



The hotel and tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy. Accounting for over 319 million jobs globally, or 10% of total employment¹, and a 3.9% growth rate per year², hospitality and tourism is among the strongest job-creating sectors. The industry is the second-fastest growing in the world and one in five new jobs created throughout the world are in the tourism industry². Due to tourism’s importance in the global economy, it has been noted by the global community for playing a leading role in sustainable development and in the future of work as a driver of employment worldwide.³

Within the industry, there is strong consensus that migrant workers are vital to its operational viability and continued future growth. Migrants are noted for bringing skills profiles into the industry that are frequently unavailable on the local labour market and for fulfilling roles that are often unattractive to local jobseekers. Hotels and other tourism enterprises also benefit from the culturally diverse and multidimensional skillsets of migrants while providing important employment and livelihood opportunities.

Nevertheless, while job creation and industry growth are high and employment opportunities abundant, recent reports from academia, civil society, and government⁴ indicate that job quality, employment conditions and access to decent work are, in some cases, restricted. Notable challenges include low wages, low levels of skills development, seasonal and shift work, and risks of violence and/or harassment faced by some categories of workers, for example cleaning and frontline staff.

For migrant workers, these challenges can be compounded by experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment both in the workplace and in the communities where they live. In the worst cases, migrant workers face abuses during the recruitment and migration process that can result in conditions of debt bondage and forced labour. These abuses include false promises about the terms and conditions of employment, fraud, restrictions on freedom of movement, confiscation of personal documents or valuables as well as fees and costs levied by labour recruiters, who charge migrant workers for services to secure employment. While it remains a challenge to estimate the prevalence of such abuses in the hospitality industry⁵, nevertheless preventive action by hotels, their business partners and other relevant stakeholders, including policy makers and civil society, is essential to ensure that the dignity, welfare and rights of migrant workers are respected.

IRIS: Ethical Tourism

To reinforce industry engagement, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with Sustainable Hospitality Alliance, has launched a new, global initiative to promote ethical recruitment in hospitality and tourism. The initiative – called IRIS: Ethical Tourism – builds on IRIS, IOM’s global multi-stakeholder initiative to support governments, civil society, the private sector and labour recruiters to establish ethical recruitment as the norm in cross-border labour migration. The goal of IRIS is to make international recruitment fair for everyone involved: migrant workers, employers, recruiters and countries of origin and destination. It does this by:

- Promoting respect for the rights of migrant workers;
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in recruitment;
- Advancing the Employer Pays Principle; and
- Strengthening public policies, regulations and enforcement mechanisms.



SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY ALLIANCE (SHA)

Sustainable Hospitality Alliance brings together engaged hospitality companies and uses the collective power of the industry to deliver impact locally and on a global scale. They work with the leading hospitality companies to address environmental and social challenges, share expertise and develop practical resources and programmes to enable the wider industry to operate responsibly and grow sustainably. This is achieved through partnering with philanthropic organisations, non-profits, governments, other industries and the private sector to drive action on shared sustainability challenges.



SHA launched the Principles on Forced Labour to help the hospitality industry to prioritise action to address the primary drivers of forced labour. Through their responsible recruitment programme, they are working to leverage the collective influence of the hospitality industry to promote and encourage responsible recruitment across industry-wide labour supply chains. They pilot recruitment policies and processes in key countries through multi-stakeholder partnerships to create safe recruitment pathways and careers in the hotel industry. They also create tools and guidance for hotel companies and recruitment agencies to protect migrant workers and promote clear and accessible information for workers throughout their recruitment journey .

Through IOM and SHA's partnership, IRIS: Ethical Tourism is designed to reinforce, advance and sustain ethical recruitment in the hospitality industry. It does this by using a three-pillar strategy focused on: 1) private sector, employer and labour recruiter engagement; 2) private-public dialogue; and 3) migrant-centred and civil society engagement. The solution to unethical recruitment advanced in this project is multi-faceted and multi-stakeholder.

The project is implemented in two leading corridors: 1) within Central America, targeting countries of destination such as Mexico and Panama; and 2) in East Africa to countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including Kuwait and Oman. Within these corridors, IOM and SHA will enhance interest in and capacity to support ethical recruitment, improve recruitment regulation and protect migrant workers. This will involve direct engagement with the private sector, governments, and civil society, including tailor-made resources and activities to raise awareness, understanding, capacity and commitment. The project will feature:

- Stakeholder-specific training courses;
- The development of practical tools and guidance material;
- National, regional and global workshops and conferences; and
- Targeted outreach to migrant communities and advocates, including comprehensive training and orientation programmes.

To learn more about the global IRIS Initiative and the joint IOM-ITP IRIS: Ethical Tourism initiative, please visit <https://iris.iom.int/> and <https://sustainablehospitalityalliance.org/>

¹ World Travel and Tourism Council- Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2019- <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/regions-2019/world2019.pdf>

² World Travel and Tourism Council- <https://www.wttc.org/about/media-centre/press-releases/press-releases/2019/travel-tourism-continues-strong-growth-above-global-gdp/>

³ Meeting of Tourism Ministers of the G20 Economies Statement (2018) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/statement/wcms_627763.pdf

⁴ Business and Human Rights Resource Centre : <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/inhospitable-how-hotels-in-qatar-the-uae-are-failing-migrant-workers>
Marzouk, A. M., & Elshaer, A. M. (2019). Labor in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry: Skills, Ethics, Issues, and Rights. Apple Academic Press.

⁵ Globally, it is estimated that 40.3 million people are in modern slavery with approximately 25 million of these in forced labour and 23% of these being domestic workers.

ILO, Walk Free Foundation, and IOM (2017). Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage. <https://www.minderoo.org/global-estimates-of-modern-slavery/>



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