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INTERNATIONAL HOTEL ASSOCIATION

ACTION TAKEN BY INTERNATIONAL HOTEL CHAINS TO DEVELOP  
HUMAN RESOURCES IN AFRICA

The Secretariat of the Conference wishes to submit to the attention of the Conference, document TRANS/TOUR/84/4/g entitled: "Action taken by International Hotel Chains to Develop Human Resources in Africa" prepared by International Hotel Association.

This document does not, however, necessarily reflect the point of view of the Secretariat of the Conference.

My presentation today is based mainly on the efforts of two major international hotel chains (Inter-Continental Hotels and Hilton International Co), the International Labour Office and the co-ordinating activities of the International Hotel Association in developing human resources in Africa.

These two International hotel chains have been involved in Africa for as long as 22 years, when in 1962.

Inter-Continental Hotels opened their first African hotel, the Duoor Palace in Monrovia.

This was followed by the two companies opening hotels in:-

Egypt	Madagascar
Ethiopia	Morocco
Gabon	Sudan
Ivory Coast	Tunisia
Kenya	Zaire
Lesotho	Zambia

From this list, it can be clearly seen that these two companies therefore have some considerable experience in recruiting, training and developing indigenous African personnel.

Other companies (of which I have less personal information) who have also been involved, often in a pioneering role, include the French chains of Meridien, Novotel and Sofitel. French chains operated in Africa prior to the 2nd World War and in fact are the major operating companies today.

In this presentation, it is not my brief to speak of the financial success, advantages or drawbacks from a business point of view of the value of having international hotel companies in major African locations vis-à-vis a locally owned or managed hotel. This has already been explored and reported on by Professor Dunning in his 1980 report addressed to the Socio-Economic Committee of the United Nations.

When deciding to sign a contract to operate a hotel in such African locations, the responsibilities of the chain hotels towards onerous.

It will often be the first time that local personnel have been exposed to the luxury standards offered in international chain hotels. Products not normally available locally will be in use. Uniforms will be worn. Standards

of courtesy, hygiene and service experienced for the first time by these new hotel employees. This of course does not only apply in Africa, but in all locations where the introduction of an international luxury first-class hotel is experienced for the first time.

How is this problem then grappled with? What facilities are available for assistance? Is enough being done, not only before and just after a hotel is opened, but on an on-going basis?

In many countries, the International Labour Office has been instrumental in setting up training centres and hotel schools. From its base in Geneva, under the guidance of Gian Luigi Baroncini, the Hotel and Catering Service of the I.L.O. has identified local personnel and trained them throughout Europe to return to their home countries to set up and assist in these training locations.

This on-going programme is of immense value to international hotel chains opening a new property in a particular location for the first time. The I.L.O., through its documented training programmes and published literature, has often assisted in the training and development of personnel employed in existing locally managed companies long before an international hotel chain arrives on the scene. Mr. Baroncini's team of training experts remains available to assist at every level of training and development activity at all times.

Additional initiatives taken by the I.L.O. have included being host and sponsor to three tripartite conferences over the last ten years, which involved governments, labour organisations and employers to facilitate these training activities and to produce more efficient and satisfactory results. The most recent conference took place in October 1983 and produced several resolutions which, if implemented, will greatly assist the future training and development of personnel in African countries.

Further activity includes a very strong working link between the I.L.O. and the International Hotel Association, whom I represent here today. In 1979 at a special congress in Warsaw, the I.H.A. introduced the idea of developing an on-going platform to improve the advice, guidance and aid for its members, particularly those in isolated locations, needing assistance on all matters related to personnel, training and human resource development.

This initiative has now seen the introduction of an annual Professional Training and Human Resources Forum, open to member hoteliers, educationalists and training and development experts from all over the world. The first two such forums were held at the I.L.O. headquarters in Geneva with great assistance from Mr. Baroncini and his staff both in the content of the forum and in the

physical facilities offered. The third forum took place this year in Copenhagen, and future forums will return to their original home in Geneva.

At these forums, discussions take place on various topics of interest related to hotel management problems. Speakers from all over the world are invited, and I am sure that there are several amongst you today who have attended these valuable meetings on this most important aspect of the I.H.A.'s work.

It has therefore been, and remains, a great help to international hotel chains when "setting up shop" in a new location to be able to rely on the back-up support of the I.L.O.

I believe that it is necessary to identify two quite distinct but different types of location where international hotel chains operate. In many areas, there are existing hotels with trained employees (albeit insufficient in number). There may be a local hotel school or training centre and therefore a certain historical awareness of the needs of a new hotel. If I may, I will return to such locations later, as I believe our major initial concern is when an international hotel chain opens a hotel in an area where little, if any, such infrastructure exists.

Today, and speaking in the main of the two international companies I represent, the General Manager in such a location would be supported by a qualified personnel and training expert who would arrive in the location as much as a year in advance of the hotel's opening. This person's responsibilities would be of supreme importance to the eventual success of the hotel.

Firstly, he or she would become thoroughly familiar with the location, the people, culture, way of life, et cetera. The Personnel and Training Expert, with the General Manager, would then initiate contact with the local authorities, including labour departments and tourism ministries to negotiate a work permit policy for the hotel.

It is now common practice for a contract to be made with the local authorities to arrange the issue of work permits for certain key positions in the hotel. Usually the criteria for issuing the work permit is that the expatriate must have good overseas experience, be over a certain age, and have the ability to pass on their knowledge to locally-hired employees. Depending on the position, permits will be issued for a certain time period, with the understanding that at the end of this time a local employee will be ready to take over that position. This "Africanisation" of expatriate positions is understood and recognised by international hotel chains, who believe it is one of their major responsibilities

in ensuring the continuous development of local personnel. The success of this policy can be seen in many many hotels throughout Africa where there may often only be one or two expatriates still in the hotel.

The way in which this development of local personnel is attained will be seen when I turn to how on-going training and development is achieved in an established hotel, but we will first look at a hotel's responsibilities during the pre- and post-opening of the property.

During this stage, there are two main human resources responsibilities to be considered. The first pertains to the considerations needed for locally hired personnel, and the second towards the expatriate community.

If handled in the proper way, training locally-hired personnel can have a most advantageous effect on the whole community. We believe that training should be given not only in the basic skills needed by the employee - whether they be a chambermaid, cook, room clerk or waiter - but also where necessary social skills, including such topics as cleanliness, hygiene, safety, and, if necessary, a second language (usually English or French), as well as a wider understanding of the environment in which they are going to work. In many locations, the international chain hotel will become a medical centre for its employees and the envy of locally employed personnel in other industries. The international hotel chains recognise this responsibility and react accordingly.

All these programmes will commence several weeks before the hotel opens, and will only be curtailed should funds not be made available by the owners of the hotel.

Additional skills to be taught will include supervisory techniques for those people in supervisory positions. Both companies I represent here have their own supervisory training packages prepared in Europe and the United States and fine-tuned with experience. These programmes are vital for the on-going success of the new hotel after opening.

Turning to the training of the expatriates, I do believe that there has been a tremendous change and improvement in the way that these personnel are prepared and selected for such assignments. No longer are people from other parts of the world "parachuted" into situations with no fore-knowledge of the environment or culture of the location. Today, hotel training departments have specially prepared programmes to prepare expatriates on the expectations of the appointment. These lessons have been learnt, and I believe are now handled in such a way that in getting the right person for the job we can only help the local employees to grow in their jobs.

Important to learn, understand and work with the normal social and cultural hierarchies. For example the recognition of age is so important in Africa

In a newly opening hotel, the appointed Personnel and Training Manager would be assisted by additional specialists sent by the company. For example, in my own company at our recent opening in Abidjan, the Training Co-ordinator for the Francophone properties assisted for nearly three months before the opening of the hotel. Additional experts in accounting, engineering, food and beverage, housekeeping and laundry were also sent to help with training and to set the standards for the future.

Once a hotel is open and working, then of course many other responsibilities come into force and are recognised.

Primarily, there is the continued training of local employees, which can be achieved in many ways. In the hotel, each department head and supervisor has the responsibility to continue with the on-going training of the skills for which each person has been employed. This programme will be combined with regular evaluations of the progress of each individual. Through this system, an employee's potential is identified for long term development and eventual advancement.

Training in the hotel would include departmental cross-exposure for specified periods, with employees going from one department to another. For example, someone from housekeeping working in the Reception, or a waiter working in a bar.

Additionally, employees would be sent for training abroad, and here we arrive at one of the main advantages of international hotel chains. Through these companies' commitment to training, they are usually able to offer cross-exposure training throughout their world-wide foreign properties for the training of their own employees. For example, my London office co-ordinates the training for up to forty employees per year from Africa and the Middle East to follow cross-exposure training assignments in Europe. This is an expensive programme, but in our opinion it is very necessary and worthwhile.

International hotel chains would also finance the attendance of employees at training courses in Europe or the United States. Such attendance is usually combined with cross-exposure training in other hotels of the chain in order that the maximum possible benefit can be obtained. Hotels would also support employees following correspondence courses and would reimburse the fees and examination expenses.

Considering these points, there are obviously advantages to employees who are part of such international companies.

As the hotels develop and local personnel move into key positions, it is vital that enthusiasm, interest and standards are maintained. Regular visits take place from area specialists to help these people grow in their jobs. Expert advice is available on immediate request for queries on accounting, engineering, and food and beverage matters.

Additional responsibility of the local hotel General Manager and his staff is to assist at the local hotel school. Primarily, this responsibility will be to take trainees or stagiaires into the hotel for work experience, but they will also probably assist in the teaching of technical and management courses at the school.

It therefore seems to me quite clear that, providing Management remembers that they are guests in someone else's country, the value of international hotel chains in African countries can be of great educational and personal value to the employees involved.

There are many ways in which the programmes initiated by international hotel chains can be followed by locally managed hotels, but far greater assistance and recognition of their needs will be required by governments.

In most countries, the present system of work permits is extremely restrictive, and is certainly detrimental to the development of young people from African nations. It would seem to me that governments should be in a position to persuade their counterparts in other continents to allow their young, potential personnel to receive student work permits to enable these people to follow established training programmes in developed countries. Thus, international hotel chains wishing to operate properties in Africa would then be issued work permits for expatriates on a reciprocal basis.

It is also important to remember that it is vital for all international hotel chains to have access to a number of expatriate work permits in order that qualified, talented hoteliers (whether for the dining room, engineering, housekeeping, the kitchen, or for Management itself) are available. This local issuing of work permits should be tied to a commitment by the international hotel chains to develop indigenous personnel, to which I do not believe there will ever be any objection from these hotel chains.

It is also my recommendation that African hoteliers should participate in much greater numbers in overseas training and development activities. For example,

this year at the I.H.A. Professional Training and Human Resources Forum in Copenhagen, there was a very limited participation from African countries, whereas there was quite a high attendance from Asian nations.

African hoteliers should additionally be encouraged to attend other training and development activities taking place throughout Europe and the United States, and I am sure that the local hotel associations will support such activity as, of course, should hotel management.

I have read with great interest the various papers prepared for this conference and in particular the paper on the 'Development of Human Resources for Tourism Employment' and the paper on Intra-African Tourism Co-operation.

It would seem to me that if there is a recognized need at this conference for a genuine desire to improve the development of Human Resource potential for Tourism Governments will have to give greater support to the introduction of Education centres in Africa and as I have said previously more support to assist young Africans to travel abroad for training and development.

In the countries where Hotel schools are already in operation there begins to build up a nucleus of trained Hotel personnel and in these schools additional courses on all aspects of Tourism should be introduced. I recently had the opportunity to visit the relatively new Hotel school in Abidjan and found the facilities and teaching techniques upto a very high standard.

I welcome the suggestion of the formation of the African Hotel Association which hopefully would become a full working member of the International Hotel Association. By this membership the A.H.A. would be a strong voice in International Hotel affaires and have the opportunity to be represented on committees tackling matters as diverse as Travel Agents Commission to Human Resource development. Wearing my second hat of Chairman of the I.H.A. Professional Training and Human Resource Development Committee I would welcome membership by a representative of the African Hotel Association.

To close and on behalf of the I.H.A. we wish the conference every success in its deliberations with the thought that as in Hotel Management, Tourism is about people. All of us are only as successful as to the amount of genuine time and effort we put into recognizing the needs of people.

The needs of the tourist,

The needs of your own people, and this Conference must provide all concerned the necessary guidelines to bridge those two needs.

Thank you.