



UNWTO Discussion Paper on the occasion of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 Equality in Tourism Comment, June 2017

Background

Equality in Tourism is an independent, non-profit women's organisation dedicated to ensuring women have an equal voice in and share of the benefits from tourism globally. Our purpose is to drive change in the development and practice of global tourism by empowering women through the involvement of local communities and by engaging stakeholders at every level.

At Equality in Tourism, we believe that tourism can create positive change in communities if all members enjoy equal access to the industry and its benefits. The way that the tourism industry operates magnifies the disadvantages and constraints that women face in their lives. Furthermore, gender inequality significantly undermines the potential of the industry. We believe that our work helps ensure women enjoy an equal share in the global tourism industry.

As such, we welcome the opportunity to comment on UNWTO's Discussion Paper, with the aim of holding UNWTO to account for its responsibility to promoting the Sustainable Development Goals in the context of tourism. In the case of Equality in Tourism, we are particularly concerned with SDG5 – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Inclusion of Gender Issues in the Discussion Paper

In this first instance, Equality in Tourism commends the inclusion of SDG5 as a key theme in the Discussion Paper. The paper sets out the key links between the SDGs and tourism's role in social inclusiveness, employment, poverty reduction, noting that:

When it declared 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, the United Nations General Assembly took special care to stress the significant role tourism can play in eradicating poverty. In this vein, tourism's links to the following SDGs are especially relevant:

- **SDG 1** (ending poverty in all forms everywhere), notably in terms of ensuring rights to economic resources for the poor and vulnerable (**Target 1.4**);
- **SDG 8** (on sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth), its focus on decent work for all – i.e. full, productive employment free from exploitation – and its concern with labour rights and the working environment (**Target 8.8**). **Target 8.9** specifically refers to job creation through sustainable tourism;
- **SDG 4** (on inclusive education and lifelong learning), which is essential for developing skills within the tourism workforce, including through access to vocational education and skills training (**Targets 4.3-5**);

- **SDG 5** (on gender issues) and **SDG 10** (on reducing inequalities), which provide an important set of targets for the social inclusiveness of sustainable tourism development; and
- **SDG 3** (on health and well-being), which is tied to enabling all individuals to benefit from tourism as a “life-enhancing” activity.

Following this, gender issues in the tourism industry are mentioned in a number of different areas. For example, the paper argues that tourism is well placed as a tool for achieving sustainable development for a number of reasons, including “provision of promising employment, including for women and youth.” In terms of the first of the Key Areas for Action - 1.2.1 Creating an enabling environment for tourism businesses - gender issues are mentioned insofar as they relate to “advancing the decent work agenda including issues of wage setting, social dialogue, social protection and raising awareness of career paths, particularly for women and youth.”

Aspects of gender inequality are dealt with in more detail in section 2 of the Discussion Paper – on **Social Inclusiveness, Employment and Poverty Reduction**. The paper sets out four key priorities for harnessing tourism’s potential for inclusivity, decent work and poverty eradication – one of which is “support local communities and empower women and youth.” It is suggested that tourism should “build on the positive prospects it offers for youth and women, including for women to run their own businesses. Capacity-building and training should be at the heart of this drive, alongside bridging the pay gap – as women workers earn 10%-15% less than men – and redressing the vulnerability of unpaid workers in family tourism businesses”. These points draw on the findings of the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010. Theme 2 - Key Priorities for Action – calls for gender analysis and monitoring of work conditions.

In particular, tourism is hailed for its role in “empowering women and youth” (Section 2.2.4), quoting statistics from both the UNWTO Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 and the 2013 ILO paper. Building on this, the paper argues that “enhancing the opportunities for women and young people requires positive and purposeful action by tourism businesses, supported by governments, trade bodies and the voluntary sector.” A number of priorities for action are identified:

- Gender analysis and monitoring of employment conditions, especially in terms of the wages offered to women and men in the tourism sector;
- Setting and reporting on targets;
- Tailored recruitment policies;
- Tailored training and capacity building for women and youth;
- Positive social benefit and support packages (including maternity conditions);
- Codes of good practice; and
- Well-directed communication.

The Discussion Paper also includes an Annex which outlines in more detail UNWTO’s position on **How Tourism can Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals**, reproduced from the brochure *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals* by UNWTO (2015). For SDG5, it states that:

“Tourism can **empower women** in multiple ways, particularly through the provision of jobs and through **income-generating opportunities** in small and larger-scale tourism and hospitality related enterprises. As one of the sectors with the highest share of women employed and entrepreneurs, tourism can be a tool for women to unlock their potential, helping them to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.”

Response to Section 2.3 - Questions for Comment and Discussion

The Discussion Paper invites responses on a specific set of questions. Here we direct our responses to Theme 2 - Social Inclusiveness, Employment and Poverty Reduction – as this is where gender issues are concentrated in the paper.

General Questions:

1. *What further evidence is available on the issues addressed in this section?*

There is a wealth of academic research on the links between gender and tourism across a range of issues – employment, sustainable development, empowerment, environmental aspects, community relations, etc. We would strongly recommend that UNWTO review this literature in detail when developing the next draft of the Discussion Paper. Moreover, there are a number of specialists in gender and tourism who could be consulted in order to further develop UNWTO's work in this area.

2. *What relevant aspects, if any, are missing from this section?*

The paper does not engage with the literature and contemporary debates on women, gender and tourism. The sources on which it draws – predominantly the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 – are long out of date. It employs a very basic understanding and analysis of gender issues and as such does not offer much to discussions of how tourism can contribute to SDG5.

3. *What specific changes in tourism policy, business practices and consumer behaviour are needed to address these issues and contribute to sustainable development?*

Four key points can be highlighted here.

First, it should be noted that this report fails to grasp the importance of SDG5 for achieving all other development goals, as outlined consistently across UN policy discourse. Without tackling gender inequality in a meaningful and substantive way, tourism's potential to contribute to the other SDGs will be substantively reduced.

Second, the paper only discusses a relatively narrow aspect of gender equality issues in tourism – employment and decent work. This misses a large range of how tourism interacts with gender inequalities, as detailed in the literature mentioned in question 1 above. In particular, it depicts a limited framing of gender issues as related to economic empowerment, leaving out discussions of political empowerment and broader questions on structural inequalities.

Third, the paper does not demonstrate an understanding of gender analysis or gender inequality and – as such – it is not clear how tourism is meant to contribute to achieving SDG5, nor the role of institutions in working toward this. Moreover, mixing 'women' and 'youth' is an unhelpful conflation, and further serves to marginalise the importance of gender issues to both the SDGs and the tourism sector.

Fourth, it is well documented that gender equality cannot be achieved without dedicated resources. In order to make progress in this area, a budget is required in order to advance tourism's contribution to SDG5.

Specific questions:

Q7 What kinds of interventions ensure that women enjoy equal opportunities in tourism – especially in terms of pay?

Here UNWTO should look into good practice in terms of equality legislation, private sector equality initiatives such as the UN Women-Global Compact Women's Empowerment Principles and equal pay

campaigns. Moreover, UNWTO should be a leader both in terms of knowledge and policy on gender equality issues in the sector.

Possible topics for case studies – examples and evidence of:

E. Improving gender equality and opportunities for women

- Case studies can be drawn from countries which have developed specific gender equality strategies for the tourism industry – such as Nicaragua, Cape Verde and Mexico.
- A useful exercise would be to commission a compilation of good practices in gender and tourism at different scales and across a range of geographical locations

Equality in Tourism Recommendations

Building on these points, Equality in Tourism recommend the following actions by UNWTO in order to address the gaps in its work on gender equality and to increase the potential of tourism to contribute to SDG5:

1. Establish a dedicated budget for gender equality and SDG5 within UNWTO to ensure that necessary actions and programmes can be carried out. This should be done in collaboration with specialists in gender and tourism in order to ensure that UNWTO work matches international norms and standards on gender equality. This is in line with the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).
2. Update the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010. This was originally intended to be a triennial report. As such, it was expected that this report would have been updated in 2013 and 2016.
3. Review the literature and best practice on gender equality in tourism and update the Discussion Paper accordingly, drawing on the available expertise and knowledge in the field.

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