

# QUICK BRIEF 2019



20 August 2019

## The Swiss South African Hospitality Apprenticeship Programme (SSHAP!)

*“The hospitality sector is one of the last remaining global sectors that are growing”*  
Ambassador Helene Budliger Artieda, Swiss Ambassador to South Africa

The Swiss South African Hospitality Apprenticeship Programme (SSHAP!) is a bold and innovative partnership between the National Business Initiative (NBI) and the Swiss Embassy in South Africa aimed at tapping into the job-creation power of the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry can be compared to the multifunctional Swiss army knife in its ability to impact multiple areas of the economy at once: the industry has good growth prospects that will contribute to the national fiscus; it is a labour intensive sector which is an important ingredient for entry jobs for unemployed youth and it localises economic activity much to the benefit of local entrepreneurs. It is no wonder that the hospitality industry – a subdivision of the tourism sector – features prominently in the [Framework Agreement](#) of the Presidential Jobs Summit (2018).

*R8.8bn*

*The expected investment into the South African hospitality industry in the next 3 years*

*Fin24, February 2019*

The SSHAP! pilot reached an important milestone in June, presenting an opportune moment to reflect on progress, opportunities and challenges thus far. The reflective session comprised those directly involved in the pilot – the apprentices, trainers and project partners and an audience that included industry representatives, the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Technical and Vocational Education and Training college leaders, the National Department of Tourism (NDT), Ambassador Helene Budliger Artieda, Swiss Embassy in South Africa and Bruno Sidler, Group COO of Lornho, attended the event which was hosted by The Hyatt Regency in Rosebank.

The panellists agreed that the pilot provided an innovative and effective method for the apprentices to build skills and instil professionalism. The early results showed a transformation of the apprentices from students to functioning members of a team in a short space of time. The pilot provided the apprentices with a platform to showcase their potential. They were stretched but rose up to meet the technical demands of an international hospitality curriculum and the high expectations for service excellence that is typical of the international hotels in which they are currently placed. One of the hoteliers commented that they have seen tremendous professional growth in the apprentices in the short duration of the pilot. “This is an incredible programme for the apprentices that we will be happy to continue supporting”, he said.

Insofar as the apprentices were concerned, the pilot highlighted decent work as a human right and a foundation for economic and social security. The apprentices emphasized that the pilot provided a source of professional development and personal pride. Beyond just a tool for generating income, they experienced their workplaces as a stimulating and supportive home away from home.

The trainers agreed that the comfort of old habits was the biggest stumbling block at the launch of the pilot. Therein lies the important role of the NBI as the pilot's "Champion of Change". "A programme like this requires expert coordination to help the team with pushing past natural resistance to change. The pilot would not have happened without the skill, support and encouragement from the NBI", remarked a hotelier.

**70%**  
*The proportion of youth in Switzerland who forego university study in favour of apprenticeship training  
(Ambassador Helene).*  
***Switzerland has a youth unemployment rate of just 3%.***

The reflective session ended with a broad discussion on new ways of tackling the problem of youth unemployment. It was argued that the South African skills development system is inflexible and largely fixated on qualifications at a time when a three-year diploma is being overtaken by rapid pace of innovation and technological change globally. This argument enlivened the audience, with some suggesting that formal qualifications still have their place in the ecosystem.

The engagement concluded with an appreciation that the problem of youth unemployment requires many different solutions, one of which is the Swiss apprenticeship model implemented in close collaboration with the TVET college system in South Africa. As was done during the pilot, there is an opportunity for the private sector to assess for potential where possible particularly when assessing unemployed youth for entry-level jobs. The importance of the B-BBEE scorecard was acknowledged, followed immediately by a challenge to employers to push past compliance towards the implementation of large-scale, and demand-led innovative projects that absorb large numbers of unemployed youth.

#### **About the SSHAP! pilot:**

**SSHAP!** is a six-month programme launched in April 2019. It utilizes the well-established Swiss apprentice model which increases youth employability by exposing students to a combined process of classroom instruction, on-the-job training and e-learning. The result is a model that trains in line with skills in demand, producing apprentices that are ready for immediate employment while at the same time opens new pathways for employment and further study.

The pilot comprises 37 apprentices carefully selected and matched to the demands of the programme delivered in collaboration with our implementation partners: **Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator**, the **Hyatt Regency Johannesburg Hotel**, **Park Inn by Radisson Sandton Hotel**, the **Hilton Sandton Hotel** and the globally renowned **Hotel and Tourism Management Institute of Switzerland (HTMi)**. At the end of the six-month period the apprentices will exit with a globally recognised certificate from HTMi and an internationally benchmarked set of hospitality skills that provide them with cross-border career mobility. Implementation partners will get first preference in choosing top talent at the end of the programme. The programme has been approved to take on its 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort before the end of 2019.

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