

Developments in some APacCHRIE Countries

By: Ma. Christina G. Aquino

Introduction

All roads lead to ASEAN 2015, with great expectations for the region for Tourism growth and the needed human resource development. The Association of South East Asian Member states include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. All of these countries are members of the APacCHRIE.

ASEAN Integration 2015

With the acceleration of the ASEAN 2020 to 2015, there three pillars of the ASEAN Integration 2015 includes the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and the ASEAN Political-Security Community. The AEC has four objectives and these are: single market and production base, competitive economic region, equitable economic development and integration into the global community. The single market and production base will allow for seven of the seventeen core elements and these include: free flow of goods, services, skilled labor, investment, capital, food and agricultural security, and integration of the 12 priority sectors, of which Tourism has been identified as one priority sector.

With the AEC, educational programs among the ASEAN Member States (AMS) will need to develop programs and curricula that will allow for a framework of recognition of licenses and assessment results for professionals to be able to work, as part of the free flow of “skilled labor”. To date, there are eight Mutual Recognition Arrangements that have been signed by the various ASEAN Ministers, including the ASEAN MRA for Tourism Professionals.

ASEAN MRA for Tourism Professionals

The ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) for Tourism Professionals (TP) was signed by all ASEAN Member States last November 2012. As part of the preparations, several ASEAN Master Trainers and Assessors trainings were conducted in different parts of AMS, with two to three representatives from each member state, with the three week ASEAN Master Trainers Program and the two week ASEAN Master Assessors Training. Aside from the trainings, ASEAN MRA for TP consultants identified required competencies through consultations with various groups with Tourism stakeholders in each member state, called the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP). The consultants also developed the toolboxes containing various resources such as Assessor’s Manual, Presentation slides, Trainer Guide, Trainee Manual which can be downloaded through a website. To date, 145 competencies of the 242 competencies in the ACCSTP have complete toolboxes already. The Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC) was likewise developed containing guides in packaging the curriculum for the fifty-two qualifications in the six labor divisions that include: Housekeeping, Front Office, Food Production, Food and Beverage Services, Tour Operations and Travel Agents. There are qualifications from Certificate 2, 3, 4, Diploma and Advanced Diploma and contain a combination of Core and Generic Competencies that are required for each labor division; and Functional Competencies that are required for each level of qualification.

The trainings were done for the different qualifications as follows: Housekeeping in Bali last November to December 2012; Food Production in Thailand last September to October 2014; Front Office in Bali last October 2014 and Food & Beverage Service last November to December 2014. The two labor divisions of Tour Operations and Travel Agents will be conducted sometime in 2015. As part of the undertaking, all Philippine participants will conduct cascade training to selected trainers/assessors in the country to develop awareness and utilization of the materials in the various programs. The Housekeeping group conducted two cascade training sessions already. These were undertaken last March 2014 at the TESDA Women's Center, and in Marriot Cebu last July 2014, with 65 participants completing both sessions.

Lead Agencies in the Implementation of the ASEAN MRA for TP

In implementing the ASEAN MRA for TP, three agencies were identified by each AMS. These include the National Tourism Organization (NTO), the government agency that initiates programs for the tourism sector; the National Tourism Professional Board (NTPB) is led by the the Board for Tourism Professionals composed of representatives from the public and private sectors including the academia and other relevant tourism stakeholders as identified by the ASEAN NTOs; and the Tourism Professional Certification Board (TPCB) the agency authorized by the government of each ASEAN Member State primarily responsible for the assessment and certification of tourism professionals.