

TRIPARTITE ADVISORY ON ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SECURITY SECTOR IN VIEW OF COVID-19

Introduction

1. This advisory provides recommendations on measures that service buyers and providers should adopt to ensure the sustainability of the security sector in view of COVID-19.

Crucial to Ensure Sustainability of Security Sector

2. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant disruptions to the demand and supply of security services, and affected the livelihoods of security officers. The sustainability of the security sector depends on close cooperation among all stakeholders to make the necessary adjustments, as well as support from the Government.

3. Service buyers in particular play an important role in ensuring the sustainability of service providers and the security sector. This includes making reasonable business arrangements that enable service providers to continue to employ their officers and retain their capabilities during a circuit breaker period or in a downturn. This is so that essential security services can be maintained, and scaled up when businesses reopen and the economy starts to recover.

4. As the COVID-19 situation is likely to be long drawn, unsustainable practices will compromise the ability of service providers to provide security services during this period and in the long term. This would be detrimental to the security sector (service buyers, service providers and security officers), and the general public.

Recommendations

5. **Exercise restraint in activating liquidated damages.** Service buyers should demonstrate understanding towards service providers during this period, by exercising restraint in activating liquidated damages contract clauses to penalise service providers, for breaches that are beyond the service providers' control.

6. **Temporarily reconsider security deployment.** In instances where the service provider is facing manpower challenges due to COVID-19 and where it is feasible, the service buyer should consider working with service providers to review security deployments to optimise the use of manpower (e.g. close some entrances due to reduced footfall or reduce the frequency of patrols). Service buyers should also adjust their expected security outcomes if they are considering a reduction in security headcount.

7. **Pay service providers appropriately.** Service providers should be paid as per contract terms if there is no change in security services required. Specifically, service buyers should not ask for reduced contract fees on the basis that their service providers are receiving wage support through the enhanced Jobs Support Scheme, which is intended to help enterprises retain their local employees during this period of economic uncertainty. If there is any significant change in security services required, service buyers and service providers should engage each other to reach a mutually agreed revision to payments for services. This also applies to instances where minimal or no security service is required due to temporary workplace closures, or conversely, where significant additional services are required.

8. **Remunerate security officers appropriately.** If there are any significant changes in the security services required, service providers should remunerate their security officers appropriately:

- a. For security officers with higher workloads (e.g. due to having to work longer hours to address higher absenteeism), service providers should compensate them appropriately.
- b. For security officers with reduced workloads (e.g. due to decreased requirements of service provision as a result of circuit breaker measures), service providers should comply with the advisories related to salary and leave arrangements¹, including taking into consideration Government support² to retain and pay their employees during periods of reduction in business activity.

9. **Seize the opportunity to upskill workers.** Service providers should consider taking this opportunity to send security officers, particularly those with decreased workloads, for training and upskilling. They can tap on Government support, such as the Workfare Training Support³ and Enhanced Training Support for SMEs, to help defray training costs, and to receive absentee payroll funding.

10. **Continue to ensure workplace safety and health of security officers.** Security officers are at the frontline in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Many perform temperature taking duties as part of access control and face additional exposure and increased workloads. These risk factors reinforce the importance of service buyers and providers ensuring that workplaces are made safe. It is therefore important for them to be provided with suitable and adequate personal protective equipment and hygiene materials (e.g. sanitisers). Security officers must be reminded

¹ This includes the advisory on salary and leave arrangements during Circuit Breaker, issued on 6 Apr 2020 – www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/advisory-on-salary-and-leave.

² The Government's Jobs Support Scheme provides companies, including security service providers, with wage support amounting to 75% (during the circuit breaker period), and at least 25% (other periods) of local employees' wages for 9 months. www.iras.gov.sg/irashome/Schemes/Businesses/Jobs-Support-Scheme--JSS-/

³ Enhanced as the Workfare Skills Support scheme from 1 Jul 2020. www.mom.gov.sg/-/media/mom/documents/budget2020/factsheet-workfare-skills-support-scheme.pdf

to practice good personal hygiene at all times. Service providers must also continue to comply with employment regulations, such as limits on overtime, to ensure the well-being of officers.

11. Plan ahead, leverage technology-enabled solutions and transit to outcome-based contracts. Service buyers whose security contracts are due to expire should consider adopting outcome-based contracting⁴ and leveraging technology to reduce demands on manpower.

Conclusion

12. The COVID-19 situation is a difficult period for service buyers and providers, as well as security officers. All stakeholders should share the impact arising from changes in security services required. The tripartite partners urge stakeholders to work together, to review and reprioritise security needs, and to voluntarily renegotiate contracts or payments for variations in security needs. Security officers should be appropriately recognised and remunerated, and their health cared for where needed. This will help ensure that the security sector and necessary security outcomes are sustained during and after the COVID-19 situation.

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⁴ Service Buyers can refer to MHA's Guide on Outcome Based Security Contracts (www.mha.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/guide-on-outcome-based-security-contracts.pdf), and the Tripartite Advisory on Best Sourcing Practices (www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/good-work-practices/best-sourcing-practices) for more information.

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This tripartite advisory is issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Manpower, National Trades Union Congress, Singapore National Employers Federation, Union of Security Employees, Association of Certified Security Agencies, Security Association Singapore, and Security Tripartite Cluster.