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Initiative on Women Empowerment in the Tourism Sector: Special focus on Africa

Note by the Secretary-General

In this document, the Secretary-General presents to the Members of the Commission for Africa, for their comments, the draft concept note on Women Empowerment in the Tourism Sector – Spotlight on Gender Equality and Young Women with a focus on Africa.



Women Empowerment in the Tourism Sector - Spotlight on Gender Equality and Young Women



“We live in a male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture and that is why the empowerment of women and girls is our central objective”

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, at the opening ceremony of the 62nd Committee on the Status of Women (CSW), 12- 23 March 2018¹ in New York

Although significant progress has been made throughout the years in advancing gender equality, women and girls are still likely to be marginalized in many economic sectors and face precarious employment. Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development therefore aims to ‘*achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*’².

Tourism is one of the key economic sectors that has the potential to contribute to greater gender equality and the empowerment of women. This is especially important because tourism is one of the world’s cross-cutting and fastest growing sectors which accounts, directly and indirectly, for 10 % of the world’s jobs and GDP.

As illustrated in the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 published jointly by UNWTO and UN Women³, tourism can empower women in multiple ways, particularly through the provision of jobs and income-generating opportunities. As one of the sectors with the highest share of women employed – 49% of the workforce in hotels and restaurants are women⁴ – and entrepreneurs, tourism can offer women opportunities to unlock their potential, helping them to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.

Even if progress has been made in the empowerment of women, they are still far from enjoying the same basic rights, privileges and benefits that are available to men. Research shows that women, in particular young women, in tourism are still not fully benefitting from the sector. Although 48,5%⁵ of employees in the hotel and restaurant services industry in developing countries are women, they earn between 10 - 15% less than men⁶

Focus on Africa

In Africa, tourism is on the rise and many countries have identified the sector as a tool for sustainable development and inclusive growth. The sector generates 8,5 % of GDP, more than 21 million jobs are created

¹ UN women (2018), *Commission on the status of Women, 62nd session*, New York 12-23 March 2018, available at:

² United Nations (n.d.), *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, SDG 5, available at:

³ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and World Tourism Organization (2011), *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010*, UN Women/UNWTO, New York and Madrid; <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/global-report-women-tourism-2010>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and World Tourism Organization (2011), *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010*, UN Women/UNWTO, New York and Madrid; <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/global-report-women-tourism-2010> ; Primary Source ILO Laborsta Database

⁶ *Ibid*

directly and indirectly by tourism⁷ and is the mainstay for some countries for instance Cabo Verde, Mauritius, Seychelles to name a few.

Women in Africa represent more than 50% of the population in the region⁸. 73% of the tourism contributing family workers are women in Africa⁹ and yet they have vulnerable and low-skills jobs and the gender gap is more than 50% in labour force participation¹⁰.

By the same token, women are more likely to have a leadership voice in tourism governance than in other areas. There is an important proportion of women in tourism ministerial positions (for instance as of March 2018, in Africa there are 12 female Ministers of Tourism) and 30,5% of entrepreneurs in the hotel and restaurant service sector are women¹¹ however, the proportion of women graduates in services remains low.

Aims and objectives

In view of the above and focusing on Africa as a representative region, UNWTO is placing its efforts in contributing to promote gender equality and women and girls empowerment in the tourism sector (SDG 5).

More specifically, this initiative aims to:

- Enhance opportunities for women's participation in the workforce, women's entrepreneurship, and women's leadership in executive positions;
- Raise awareness on key issues regarding women empowerment in tourism, with a particular focus on young women, and identify power imbalances;
- Encourage mentoring, and promote education and training of women;
- Promote and advocate for training facilities and hospitality schools.

Main activities

The initiative includes four components aimed at maximizing its effectiveness and outreach:

- 1) Leadership Taskforce;
- 2) Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme (WiTEP);
- 3) Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in Africa in the Tourism Sector, 2019; and
- 4) Second Edition of the Global Report on Women in Tourism (2019).

1. Leadership Taskforce

Within the framework of the UNWTO, the Leadership Taskforce will be a forum for the debate of proposals and activities geared towards promoting women empowerment and leadership in the region.

This body, mainly composed by female African Ministers, NTA representatives and CEOs of tourism companies, and Representatives of Women' tourism associations will also serve to set examples of role models for women and girls and give international exposure to the career possibilities in the tourism sector.

The Chair of the Taskforce would be a Tourism Minister designated by the membership, and this responsibility would rotate every two years. The Chair of the Taskforce will report to the [UNWTO World Committee on Tourism Ethics](#) (WCTE) on a yearly basis, informing of the progress and outcomes of its work through a written report.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ United Nations (2016), *United Nations Demographic Year Book*, UN, New York.

⁹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and World Tourism Organization (2011), *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010*, UN Women/UNWTO, New York and Madrid; <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/global-report-women-tourism-2010> ;

¹⁰ International Labour Organization (2013), *International Perspectives on Women and Work in Hotels, Catering, and Tourism*, ILO, Geneva.

¹¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and World Tourism Organization (2011), *Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010*, UN Women/UNWTO, New York and Madrid; <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/global-report-women-tourism-2010> ; Primary Source ILO Laborsta Database;

The Taskforce will hold virtual meetings every 6 months, possibly present a progress report at each UNWTO Regional Commission for Africa and the agenda for each meeting would be in line with its above-mentioned mandate:

- (i) Propose guidelines to integrate gender issues in tourism strategies in Africa;
- (ii) Promote women empowerment and leadership in the region;
- (iii) Set examples of female role models for young women;
- (iv) Identify, improve and create career opportunities for women in the tourism sector, while providing and promoting adequate visibility for them; and
- (v) Steer and promote the Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme (WiTEP).

2. Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme (WiTEP)

Driven by the Leadership Taskforce, the WiTEP in Africa would consist of partnerships with hotel chains and other tourism stakeholders as well with current women' tourism associations in Africa (education institutions, tourism companies, tour operators, travel agencies, GDS, etc.) aimed at improving employment/entrepreneurship opportunities for women by facilitating their access to jobs and/or participation in supply-chains, and by creating possibilities for career advancement within the tourism sector.

The WiTEP will have four main focuses:

- (i) Employment Skills for young women as an entry point to the labor market, - provide basic employment skills to young women from disadvantaged areas through an Employment Skills Training Programme in collaboration with private sector partners;
- (ii) Supply Chain participation for women cooperatives - facilitate market access for women by seeking cooperation and commitments from private tourism companies towards local goods and services while promoting women entrepreneurship through training and technical support;
- (iii) Career Advancement for women employees – create a Career Advancement Programme that will work with public entities and private companies to encourage women employees to seek leadership positions and consider a range of employment options; and
- (iv) Gender Awareness for the tourism sector and local communities including awareness about challenges and risks of exploitation or cheap labor – promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the sector and local society by engaging with private sector employees, management and community members to provide gender training and raise awareness;

The WiTEP would be promoted and supervised by the Taskforce that would also be in charge of proposing and selecting adequate partners to contribute to each component the Programme. The implementation of the Programme would be carried out with the assistance of the UNWTO Secretariat, specifically the Ethics and Social Responsibility Programme in coordination with the Regional Programme for Africa.

3. Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in Africa in the Tourism Sector, 2019

To better capitalize the momentum and work on the topic of Women and Girls Empowerment in Africa throughout 2018, a regional Congress could be planned in 2019 in Africa. Tourism women Ministers of Africa will be kindly requested to express their interest in selecting one country that could host the event.

4. Second Edition of the Global Report on Women in Tourism (2019)

Throughout 2018, the UNWTO Secretariat will be preparing a second edition of the Global Report on Women in Tourism thanks to the current support of the German Development Agency (GIZ), UN Women and UNWTO.

The purpose of the 2019 Global Report is to:

- (i) Update the results of the 2010 study in order to establish trends in women in tourism data;
- (ii) Expand data collection to a wider range of developed and developing countries;

- (iii) Provide comparative analysis of tourism industries; and
- (iv) Establish criteria for best practice in gender equality and empower women and girls (SDG 5).

The 2019 Report will further provide an overall focus on policy for gender equality in tourism, highlighting good practices, challenges and recommendations. A Chapter on Africa will be developed by a regional expert based on fieldwork reports, case studies, statistics and data collection.

Outcomes

This initiative will develop action-oriented recommendations and programmes, with potential to be replicated, that will have an important impact on women and girls in tourism, particularly for the Africa Region.

By the same token, it will serve as reference and guidance material for improved gender-sensitive policies and leaving “no one behind” towards the UN Agenda 2030 and beyond on Sustainable Development.

It will allow countries to better address the needs of women and girls in an ethical and responsible manner, whilst ensuring that the benefits of tourism are delivered equitably between men and women.

The initiative is also meant to foster and improve relations between the tourism industry and local communities, as the benefits of tourism are shared more fairly and communities benefit from the developmental benefits that arise from the empowerment of women.

Partnership opportunities

UNWTO welcomes public and private sector partners to collaborate on the Women Empowerment in the Tourism Sector initiative. There are several engagement opportunities:

- Become partner in the Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme (WiTEP).
- Become partner in the organization of the Regional Congress on Women Empowerment in Africa in the Tourism Sector, 2019.

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The World Tourism Organization, a United Nations specialized agency, is the leading international organization with the decisive and central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Its membership includes 164 countries and territories and more than 500 Affiliate Members..