



First Regional Congress on Women's Empowerment in the Tourism Sector

Focus on Africa

Accra, Ghana, 25-27 November 2019

Conclusions and Recommendations

Tourism is one of the leading sectors for gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the core areas of the UNWTO Agenda for Africa – tourism for inclusive growth.

The African tourism sector has the highest female labour participation rate of all world regions and more women in high-level leadership and management positions than the broader economy. Importantly, tourism also unlocks value chains in other sectors, such as artisanal handicrafts or agriculture.

However, the participation of African women in tourism remains at a severe disadvantage to their male counterparts. The barriers to entry and progression are greater for women while the benefits tourism can bring are harder to access and retain.

Discriminatory social and cultural attitudes intersect with this inherent inequality to severely limit the opportunities tourism can offer to women both in Africa and worldwide.

To help tackle this more platforms should be created on gender equality to sensitize stakeholders and society at large, engaging them to create more and decent employment for women.

During the Congress, the second meeting of the Leadership Taskforce was held during which African Ministers, CEOs and leaders from across the tourism sector endorsed the UNWTO Action Plan for Women in Tourism.

The panel debates focused on tourism as an agent for positive change and the contribution of tourism to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 5 – achieving gender equality and the empowering all women and girls.

Eight key areas of action emerged from the discussions engaging experts from across Africa and around the world on how to further tourism's empowering potential for women:

1. **Policies to enable gender equality:** Mainstreaming gender equality considerations across tourism policy and including tourism in gender-sensitive macroeconomic policy will increase women's empowerment in the sector;
2. **Entrepreneurship:** Women's ability to access tourism markets, to diversify tourism products and services and to formalize tourism businesses must be further enabled in order to encourage higher rates of female tourism entrepreneurship;
3. **Employment:** Gender-equality within tourism employment in Africa is a long way from a reality, as in all other world regions. To address this systematic inequality, measures must be taken to tackle the gender pay-gap, address unpaid work, prevent sexual harassment and challenge gender stereotypes.
4. **Financing:** Adequate human and financial resources must be made available for gender-equality programmes and policies to be effective. In parallel, improving individual women's access to finance and financial inclusion is vital for enabling women's empowerment through tourism.
5. **Education and training:** Women's limited access to tourism education and training impedes the opportunities available for empowerment and should be expanded. Meanwhile gender-equality training should be made available for tourism stakeholders across the private and public sectors;
6. **Technology:** Women's access to digital technologies, including digital tourism platforms, must be expanded and accompanied by appropriate training if women are to equally benefit from the ongoing digitalization of the tourism sector;
7. **Leadership:** Action must be taken to increase female representation at the highest levels of the tourism sector. High-level training on soft-skills and networking combined with facilitating women's career progression would contribute towards an improved gender balance at all levels;



8. **Community and civil society:** Introducing measures to improve women's work-life balance and supporting women's tourism networks, NGO's and tourism cooperatives would help to strengthen women's voices in community and house-hold decision making;