



Report of the Regional Seminar on Responsible Tourism: Opportunities for Women and Youth Held in Conjunction with 53rd UNWTO Commission for Africa

Opening

The seminar was opened by **His Excellency Chief Edem Duke**, who welcomed the participants and introduced UNWTO Secretary General **Dr Taleb Rifai**. Dr Rifai began by setting out how the concept of responsible tourism is complementary to sustainability, and goes beyond environmental aspects of tourism. Responsible tourism should improve people's quality of life, particularly women's lives, as women are the future of Africa. It is also important to be aware of the negative impacts that tourism can have on women and youth, for example when tourism infrastructure is used to facilitate the sexual exploitation of women and children. The Secretary General reiterated Executive Director of UN Women Michelle Bachelet's support for tourism as a vehicle for the empowerment of women. He pointed out that tourism is not merely a business, but should improve quality of life for many people. Also, tourism is not just about large hotels and resorts – it includes small-scale tourism enterprises which are particularly relevant in the African context.

Introduction to seminar themes

UNWTO Consultant **Dr Lucy Ferguson** began by setting out the benefits of focussing on women and youth, both for the tourism sector and for African development. She highlighted in particular the widely acknowledged point that African tourism will only be sustainable if it addresses social and cultural factors and ensure the fair inclusion of women and youth. Next, Dr Ferguson outlined the African policy framework relevant to these issues in the tourism sector, such as the AU/NEPAD Tourism Action Plan, the AU Gender Policy and the AU Youth Charter. The presentation went on to outline the findings of the Global Report on Women in Tourism specific to Africa. Women make up a high proportion of workers in the sector, but earn on average 10% less than men and occupy only one third of all professional level positions. However, women are more likely to be own-account workers and employers in tourism in Africa than in other sectors. While the proportion of women tourism ministers is high, women leaders in other areas the sector are scarce. Women carry out a high amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses which limits the potential for empowerment in the sector. Unfortunately, equivalent data on youth participation in African tourism is not currently available.

Dr Ferguson presented UNWTO's three main activities in the area of women in tourism. The Second Global Report on Women in Tourism will offer a more comprehensive review of the participation and status of women in tourism. The terms of reference for the report are ready and work will start as soon as we secure the resources necessary to conduct this study. The Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme is made up for components: Employment Skills Training; Supply Chain; Advancement Programme; and Gender Training. UNWTO is currently seeking countries to serve as pilots for the first stage of the project and funding partners to collaborate on one or a combination of these components. The Gender Mainstreaming in Tourism Strategy is a broad over-arching programme which aims to provide NTAs with the necessary tools and guidelines for enhancing women's participation in tourism, developed specifically for the tourism sector. Dr Ferguson concluded the presentation by setting out some of the possibilities for collaboration between UNWTO and African institutions on women and youth in tourism.

Panel 1: Forging women leaders in African tourism

This panel discussed the main opportunities for and barriers to women's leadership in the tourism sector in Africa. **Ms Rosalie Balima**, Director of Tourism for Burkina Faso explained the ways in which cultural stereotypes that originate in communities can constrain women's aspirations. **Ms. Emuobo Ibru** of Ikeja Hotels Nigeria pointed out that there are very few women in high level leadership positions in African tourism. Although many women attend seminars such as this one, men tend not to even though they are in the highest level posts. During the discussion, it was suggested that women's leadership should be supported at all levels, paying particular attention to grassroots leadership in communities as this is where most African tourism products are based.

The panel then looked at the public sector, private sector and community level in order to explore these issues and proposed practical steps and activities that could be carried out in order to promote and support women's leadership in the tourism sector. Ms. Ibru pointed out that there are a large number of women's cooperatives and enterprises poised to take leadership in the tourism sector. However, women must be made aware of the opportunities available in the sector in order to be able to advance. There is also a need to promote favourable conditions for women's access to finance. In terms of the public sector, there is a need to consider carefully the impact of tourism policies on women. Current policies tend to focus on support for large tourism businesses. However, the majority of opportunities for women are found in rural tourism and ecotourism.

Panel 2: Strengthening entrepreneurship in Africa's tourism sector

The second panel discussed the challenges involved in promoting entrepreneurship in the tourism sector. **Ms. Nyanya Jagne**, President of the Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism, The Gambia highlighted market access in tourism as one of the most serious problems facing all entrepreneurs, including women and youth. **Chief Sally Ukpo**, Executive Director at Suffy Travels Ltd, Nigeria set out a number of challenges to growth for entrepreneurs in African tourism, such as a lack of infrastructure in terms of power and communications. Security issues and instability are also important, as they give a negative image to countries such as Nigeria. Those who want to be entrepreneurs in Nigeria have to deal with a broad range of organisations and face a wide range of obstacles, of which finance is a major issue. A point repeatedly raised in the discussions was the issue of access to land and property. As African women normally do not own land setting up a tourism enterprise is particularly challenging. Often, women entrepreneurs rely on rented land which affects the long terms stability and sustainability of their businesses.

The panel then explored what concrete measures need to be taken in order to support entrepreneurship by women and youth, and a number of suggestions were made. In terms of the public sector, governments should facilitate the application process for loans and business permits and simplify the bureaucratic procedures required by different institutions by centralising such processes. They should also consider tax incentives for tourism entrepreneurs and provide a framework for sustainable tourism policies at the national and regional level. Also important is the need for governments to develop bids for international donors in order to promote women entrepreneurs in tourism. In terms of the private sector, tourism companies need to introduce and comply with their own codes of conduct in order to ensure decent work and prevent any form of exploitation. At the community level, Chief Ukpo highlighted the need to promote cooperation between women entrepreneurs and the forming of associations in order to be able to create sustainable products and services for local and global markets. It was also suggested that in order to combat the volatility of tourism seasonality women and youth should be encouraged to combine handicraft production during the low season with the reception of tourists in the high season. In addition, there should be a gradual shift of emphasis from microenterprises to small and medium-sized enterprises for women and youth, as these are more likely to be profitable on a long-term basis.

Panel 3: Capacity Building and community development

In the final panel, the discussion considered how capacity building in the tourism sector can benefit women and young people. The issue of quotas for women's participation was discussed. For example, 40% of participants in GIZ projects must be women. However, this is not enough to ensure that a gender approach is mainstreamed and much more decisive actions are needed. Both **Mr Akinropo Omoware** of GIZ Nigeria and **Mr Sina Adefolahan** of Women Consortium of Nigeria stressed the importance of wide-reaching gender training at all levels of the tourism sector – from ministerial to community level. The challenge of how to construct shared meaning on gender was raised, in order to ensure that local people are engaged in these projects. Several presenters outlined how the stereotyping of young people – particularly young men - hinders their opportunities for advancement in the tourism sector. Mr Adefolahan discussed the potential of tourism to combat human trafficking by working with women's cooperatives, addressing the gender division of labour in the household and reducing the intergenerational cycle of poverty.

The panel also explored how women and young people can acquire skills to harness their intangible cultural heritage assets through tourism development. **Ms Laetitia Yei Adou** of the Tourism Division of West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) discussed how UEMOA's common tourism policy incorporates intangible cultural heritage and funds young entrepreneurs to access training in activities such as handicrafts through microcredit schemes. Mr Adefolahan pointed out that intangible cultural heritage has to be accepted and taken on by young people – it is not something that can be identified or imposed from above or outside. The panel discussion concluded with a reflection on how increased capacity building for women and young people can benefit the tourism sector as a whole. **Mr Munzali Dantata** of the National Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, Nigeria explained that women and young people have to be well trained in order to be able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by tourism. He argued that the sector could benefit significantly from more systematic and formalised education and training. Mr Omoware and Mr Sina Adefolahan stressed the importance of including young people in decision-making in the tourism sector. When young people feel ownership for projects through meaningful participation the results are more likely to be positive and enhance the overall sustainability of the sector.

Conclusions and recommendations

In the concluding comments, Dr Lucy Ferguson outlined the key challenges and opportunities that were identified during the seminar. In terms of challenges, she first noted the lack of systematic information on women and youth in the tourism sector. She went on to identify some of the barriers to participation and leadership by women and youth in the sector, such as: the lack of equal opportunities in employment markets; women's economic literacy; barriers to inclusion into tourism supply chains; lack of vocational training opportunities; and cultural stereotyping of women and young men. In terms of leadership, cultural stereotypes that originate in communities can constrain women's aspirations. Moreover, there is often a gap between women's ambitions for leadership in the sector and the level of training, capacity building and overall knowledge of tourism. The presentation then highlighted some of the opportunities for the sector in focussing on women and youth, such as a supportive and complementary African policy framework, the importance of grassroots leadership programmes at the community level, and the significant potential of intangible cultural heritage for involving young people and women in a proactive way in the tourism sector.

Three broad sets of recommendations were given. In terms of information, the recommendations focussed on the need for more systematic data collection, the sharing of best practices and the establishment of an African Network of Women in Tourism, to be facilitated by UNWTO. The recommendations for economic empowerment involve promoting economic literacy programmes, support for cooperatives and widespread vocational training

and skills development for women and youth. In terms of institutional aspects, Dr Ferguson identified a need to forge cooperation between the tourism private sector and women's and youth organisations and the importance of gender training across all sectors. She then set out a number of suggestions for collaboration between UNWTO, NTAs, private sector actors and NGOs on these issues, focussing specifically on an Empowerment Programme for Women and Youth in African Tourism. The presentation concluded with a call to ensure that Africa is at the forefront of the contribution of the tourism sector to global development.

Closing ceremony

Mr Frédéric Pierret, UNWTO Executive Director for Programme and Coordination, reinforced UNWTO's commitment to gender equality and women's rights, stating that these are fundamental components of responsible and sustainable tourism. The seminar was closed by Chief Duke, who thanked all the participants and expressed a desire to work together on these issues.