

Making a Difference

At a time when the world is basically in economic and social turmoil, those who are fortunate to be employed can accept the fact that they hold an advantage over the thousands or even millions in their geographical location, who are either employed or underemployed. Most employees now face the challenge of not having security of tenure in their current employment. Looking at what is happening on the ground, there is a steady stream of business enterprises that are either downsizing their operations or resorting to closure. There is the growing practice where employers including governments, are not filling vacant positions in the organizations when they arise. The cold fact of the matter is that there is a diminishing level of employment which is being experienced. Notwithstanding this, the populace is asked to believe that the employment numbers are low. Understandably, it is expected that statistics would paint a picture that brings comfort to the minds of members of the public. Unfortunately, when actuality kicks in, the story appears to be far different than that which is conveyed.

In the context of the English speaking Caribbean governments have been eternally promising the start of new capital work projects in an effort to ease the unemployment problem. The rise tide of criminal activities and anti-social behaviours are linked to the high unemployment trend. Against this backdrop, it is amazing that the impression is yet being that the unemployment problem is on the decline. Governments all across the world seem to be struggling to find solutions to arrest the unemployment problem. It would appear that there is the general thinking that job opportunities abound where concentration is placed on capital works projects, construction, digitalization and renewable energy projects. It is expected that an uptake on these, will contribute to a turnaround that can lend to sustainable development, economic growth and stability. For this to occur, there is a need to carefully plan strategies that are aimed at growing the economic sectors.

For countries who are not self-sufficient in food production and who depend heavily on food importation, foreign goods and services, it is about time that concentration is centered on developing the agriculture and agro industries sector. Development in these two areas can bring on stream thousands of jobs which would utilize non skilled, skilled, technical workers, administrative and management personnel. It is to be expected that direct and indirect jobs will be created by industry partners, as linkages are created throughout the various employment sectors.

In the past, the Caribbean countries have placed emphasis on the tourism industry as the major economic revenue generating source. The regional has long outlived its marketing thrust which was driven on the promotion of the enjoyment of sand, sea and sun. Tourism is about the level of spend and unless this happens, growth of the sector can be retarded.

Making a Difference: Dennis de Peiza, Labour & Employee Relations Consultant, Regional Management Services Inc. 20 January, 2023

The coming on stream of new tourism destinations that are bringing on stream new attractions and offerings, means that there is rising global competition. It is recommended that serious thought is given to taking the current investment within the tourism industry, beyond the mere construction of new hotel properties. Improving in the quality delivery of service is a must.

Like all businessmen, those who invest in the tourism sector are hopeful of maximizing their returns. As a high priced destination, countries like Barbados have every reason to understand and appreciate that with the offerings made by low priced tourism destinations, clients now have options. High accommodation rates, taxi fares, food prices and poor quality service delivery are unlikely to attract long stay visitors.

It is evident that solutions to the unemployment problem go beyond macroeconomic thinking, but extends to strategic economic planning. It is worth the while for the authorities to study what changes are desired and required to be made to the various economic sectors. They are also urged to address the seasonal employment now offered in some employment sectors, and to empower and provide meaningful assistance that is aimed towards driving entrepreneurship and self-employment.