mouth from existing employees, as well as via adverts in local newspapers. This approach has proved effective because individuals from the local villages frequently approach CGH for work without the need for expensive advertising and recruitment techniques.

JLR is a government run enterprise, and as such, the decisions for senior level positions are taken by the state department. None of the jobs are formally advertised by JLR hotels, but instead they are communicated through existing members of staff. The historical reason for this approach is that local villagers were hired as construction workers when JLR’s Kabini Lodge was being built, and when it became operational, the individuals who had demonstrated motivation and effectiveness were retained as hotel staff. As the lodge expanded, new roles were filled by relatives and friends of staff members. The ‘recommendation’ approach has been effective for JLR because management report they are consistently able to recruit motivated employees who demonstrate ‘social buy-in’ to the organisation. Our Native Village has taken a similar approach to JLR for the same historical reasons, and management reported good results. Our Native Village is unique in that all vacancies are advertised by word of mouth, including senior management positions (although management positions are primarily taken by individuals who have significant prior experience in the sector).

“One of my relatives is working here as a supervisor. I got a job here through him.”

This informal ‘recommendation’ approach, as an employee at JLR Kabini stated above, works effectively for the organisations by maintaining ongoing dialogue between the hotel and the community. It also allows for an informal mode of vetting of employees through close relationships with existing employees. It may develop a sense of buy-in to the organisation because a poor recommendation can reflect negatively on the existing employee. On the other hand, the approach encourages nepotism and acts as an ongoing barrier to employment for individuals who don’t have friends and family already working at the hotels. This may reinforce social hierarchies which exist in the community, with the most vulnerable unable to access employment while those in positions of power able to dominate employment opportunities. This specific issue has led to feelings of discontent among groups.

**Roundtable views**

*Are current hospitality and tourism qualifications right for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)?*

An owner of a small retreat hotel in Karnataka said there is a mismatch between what the majority of the tourism industry needs from training providers, and what learners are actually being taught through qualifications:

“More than 79 per cent of the hospitality sector comprises of SMEs and the informal sector. However, all the training institutes are orientated towards the 20 per cent of high-end hotels with five star culture, yet these hotels have their own training programmes anyway. Skills development programmes in the tourist sector have to change. If they don’t, ultimately businesses and the industry will suffer.”
of people who are effectively excluded from employment at the JLR hotels due to their recruitment approach. When we interviewed an unemployed man from the Dalit community close to one of the case study hotels, we were told that his son was turned down by the hotel due to lack of experience. At the same time, opportunities had been given to individuals with family connections at the hotel with no experience or qualifications:

“My son is a graduate. If we ask for a job, they ask for experience. Where will he get experience, if he is not given a chance at all?”

We heard examples where up to five people from the same extended family were working in hotels. This provoked criticism from a number of interviewees from nearby villages:

“They have given jobs only to the relatives of people who are already working there. They give jobs only to influential people ... the grandson can get a job if his grandfather is working there. Boys who have studied only up to 10th [grade] are working as naturalists. On the other hand, graduates are made to work as labourers and gardeners. It is not the culture of a good resort.”

It seems clear that although community engagement has been central to recruitment approaches, more attention is needed to ensure that approaches don’t reinforce social inequalities and marginalisation. Animosity may be directed towards hotels from the wider community if preferences are perceived to exist in recruiting certain groups of individuals over others. Recruitment approaches must target the wider community and ideally aim towards recruiting from a broader cross-section of the community.

Entry requirements

For each hotel there are certain minimum educational qualifications required for every position, even at entry level. However, educational requirements are applied flexibly throughout the case study organisations, with the exception of senior positions which require formal education, training and previous experience. Our focus in this report is on jobs at entry and intermediate levels because community-targeted recruitment is most prevalent within these roles.

The management team at CGH Earth emphasised that many entry level roles require minimal skills and training and there are very few barriers to recruiting individuals who have had limited formal schooling. Entry roles include maintenance, gardening, security, and back-end functions of certain departments such as housekeeping. What is important to note is that there is no entry barrier for individuals from any level of training or education which prevents them applying for employment in the organisation at entry level. This is a vastly different approach from many tourism organisations that require prior training as an indication of an individual’s ability to perform in the role, therefore, excluding the majority of individuals from marginalised communities.

At JLR, sector-specific qualifications are not needed as an entry level requirement. Instead, the most important attributes are soft skills such as motivation and capacity to learn. This is because the management team believe current sector specific training courses and qualifications are not tailored to the realities of the industry. Therefore,
the community-targeted recruitment approach is proving effective because new employees can be trained directly, to meet the needs of their hotels. Recently JLR introduced a minimum of 8th–10th grade standard education for employment. This seems to reinforce the important role of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy as an enabling factor in up-skilling, and for driving motivation, as has been found in a number of studies (See Burchfield, Hua, Suxo Iturry & Rocha, 2002a and Burchfield, Hua, Baral & Rocha, 2002b). It is important to emphasise that seeking individuals with at least some formal education or training was not so that individuals had the technical skills for the job but because it provides a stronger foundation for progression. At Our Native Village staff training is seen as a priority, in part due to the fact that it is a relatively small hotel with a high staff-to-guest ratio. This may explain why qualifications do not seem to be a prerequisite for recruitment. Instead, the emphasis is on selecting employees who demonstrate a high level of personal motivation, and a willingness to commit to learning. However, for positions at the supervisory level, sector-specific qualifications are a prerequisite. At both JLR and CGH, there are examples of staff members who have moved into supervisory positions after gaining sufficient experience on the job, despite lacking formal qualifications. Self motivation was considered the most important prerequisite for employment at any level. In addition, management favoured recruits who demonstrated during interview an ability to be ‘mouldable’. This means the ability to grow and develop comfortably in the organisation. But it also meant, in the case of individuals who had gone through formal vocational training, the ability to ‘unlearn’ existing approaches that could conflict with the way the organisation prefers to do things. The management team said that they believe existing training courses are teaching some outdated or irrelevant skills and techniques. These techniques must be ‘unlearned,’ and the mismatch in expectations must be addressed. The ‘unlearning’ process is important because each of the hotels utilise their unique selling points to attract visitors, and it is their localised differences that makes the experience, and this begins with the staff. The capacity to integrate staff into the organisation’s value system is, therefore, extremely important.
The employees who were interviewed for this report overwhelmingly said that the main criteria that enabled successful recruitment into the organisation were soft skills including:

“Commitment, determination, interest, confidence.”

What is notable is that soft skills were prioritised over technical ability as the key skills required for employment. For organisations looking to develop similar approaches to community recruitment, an ability to recognise and prioritise soft skills over technical ability can be seen as the most important factor in recruitment policy and process. The ability for an organisation to be able to implement this in practice may, however, be dependent on an established and effective relationship with the community, so that the community has exposure to the expectations of the organisation.

CGH Earth balances recruitment from the local community with recruitment techniques that target colleges offering courses in tourism and hospitality. The overall approach is to recruit qualified staff from a range of colleges, in addition to staff from the local community who do not have training or previous experience in the industry. Managers arrange visits to local colleges to conduct formal interviews with students who are interested in becoming employees. CGH’s preference is to recruit students from local government colleges, rather than from perceived ‘high quality’ technical institutes:

“If you go to an IHM (Institute of Hospitality and Management) you will get people who are from the local community but their attitudes will be different from the local people coming from the government [colleges]. [We] found [individuals from the local/ government colleges] attitudes are much better, more adaptive, more open compared to [the individuals from the high profile institutes, who] have mind blocks.”

Entry into roles

Developing effective processes to guide new recruits’ entry into the organisation is discussed in depth in the next section. However, it is important to contextualise the terms of employment to which staff are contracted. A detailed analysis of employment terms and conditions sits outside the scope of this report, but it is worth noting that many employees told us that the issue of employment contracts is of real concern. Many staff members reported working on a daily wage without benefits for several years, before eventually being offered a fixed term contract. In some instances at JLR (although it is a specific case being a government enterprise), employees had worked for up to seven years before receiving a permanent contract. Although each of the case study hotels had established contract policies in place, the extent to which they were effectively communicated to employees was varied, and this had an impact on the job security that employees reported. Clarifying and strengthening contractual relationships could be a factor in helping to establish opportunities for progression in an organisation because security of tenure would seem intuitively to encourage staff commitment and growth. Job progression is discussed in Section 4.
Skills development

“I never had enough courage to speak to people I didn’t know. But now that I have to talk with colleagues and guests every day, I feel more confident. I’ve also learned basic Hindi and English.”

Housekeeping assistant
This section analyses the training process adopted by the organisations for entry level roles, discussing their approaches to skills development for individuals recruited from local communities. The principal approaches to skills development are explored as well as the challenges that the case study hotels have experienced in developing and maintaining these systems.

Key findings

- Management at the case study hotels said that formal training and qualifications are not tailored to their needs, so they do not favour external training. When they hire staff through formal routes they often have to ‘unlearn’ the training.

- On the job training is the primary approach to skills development in the case study hotels. Hotels favour this style of training as they are able to immerse individuals in its organisational culture and operating processes.

- Emphasis is on training practical aspects of job roles, with little time given to theory. Where theory is taught, (for example health and safety aspects of using cleaning chemicals), it is taught in a practical way using imagery and through demonstration and imitation. The potential for individuals to train others, or to progress, may be hindered by poor theoretical knowledge.

- Organisation-specific manuals that document operational procedures have been developed by Our Native Village, to encourage standardisation of skills. We believe exploring similar approaches could encourage progression in an organisation, as individuals have a tangible way of building on foundation skills to master greater levels of expertise.

Approaches to training

Although the methodologies applied to training vary across the four organisations, on the job training is the primary approach to skills development, particularly for lower skilled roles. This report discusses three main types of on the job training:

- **Organisation orientation**
  
  Encompassing general inductions and training focused on aligning recruits to the organisation’s culture and processes, including health and safety.

- **Soft skills training**
  
  Including communication, team working, problem solving, learning to learn, these are sometimes also referred to as core or generic skills, depending on the context.

- **Role specific technical skills training**
  
  Focused on the routine tasks for specific occupations, such as cooking and preparing food by kitchen staff, use of appropriate cleaning equipment and products by housekeeping staff.
External training

External training was rarely used by the case study organisations. CGH and ONV haven’t used external training in recent years due to a perceived lack of return on the investment. JLR occasionally sends staff to off-site programmes, but this has been sporadic and not always yielded the desired results. Where external training courses are used at JLR’s Kabini and River Tern Lodge, it is primarily for housekeeping and cooking staff who are sent to the Institute for Hospitality and Management (IHM) to develop standardised industry skills. However, only individuals below the age of 35 are eligible to attend courses at the training institute. Also, the training is conducted in English and Hindi which has caused issues for some of JLR’s staff:

“We used to get sleepy. They used to give lectures in Hindi and English. They never used to speak Kannada. Those who could understand were listening and we used to take a nap.”

JLR provides training for naturalists (environmental guides) at their Kabini resort. Trainee naturalists receive between two to five days of training, by accompanying senior members of staff and guests on safari. They are expected to utilise this knowledge when back at their resort, under the guidance of a senior naturalist. This approach is in line with management’s opinion that the current provision for off site training does not meet their needs. Both ONV and CGH management also indicated that they are unable to source the skills they require, whether for entry into the organisation or for skills development through formal routes. External training courses are not used in any of the

Roundtable views

What’s the most effective language of instruction for entry level training?

A representative from a community-based based NGO in Tamil Nadu said that local languages are very important when teaching local communities:

“We work in 14 states that utilise at least 14 different languages. It’s crucial for us to hire local trainers”.

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organisations to develop theoretical knowledge, improve standards, or learn soft skills. These are key areas in which new employees are perceived to be weak, and the organisations have consistently struggled with their own internal training provision in these areas.

Organisation orientation

The orientation programmes at each case study hotel were primarily used to outline management expectations of staff on commencing employment. This aim is particularly important because the majority of staff did not have prior experience of working in a formal environment. The orientation, therefore, provides a good opportunity to detail expectations around process and procedure, but also around professional standards and behaviours. However, we did not find evidence that mismatches between employer and employee expectations were addressed during orientation. Tailoring orientation to include opportunities for two-way exchange of information about expectations could be beneficial to both staff and managers.

New employees at CGH Earth receive a structured internal orientation course, primarily to provide an overview of the organisation’s vision and values, and how these are implemented into day-to-day processes. Individuals from different departments discuss their roles and explain some of the processes and procedures involved. This approach is taken to ensure that all staff understand what is expected of them, and begin embedding the values of the organisation into their work from day one. Similar orientation training is offered at Our Native Village but it is based on a formalised induction manual. The induction manual is in English as well as the local language of Kannada. It details the vision, principles and beliefs of the company, as well as outlining aspects of personnel policy. Individuals with low levels of literacy work alongside management to interpret the information verbally, although there didn’t appear to be additional processes in place to ensure that the information is effectively taken up by individuals.

Roundtable views

Is standardised training provision compatible with retaining ‘localness’?

An owner of a small chain of hotels said that tourists prefer authentic ‘local’ experiences, and training must therefore retain the local ways of doing things:

“A hotel of mine in Swamimalai is very different from one in Chettinad, although the distance between the two places is only two hour’s drive. In our hotels, there is an option of an English speaking guide or a French speaking intern, and also a local villager. The local villager is always preferred. We used to have professional guides for temple tours, but tourists prefer local boys who can share knowledge about the place in general and not restrict it only to the temple.”

The same hotel owner went on to say that standardised training provision can impact on local culture:

“It [standardised training] takes away the localness and the uniqueness of how things are done. We want to preserve the local culture. The local style will be killed if cross pollination happens.”

A hotel director from Karnataka said that current hospitality qualifications generally offer training in international cuisine. As a result, learners’ aspirations are to work in hotels that cater to an international market. However, the majority of jobs are in SMEs which may deal largely with domestic tourists:

“Today there is a minority of people wanting to work in Indian cuisine. Instead, they want to do French and Portuguese cuisine.”
Role specific technical skills training

According to the case studies’ management, the majority of the skills required for entry level roles are relatively basic and do not require formal training. One of the reasons given for this is that the key skills required are variations or extensions of domestic skills. The ability to develop these skills was, therefore, not seen as a particular challenge, even in the smaller hotels with limited capacity to establish structured training programmes.

At CGH Earth, each new recruit is trained in the same way by their supervisors to develop job-specific skills to perform their role effectively. Generally, individuals at the entry level develop their skills through an incremental growth in their responsibilities. There is a degree of structure to this training, although it is not formalised. For example, a housekeeping trainee will be given responsibility for a couple of rooms and extra rooms will be added as their competence grows. Because of the seasonal nature of the industry, new training approaches and changes in methodology are shared during the low season, when there is sufficient time to develop staff. It is important to emphasise that the training approach is the same whether an individual has been through a qualification or has been recruited locally with no formal training or qualifications. Emphasis is on training practical aspects of job roles, with little time given to theory. Where theory is taught, it is primarily around health and safety aspects, such as how to use and store cleaning chemicals. Theory is taught in a practical way using imagery and through demonstration and imitation which means that literacy levels are generally not an issue. The majority of trainees did not perceive this as theoretical knowledge sharing as it was mostly conducted on the job. As such, the potential for individuals to train others in the future may be hindered by not gaining a firm theoretical foundation to underpin practical tasks. This could be seen as a barrier to progression to supervisory or management roles in the organisation.

Historically, at JLR’s Kabini, junior staff accompany and assist senior staff, thereby gaining skills through observation and imitation. This same practice is followed for supervisory and managerial positions. This clear lack of structure in training does, however, mean that it might be difficult to develop progression routes and standardise skills learnt, a potential issue for other organisations wanting to develop an
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employer-based training programme. One way that JLR have attempted to get round this is through transferring senior staff from more established JLR properties who have greater experience of skills development with lower skilled staff. At ONV, observation on the job again plays a strong role in skills development, as well as developing independent learning. ONV does not deliver classroom-based training because the management believe that employees they recruit (from the local area and with little formal education and training), do not find the classroom a constructive or comfortable learning environment. The management highlighted that the most effective approach they have found is for the staff to experience issues and learn from these challenges, rather than having these discussions in classroom environment. The managing director said:

“We don’t have any lecture sessions. But the staff see the skills needed every day, so that’s how we convey our expectations.”

All of the case study organisations said the most effective approach for skills development is through on the job training. Off site courses are deemed to be useful on some occasions, but only if there is a need to develop a specific technical skill. This approach seems to work for recruits from the local community, who are primarily coming from very limited educational backgrounds and may not be comfortable in more formal training environments. The investment in on the job training also eliminates the need for new recruits to have qualifications before applying for jobs, a huge enabling factor for individuals who typically have only a small amount of income to be spending outside of health and nutrition. This is particularly important as there are very few opportunities for individuals to gain exposure to the realities of jobs and what career progression might look like before entering onto a training course, as well as what personal and income development may come from this career. This leads to a lack of clarity of what the training investment might lead to.

As organisations are saying that they are able to take individuals on without qualifications, and in the face of more immediate income generating opportunities, there seems to be little incentive to invest in a qualification for the individual. Furthermore, there are a variety of competing factors which come into the mindset of individuals when identifying income generation opportunities.

Roundtable views

Are people from disadvantaged rural areas interested in investing time and money into a qualification?

An individual from an Indian qualifications organisation said that there are competing priorities that often prevent individuals from local communities undertaking a qualification:

“Our biggest competitor is the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act; an Act which aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of employment in a financial year. People are not willing to [invest in a qualification] since the government is providing 100 rupees a day without them having to develop skills.”

He also said that the time needed to complete a qualification unpaid is a constraint:

“Retention is also a problem, since once a trainee completes three to six months [of a qualification], only after that he’ll start getting paid.”
Understanding standards

CGH Earth and Our Native Village have implemented Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) taken from the Hotel Association of India, which is the national membership body of the hotel industry. The SOPs are used to form the basic structure of the training framework which is populated with the more practical aspects of on the job training. Our Native Village has evolved the SOPs into organisation-specific manuals that document operational procedures and methodologies. This has helped develop a standardised approach to the training process and a level of consistency regarding quality. At JLR’s Kabini and River Tern Lodges, manuals or documented guidelines are not used, and this could be said to have affected their ability to create standardisation in skills levels, particularly at the entry level. An approach to standardising skills is potentially an important aspect in encouraging progression in the organisation, as individuals are able to gain a clear set of skills that they can demonstrably build on for future progression.

The case study hotels showed an interest in developing manuals that could increase standardisation of on the job training.
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Management suggested that visual aids such as illustrations would help individuals with low literacy, and the use of local languages would also be beneficial. This would be in keeping with the preference for informal and flexible on the job training approaches. Where budget and resources allow, other interactive methods could be used such as the development of short films. The central requirement is retaining the flexibility and relevance of training approaches, while ensuring that there is a level of standardisation across trainees. For employees, this could be beneficial in improving the recognition of their skills which could provide a foundation for progression. There is the potential to link this approach with recognition of prior learning (RPL) opportunities, which is an aspect of vocational skills training which Indian policy makers are currently exploring developing. If RPL is an option for assessing skills, the question remains about who should pay for assessments and how they should be delivered.

However, the most significant factor that needs to be understood in greater depth is to what extent qualifications have (or could have) currency with employers in the sector. The research suggests they are not a priority, but this seems to be driven by the perception that current qualifications are irrelevant and outdated. A relevant offering for entry level roles that can be delivered in-house and on the job to develop standardisation in skills and quality seems to be supported by hoteliers, while also eliminating the need for initial investment from trainees, but further research is required to test this.

Roundtable views

When are there benefits in offering standardised training?

An independent tourism consultant said that one benefit of standardised training is that all trainees learn the minimum required technical skills:

“A clear cut differentiation between what is essential and what is good to know is needed when developing training for lower skilled jobs in the sector. Many of the jobs require very basic technical skills and if these could be standardised this would be of benefit. Long courses are not required or effective for entry level service jobs but a standardised offer of the technical skills would be of great use, particularly to SMEs.”

In general, a standardised training offering for technical skills that could be delivered in-house received widespread support from hoteliers, providing employees do not need prior qualifications to access the programme.

The Director of a community owned social enterprise in Uttarakhand, Northern India said that another benefit of high-quality standardised training was that it led to an extra revenue generation opportunity:

“We have seen a number of our guides being employed by search and rescue organisations because the quality of our training is higher than theirs. We’ve since been able to link up with them.”

Soft skills

Soft skills such as team work, adaptability, workplace attitude, punctuality, motivation, professional presentation, and communication skills were considered extremely important by each of the hotel’s management teams. However, according to the staff and management interviews, there were often mismatches of expectations between staff and management regarding soft skill competencies. This may be partly to do with the unfamiliarity of a formal workplace environment for individuals who lacked previous employment in a
Soft skills structured training: Accelerated Culinary Skills programme at CGH Earth

The Accelerated Culinary Skill (ACS) programme is an initiative that targets employees’ soft skills. Conducted by the culinary department, it is aimed at entry level employees. The programme was initiated three years ago to address a perceived decline in new recruits’ soft skills such as confidence and self esteem, as well as tackling high staff turnover. This includes individuals from formal education routes as well as local community recruits, despite hotel management’s higher expectations for the former.

The ACS is designed as a five year programme which aims to:

- Build confidence.
- Identify and understand potential.
- Empower individuals to be creative, more positive and more forward-thinking.

The Head Chef who presented the need for the programme to the board did so because he felt many of his employees had ‘blockages’ that were limiting their potential. Many of the recruits were from deprived backgrounds or had not achieved highly at school, before finding their way into the tourism and hospitality sector. According to the Head Chef:

“We have been taking local people ... I won’t call them ordinary people ... they are really extraordinary people but because of social and family circumstances and other problems they could not do well in their normal academic life ... Net result, they landed in a place where they could not opt for any bigger jobs ... so they opted, or rather had no other option, but to opt for this.”

Issues such as communication and language, familial circumstances, financial problems, lack of confidence, and job-related behavioural issues are discussed in the programme. Open discussion and positive thinking is encouraged. The group meets once a month to discuss their experiences, progress, challenges, and to determine if extra support is required. The outcomes are documented to assist with assessments later in the role.

Positive outcomes have been demonstrated through staff behavioural changes, including more confidence, self awareness, and more professional attitudes, although evidence is anecdotal. For instance, one manager said:

“Many changes have taken place in their personalities, confidence, the way they talk, their dreams and goals.”

In the beginning, the Head Chef faced significant barriers to developing and implementing the programme because it was perceived as an unnecessary additional expense. Other SMEs may come up against similar challenges because of the impact on resources. Nonetheless, initial evidence suggests that individuals are far more motivated and happy in their jobs. Happier and more motivated staff may reduce turn-over and improve performance and, therefore, the potential return on investment could be valid for the bottom line as well as for staff development.
similar organisation as well as education history. Given the importance of soft skills, it is interesting that CGH Earth was the only hotel to have a structured training programme in place for the development of soft skills, (see Accelerated Culinary Skill programme). This may be reflected in the fact that many employees were unable to identify how their soft skills had developed and progressed in their roles, when asked during interviews. This is despite acknowledgment of the changes by management and supervisors. A training approach which builds in time and resources to review progress and set goals may be important in helping staff develop self-directed learning which also incorporates soft skills.

In all the case study organisations, all interviewees, and notably those at the entry level, had a desire to develop their ICT, communication and environmental practices skills. In other instances but far less common, employees indicated that they would like to develop their technical skills, primarily through using new technology, or acquiring a greater breadth of technical skills. The fact that ICT and communication skills were identified as key skills highlights the perception that it is through improving soft skills and wider transferable skills that individuals believe they will progress. This again reinforces the notion that technical skills are not the areas in which entry level staff need support, which is in contrast with current qualification provision in the sector.
Embedding training in organisations

All of the documented approaches to training have been important for the organisations to be able to develop skills which meet their needs and provide employment opportunities to individuals from the local communities. Each of the organisations faced substantial challenges in embedding these approaches into their organisations, however, it has often been the presence of a supportive director or the owner to maintain focus and belief in a community-targeted approach. Some of these challenges faced by the organisations have been highlighted in the previous sections but it is important to discuss particular aspects in more depth for other organisations to learn from these experiences.

As previously mentioned at CGH Earth, implementation of the ACS programme faced a variety of challenges. Support from senior managers and directors was not initially forthcoming because of the time and money required to invest in the programme. However, in the past three years there has been a positive shift in the perspectives of the management as they have seen the impact of some of the initiatives. Scaling the project up will require other factors to be put in place.
At an institutional level, it was perceived by management that CGH would benefit from developing a training department to focus on the programmes currently in place in the organisation. The department would map the courses and training gaps, monitor and evaluate outcomes, and share the information across the Group. This may also be an important way of contrasting the training requirements of individuals from different backgrounds to ensure that training is needs-based. Linking up with training institutes to share this information and utilising their experience in structuring and developing training could potentially ensure that training is relevant, structured and standardised.

Management at JLR stated that their priority is people and not profits which of course is not the case across the sector, nor should it be. As a public enterprise they do have some leeway to focus less on profit and target community-led growth and a more people oriented strategy but it is clear that these two things are not mutually exclusive. One staff member discussed the impact the organisation has had on the lives of the community:

“Many people are still not made permanent employees. But JLR has been the reason for improvement in the lives of thousands of people.”

At Our Native Village, when they shifted the organisational strategy towards embedding health and wellness, they had to change their practices significantly. With the shift in focus, non-vegetarian food and alcohol were taken off the menu and replaced with organic produce, vegan food and zero-oil cooking. Accordingly skills development focused on these aspects, both in a technical capacity and in terms of embedding approaches into the staff members’ daily lives. Investment in these skills has been perceived as a commitment from the management to the wellbeing of their staff. One employee noted:

“I saw the way the food is being prepared here. I have asked my family to follow the same procedures. They teach us meditation and yoga which helped me in controlling my anger. It has helped me in knowing how to behave with people. My mind is peaceful now… This is a major change in my life.”

Roundtable views

**What can be done to improve the relations between communities and the tourism sector?**

A consultant with many years experience in the Indian tourism sector said that community benefits must to be at the heart of tourism planning:

“A change in perspective is needed when looking at the benefits of tourism development. We have to put at the centre the community benefits first, not the tourist experience. For any change, there needs to be a champion for the cause, and it is important to think long-term”.

The chief executive of a hotel chain supported this view, referring to his experience of building relationships with the local community:

“If the sector is to grow we need to adapt to what the local community have, adapt to what they know, and adapt to what they do”.
Progression pathways

“My job made me believe in myself. I started as a trainee assistant three years ago, and now I’m front office manager. As my job has grown in responsibility, I’ve grown too. I feel stronger, more responsible.”

Front office manager
Career progression is essential to encourage people from all backgrounds to view tourism and hospitality as a viable career option. Organisations must integrate progression routes into their training and employment offer to improve the sector’s image, and to reduce recruitment and re-training costs.

**Key findings**

- Despite management being supportive of career progression, at each of the case study hotels there were limited opportunities for employees to develop additional skills beyond the requirements of their current roles. Employees rarely go through structured training courses that formally recognise their skills levels.

- Where evidence of progression was found, vertical progression in the same department was most common, for example being promoted from housekeeping assistant to cleaning supervisor. Because training is usually in the departmental context only, horizontal movement into roles in different departments was less prevalent.

- Lack of knowledge of English was considered by employees as the single most significant barrier to progression. This is because front end roles are considered to be higher status, and the ability to speak basic English is essential in order to interact with guests. English language training methods such as informal labs and peer to peer training require further investigation to determine their effectiveness.

Currently the tourism sector in India is viewed as a poor employment choice due to limited opportunities for progression, and the seasonal approach to work. This is partly because it is characterised by large numbers of low skilled jobs. As such, developing defined opportunities for career progression is an important factor in encouraging people to view tourism and hospitality as a viable career option. This includes focusing on carving out clear career paths for staff entering the organisation at entry level. This is important because one of the reasons for the high attrition rates across the sector, including in the case study hotels, is the fact that barriers to entry are low. Individuals can enter into the industry relatively easily but also often for a specific short-term need creating a transient workforce. It is, therefore, important for organisations to be able to integrate progression into training and employment if the sector is to be perceived more positively as a career pathway, and if recruitment and re-training costs can be reduced.

**Encouraging progression pathways**

In all the case study hotels, staff progression at all levels, including entry level, is encouraged. However, there are two main approaches: progression dependent on length of service versus progression based on merit. There are examples at each case study organisation
of individuals progressing through the ranks to senior positions, although this is not the norm. Where progression occurs, it is usually in a departmental context, meaning that vertical progression in the same department is more common than horizontal movement across departments. So, for example, it is more likely that someone will progress from a cleaning position to a cleaning supervisor role, rather than move into a food and beverage role. Progression in departments is limited, however, by management’s belief that the skills and abilities needed to perform in management roles are separate to the technical and soft skills needed for service roles. As a result, few staff members make the move from service roles into management positions.

At JLR, the favoured approach to progression is dependent on length of service. Staff are employed on a daily wage basis for the first two to three years of service before they enter into a contractual arrangement with the company. Another six to seven years of service is needed before the staff member can be made permanent. The timeframe is considered as a way of assessing an individual’s development and commitment to the organisation, particularly because of the high level of job security as a permanent public sector employee in India, although it could be seen as a barrier to progression and, certainly, to rapid progression through the ranks. However, the staff that we interviewed didn’t appear to feel this way. Somewhat surprisingly, the overall message from employees was that the approach allowed an element of fairness and objectivity in progression and promotion. This was the case even for an employee we spoke to who had a BA degree but was working as a resort gardener. His ambition was to work as the hotel’s naturalist but he knew he would need to wait his turn until more senior colleagues had their opportunity. The employees overall seemed to have a high level of trust in the organisation, believing that they had equal opportunity to progress, provided they stayed loyal to the organisation. As one employee noted:

“I am a contract worker and my colleague became a permanent worker just two months back. I am the next senior. I believe that I will also be made permanent next time. We will definitely reap the benefits of our hard work here.”

A significant reason for this attitude by staff may be the fact that the primary motivating factor for gaining a position with JLR is the security of working towards a permanent position in a government enterprise. The prestige of working for the government in a permanent role seems to be more important to the individuals than the actual nature of the work they are assigned:

“[People from the community] give me more respect now I’m working in a government lodge. They ask me not to quit and continue here only. They feel it will be good for my future. I may be made a permanent worker here.”

“I am a naturalist. But I have worked as a gardener. I have also collected garbage here.”

At Our Native Village, promotion is much more focused on skills and potential, rather than length of service. The head cook gave a clear account of his progression over 18 months, which saw him promoted four times.
his success appeared to be soft skills including confidence, enthusiasm and personal motivation, as well as his ability to self-teach technical skills through observation and imitation:

“In the beginning I joined as a kitchen assistant to help with washing up for six months. I used to watch and concentrate on the way the seniors worked. Nobody will teach here. I took it as a challenge. After six months they assigned me as an assistant cook in the kitchen. I used to cut vegetables. Again after six months they promoted me as a cook. They asked me to prepare two to three types of dishes. I did it successfully and everybody liked it. Again I was promoted as head cook.”

CGH Earth’s management prefer to encourage progression based on merit. Management indicated through interviews that they become concerned if a person stays in the same position for more than a few years. At this point they will try to encourage the individual to enhance their skills, and they will be assigned time and resources to do so. However, if the person appears to be unwilling to learn in the supervisor’s opinion, then this will be looked upon unfavourably. Management perceive ‘unwillingness to learn’ as lack of motivation which they believe will transfer into the person’s existing job role. As a result, they are prepared to accept a certain attrition rate, rather than retain staff who will not progress throughout the organisation. Perhaps partly as a result of this, CGH have consistently seen many of their staff moving on to other organisations. Management perceive this as an indication of the success of their training process but it means they have to invest more heavily in recruitment and training. According to management, most people who move on to other organisations do so to take on a higher position. Management believe this is due to the competitor’s confidence that staff with a work history at CGH have a certain guarantee of quality and are able to perform to a particular level.

One important aspect as a catalyst for progression is for people to recognise and acknowledge the specific skills they have developed. This is something that a qualification may do effectively. In the absence of formal qualifications this is a difficult process to master and is an area which requires additional research to understand the extent to which this is a constraining factor.
Wider skills for growth

One approach to encouraging progression is through inter-departmental transfers, as employees can look to broaden their industry-specific skills. In three of the four case study organisations (JLR’s Kabini and River Tern, and Our Native Village) horizontal movement is encouraged despite being less common than vertical progression. At CGH, horizontal progression opportunities are limited to those who have been with the company for a significant period of time, or have demonstrated a high level of personal motivation to progress. An additional requirement is that candidates must already have the basic skills required for the role. However, CGH employees had a different perspective about horizontal progression opportunities in the organisation. Many employees interviewed said they believed they would not be allowed to move roles, and that they were actively encouraged to stay (and potentially progress) in their current department. If they wished to acquire additional skills they said there were opportunities to learn in their free time, once their shift was over. Given that each person works long hours, this approach is unlikely to be effective. As a result, CGH are planning to provide time for individuals to sit in on training in other departments to increase horizontal movement. Management believe this will provide an opportunity for staff to properly understand the requirements of these roles.

Kabini and River Tern, provide more extensive opportunities for horizontal progression. In both resorts there were a number of instances in which a person from housekeeping showed interest and aptitude in another area and subsequently went through internal training in other departments. For instance, the accountant at Kabini was originally recruited in the housekeeping team.
ONV is exploring approaches to providing inter-departmental training to all staff. Management believe this approach will allow staff to develop a wider array of skills which will benefit them as well as the business. However, employees expressed reluctance to the proposal when interviewed. In general, they said they were willing to do the training but more through a sense of duty to the management rather than because of professional or personal development opportunities, as indicated by the interviewees below:

“No, I am not interested in learning all those things. I am interested only in cooking.”

“Actually they asked me whether I am interested in working in the kitchen. But I refused; I said I will continue [in my current role] only.”

Members of the supervisory team perceived these attitudes as a lack of ambition and self management:

“It is always the management team who ask them to do something ... there is nothing they take responsibility for.”

This statement could be construed as a lack of understanding of the motivations of staff, which is clearly an issue in developing progression pathways and is a factor that each organisation continues to struggle with. The motivations of individuals for disadvantaged rural backgrounds differ from management’s expectations, which has the potential to create misunderstandings. Many of the employees highlighted how happy they were in their roles, and without sufficient guidance around developing new skills it is possible that they thought additional changes might lead to instability in their current role.

**English language**

CGH and JLR’s Kabini receive a large number of foreign tourists and, therefore, a basic knowledge of English is particularly important for staff. At JLR’s River Tern Lodge, and at Our Native Village, visitors are primarily domestic but staff nonetheless expressed a desire to learn English as an aspirational skill. At all of the case study hotels, lack of English language was considered as the single most significant barrier to progression by employees. This is because contact roles that require English, such as front office and food and beverage, are often considered as higher status because they don’t involve ‘domestic skills’:

“I want to improve my English language. I would like to go to other departments, such as food and beverage service. I can have better results if I could improve my English.”
The ability to communicate effectively in English also gives staff more confidence in dealing with guests, particularly when managing expectations:

“Whatever the guest wants, we have to be in a position to provide it. However, sometimes, we have to say “no” . Maybe if I could say this in a better way it would help them understand.”

Some of the hotels have tried to support staff with learning English. An approach that was trialled by one of the hotels involved setting up English ‘labs’ which are informal learning spaces where lessons are led by senior members of staff. However, the labs didn’t have the desired impact potentially because lessons were held outside of the working day meaning that the majority of employees were unwilling or unable to attend. Still, the potential for labs to make a difference to English language skills is an area that could be explored in greater depth, to see if the approach can be adapted with better results. The employees who did attend the labs said it did have a positive impact on their development and progression, which suggests there is potential to build on this to reach a broader mix of employees.

A different initiative led by JLR’s Kabini Lodge is a peer to peer approach to learning English. Staff members who have strong English language skills are encouraged to teach English on the job to staff who are lacking English skills. In turn, these individuals attempt to pass the basic language skills on to newer recruits. This informal and peer to peer approach to language development negates the risk of disengagement with formal classroom-based learning. According to management, the approach means that in three to five years, staff members with no previous knowledge of English are able to understand and speak basic English with guests. However, the extent to which they are able to utilise the knowledge is restricted by role. Nonetheless, the peer to peer approach has helped staff aspire to improve their English which has also had an impact on their confidence and self esteem:

“When I came I didn’t know a word of English, but now I understand, and in broken English I am able to respond back.”

“My brother used to keep a blackboard here to teach employees the alphabet, greetings like ‘welcome’, ‘excuse me,’ and other useful words.”
At JLR and ONV, guests are informed upon arrival that their staff are seeking to improve their English by communicating with guests. In general, guests have responded positively by showing a willingness to communicate with staff in basic English. The approach is in contrast to the more hands-off approach which characterises the majority of high end and urban hotels in India.

Nonetheless, in general, the attempt to support staff in improving their English has been ad hoc and sporadic across all the case study hotels. There is a lack of coherent and demonstrable impacts from the English language initiatives. This is exacerbated by the fact that senior management have been reluctant to invest in structured English teaching and learning during an employee’s working day. For an industry which generally has long and unsociable working hours, this is unlikely to be a viable or sustainable option for the majority of staff. Investing in developing a structured programme to develop employees’ English language skills could potentially improve progression pathways for those who wish to move into contact roles.
Additional barriers to progression

At the entry level the key issues for community-based recruitment across all of the organisations are primarily around establishing standards and ensuring levels of professionalism. From the organisational perspective the major challenge is understanding community cultures and values. Some of the differing values manifested themselves into a notion that many locally recruited staff were less ambitious and less conscientious towards their work. These perspectives appear to be the result of a mismatch in expectations, resulting from a lack of understanding of the differing motivating factors of the employer versus the employee. These misconceptions may, however, manifest themselves as barriers to progression.

Another barrier to progression is high staff turnover, coupled with a shortage of new recruits. For example, CGH Earth has had significant issues with both recruitment and retention of staff, and the situation seems to be worsening. There are fewer people willing to work
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in hotels due to the stigma and poor perceptions that surround the tourism industry (see Section 1). At the same time, CGH’s annual staff turnover rate, which was at 10 per cent just a few years ago, is now closer to 20 per cent. The reasons for people leaving the organisation are varied. Interviews with CGH management suggested that some of the reasons were:

➢ For graduates from colleges:

• With starting salaries being relatively low in the sector, people who have taken a loan to complete their education are often tempted to take higher paid jobs in alternative sectors.

➢ For all employees, recruited from local community and through colleges:

• There are a large number of hotels emerging in Kerala and opportunities to gain a higher salary in international hotels are growing. These international hotels also often provide a substantial structured training programme upon recruitment.

• Many young people join the hotel industry with a perception that it will be a glamorous place to work. Upon joining, it is apparent that the image and the reality do not match, and commitment to the job often fades.

• The hours are long and shifts often run late, which reduces the appeal of the working environment.

• Some people move to daily wage jobs as they can often earn similar money and receive the money in hand quickly, as compared to working in a company that offers a fixed amount paid on a monthly basis.

All of these factors constrain opportunities for individuals, particularly as most are not going through a structured training programme which can provide a structured foundation for progression. With regards to retention of staff, it was emphasised that employees from the local community are more likely to change jobs. This is because the hotel job may be only one source of household income, with additional income drawn from land and familial micro enterprises. A manager emphasised this noting:

“Employees work here during the day but they also work part-time in services like laundry and tailoring.”

Some of these issues again come back to the contract situation, with individuals in a permanent position feeling much happier with regards to progression. Issues surrounding payment on a monthly basis also drive the need for extra income to support households throughout the month.

Roundtable views

Why do people drop out of the hospitality and tourism sector after completing formal qualifications?

A number of roundtable attendees indicated that the aspirations of young graduates are often more focused on city based careers:

“Indian youth are very attracted by office jobs that would allow them to have an urban lifestyle.”

A manager from a national NGO said there needs to be better guidance offered to young people about the tourism and hospitality sector before they undertake training:

“Young people should get better guidance into the nature of the industry before choosing their course of study.”
Conclusions and recommendations

“... I've learned I can work well with different people and understand their opinions. There's no discrimination here because we're all treated the same. Now I judge situations more fairly and I make better decisions in my life generally.”

Maintenance supervisor
This report has shown that opportunities exist to improve the impact of tourism on local communities through a targeted approach to recruitment and training. Importantly, the approaches can be mutually beneficial for tourism organisations. The research suggests that the case study organisations are not ‘special cases’. Rather, they are likely to provide important lessons for tourism expansion in India and further afield. This section summarises key findings from the research and provides recommendations for stakeholders seeking to establish effective processes for local employment in the tourism sector. We conclude with an overview of areas for further research.

Social considerations

**Understanding motivations and expectations**

The research found that the motivations and expectations of employees from local communities can conflict with those of their employers. For example, family and community concerns were often prioritised by local people above their work responsibilities, leading to different expectations about work behaviours such as punctuality, attendance and time off. The relationships established between organisations and communities were found to be very important in addressing the disparities in expectations. Such relationships allowed the organisations to gather the information needed to better manage expectations and adapt business processes. Hotels entering new and marginalised areas must commit resources to understanding local communities. Initial investment in such activities can provide an invaluable foundation for future recruitment, and for constructive long-term community relations. This, in turn, can strengthen business prospects, as well as retaining the ‘localisation’ of the touristic experience.

**Social challenges**

An important challenge for all the case studies was ensuring that external social conflicts didn’t manifest in the organisation. Caste based discrimination was a particularly challenging issue. Two basic strategies were identified as having a positive impact on mitigating social conflicts in the workplace. Firstly, senior staff and managers needed to take a leading role in discouraging discrimination by leading through example. Secondly, managers needed to provide opportunities for interaction between different social groups, for example through practices such as encouraging eating and socialising together, and working as a team. It is critical for employers to invest time in understanding and addressing significant social challenges in the workplace. This could lead to improvements in community perceptions of the organisation and can help dispel some of the misconceptions around the tourism industry, including some of the issues experienced by women, as well as conflict with often conservative societal norms in local communities.
Women in the sector

Barriers for women entering employment in the sector were highlighted consistently, with the highest percentage of female staff just 28 per cent across the case studies. The low numbers of female staff were attributed to social stigma and misconceptions which surround the tourism industry, often leading many women to believe they may be marginalised in their communities if they take a hotel job. Tourism employers should seek to address the specific barriers faced by women inside and outside the workplace. Measures can include:

- Providing women and their families with direct access to the workplace prior to commencing employment so they can view the work environment, understand the nature of job roles, understand health and safety standards, discuss potential career pathways, address any questions or concerns.

- Introducing and enforcing zero tolerance policies on sexual harassment and sexual discrimination in the workplace.

- Exploring opportunities to enable different or flexible working patterns so women can balance work with family and community commitments.

Recruitment practices

Communicating job opportunities

All the case studies shared employment opportunities by word of mouth via existing staff. This ensured that opportunities were communicated to potential candidates from local communities, although the process had limitations. For example, occasionally the process meant that some sections of the local population were marginalised from employment, which in turn led to friction. It’s important for organisations to improve their understanding of the local communities in which they operate. This is particularly important when targeting individuals from marginalised groups, as they are often the hardest to reach. Job roles should be communicated through a variety of different channels to reach different groups within the local community. Specific strategies are needed for marginalised groups.

Integrating employees into organisations

One of the perceived benefits of recruiting individuals from a training institute is the perceived ease of integration into employment. However, none of the case study organisations faced significant challenges with integrating individuals from local communities into the workplace, apart from establishing expectations about work behaviours. Tourism and
hospitality organisations should consider community-targeted recruitment and training as a viable alternative to more traditional recruitment pathways. The case studies indicate several advantages to taking this approach.

**Staff turnover**

High staff turnover was an issue in all of the case studies and this seemingly did limit organisations’ willingness to commit significant resources to training. Organisational commitment to community-targeted recruitment was found to reduce staff turnover however. This was often because of a desire from local employees to work in close proximity to home villages. The commitments made by the organisations to personal and professional development also built loyalty. More robust career progression pathways could be developed as one way of preventing high staff turnover, (see related section below).

**Skills development**

**Issues with the existing vocational training system**

The relevance of the existing qualification system to the needs of the industry was questioned consistently by management. This was cited as a key driver for the case study organisations’ development of their own on the job training programmes. Closer engagement between training providers and employers is required to ensure that qualifications are relevant to the needs of the industry. In addition, there is a need for greater understanding in the training system of the economic situations of potential learners. Current provision is out of reach for the majority of potential learners from lower income families.

**Technical skills**

The majority of technical skills required for entry level roles in tourism are relatively basic and can be developed without formal training. Developing these skills in-house via on the job training was not seen as a challenge, even in smaller hotels with limited capacity for structured training. One benefit of learning technical skills through on the job training is that it eliminates the need for employees to undertake a relevant paid-for qualification prior to applying for jobs. This is a huge enabling factor for individuals from many local communities who typically have only a small amount of disposable income.

Technical skills were generally developed through incremental growth in staff responsibilities. Although on the job training was considered effective, employers often expressed a desire for greater standardisation of the training
Process to improve comparability of trainees. Steps to standardise training could include the development of manuals and documented frameworks, and linking training to Recognition of Prior Learning programmes. The extent to which training should be standardised or flexible will vary depending on the purpose of training. Health and safety training, for example, may require a highly standardised approach, potentially leading to a qualification, while soft skills training will require a higher degree of flexibility.

**Orientation training**

Internal orientation training was used in some of the case studies to establish the organisation’s expectations of employees. This was essential for those employees who had not worked previously in formal employment. The orientation programmes also provide exposure to the differing functions of the hotel and potential job roles. However, we didn’t find evidence of a two-way exchange of information between staff and managers about different expectations of work behaviours or standards which could help to overcome mismatches. Also, tourism employers should explore whether they need additional processes in place to support the orientation process for new recruits with special needs including low levels of literacy.

**English skills**

English language skills were perceived by all interviewees to be important for career progression. This is because basic competency in English improved staff confidence as well as increasing the likelihood of gaining customer facing jobs which were seen as higher status. Where appropriate, work based training programmes should consider how best to support the development of English language skills for staff. Doing so is likely to raise staff confidence and commitment to the organisation, and support career progression. Informal peer to peer approaches are a potentially valuable way to support such learning, particularly as they may combat discomfort with classroom-based learning.

**Soft skills**

Insufficient grasp of soft skills was highlighted as a significant barrier to career progression by most of the stakeholders interviewed throughout this research. (By soft skills we mean core or generic transferrable skills such as effective communication, problem solving, and learning to learn). Despite the perceived importance of soft skills by employers, training approaches focusing on soft skill competencies were largely overlooked by the case study organisations. As a result, the lack of focus on soft skills could have restricted local employee opportunities for progression. On the job training programmes must factor in soft skill
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Progression pathways

Opportunities for progression

While career progression was encouraged at every case study hotel, relatively little progression appeared to have occurred. The absence of structured training courses may have been a contributing factor, with unstructured approaches making it more difficult for management to assess progression potential. One important aspect as a catalyst for progression is for people to recognise and acknowledge the specific skills they have developed, and this can go a long way in increasing their own sense of confidence and perceived ability to progress. In order to support staff progression, on the job training programmes should seek to incorporate, where possible, processes for formal recognition of the skills of learners.

Barriers to progression

Lack of knowledge of English was perceived as the single most significant barrier to progression. Many interviewees also said that they were not interested in broadening their skillset by working in other departments, citing a belief that it could lead to instability in their current role. This represents another potential barrier to progression. Providing opportunities for employees to explore further learning, whether this be through peer to peer training, or through exposure to other departments could provide a greater foundation for progression. These programmes may need to be formalised to ensure the benefits are communicated effectively to employees and they are able to make a personal choice as to whether they are interested and willing to take on the change.

Areas for future research

Recognising skills

Further research is needed in order to understand effective approaches to recognising skills, particularly in the absence of qualifications. Progression typically requires measures for recognising skills levels of individuals and this is clearly difficult for individuals who have not been through formal training programmes. Improving understanding of ways to improve skills recognition for this group could have a real impact on those at the lower end of the skills spectrum.

Relevance of qualifications

The extent to which qualifications have ‘currency’ with employers in India’s tourism sector is currently unclear. The indication in the research was that qualifications were not a priority for employers, particularly because of the basic nature of the skills required for the majority of roles. This perspective could, however, be driven by the current lack of relevance to the needs of employers of some qualifications.

Embedding standardisation

Understanding ways in which organisations of varying sizes have been able to standardise processes while retaining the informal and flexible nature of on the job training needs further research if these approaches are to be scaled up.


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