



Advancing Women's Economic Empowerment in the Tourism Sector in COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Photo: UN Women/Pornvit Visitoran

SUMMARY

This brief explores the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's economic empowerment in the tourism sector. The restrictions of movement applied as a response to the pandemic all but destroyed the global tourism industry. This has disproportionately affected women due to the industry's pre-existing gender inequalities and women's predominance in the sector's workforce. This brief examines emerging research and data on these impacts; identifies innovative responses to these challenges across regions; and makes concrete recommendations for action by different stakeholders to ensure that women's economic empowerment is central to the COVID-19 response and recovery in the tourism sector.

COVID-19 IMPACTS ON TOURISM

The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic is still being calculated. The World Bank reports that the global economy is set to stage a robust post-recession recovery, with global growth expected to reach 5.6 per cent in 2021. However, this global figure is largely based on China and the United States, with predictions for uneven recovery between emerging market and developing economies. For example, in low-income countries, where vaccination has lagged, growth has been revised lower to 2.9 per cent. Fragile and conflict-affected low-income economies have been the hardest hit by the pandemic and per capita income gains have been set back by at least a decade.¹ Global income will still be some US\$3 trillion less by the end of 2022 than anticipated before the crisis hit.²

In 2019, the tourism sector contributed 10.4 per cent to global GDP; a share which decreased to 5.5 per cent in 2020 due to ongoing restrictions to mobility. In 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, representing a drop of 18.5 per cent, leaving just 272 million employed across the sector globally, compared to 334 million in 2019. The threat of job losses persists as many jobs are currently supported by government retention schemes and reduced hours, without which full recovery of tourism could be lost. Domestic visitor spending decreased

by 45 per cent, while international visitor spending declined by an unprecedented 69.4 per cent.³ The figure below shows how this dynamic affected world regions, with the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific worst hit in terms of GDP, and Africa and North America losing the largest proportion of jobs.

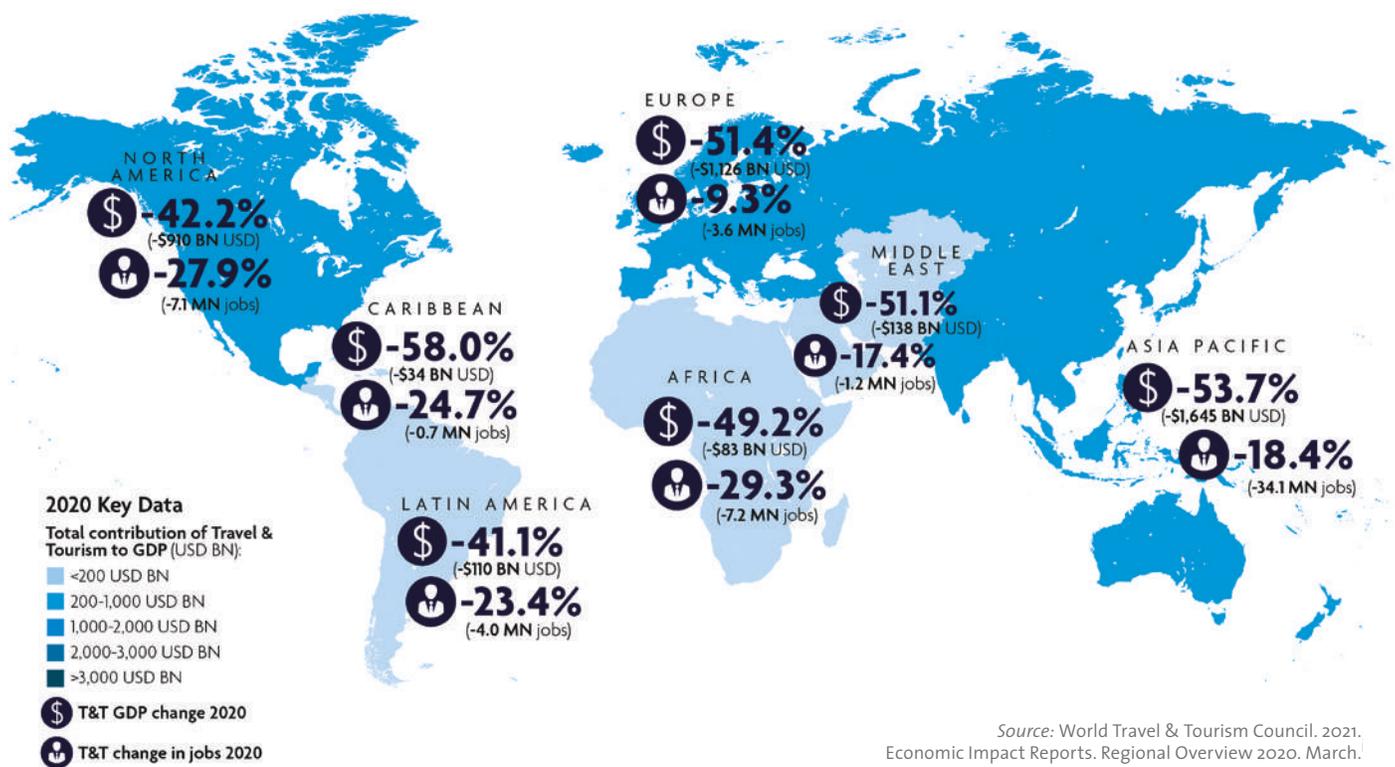
The collapse in international tourism represents an estimated **loss of US\$1.3 trillion in export revenues**—more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis. Most experts do not see a return to pre-pandemic levels happening before 2023. The crisis has put between **100 and 120 million direct tourism jobs at risk**, many of them in small and medium-sized enterprises.⁴ Modelled projections by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) predict that the crash of the international tourism sector could cause a **loss of more than US\$4 trillion to the global GDP** for the years 2020 and 2021. This reduction in tourism has caused a **5.5 per cent rise in unemployment of unskilled labour** on average, depending on the importance of the sector for the economy.⁵ In addition, much work in tourism is seasonal and located in the informal economy or carried out by unpaid family members.⁶ As such, these figures do not necessarily reflect the magnitude of lost jobs and income in the tourism sector.

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure.

The tourism sector is made up of a number of industries, such as accommodation; food and beverage serving; passenger transport (railway, road, water, air); transport equipment rental; travel agencies and other reservation services; cultural activities; sports and recreation activities; retail trade of country-specific tourism characteristic goods; and other country-specific tourism characteristic activities.

In general, women's employment is concentrated in accommodation, food and beverage serving activities, air passenger transport and travel agencies. However, as highlighted in the *Global Report on Women in Tourism*, data are not currently collected for these industries, apart from in European Union (EU) countries, so the International Labour Organization (ILO) category "accommodation and food services" is used as a proxy.

Sources: UNWTO. "Glossary of Tourism Terms." Accessed 1 December 2021, and UNWTO. 2020. [Methodological Notes to the Tourism Statistics Database, 2020 Edition](#).



Source: World Travel & Tourism Council. 2021. Economic Impact Reports. Regional Overview 2020. March.

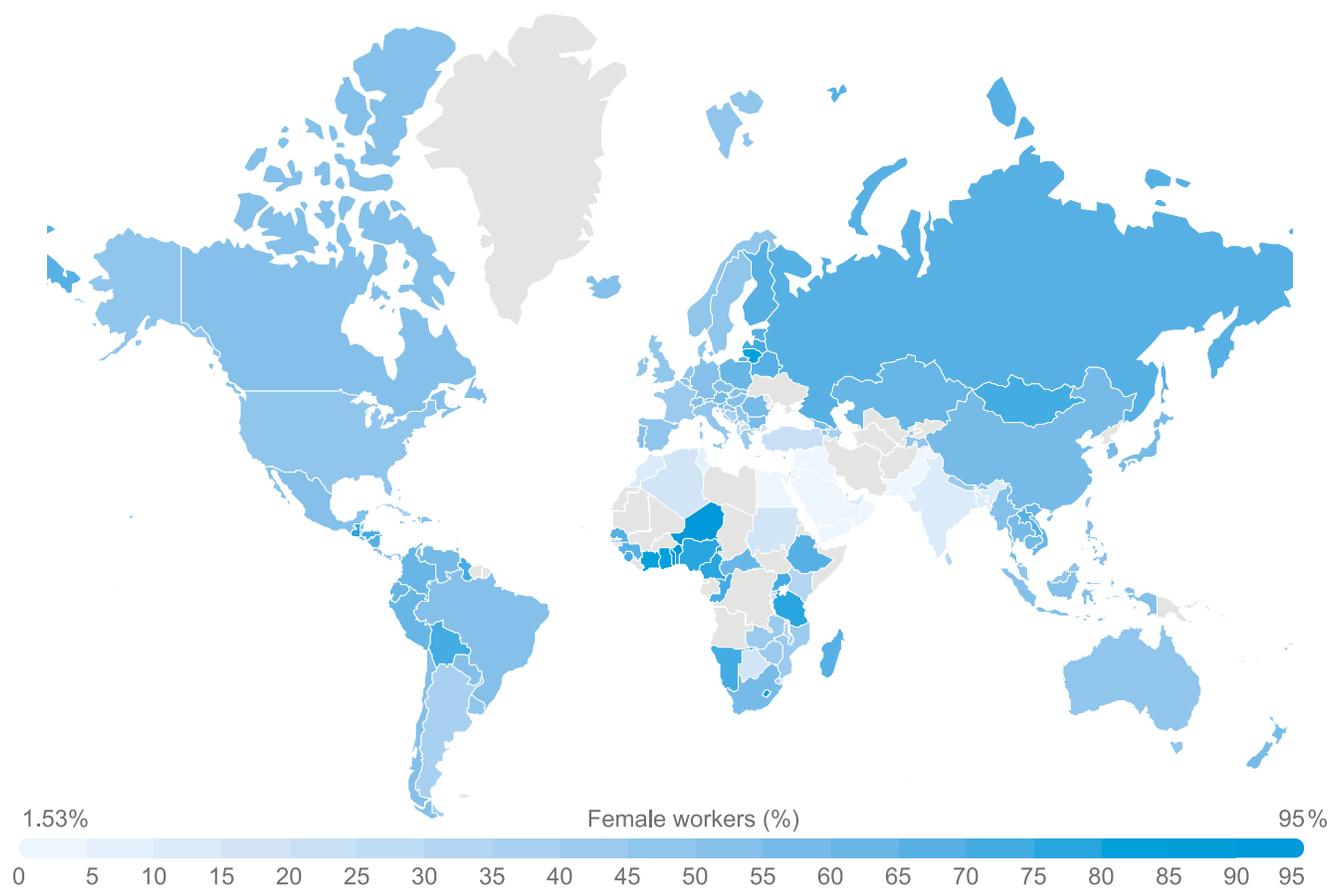
IMPACTS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS

As set out in the UN Women Policy Brief, [Addressing the Economic Fallout Of COVID-19: Pathways and Policy Options for a Gender-Responsive Recovery](#) (2021), decades of research by feminist economists have made it clear that crises are not gender neutral.⁷ Women’s work and livelihoods are often particularly affected during times of crisis, as their access to income is less secure; the majority of women’s work (58 per cent) is in the informal economy with little or no social protection; and they have less access to finance and technology.

The COVID-19 crisis cost women around the world at least US\$800 billion in lost income in 2020, equivalent to more than the combined GDP of 98 countries. Globally, women lost more than 64 million jobs in 2020—a 5 per cent loss, compared to a 3.9 per cent loss for men. This can partly be attributed to the impact of the pandemic on women-dominated sectors and the explosion of additional unpaid care work shouldered by women due to discriminatory gender roles and the stress on already weak health and care systems,

as set out in more detail in the UN Women Policy Brief, [COVID-19 and the Care Economy](#) (2021). Moreover, this figure does not take into account wages lost by women working in the informal economy. The impact of this economic crisis means that an additional 47 million women worldwide are expected to fall into extreme poverty, living on less than US\$1.90 a day in 2021.⁸ According to the World Economic Forum, the length of time to close **the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years due to negative outcomes for women in 2020.**⁹

These patterns are **amplified in the tourism sector, where women comprise the majority of the workforce and are often concentrated in low-skilled or informal work with less access to social protection.**¹⁰ Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 54 per cent of the global tourism workforce was made up of women, with large variation between countries. This is illustrated on the map below which represents the proportion of the tourism workforce that are women, using 2018 data.¹²



Source: UNWTO, Global Report on Women in Tourism, data from ILOSTAT 2018.¹¹

The lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics makes it difficult to assess the specific impacts of the pandemic on women’s employment and self-employment in tourism. Governments urgently need to increase efforts to collect and analyse such data in partnership with the private sector. Nevertheless, examples from various countries and regions help to shed light on the extent of the pandemic’s economic fallout on women in the tourism sector.

In many countries, women’s employment in tourism has been higher than in the overall economy; for example, in Mozambique (25.5 per cent higher than in the overall workforce) and the Czech Republic (8.9 per cent higher).¹³ For countries with high women’s labour force participation in tourism, the impact on women of the economic fallout from the pandemic is likely to be more sharply felt than in countries where women are less concentrated in the tourism sector. Before the pandemic, women in Australia held around 55 per cent of all jobs, both part-time and full-time, in the sector. By the end of 2020, they held 53 per cent of all jobs and 52 per cent of full-time jobs in the sector. A review of

the annual loss of jobs in the sector showed there has been some recovery for both men and women in part-time jobs. However, the **loss of full-time jobs** for women in the tourism sector is getting worse.¹⁴

Women’s participation in tourism is often concentrated in low-paid, seasonal work at the lower levels of employment. A good deal of women’s work in the sector also takes place in the informal economy, such as handicrafts and food production, and many women work as “contributing family workers” in family tourism enterprises. In **India**, many women workers are part of the homestay industry in various tourism destinations. However, due to the domestic and caring nature of this labour, their **work is often invisible**, and women rarely have financial control of these businesses. While homestays are usually registered under the Ministry of Tourism, women’s labour is not recognized within these businesses and women have therefore **not been taken into consideration for relief packages**.¹⁵

This trend can be seen more broadly across the tourism sector as a whole, as women workers, often migrants, tend to work in an informal or seasonal manner, and as such do not feature in official statistics of the labour department or tourism industry data. This highlights the need to conduct robust gender analysis when developing tourism policy in the COVID-19 recovery, as many aspects of women's work in tourism are made invisible, unpaid or underpaid.

Considering the high levels of dependency on the tourism sector in **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** and the dominance of women in tourism employment, especially in low-skilled activities, economic contraction of tourism to SIDS is likely to **hit women hardest with job losses**. For example, women have the highest share of employment in the food and beverage service sectors in the Dominican Republic, Kiribati, Mauritius and Tonga. In contrast, in relatively high-skilled tourism activities such as travel agencies and tour operators, women make up a lower proportion of the workforce in SIDS. While the impact on women in the tourism industry in SIDS has been disproportionate, the COVID-19 response has lacked an explicit gender dimension. Many SIDS have introduced fiscal or monetary measures targeting the tourism sector; however, few have included an explicit gender component.¹⁶ In addition to their high dependence on the tourism sector, SIDS are similarly vulnerable to climate risks and crises. Considering the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women in tourism, and the fact that women are more vulnerable to the risks and effects of climate change, it is essential that COVID-19 recovery efforts take into account the relationships between gender, sustainable tourism and climate change, and ensure policy coherence.

The pandemic has contributed to record unemployment, extreme poverty, and financial uncertainty and stress. All around the world, this situation, coupled with mobility restrictions and lockdowns, has led to a **drastic increase in domestic and other violence against women and girls**.¹⁷ As reported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, this shadow pandemic of violence against women has significantly increased in the **Caribbean** where the tourism sector has been blighted by the pandemic. In the Bahamas, for example, 70 per cent of GDP comes from tourism, placing not only women's employment, but their safety and well-being at risk.¹⁸ This issue is not only related to the domestic sphere, as the impact of travel and mobility restrictions has made public spaces less safe for women and girls with empty streets and public transit. Restrictive measures affect women

workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, as travelling to and from their places of work, and carrying out their business activities, carries an elevated risk. Evidence in some countries already shows that increased reports of domestic violence have continued after the lockdown period¹⁹ and thus may have longer-term impacts on women's safety, both within the domestic realm and in public spaces, including as tourists and tourism workers.

“A gender-responsive approach to the COVID-19 crisis is essential across the whole of society to ensure that gender inequalities are not reproduced, perpetuated or exacerbated in the context of this pandemic. This includes in workplaces, through healthcare provision and research, and in preventing violence towards women and girls.”

Source: International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). 2020. [“IUF COVID-19 Demands: Equality.”](#)

Taken together, these data and selected examples show the **devastating and multifaceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the tourism sector, revealing already existing discriminatory gender practices within the sector and ongoing challenges to gender equality and women's rights to and at work.**

PUTTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AT THE CENTRE OF RECOVERY

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [Global Report on Women in Tourism – Second Edition](#) (2019) highlights how women's participation in the tourism sector can contribute to economic empowerment and gender equality in five key areas: employment; entrepreneurship; education and training; leadership, policy and decision-making; and community and civil society.

However, as set out in the UNWTO report, achieving these goals was already difficult before the pandemic. **Unless concrete actions are taken, the post-COVID-19 era will be even more challenging for securing women's economic empowerment in the tourism sector.**²¹ The recovery of the tourism sector and COVID-19 recovery present an opportunity to “build back better” and “build forward”, with women's economic empowerment as a central focus.

A number of emerging good practices by the public sector, private sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships are highlighted below. These examples demonstrate the kinds of concrete actions that can be taken across the five thematic areas specifically within the COVID-19 response and recovery.

EMPLOYMENT

A key challenge for women's economic empowerment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic includes the widespread job losses caused by the collapse of the tourism sector. There are also concerns around the retrenching of gender stereotypes in tourism employment, and the halting of measures to promote gender equality across the sector. Women's ability to balance work and domestic responsibilities has also been strained by the increase in care and domestic work and the lack of supportive and flexible employment policies and care infrastructure.

In **Nepal**, the 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking company trains young women to become trekking guides in the mountains

of Nepal. When the nationwide lockdown hit and the company was unable to operate, they provided cash relief of US\$100 to temporary staff members to help them return to their homes. Permanent staff members were provided with a minimum flat salary of US\$50 per month, enough to at least enable them to pay their rent. The company has helped staff who were infected with COVID, providing funds for counselling and making necessary arrangements. The company has also used this time to conduct virtual monitoring and evaluation, which will support its efforts in developing and employing women trekking guides as the tourism sector recovers.²²

In the **United States**, Airbnb expanded its benefits for employees in response to COVID-19, providing additional days of well-being and emergency time off; two coordinated companywide days off; and new working norms and manager expectations to allow for more flexible work. Following these actions, in 2021, Airbnb was recognized as “[Leading on Leave](#)” by the National Partnership for Women & Families, an advocacy group dedicated to advancing key policies for women and families.²³

Intrepid Travel, a signatory to the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPS²⁴) since 2017, works with more than 1,250 staff of about 65 nationalities, based in more than 40 offices around the world from its headquarters in **Australia**. Close to 60 per cent are women. In response to the changing needs of their workforce, particularly during the pandemic, Intrepid introduced a flexible work policy to allow staff to set their own hours and choose a work schedule that suits them, fulfilling a desire to balance home life and work and be global rather than localized. Considering its women-dominated workforce, this policy has allowed for the retention of women staff during the pandemic, in contrast with the many companies which did not respond to the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women staff due to increased care responsibilities.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women entrepreneurs in tourism have been hit twofold: by the reduction in the direct provision of goods and services to tourists and the drastically reduced demand from tourism supply chains. Significant initiatives have been taken in the public and private sector for a gender-responsive recovery and to support women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. These measures include continued provision of skills development opportunities, facilitating market access, wage subsidies, tax cuts and exemptions, increased access to finance, interest rate subsidies and reduction of social security contributions.

In **South Africa**, all State Departments are required to comply with the Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting,

Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework (GRPBMEA). Under this framework, the South African Department of Tourism is required to ensure that women's empowerment and gender equality are at the centre of policy priorities, results-based planning, budgeting and accountability. Key activities by the Department of Tourism to promote women's empowerment include the *Women in Tourism (WiT) Programme*, a three-year pilot programme implemented in collaboration with UNWTO in the Limpopo province, which is the second most impoverished province in the country but has significant tourism potential. This project has continued during the COVID-19 pandemic as much as possible and will be expanded into a larger-scale project as part of tourism recovery in South Africa.



Source: Global Report on Women in Tourism.²⁰

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the WIT Programme ran a series of webinars on skills development to support women tourism entrepreneurs. These included sessions on social media, technical support, wellness and tech-savvy businesses. The programme supports tourism authorities to work substantively on women's economic empowerment in the sector, developing targeted policies and programmes, and ensuring continuing support for them during the pandemic. The South African example demonstrates what can be achieved when gender mainstreaming is mandated from the highest level of government.

Currently piloted in **Mexico**, the UNWTO *Weaving the Recovery – Indigenous Women in Tourism* project, is aimed at enabling the market access of indigenous women to tourism and conscious consumers through textiles, fair trade and community entrepreneurship. The project builds on indigenous women's ancestral knowledge and skills in traditional textiles, enhancing their capacities to participate in the recovery of the tourism sector.²⁵ A training toolkit aims to build digital skills for women to access online markets to sell their products. After Mexico, this project will be implemented in other countries of the Latin American region.

In addition to these programmatic measures to support women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, a number of governments have enacted policy measures to sustain tourism workers and help them recover from the effects of the pandemic. Many of these measures are gender-responsive and either directly target women recipients or are beneficial to women in countries where they make up the majority of tourism small-business owners.

In **Argentina**, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports launched a **support fund to subsidize wages** for tourist service providers (*Fondo de Auxilio para Prestadores Turísticos*) in June 2020. Monthly payments are available for small, independent service providers who offer complementary tourist services such as guides, short-term excursions and instructors. Priority recipients include women and non-binary people who carry out such activities. The fund was in its sixth round of soliciting new applications in mid-2021.²⁶

Burkina Faso adopted policy measures to support entrepreneurs in the tourism sector with tax cuts and exemptions. A 25 per cent reduction in business licences was introduced to benefit companies in the passenger transport, hotel and tourism sectors. Companies that already bought a licence could opt for compensation from other local taxes. Tourism-related activities, such as accommodation and food services, account for 7.8 per cent of women's employment in Burkina Faso compared to 1.7 per cent of men's.²⁷

In **Paraguay**, the Ministry of Women's Affairs submitted a request to the Banco Nacional de Fomento and the Crédito Agrícola de Habilitación for special attention to women entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, **making requirements more flexible and creating a specific line of credit**.²⁸

In **Poland**, where women are twice as likely as men to work in accommodation and food services, COVID-19 response policies aim to ensure that companies have sufficient liquidity to maintain their activities by providing support to tour operators and other workers active in tourism and culture. Measures include **direct grants, interest rate subsidies and reduction of social security contributions**.²⁹

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The suspension of in-person learning has had a significant effect on the training and education of women in tourism, particularly for those in hard-to-reach communities or without access to digital technologies. In addition to leadership and skills training for women in tourism, gender equality training programmes for tourism representatives in the public and private sectors lead to greater outcomes for gender equality. A number of companies and governments have stepped up efforts to fill this gap in education and training caused by the pandemic.

The *Santander BEST Africa* programme from Banco Santander aims to maintain the continuity of women's tourism businesses throughout the pandemic, providing training, exchange and shared learning, technical assistance, market access, improved use of technologies, and financing for activities linked to sustainable tourism in selected destinations. The Banco Santander Foundation estimates its aid will help create or maintain jobs for up to 1,300 women and train at least 700 women by the end of 2021. It will make a first contribution of EUR 500,000 for the first three years of the programme, which is running in **Gambia, Senegal and Morocco**, with more countries to be added in 2021.³⁰

The Airbnb Africa Academy was created to encourage healthy tourism and entrepreneurship in rural and under-resourced communities across the continent. By working with community-based and grassroots organizations, the Academy provides local hosts and co-hosts with information and tools to create listings on Airbnb's platform and create unique experiences to further expand the role of local, healthy and inclusive opportunities in African tourism. The Airbnb Africa Academy is part of [Airbnb's US\\$1 million commitment](#) to boost community-led tourism in Africa, and is supported by the World Bank Group. The majority of participants in the Academy are young women.

Due to COVID-19, many women in **South Africa** were no longer able to host visitors. Airbnb set up Online Experiences so people could provide services from the safety of their homes, and set up the [Airbnb Academy Fund](#), a relief fund established to provide funding to tourism entrepreneurs who participated in the Airbnb Africa Academy, with a total of ZAR 1 Million paid to hosts who had been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis.

In **Malaysia**, the government is encouraging training as part of labour market activation to respond to the pandemic and is providing double deductions on expenses incurred on approved tourism-related training.³¹ Women make up 49 per cent of the tourism workforce in Malaysia and are likely to benefit from such an initiative.³²

LEADERSHIP, POLICY AND DECISION-MAKING

Leadership for gender equality in tourism is more important now than ever before. Women's economic empowerment should be at the centre of the COVID-19 recovery, with women involved in decision-making at all levels. Gender perspectives should be integrated into tourism policy and gender equality strategies for the sector accompanied by institutional and budgetary support.

A key initiative to highlight in this thematic area is the UNWTO *Centre Stage: Women's empowerment during the COVID-19*

recovery programme, which aims to foster opportunities for women's empowerment and ensure gender equality in tourism's recovery from COVID-19 through targeted, measurable interventions including the promotion of widespread commitment to the Action Plan of the [Global Report on Women in Tourism, Second Edition](#); building capacity across the tourism sector to enable private and public stakeholders to effectively implement gender mainstreaming and providing more opportunities for women's empowerment; and producing primary data that can be used for future research and action in the field. Supported by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and UN Women, the 18-month programme will be implemented in four pilot countries—**Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Jordan and Mexico**—with a view to scaling up in the future and replicating its successes across world regions.

The [Cancun Women's Initiative Declaration Supporting Women in Travel & Tourism](#) was adopted at the World Travel & Tourism Council Global Summit in April 2021. Signed by more than 100 companies, tourism destinations and industry leaders, it commits them to a series of concrete actions aimed at "providing equitable opportunities, ensuring fair treatment, removing barriers, and fostering greater financial, professional, and social independence for women."³³ The Declaration includes specific action points for actors from the public sector, private sector and academia, focusing specifically on COVID-19 tourism recovery.

Photo: World Travel and Tourism Council



Multilateral collaboration for sustainable tourism and women's economic empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim Association

The Indian Ocean Rim, bounded by Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Australia, is home to one third of the world's population. With its rich biodiversity and diverse art, cuisine, music, dance, architecture and history, the region has a robust tourism sector, including in adventure tourism, coastal tourism, cruise tourism, safari and wildlife tourism, and eco-tourism, where many women contribute their paid and unpaid work and where there is ample opportunity for women's increased participation and leadership. The [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#) recognizes the current and potential contributions of tourism to the social, cultural, economic and environmental development of the region, as well as to the achievement of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). IORA equally recognizes women's economic empowerment and gender equality as a prerequisite for sustainable development. To foster regional cooperation and exchange on advancing women's empowerment and sustainable tourism, IORA established the Core Group on Tourism and a Working Group on [Women's Economic Empowerment](#), with dedicated action plans that help set policy agendas and provide formal institutional mechanisms and coordinating platforms for dialogue amongst IORA Member States, Dialogue Partners and other international bodies. One of the tasks of the Core Group on Tourism is to identify opportunities to empower women in tourism by cooperating with the Working Group on Women's Economic Empowerment which is committed to developing a framework for women's empowerment in sustainable tourism. As part of IORA and UN Women's project, [Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Indian Ocean Rim](#), supported by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, IORA representatives increased their capacities and networks to achieve these goals through a 2021 training on "Women's Economic Empowerment in the Tourism Sector".

COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

While tourism can increase women's access to income, there are many barriers to substantive gender equality and women's actual empowerment. Women's grassroots organizations in tourism and women's participation and leadership in trade unions must be supported to promote women's political and social empowerment.³⁴ Partnerships between women's groups, civil society organizations, trade unions, international organizations, the private sector and the public sector can help to support women's rights to work and at work in tourism, and to promote cohesive adoption and implementation of gender-responsive policies, particularly in the COVID-19 recovery. The "shadow pandemic" of gender-based violence is one example of a serious barrier to women's economic empowerment that requires collaborative action from both the public and the private sector. In tourism-dependent communities, this has been a particular concern due to the rapid loss of income and economic independence for women.

AccorInvest is one of a small number of hotel chains to have an agreement with the hotel workers' trade union International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUFA) on sexual harassment in the workplace.³⁵ They have also committed to specific goals for women's participation in senior management positions, including 30 per cent women on the executive committee by 2022, and 40 per cent women by 2025 (increasing from 18 per cent in 2020). As part of the company's response to increased violence against women during the pandemic—and as an active member of the HeForShe movement—Accor hotels committed to supporting local communities and women impacted by domestic violence by working closely with government bodies, local authorities, healthcare services and pandemic support teams.

In March 2020, Accor created CEDA (Coronavirus Emergency Desk Accor), a centralized platform that provides accommodation solutions to healthcare professionals and vulnerable communities, offering 17,373 overnight stays and almost 5,000 nights for women experiencing domestic violence. In South America, Accor joined the *Business Coalition for the End Violence Against Women* campaign, an initiative which

hosted victims of violence in Accor hotels through the *Acolhe Program*, which offered some 4,000 rooms per night in 295 hotels located in 133 municipalities and benefiting thousands of women. In Poland, Accor hotels have served as shelters for women suffering from violence in nearby communities.³⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

Targeted interventions by public, private and civil society actors can help to keep women in the tourism sector afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that they are engaged in and benefit from response and recovery measures over the long term. Given that the tourism sector may offer greater opportunities for women's employment and entrepreneurship than the broader economy,³⁷ investment

in decent work with social protection as well as financing and skills training for women and their enterprises are critical for gender-responsive tourism recovery. Building on accumulated research and recommendations developed by UNWTO, UN Women and partners,³⁸ the following actions are recommended for the public sector, private sector, civil society and international organizations.

ACTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

1. Place **gender equality concerns at the centre of labour policy in the tourism recovery**, including decent work and social protection for women, workplaces free from sexual harassment, and social protection, including maternity, paternity and parental leave. Expanding decent work and social protection are especially critical for women in informal employment in the tourism sector.
2. Ensure that **recovery packages for small and medium-sized enterprises include targeted financing for women's tourism enterprises** in order to offset the damage caused to women's entrepreneurship during the pandemic.
3. Facilitate the **integration of women's tourism businesses into national and global tourism supply chains** by supporting and regulating gender-responsive procurement in the sector.
4. Implement measures to **recognize, reduce and redistribute women's disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work**, to mitigate the impact of the current and future crises on women's participation in the labour market, and adequately **reward** and **represent** paid housekeeping and care workers in the tourism sector.
5. **Include women at all stages of decision-making processes for tourism recovery**, using the disproportionate impact of the crisis on women as an opportunity to develop the next generation of women leaders in tourism.
6. Make sure that **data collection on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector is sex-disaggregated**.

ACTIONS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

1. Ensure that **women's rights, decent work and well-being are central in COVID-19 tourism recovery**, especially considering most tourism work is customer-facing and the heightened health and violence risks during the pandemic, including adherence to international labour standards and ILO Conventions on freedom from violence and sexual harassment in the world of work (C190), equal pay for work of equal value (C100), and the right to paid maternity and care leave (C183).

2. Ensure women's **rights to join and have decision-making roles in labour movements and trade unions**, in order to uphold commitments to labour standards and decent work for all.
3. Avoid retrenchment of traditional gender roles in the sector by **promoting women in non-traditional jobs**, such as tour guides with job training and mentorship opportunities.
4. **Engage in gender-responsive procurement** by buying from women's enterprises and working to make supply chains more gender-responsive, to make sure that women's businesses are central to tourism recovery.
5. Adopt policies to **promote gender balance in senior management and on executive boards** in tourism companies.
6. Allow for **flexible work arrangements** and adopt inclusive **paid leave policies** to support women's work-life balance and to reduce job losses, particularly in light of the sharp increases in unpaid care and domestic work caused by the pandemic.

ACTIONS FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. **Promote women's participation and leadership in trade unions** and encourage tripartite negotiations to ensure women's labour rights and decent work are central to tourism recovery.
2. **Support women entrepreneurs in tourism** through access to credit and finance in order to sustain women's tourism businesses.
3. Support **women's organizations, women's tourism cooperatives and women's business associations** in order to promote and protect women's rights to work and at work and increase gender equality in tourism recovery.
4. Collaborate to **produce timely research and data on women's economic empowerment** in tourism recovery.

In conclusion, targeted collaboration and action by all stakeholders are required to ensure that women's economic empowerment is at the centre of post-COVID-19 tourism recovery.

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