



#IWD 2021 – 8th March 2021.

TOURISM FOCUS: GTRCMC-EA

WOMEN IN TOURISM: AN INERTED DYNAMITE

Tourism has been identified by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) as *'one of the most dynamic and fastest growing economic sectors in the world.'*

The Sustainable Development Goals can be deduced to the sector in its impact on the developing economies. The direct, indirect and induced economic impacts are inarguably evident on women, who make up the majority of workers in the Tourism Sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has however brought changes that have shaken the industry. The very definition of tourism and its value chain, mobility at its core, has been rattled, with adverse effects. Women in the industry have obviously borne the blunt of reduced tourism activity.

The theme of IWD 2021, *#ChooseToChallenge*, could never be more relevant to the sector. The IWD 2021 organizers, through their website compel us to be alert to change and to embrace challenges as the pathway for making a difference.

Asset ownership and quality of work for women in Micro and Small tourism Enterprises is still under much study. However, MSEs stand as springboards for change according to various reports on Tourism Recovery. Governments have made efforts to inject stimulus to tourism MSEs as a response to the shocks from the pandemic. The plausible initiatives ought to be seen in light of several factors: First, the sustainability of tourism in a world where travel is dependent on the containment of the Virus. We may not experience an influx of tourists in a long time. What will women do, especially at the community level, offering cultural ancillary services around attraction sites?



Second, alternative markets that may need a shift of focus by key stakeholders. How can women be empowered to embrace these markets which may be closer home and different altogether?

Third, the supply of tourism and cultural experiences virtually. The dynamite cannot be stopped. It may not be the same, but it is possible. This would introduce investment-benefit arguments around technological infrastructure and training. But it could be the challenge that brings lasting change for women in tourism.

Lastly, offering value to tourists whether through physical or virtual products. In a world of competitive strategies, how can women offer unique products to niche markets that would anticipate needs and be resilient to threats?

These propositions ought to be supported by research-based information towards a recovery path and beyond. The Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to help Eastern Africa build resilient tourism products and combat crises.

As projections for tourism recovery continue to be realized, the industry still offers comparative benefits for women: Those women in formal employment who lost jobs, or those in informal enterprises who were pushed out of business, recovery means getting them back to economic productivity while in a #challengedbutchangedtourismindustry.

By: Abby Murage and Lina Mkoji,

*Researchers - Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre -EA,
Kenyatta University.*