



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

Women's Rights & Gender Equality in Tourism

This unit will help you explore key issues related to **women's rights and gender equality in tourism**. While women are highly represented in the tourism workforce globally, often exceeding employment rates in other sectors, many are employed in low-paid service roles. This situation is detrimental to the women themselves and doesn't benefit the companies they work for.

Through this unit, you'll delve into the real stories of four women who achieved a better quality of life through improved working conditions, which, in turn, contributed to the success of their companies.

What will you learn?

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- **Explain the key issues** related to women's rights and gender equality in tourism.
- **Identify potential negative impacts** of tourism on women's rights and understand what actions you can take to address them.

Keywords: Sustainability, tourism, management, gender equality, women's rights

Discrimination against women

Key Lessons

Sophia wants to be a successful career woman and a good mother. Could her husband help around the house? "She gets paid less than Paul" for doing the same job. How is that fair?

Mia loves showing tourists her country but not when they're rude or behave badly. She has to earn money to support her family, whatever happens at work. But one day she'd had enough. She spoke up.

Asha's the new tourism manager. She wants a fair workplace for everyone where human rights are respected. No company can really succeed "if it allows half the workforce" to be treated badly. "It's a small start to include some women in management positions," but

we're half the population! Women make good decisions about workers' rights, equal pay, childcare and the workplace culture. When you pay women the same as men for the same job, it changes the workplace for the better. When you value women and the unpaid work they do at home, it improves family life.

When you insist on equal human rights for women, it lifts up everyone in the community. "When you support one woman, you start a chain reaction." The ripple effect on women, children, families, communities and the wider economy is immense and we all benefit.

The manager in the film did something about the poor working conditions and unfair pay, creating a win-win situation. Unfortunately, this is not yet the case in many areas of the tourism industry.

Women are exposed to many risks in tourism

They earn less than their male colleagues, have to work long and irregular working hours and are exposed to gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment.

The tourism industry is one where gender-based discrimination takes place even though the number of women working in the industry is about twice the number of men in some countries.

Women are exposed to discrimination in which of the following?

- Wages
- Correctly checked
- Terms of their jobs
- Correctly checked
- Working conditions
- Incorrectly unchecked
- Promotion and internal social relations

Assigning women specific rights and responsibilities based on their gender, rather than their qualifications, background, education and experience, constitutes serious discrimination.

Closing the Salary Gap and Boosting Career Opportunities for Women in Tourism

In Your country's tourism sector, women make up the majority of the workforce. However, they consistently hold the lowest-paid, lowest-status jobs.

Underrepresentation in Management

Despite forming over 50% of the hospitality workforce, women remain significantly **underrepresented in management positions**. For instance, a study by Equality in Tourism

revealed that women constitute only 27% of board members in major hotel chains. This disparity highlights a clear barrier to women's advancement in the industry.

What Can YOU Do to Increase Women's Access to Leadership Roles?

Action is needed to dismantle the barriers that prevent women from accessing tourism opportunities and leadership roles. Here's how you can make a difference:

- **Develop:**
 - Create a comprehensive **gender equality policy** for your organization.
 - Implement a **gender-equal recruitment and promotion strategy** to ensure fair opportunities.
 - Make a firm commitment to **end the gender pay gap** within your company.
- **Ensure:**
 - Provide opportunities for **continuous professional development** for all women on your staff.
 - Actively work to **ensure women's voices are heard** at the community level, giving them a platform to contribute.
- **Promote:**
 - **Promote women's involvement** in decision-making processes at all levels of your tourism operations.
 - Provide necessary **support mechanisms** to enhance the active participation of women in these decision-making processes.
- **Enable:**
 - Implement policies that **enable all staff to balance work and home life**, recognizing the unique challenges women often face.

Salary gaps and limited career opportunities are just one crucial aspect where gender equality falls short in tourism. Our next lesson will delve deeper into the overall employment conditions for women in the industry.

Improving Employment Conditions for Women in Tourism Sector

In the tourism sector, particularly within hotels, women are disproportionately found in lower-skilled, poorly paid roles. They are also more frequently employed in part-time and temporary positions compared to men. Departments like housekeeping and waiting services often have a particularly high female workforce.

Unfortunately, the employment rights of women working in the tourism sector are frequently violated.

What Tourism Companies Must Do

Tourism companies in Your country have a responsibility to **uphold and defend the rights of their women workers**.

Make Women Aware of Their Legal Rights:

- **Educate women** on their legal rights. Women employed in the informal sector, such as vendors or craft sellers, may not be aware of their entitlements.
- **Build women's capacity to assert these rights**, for example, by supporting and encouraging their participation in cooperatives and collectives.

Respect Women's Rights:

- **Respect women's maternity rights**, which includes providing adequate maternity leave.
- **Ensure safe working conditions for women**, addressing concerns like safe travel for staff at night.
- **Provide protection against workplace harassment**, which involves formulating clear sexual harassment policies and appointing a dedicated harassment prevention committee.

Safeguard Women's Interests:

- **Adopt measures to specifically safeguard the interests, needs, and rights of women**, especially those in the informal sector.
- **Oppose all forms of sexual discrimination**, including unequal pay, dismissal due to pregnancy, and unequal access to decision-making positions, promotions, and training opportunities.

To enhance women's access to the numerous opportunities that tourism provides, concrete action is needed. For example:

- Offer **specialized vocational training** in specific skills to increase opportunities for female workers to advance within the industry.
- Provide **leadership training programs specifically designed for women** to help them climb the career ladder.
- Disseminate **information on women's specific rights**, available grievance mechanisms, and relevant women's organizations and networks that advocate for equal pay and rights.

By taking these steps, tourism businesses in Your country can contribute to a more equitable and empowering work environment for women.

Addressing Sexual Harassment of Female Workers in Tourism

Gender-based violence, including **sexual harassment**, is a very real and constant threat faced by women working in Your country's tourism industry. Women in hospitality — whether in hotels, restaurants, bars, casinos, or other tourism roles — often risk violence and harassment. This is partly due to the stark social and economic differences between female workers and others.

Who are the main offenders of sexual offenses? Unfortunately, the answer is **all of the above**:

- **Customers**
- **Colleagues/Co-workers**
- **Managers/Supervisors**

Like other workers in often non-standard employment situations where risks of violence and harassment are present, many women don't complain for fear of losing their jobs.

Sexual Harassment and Exploitation

Female workers are particularly exposed to sexual harassment and exploitation in **bars and nightclubs**, not only by customers but also by managers or other staff. These venues are sometimes hubs for prostitution. In many tourism destinations, women in prostitution are victims of human trafficking or have been forced into it by poverty. Women also face sexual harassment from hotel staff or customers in areas like hotel spas and massage parlors. Too often, customers who commit these offenses are not held accountable.

Do Something!

As a leader in the tourism industry, you **can and should take action against sexual harassment**. Your female employees must feel safe enough to confide in you.

What YOU Can Do:

- **Enforce a zero-tolerance policy** towards any form of exploitation of women in tourism, including labor abuse, sexual abuse, pornography, or trafficking.
- Take steps to ensure tourism doesn't **displace women or alienate them** from their communities or traditional roles. This involves raising awareness among all tourism stakeholders, providing information, empowering women in rural areas, and strictly applying your zero-tolerance policy.
- Ensure a **gender-friendly environment**, which includes guaranteeing the **safety and security of women tourists** as well.

By taking these actions, you contribute to a safer, more respectful, and equitable tourism environment for all women in Your country.

Supporting Working Mothers in the Tourism Sector

Many women in the tourism sector face challenging decisions when it comes to childcare.

State-provided childcare is rare, and the industry's often **erratic and long work schedules** make finding affordable childcare difficult. Consequently, most female workers rely on relatives for childcare, even if they live far away.

The significant amount of time women spend on **unpaid care work** prevents them from fully accessing the professional and economic opportunities available to men. This directly **reduces their earning power**, limits their influence in family decision-making, and often leads to **economic dependence**.

Benefits for Businesses That Address Childcare

By actively addressing childcare challenges and supporting female workers, tourism businesses in Your country can reap significant benefits:

- **Improved Talent Acquisition and Retention:** Skilled female workers increasingly seek roles that align with their childcare needs. Offering childcare solutions boosts staff retention and helps you attract top talent.
- **Increased Productivity:** When employees have support with childcare, they experience less distraction, reduced fatigue, and lower absenteeism, leading to higher productivity.
- **Enhanced Supply Chain Resilience and Diversity:** Supporting women in your workforce, including through initiatives like producing labor-saving devices to ease care work, can lead to revenue and overall business growth.

What Tourism Businesses Can Do

Here are concrete steps tourism businesses can take to support working mothers:

Maternity Leave:

- **Grant or extend paid maternity leave**, even if it goes beyond what's legally mandated in Your country.
- **Fully respect all women's maternity rights**, ensuring they receive the support they need during and after pregnancy.

Working Arrangements:

- Provide **alternative working arrangements** after maternity leave, such as shorter working days.
- Allow **working from home** when feasible, or enable staff to work closer to their hometowns if they have parental care responsibilities.

- Offer **childcare facilities** and implement flexible employment policies to support women with children or other care responsibilities.

Employee Education:

- **Train workers on gender norms and issues**, promoting an equitable division of household work among all family members.

By implementing these measures, tourism businesses can create a more supportive and equitable environment for working mothers, benefiting both their employees and their bottom line.