EVALUATION REPORT

National Skills Development Programme (NSDP)

01 Demand-Driven Training
Unemployed youth
Between 16 and 35 years

02

03 Placement
At enterprise level

04 Employability and Prospective Employment
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1. **BACKGROUND**

This report summarises the conceptualisation, implementation and outcome of the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP). Realising the importance of the linkage and collaborative approach required, the Government heralded the National Skills Development Programme (NSDP), a budgetary measure 2016/2017 to train unemployed youth in technical skills that are in high demand to contribute to tackling unemployment while addressing skills mismatch. This measure was replicated and enhanced in future budgets 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 with the objective to ensure inclusiveness of unemployed youths.

The NSDP has been conceptualized and is being implemented by the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC) since 2016, involving a wide range of stakeholders in the skills eco-system with a view to collaboratively reduce youth unemployment and strengthen cooperation on various levels.

The main aim of the NSDP is to provide young people aged 16-35 with relevant training and industrial placement which can bolster their employability in the short to medium term. Given the realities of the demography of the unemployed youth in Mauritius, the definition of youth has been extended (as compared to the globally accepted definition) to encourage people within the age group 16-35 years to become employable, economically active and enjoy a better quality of life.

Since its inception, the NSDP has supported more than 6,000 trainees to integrate different sectors, encompassing consortia of enterprises and Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) Registered Training Institutions (RTIs) across Mauritius.

![Figure 1: Collaboration of enterprises and training providers](image)
1.1 **Report structure**

The report is structured in three parts:

- **Part 1**: ‘Introduction’, describes the scheme and its objectives, outlines the scope of the evaluation, governance and its benefits.

- **Part 2**: ‘Programme delivery’, looks at the operation of the programme, describes the eligibility criteria of youth and comprises the procedures and strand of the programme.

- **Part 3**: ‘Outcomes’, looks at programme outcomes and the perceived impact, the evolution of the programme, challenges and the way forward.
2. **ABOUT THE HRDC**

The HRDC was set up as a corporate body in November 2003 as per the Human Resource Development Act 2003. The institution operates under the aegis of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO)\(^1\) and has been tasked specifically with promoting the development of a skilled labour force. Its objectives are to:

(i) promote human resource development in line with national economic and social objectives;
(ii) stimulate a culture of training and lifelong learning at the individual, organizational and national levels to enhance employability of the labour force and increase productivity; and
(iii) provide the necessary human resource thrust for a successful transformation of the country’s economy into a knowledge economy.

HRDC has been vested with the responsibility to look after and promote the development of human resource in Mauritius in line with the requirements of a fast growing economy. To this end, the HRDC runs the Levy grant scheme so as to encourage human resource development at the national level and to emphasise targeted training to provide training opportunities to the maximum number of employees.

The HRDC also conducts skills studies at regular intervals to assess the country’s skills requirements in the short, medium and longer term; to identify the critical skills and hard-to-fill posts in different sectors; and to assess the degree of mismatch in skills across occupational groups. Such information helps align curriculum to the needs of the industry and reduce information asymmetry. More information on other HRDC projects are found at: [https://www.hrdc.mu/](https://www.hrdc.mu/).

\(^1\) Since 2003, the HRDC was operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Education & Human Resources, Tertiary Education & Scientific Research (MoEHRTESR). Following the Budget 2018/19, the HRDC has been shifted under the aegis of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) since July 2018.
3. ABOUT THE NSDP

3.1 Rationale

Skills development is critical for economic growth and social development. This is even more important for youths, who have to manage a successful transition from school to the world of work. Transforming the skills development ecosystem and making it responsive to the needs of both industry and citizens requires amongst others scalable and flexible programmes. Given the increasing complexity and dynamics of the labour market, there is continually imbalances between demand and supply of skills, resulting in skills gap, concept and methodology. To address this issue, there was a need for strong skill matching methodology.

The Government thusly, announced the NSDP as a budgetary measure 2016/2017 with the objective to train unemployed youth in technical skills that are in high demand to contribute to addressing skills mismatch which is also contributing towards tackling unemployment.

The NSDP has been extended to accommodate training programmes to be offered in promising emerging sectors in order to train local talent for the film production industry and other performing and fine arts with a higher degree of flexibility.

4. PHILOSOPHY OF NSDP

The philosophy of NSDP is to fill the short to medium term skills gap through skills intermediation. The collaborative nature of the programme (figure 2) contributes both towards empowering unemployed youth through training (co-mounted by enterprises and registered training institutions (RTIs) and placement in areas of
high demand with a view to supply relevant skills to the industry. Consequently, this programme has contributed to reduce the unemployment rate since November 2016 (SDG 8).

5. SECTORS OF ACTIVITY
The youth are enlisted for training and placement in technical skills that are in demand in the following sectors (figure 3) based on demand of employers:

![Figure 3: Sectors covered under NSDP](image)

6. DURATION AND FUNDING OF NSDP
Keeping in mind the realities of the unemployed youths (where access to training is an issue and lack of means to attend training and industrial placement across the island), the trainees are paid a monthly stipend of Rs 5 000 and an additional Rs 1 000 as travelling expenses based on attendance and upon satisfactory participation in the training. The training and industrial placement span a period of 3 to 12 months. The training cost per course is borne by the HRDC as follows:

- the cost per trainee will not exceed Rs 30,000 ($ 853)² in a cohort for a course between 3-6 months; and
- the cost per trainee will not exceed Rs 60,000 ($1,707) in a cohort for a course between 6-12 months.

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² Rate (USD 1 = Rs 35.15)
6.1 Components of NSDP
NSDP comprises 2 compulsory components namely training and industrial placement developed jointly by RTIs and employers.

Figure 4: Structure of NSDP

7. OBJECTIVES
The objectives of NSDP are to:
1. train unemployed youth to better match skills with the demand of the industry;
2. establish linkages between the training systems and the workplace;
3. provide in demand skilled manpower to the employer; and
4. provide trainees with the opportunity to experience the environment of a real workplace.

8. GOVERNANCE AND COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURE OF NSDP
The strength of the NSDP is its collaborative nature. The HRDC also ensures that all processes and procedures of the NSDP are marked by transparency and decision making in concert with key stakeholders. A ‘Manual of Procedures’ has been developed to provide information and guidance on the NSDP to participants. It details the roles and responsibilities of the HRDC, MoEHRTESR, Business Mauritius, Employers, Industry Associations, and unemployed youths amongst others. It also includes the standard processes and procedures of the NSDP.
The Manual of procedures also includes all the Project Collaborative Agreements (PCAs) which have been vetted by the Solicitor-General Office (SGO) prior to implementation. In order to ensure all parties are aware of their responsibilities, following approval of a training programme, a PCA is signed by the enterprise/s, MQA registered training institution and the HRDC. The PCA provides for the obligations of the parties under the NSDP in relation to the provision of training and placement of trainees selected by the HRDC pursuant to the approved course.

In addition, further to the registration of trainees to participate in NSDP, an offer of traineeship is signed between the HRDC and each trainee. This agreement stipulates that the NSDP will be implemented under established terms and conditions which will also govern the participation of the trainee in the course.

The Manual of procedures is available on the NSDP website (https://nsdp.hrdc.mu/index.php/downloads) for stakeholders to consult prior to participation in NSDP.

Moreover, the selection of applicants is made on a first come, first served basis demonstrating equity in the implementation of NSDP.

In a nutshell, the administrative processes for the NSDP are underpinned by strong operational policies and systems supported by adequate institutional arrangement (human resources, management information systems, public communications strategies, fiscal management and monitoring, evaluation and learning).
8.1 NSDP Steering Committee

The NSDP is a joint Government/Private Sector partnership programme managed by a Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Ministry of Education & Human Resources, Tertiary Education & Scientific Research (MoEHRTESR) and Business Mauritius (BM) and also comprise the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (MLIRET), HRDC, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) and Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA).

The involvement of the private sector is critical to the success of the programme as it assists in inviting enterprises to participate in NSDP. TEC and MQA ensure quality assurance in the mounting and delivery of courses.

8.2 NSDP Sub-committee

The NSDP is supported by the Sub-committee chaired by the HRDC. The main responsibilities of the sub committee are to:

(i) provide input on the skills in demand and approve the training programme amongst others;

(ii) validate the detailed course structure and contents including the placement component;

(iii) approve the programme; and

(iv) monitor the implementation of the training.

8.3 NSDP Technical Committee

Following receipt of an application from the enterprise/s and RTIs, the application is considered at the NSDP Technical Committee. The responsibilities of the technical committee are to:

(i) evaluate the NSDP applications; and
(ii) make recommendations to the Sub-committee for consideration and approval.

The NSDP Technical Committee comprises representatives from the following institutions:

- Business Mauritius
- MLIRET
- MQA
- TEC
- HRDC

NSDP applications are generally processed within 15 working days. The Gantt chart (Figure 6) shows the timeline for approval of an application under NSDP.

Figure 6: Timeline for approval of NSDP application
9. **BENEFITS OF NSDP**

The NSDP is beneficial to both employers and unemployed youths.

- **Unemployed youth:**
  - Benefit from training relevant to the needs of employers;
  - Help youth enter the labour market with skills and confidence through job placement; and
  - Receive a monthly stipend of Rs5,000 plus Rs1,000 monthly for transport expenses for the duration of the course and placement.

- **Employers:**
  - Pool of trained manpower based on needs of employers;
  - Designing training programmes based on their own needs; and
  - Training cost and stipend paid by the Government.
PART 2

10. NSDP Cell - REGISTRATION OF TRAINEES FOR A COURSE UNDER NSDP: Structure has been set up to welcome and register youths

With a view to decentralize registration of youths, an online platform has been developed (figure 7). It has been designed to facilitate registration of unemployed youth to the various training programmes on offer, to operate seamlessly and to make use of less paper (SDG 9). However, to include those not having access to internet, a physical form is used.

![Figure 7: NSDP Online platform](image)

10.1 Transparency and giving equal chance to applicants

Once the courses are approved by the NSDP Sub-committee, the HRDC invites potential trainees to register for the programmes through a dedicated link on the
NSDP website. The potential trainees shall register online at http://nsdp.hrdc.mu. However, those who do not have access to internet, on the spot application is made with the help of dedicated staff which (a printed copy of the application is accepted). In addition, in order to promote inclusiveness and access for every interested youth, regional nature of both employment offices and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) across the island act as facilitator and assist youth for registration. The registration process is administratively simple. The CAB and Employment offices have internet access and support staff who help the applicants complete the form. Only one time registration is required. To make this happen, the Ministry of Labour collaborates with the HRDC to this effect. Youths are also welcomed at the HRDC premises for advice, registration and information sessions through a dedicated service (SGD 11).

10.2 Outreach strategy

In order to sensitize youth to register for NSDP courses and reach out in “deprived” areas, the HRDC collaborates with other institutions to regularly participate in job fairs, TV programmes on jobs, dedicated interviews and newspaper articles, Infotech amongst others (SGD 9). Communication campaigns are ongoing in English, French and creole (mother tongue for all Mauritians) and brochures are also prepared in French. The campaigns are also decentralized and the staff of HRDC participate in campaigns across the island. This decentralized approach makes NSDP an inclusive programme.
The Prime Minister’s Office has implemented a grievance mechanism namely the Online Citizen Support Portal (OCSP). Under the OCSP ticket is used as an important tool for upholding objectivity and the quality of any schemes run in Mauritius and help identify systemic weaknesses that could undermine the effectiveness and reputation of the scheme. Grievances are also taken when a potential trainee or trainee contacts the HRDC either physically, via email or phone. The HRDC attempts to attend to all queries regarding NSDP in a timely and objective manner.

11. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF TRAINEES

In order to encourage transparency and fairness in the NSDP, the registrants need to meet the entry requirements for the course established by the applicants and their respective skills needs. The list of registrants for a particular is sent to the applicant for selection based on an interview process.

In certain cases, the selection process gauges registrants’ motivation and willingness to participate in particular training programmes. The HRDC is equipped with an 80-seater lecture theatre, meeting rooms which are put at the disposal of NSDP applicants for information sessions on courses, enterprises and interview purposes. Administrative support is also provided by the HRDC during this process. The HRDC also ensures that
trainees who drop-out from courses re replaced within a time frame as per the specificity of the programme \((SGD\ 9)\) to improve the efficacy of the programme and at the same time giving chance to registrants in the waiting list.

Following interviews and aptitude tests, the applicants are requested to provide a feedback per registrant to HRDC to ensure that all our processes and procedures are marked by efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and a feedback loop.

12. Courses offered under the NSDP

The young people who participate in NSDP acquire industry-led skills that contribute towards addressing skills needs at sectoral level. In order to be eligible for the NSDP, courses have to be approved by registered RTIs.

Flexibility is also embedded in the delivery of the training programmes in the following modes:

(i) face-to-face;

(ii) full-time intensive;

(iii) dual mode; and

(iv) blended mode.

12.1 Industrial Placement

Placement is a mandatory component of the NSDP which is intended to help trainees build links with the labour market and develop useful and meaningful work-related skills for skills formation. The placement of the trainee is in relation to the training, it is either sandwiched during the course or at the end of the course, depending on the needs of the enterprise and requirement of the course \((SDG\ 9)\).

13. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following eligibility criteria have been established for the NSDP:

- unemployed youths who are between 16-35 years;
- those who have studied up to Form III to HSC or equivalent;
for the construction sector, unemployed youth below Form III and aged 18 (as per regulations in the field of construction) are considered;

- a person is allowed to participate in NSDP only once to give equal chance to others; and
- a trainee participating in NSDP is not allowed to swap courses within NSDP.

14. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation (surprise and planned visits) are carried out by the HRDC to ensure smooth running of the approved training programmes. The enterprises and RTIs participating in NSDP must therefore ensure quality throughout the training and industrial placement.
15. NSDP IN FIGURES

15.1 Registration of trainees in NSDP

Since November 2016 to October 2018, 17,289 youths were registered on the NSDP. One youth can register for more than one course. The HRDC considers the first priority as established by the registrant.

15.2 Gender

As can be observed in figure 9, since November 2016, 52% of female and 48% of male trainees participated in NSDP (SDG 5).

![Figure 9: Participation of youth in NSDP (Gender)](image)

15.3 NSDP Statistics

As at date, more than 129 enterprises have participated in NSDP and additional applications are always under discussion and consideration.

As at October 2018, 150 projects have been approved for the training of 6522 unemployed youth. Presently there are 4821 trainees who have started training and the remaining will join future sequential batches as per respective schedule. Figure 10 provides a snapshot of the status of courses run under the NSDP.
Figures 11 and 12 demonstrate the sectoral representation of approved projects and the sectoral breakdown of youth that are trained under the NSDP.
16. CHALLENGES

The implementation of NSDP has challenges like high drop-out rate for certain trades, difficulty to attract youths to participate in certain trades in sectors, bad attitude of youth towards training and work among others. A range of measures were taken to mitigate these issues like targeted marketing to boost registration for such courses, information sessions by enterprises and training institutions, participation in job fairs and TV programmes among others.

17. INNOVATION BROUGHT TO THE PROGRAMME

In order to attract more youths to the programme and gauge their motivation and willingness to participate in the programme, the following measures have been implemented by the HRDC: (SDG 9)

(i) contacting the registrants via SMS when new projects are approved (besides website updates);

(ii) a dedicated telephone line to attend to NSDP queries only;
(iii) quality assurance process has been reinforced through an increase in the number of monitoring visits at training sites and placement and also seek feedback from trainees;

(iv) new brochures and marketing materials have been introduced to boost NSDP sensitization campaigns;

(v) the NSDP website is kept updated to provide up-to-date information and making it more user-friendly;

(vi) motivating applicants to offer award/professional courses for youth to acquire advanced technical skills and a better and fulfilling career; and

(vii) NSDP Readiness Programme to foster inclusiveness and ensure the registrants are aware of the expectations of the world of work prior to embarking on NSDP courses (attitude towards work, preparing them for giving interviews, ...), provide employability skills training to those who are not able to secure a job despite training or those who cannot make it through interview.

18. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, it is important to note that the continual upskilling of youth presents a challenge to the country’s long term growth potential as well as to the economic and social stability of the country. The greatest challenge is how to properly nurture the youth to become employable and highly productive to spearhead the dynamic transformation of the economy. The NSDP is one of the programmes announced by the Government to skill unemployed youth and is very much a testimony of Government’s commitment to ensure that all young people have access to training and are given the opportunity to fulfill and realise their potential (SDGs 8 &10).
The NSDP is seen as an engine for youth empowerment aiming at a better society of tomorrow.

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