

UNWTO event

Gender and Sustainable Tourism Development: *Exploring the Links*

9 November 2011, 12:30 – 13:30

Northern Room 8, World Travel Market, London, U.K.

1. *The UNWTO event on Gender and Sustainable Tourism Development: Exploring the Links* was held in London, UK, on 9 November 2011, in conjunction with the year's edition of the World Travel Market (WTM). The meeting, which was attended by some 80 delegates, featured a presentation of the recently published *Global Report on Women in Tourism*, a joint UNWTO/UN Women publication, followed by interventions of representatives of the public and private sectors, as well as of civil society. The latter shared their views and experiences on tourism's important role in promoting women's empowerment and discussed this link in light of the main themes of the report – Employment, Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Education and Community.

OPENING REMARKS

2. **Mr Zoltan Somogyi**, moderator of the event and UNWTO Executive Director for Member Relations and Services, extended a warm welcome to those assembled. Welcoming the occasion as an event to raise awareness of the importance of empowering women through tourism, and remarking on the high level of participation, gave the floor to the Secretary-General of the UNWTO.
3. UNWTO Secretary-General, **Dr. Taleb Rifai**, welcomed the audience and the three panellists, H.E. Ms. Liz Cramer Campos, Minister of Tourism in Paraguay, Ms. Zainab Ansell, Director of Zara Tanzanian Adventures, and Ms. Angela Hadjipateras, Founder and Co-Director of a community-based Lodge in Mozambique and Member of Central America Women's Network. He reminded the participants that in the global economy, few sectors were so strategically positioned as tourism to make a meaningful contribution to people's lives, to foster sustainability and environmental integrity, or to promote understanding and tolerance. Dr. Rifai stressed that gender inequality and discrimination against women are conspicuous among these challenges, and ones which must be addressed urgently, including in the sphere of tourism.
4. The Secretary-General highlighted that since the World Tourism Organization became part of the United Nations system in 2003, it has focused on linking tourism with the development agenda. Dr. Rifai recalled a time when tourism was seen purely as a business enterprise, and was not associated with the welfare of communities. He remarked how this perception has changed and how over the past decade, public awareness of tourism's role in development increased. Dr. Rifai noted that to ensure a focused development policy in the tourism sector, UNWTO links its development agenda with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and reiterated that, within this framework, MDG 3 – promote gender equality and empower women - is one of the most significant aims of the global community. The Secretary-General went further and shared his insight on the future of the global development agenda. He mentioned a consensus among development partners indicating that it will move beyond the MDGs to consider human rights deficits including those related to women's rights and he asserted that UNWTO sees itself as being part of these broader development agenda.
5. Dr. Rifai then explained the concrete actions which shape UNWTO's work on gender issues. He underlined the collaboration between UNWTO and UN Women, a partnership initiated over four years ago. The history thereof, he noted, could be traced back to the 2007 Think Tank entitled "*Tourism opens doors for women*" in Sri Lanka, which prompted UNWTO's decision to establish a programme on women's issues that would connect to the core of the Organization's work: the MDGs and the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. He then recalled that in 2008 a Forum on Women in Tourism was assembled at ITB Berlin, precipitating the development of an Action Plan to empower women through tourism, and subsequently, the partnership between UNWTO and UN Women. He reminded the gathering that the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 was the first concrete result of this collaboration and noted that other initiatives were under way, including the *Women in Tourism Empowerment Programme* and the *Tourism and Gender Portal*.

6. Dr. Rifai informed the audience that two weeks prior to the event, UNWTO and UN Women renewed their cooperation agreement in New York, committing to build on the findings of the Global Report to generate momentum for harnessing tourism's potential to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as to developing a gender mainstreaming strategy for the tourism public and private sectors. He avowed that the agreement is one of the single most important memoranda of understanding that UNWTO has signed, putting the organization in the spotlight and dictating serious obligations for the future.
7. He stressed that much remains to be done to achieve MDG 3 and to effectively ensure the respect for the rights of vulnerable segments of society, including women and children. He recognized that despite tourism's positive effects, misuse of tourism infrastructure can precipitate the abuse of the most vulnerable groups of society, a grave problem which must urgently be addressed.
8. The Secretary-General concluded the panel by reaffirming his commitment to the importance of working on gender issues, indicating that more time and resources will be devoted at UNWTO to the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality through tourism. Addressing the panellists, and Mr. Zoltan Somogyi, as moderator of the meeting, Dr. Rifai said he was honoured by their presence and participation.

PRESENTATION OF GLOBAL REPORT ON WOMEN IN TOURISM

9. Ms. **Marina Diotallevi**, Programme Manager of Ethics and Social Dimensions of Tourism at UNWTO, presented the **Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010**. She reminded the audience that the Global Report was the first joint publication of UNWTO and UN Women, and highlighted that it was the first attempt to provide a comprehensive map of women's participation in the tourism sector in developing countries. She stressed that the importance of the Report lay in creating a framework, previously non-existent, for monitoring women in tourism.
10. The aim of the Report, Ms. Diotallevi highlighted, "was to establish a set of indicators, use them to monitor the performance of women in tourism in the developing world, make recommendations for change, and inspire action". She then briefly introduced the Report's principle themes: *employment, entrepreneurship, education, leadership, and community*; and the geographical area covered by the study: the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania.
11. Ms. Diotallevi then elaborated on the key findings related to the Report's five themes. Regarding **employment**, the goal was to determine whether tourism was creating equal opportunities for women. For this dimension, the Report concluded that, "although women are well represented in formal tourism employment they are more likely than men to work at the clerical level, and less likely to reach professional-level tourism employment, and, as a result, their average take-home pay is lower than men's", she remarked.
12. Thereafter, Ms. Diotallevi outlined the results for **entrepreneurship**. The objective here was to monitor how well tourism was inspiring women as employers and entrepreneurs. Overall women are much better represented as employers in the hospitably industry. The indicators revealed the positive trend that one in three women are employers in the tourism sector, as opposed to an average of one woman in five in other industries, although great differences exist across the different countries studied. The biggest distinction is in Latin America, where women make up 51% of employers in tourism compared to 23% in other sectors.
13. As for the **education** dimension of the Report, results were constrained by the sparse data on tourism education and training, and thus a proxy indicator on women graduates in the services sector in general had to be used. The study indicates that women occupy 53% of all tertiary graduates while only 45% in the services sector.
14. With reference to **leadership**, Ms. Diotallevi mentioned a stark level of gender inequality. Women make up 21% of tourism ministers, 20% of tourism boards CEOs and 24% of tourism associations chairs. Despite inequalities, women hold more ministerial positions in tourism than in any other field, 21% compared to 17%. She remarked that in Africa results are higher than average, as a third of all its tourism ministers are women.

15. Ms. Diotallevi presented the fifth and final area of research: **informal tourism enterprises**. This dimension is important since an estimated 60% of women in developing countries are engaged in non-agricultural informal employment and thus monitoring tourism's ability to provide informal opportunities for women in their homes and communities was essential to form a comprehensive picture. The Report indicated that while the proportion of own-account workers who are men and women in tourism is roughly equal, about 70% of unpaid contributing family workers are women. Although studies are needed to determine the quality and sustainability of these jobs, the Report stressed that "unpaid family workers are vulnerable to exploitation" and that this is "one of the key areas to address in promoting gender equality in tourism."
16. To illustrate the power of tourism for women, Ms. Diotallevi presented four case studies featured in the Report: One involved a group of Mayan women in **Mexico**, who despite not having formal education, started a jam-making business called "Jungle Jams" and have won lucrative contracts with large hotels in the area. Another case was that of the Chetri sisters in **Nepal** who through their NGO, *Empowering Women Nepal*, have challenged gender stereotypes and empowered and trained hundreds of women to enter the profitable business of being mountain guides and porters. Ms. Diotallevi also mentioned the example of a group of women in the **Galápagos**, who started *las Perlas Bakery* with the assistance of a UNWTO loan and now sell more than 6,000 US dollars' worth of bread a month for the cruise ships. Finally, she drew attention to the case of a twice widowed woman in **Fiji** who started a soap business in her own kitchen and now has a multi-million dollar line of beauty products that is sold to tourist resorts and spas in Fiji and all over the world.
17. Although the monitoring system in the Report is still rudimentary, Ms. Diotallevi held that together with the case studies presented, the Global Report nonetheless reveals how tourism can be a vehicle to change women's lives. "But there is still a long way to go", she stressed and ended her intervention by presenting an agenda for Governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses which included the following main recommendations: i) Strengthening legal protection for women in tourism employment, ii) Facilitating women's access to land, credit, and resources; iii) Increasing the participation of women in tourism education, iv) Developing targeted training programs for women tourism professionals, v) Promoting women tourism leaders at all levels vi) Helping self-employed women in tourism to upgrade their businesses vii) Improving the monitoring of women in tourism, viii) Implementing the *Women's Empowerment Principles* formulated by UN Women. She invited participants to download the full version of the Global Report from UNWTO's webpage. [PRESENTATION OF MS. DIOTALLEVI. ACCESS THE GLOBAL REPORT here.](#)

PANELLISTS INTERVENTION

18. **Mr. Zoltan Somogyi** welcomed the Minister of Paraguay whom he mentioned was an excellent example of a women decision maker in tourism's public sector.
19. During her intervention **H.E. Ms. Liz Cramer Campos**, Paraguay's Minister of Tourism, shared her country's successful public programme aimed at empowering women in tourism, and recounted her own experiences as a female leader in the sector.
20. The Minister recalled that in Paraguay women initially had roles in rural tourism. "It began as an occupation for spouses and the children of farm workers", she remarked. "Despite the fact that women were already involved in the sector as artisans, handicrafts producers, and cooks, among others, all these experiences were very basic, very limited; these women did not know how to sell themselves within the value chain."
21. She recalled three major concerns when trying to build a programme to empower these women. The first was that women were not organized. "So the first thing we had to do was to organize them", she said, "To build confidence and trust among them". The second issue was that they lacked a business orientation. In response, the Ministry started a business orientation programme for micro and small businesses to give women entrepreneurs' basic managerial, marketing and financial skills. They also created a programme to help women manage their new entrepreneurial roles alongside their traditional roles as mothers and wives.
22. According to the Minister, the third problem was the lack of access to credit. She emphasised this is an important issue for women because they usually have no credit records. Once the Ministry was able to create associations and help them to develop business plans, they developed a credit programme with national institutions to provide loans. As a result, the Minister recounted that women hold now above 90 different positions alongside the Franciscan and Jesuits routes, including leadership roles in nine bed & breakfast establishments and two cafeterias.

23. Commenting on the figures presented in the Report, the Minister remarked that while it was good to have a high proportion of women as tourism ministers, one must be aware of the possible reasons for their occupation of these leadership roles. In Paraguay, she remarked, “tourism was considered as something light, as something regarding art crafts, regarding beauty, as something a country has to have because it needs to be showcased”, cautioning that “a high number of women in tourism leadership positions compared to other areas might be reflecting these perceptions.” H.E. Ms Cramer said that if that was the case, women in their position should work to show that tourism is a key sector for their countries. “Move away from the light and easy areas, and to go for the mainstream of the economy”, she advised. “If we want better budgets, if we want real support, we have to sell the sector as an economic sector that brings social and environmental impact.”
24. The Minister recounted her experience of changing the perception of politicians regarding the importance of tourism. She mentioned that bringing politicians on board means speaking in their own language, as “they understand the language of figures, the language of votes, and they understand the media.” She felt that a large number of women in tourism ultimately means votes for politicians, and making them aware of this by citing figures and marketing the sector intelligently, would move tourism higher up the political agenda.
25. The role of the media and public opinion, the Minister stressed, was key to raising the profile of tourism. The media strategy put in place by her Ministry included identifying strong women within women’s networks, promoting them in the media and giving them a voice. She recalled that this was how mayors of small towns in Paraguay began to understand that their decisions on tourism were crucial to gain support. “They had to listen to those tourism ladies, those bed and breakfast ladies, those artisans; this is how they started looking at them as important to their agenda”.
26. The Minister also underlined the importance of trying to move away from using general interest sections of the news media, and instead promoting tourism in those related with the economic and social sectors. The Minister ended her presentation by concluding: “socio-economic impact, figures, those are votes, and those votes are agenda, and agenda means better budget and better support”.
27. **Mr. Zoltan Somogyi** thanked the Minister and invited Ms. Zainab Ansell to take the floor.
28. **Ms. Zainab Ansell**, Founder and Director of Zara Tanzanian Adventures and Member of the Sustainable and Solidarity Tourism Network of the Spanish Banesto Foundation, related her experiences as a successful female entrepreneur. She explained how she managed to make her company one of the largest Kilimanjaro outfitters and one of the biggest tourism companies in Tanzania. She spoke of the bravery it took to “walk the path”. She explained that women face many challenges when becoming entrepreneurs in developing countries. “There is an entrenched social believe in Africa that women are supposed to stay at home. At times, society even does not expect you contribute to public life or to benefit the economy”, she observed.
29. Ms. Ansell explained that a key challenge she faced was access to credit. As she did not have a credit record, and given her gender, it was difficult to convince the loan officer to grant her a loan to launch her business and even harder, she recalled, getting licenses from the government. However, “it was perseverance and resilience that kept me going when facing these barriers”, she recalled.
30. Her determination grew in the early 1980s, Ms. Ansell said, while working for Tanzania’s National Airline (ATC). “Working with ATC created a dream; I wanted to open my own Travel Agency”. She was especially keen to move up from a clerical position, which, she held, “is often the place where women stay, not advancing to professional or leadership positions.”
31. Ms. Ansell recounted the story of how her company grew over time. In 1986, she used her savings and opened “Zara International Travel Agency” and began selling air tickets. However, when she applied for IATA Membership, it was not granted, and she had to work for over a year to prove herself. Thereafter, she was finally given the license which opened the doors and gave her the credibility to attract clients for Kilimanjaro and Safari excursions.
32. By 1990, as her business was steadily profiting, a second office was opened to promote safaris. Since this was before the advent of the internet, Ms. Ansell had to go to bus stations to sell safari tours. “There was finally an advantage of being a woman” she joked. “Tourists felt they could trust me because of being a

woman". In her first trips to international tourism fairs she recalled that those in attendance were surprised and suspicious to see a woman selling trips to climb Mount Kilimanjaro. In the mid-nineties, she expanded into the hotel sector, opening a small hotel which attracted customers due to its good service and affordable prices, and which was later expanded to a hotel of 80 rooms.

33. Ms. Ansell informed the gathering that her company employs many single women, training them especially in the areas of housekeeping, reception work, and as guides. "We are breaking stereotypes that women cannot do it", she emphasized. "Clients were surprised women can drive the car and take the client on Safari". She also felt that seeing her as a role model and being reassured by her example has helped other women start small businesses. She encourages them with her own personal slogan of "you can do it" and does her best to include their products in her hotels' supply chain.
34. Ms. Ansell also mentioned Zara Charity, a nonprofit foundation that finances its operations with 10% of her business revenue. Within its four areas of work, one is the Women's Foundation where women acquire literacy skills and are able to make handicrafts that are later sold in the hotels. She also spoke of the company's work with Maasai women, to whom they offer vocational training and whom they help market their handicrafts. They have constructed a waterhole in the village, saving the time and energy it previously took to get water in remote areas. "The Maasai women that work with us have been empowered and they are proudly helping their families", she remarked.
35. Acknowledging that women's rights have greatly improved in Tanzania over the past three decades, Ms. Ansell said this makes it easier for women to come forward and try to achieve their own particular goals and ambitions. While recounting anecdotes, Ms. Ansell recalled that high ranking public figures she has met are more open to women having a place in society, and are encouraging women to occupy public positions. She too encouraged women in the audience with her determined "you can do it" approach. "To achieve something worthwhile requires hard work, endurance and determination," she concluded, however "gender should no longer be a challenge."
36. **Mr. Zoltán Somogyi** thanked Ms. Ansell, exalting women that are surmounting barriers in the tourism sector. He then gave the floor to Ms. Angela Hadjipateras.
37. **Ms. Angela Hadjipateras**, Founder and Co-Director of Zalala Beach Lodge, a community-based lodge in Mozambique and Member of the Central America Women's Network (CAWN), expressed her pleasant surprise at the high level of participation at the event. She informed the audience that the project is located in Zambezia, in the middle of Mozambique's coast, towards the north where tourism is not yet developed. She also explained that the lodge which she and her colleagues were constructing was of an international standard, which they hoped would act as stepping stone or further tourism projects in the province.
38. During her development work in Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa, Ms. Hadjipateras saw tourism's potential to promote a different approach to development, one which could have a more sustainable impact. She explained that her project aimed at reducing poverty, enhancing sustainable development and community livelihoods, and promoting equal opportunities for women. To measure its impact on people's lives, they collected baseline data which identified living conditions, and needs and expectations regarding the project. A key element, she stressed, was also to "prepare communities for the concept of tourism".
39. In partnership with an association working with adjacent communities, their research found that there were differences between the livelihoods of men and women. While the former were mainly involved in fishing, the latter worked in agriculture. Only 5% of the people in the sample studied had any paid employment, and when women were spoken to about the situation, they highlighted that in order to survive some of them had to resort to early marriage and/or prostitution. The main expectation of people in the area regarding the lodge was to access jobs and training, however they also felt it could promote development in the area.
40. Ms. Hadjipateras clarified that although the lodge is not fully operational yet, a bed & breakfast is open which has created employment for the local community in the region. The construction work on the lodge has also created employment, employing locals as construction workers, cooks and gardeners. She stressed the emphasis placed on providing the best possible training to improve women's skills, including technical skills training, managerial skills and pastry-making skills. She also mentioned that they promote local heritage: the lodge buys local pottery, which it uses as decoration for their bungalows, and supports traditional dances by encouraging dance groups to provide entertainment at the lodge.

41. To exemplify how women are benefiting from her project, Ms. Hadjipateras referred to two case studies. The first centred on a woman called Esperanza, who is involved with gardening work at the lodge and who previously sold cakes in the village. When they interviewed Esperanza, she mentioned how proud she is to have proven to others that she can handle “men’s work”, that she is learning English and that she now has more income, which she can use to buy school materials, clothes, household utensils and medicines. “She can help family members and now her husband looks at her differently”, Ms. Hadjipateras pointed out.
42. The second case study was that of Francisca, a bar owner and well-known figure in the village. She attended a management training course offered by the project which had a notable impact on her life. Ms. Hadjipateras explained that she applied what she learned about finances, market research and other issues to her business in order to run it effectively. Francisca has seen her profits increase and has employed another three workers. In Ms. Hadjipateras view, Francisca’s success will also contribute to the development of the lodge by increasing the dining choices available to guests in the village. “It is mutual benefit, this is what it must have to be to be sustainable”, she observed.
43. Ms. Hadjipateras summarized the lodge’s main benefits for women. She noted that the extra income, new work environments, and new skills women have received have improved their livings standards, increased their savings, raised their self-esteem, fostered friendships, and provided them with independence at home. For example, some women can now bring orphans home, whereas before they did not have this option, since men were reluctant to accept them. “Now, women have the right to do what they please”, she stated.
44. Ms. Hadjipateras admitted that despite the benefits, gender equality in the area has not yet been achieved. She admitted that despite efforts to reach women at the community level, there are more men working for the lodge (50 men and 12 women), and more men than women attended the training sessions.
45. Reflecting on the challenges to achieving gender equality through her tourism project, Ms. Hadjipateras mentioned that more than 40% of women in the community had no education whatsoever and that they generally have lower level of skills and training, they often lack self-confidence, and face the problem of men in the household resisting women leaving the house and becoming independent. She also referred to constraints at the private sector level, such as possible tensions between business and social objectives which can undermine the viability of a business. The private sector, she said, often lacks the incentive to undertake the extra effort of finding women suitable to work in the sector. “Men are always the first to come forward and speak at meetings, so, unless, conscious efforts are made to reach the women, they often remain invisible”, she remarked. At the government level, she felt that while Mozambique has strong national policies on gender equality and on community involvement in tourism, no linkages between the two exist, i.e. there are no policies that recognize the importance of promoting women rights in the sector.
46. Concluding her presentation with recommendations to enhance tourism’s ability to empower women and foster gender equality, Ms. Hadjipateras stressed the importance of gender awareness programmes in communities and the need to emphasize skill-building and training. Investing in these areas, she claimed, would make a long term impact. In addition, she felt that positive discrimination at work in the form of giving preference to women at the recruitment level might encourage them to apply for jobs. Finally, she remarked that governments should provide a clear framework making gender equality part of their tourism policy, and could provide incentives to ensure that the existing tradeoff between social and private returns is eliminated.

PRESENTATION OF MS. HADJIPATERAS

47. **Mr. Zoltan Somogyi** thanked Ms. Hadjipateras for her input. He reminded those assembled that in Spanish “Esperanza”, the name of the female gardener in the Zalala project, means “hope”, and that this is very important message. He called for the transformation of hope into more consistent efforts towards a tourism sector with greater gender equality.
48. The Executive Director of UNWTO called for well-strategized, persistent and concerted effort from all actors in the industry. “We need to convince tour operators, hotel managers and the private sector that equality in their companies means good business. We must persuade communities that supporting the economic empowerment of women will benefit their entire communities and help lift them out of poverty. And we should strive tirelessly to ensure proper regulations and incentives in the public sector to redress gender inequalities”, Mr. Somogyi concluded.