

# Prioritising Gender Equality in Tourism: WHY and HOW?

The travel and tourism industry is one of the largest and most dynamic industries in today's global economy.

It provides over **272 million** jobs worldwide.

**54%** of these jobs are occupied by women.

## The Facts: Prevailing Gender Inequality

In the hospitality sector, women hold:

Less than **40%** Managerial positions.

Less than **25.5%** Executive committee members.

Less than **20%** General Management roles.

**Less than 8%** Board positions.

In the tourism industry as a whole women earn:

**14.7%** less than their male counterparts and comprise just **23%** of Tourism Ministers.

Source: Global Report on Women in Tourism, Second Edition (2019)

## Why does Gender Equality Matter?

Gender equality is based on "the principle of shared power and responsibility ...between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities." Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995



### The moral case

"It is not possible to realize the full human potential and achieve sustainable development if half of humanity is still denied the full enjoyment of their human rights and their opportunities". (Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development)



### The sustainability case

"Without tackling gender equality in a meaningful and substantive way, tourism's potential to contribute to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals will be substantively reduced". (Cole, Alarcon, 2019)



### The business case

"To be truly effective, a Board requires a diversity of skills, cultures and views to make smart decisions with lasting impact.....The push towards greater diversity is driven by.. an overall awareness that...companies must better reflect the markets they serve." (IFC, 2019). Ensuring diversity at all levels of decision-making results in a "virtuous cycle of increasing returns". (McKinsey, 2015)



# How can Gender Equality be Achieved? The Gender Mainstreaming Approach

Gender mainstreaming is “...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. ... the ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.” It was established as a major global strategy for incorporating a gender perspective and the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action into all UN policies and programmes.

## Equality in Tourism’s cornerstones for Gender Mainstreaming in the Tourism Industry

In order to bring about gender equality in tourism we are asking tourism and hospitality businesses to make the following pledge:

### 1. Gender Equality Policy

To put in place a company policy to mainstream gender equality throughout the organisation. This policy will be an integral part of an overall diversity policy, developed with a dedicated budget and specialist staff and, where necessary, external support, to create action plans aimed at delivering each of the specific ‘cornerstones’ listed below.

### 2. Gender monitoring

Collection of sex disaggregated data on pay, performance, access to training and promotion to be made compulsory and the data used by management to identify and address ongoing inequalities in the workplace.

### 3. Gender awareness training for staff and managers

Training to be provided on a continuous basis to ensure understanding of the policies and to enhance commitment and compliance. Such training should address unconscious gender bias and recognise the way this is compounded by the intersection of race, ethnicity, disability, religion, and sexual orientation.

### 4. Equal pay policy

A commitment to ending the gender pay gap and transparency around existing pay at all levels of the work force.

### 5. Access to workplace training opportunities

Training opportunities, should be provided on an equal basis for all workers, regardless of sex, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or disability, thereby providing access to skills development and better paying managerial positions for all.

### 6. Work/Life Balance

A commitment to enabling all staff to balance work and home life. This means considering strategies, such as flexible working arrangements, adequate maternity/paternity/carer leave, childcare support and favourable requirements for working unsociable hours.

### 7. Tackling sexual and other forms of harassment in the workplace

A culture of zero tolerance to harassment. Mechanisms established to enable staff to identify and report harassment without prejudice. To deal with such reports with sensitivity, appropriately and effectively, with due regard to national legislation, where it exists.

### 8. Adequate funding

Funding must be ensured to cover the cost of both the financial and human resources required to develop, implement, monitor and regularly update institutional gender-mainstreaming policies and practices.

### 9. Value Chains

Value chains contribute to strengthening capacity and resources for gender mainstreaming by including gender expertise in terms of reference for hiring consultants, support staff and suppliers. Both formal and informal supply chain companies should be supported to implement the above essential components of an effective gender mainstreaming strategy.

# Resources and Policy Frameworks

## Gender Equality frameworks

**Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, in particular Goal 5 - “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and Goal 8 - “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

**Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Described as an international bill of rights for women, it was instituted on 3 September 1981 and has been ratified by 189 states.

**UN Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)** provide a framework and guidelines for a gender-inclusive strategy in tourism. As at 2021, WEPs have been adopted by 6,000 companies of all sizes in 141 countries.

**Establishing Ethical Recruitment Practices in the Hospitality Industry** aimed at reducing the exploitation of migrant workers in the hospitality industry.

## Labour Rights frameworks

**The ILO Conventions** related to international women’s rights treaties, eg. Convention 100 (equal pay for work of equal value for women and men), c111 (prohibition of discrimination in work and occupation based on sex and other grounds), c156 covering Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for men and women workers, c183 on maternity protection and c190 on violence and harassment at work.

**The Gender Equality Guide** for Trade Unionists in the hospitality sector.

**The Fair Hospitality Charter** produced by UK Unite Union encompasses a range of fair labour practices, including anti-sexual harassment.

## Tourism policy frameworks

**UNWTO guidelines** directed at governments and businesses to help them better address the needs of women in the tourism sector by integrating gender mainstreaming in all programmatic internal decisions and operations. These guidelines are intended to support private sector tourism enterprises of all types and sizes to achieve effective and consistent strategies and programmes for gender equality across their operations.

**World Travel and Tourism Council’s “Environmental, Social and Governance Reporting in Travel and Tourism”**. Includes guidance on monitoring of gender and diversity within the labour force.

**Equality in Tourism International**<sup>1</sup> provides wide-ranging services for companies striving to achieve gender equality in their organisations and workforce. These include:

- Social and strategic needs analyses and gender equality training.
- Gender awareness programmes to develop standards, together with monitoring and evaluation.
- Organisational development and programme delivery, including strategic planning, change management, economic empowerment training and communications development.
- Gender and human rights impact assessments to identify and describe a benchmark for equality.

<sup>1</sup> [Home - Equality In Tourism - Gender Equality and Global Development](#)

# Best Practice Examples

## NH Hotel Group – Equality Plan

NH Hotel Group is a Spanish multinational hotel company based in Madrid, that operates over 350 hotels in 28 countries. In 2010, the group signed the Equality Plan with a strong focus on promoting a better work-life balance for its employees through various policies, including: paid leave for women undergoing fertility treatment; promotion of technologies enabling work from home; policies favouring promotion for women returnees; annual leave entitlement policies aimed at supporting employees with children overseas, and various other family-friendly policies. Furthermore, a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee was created to monitor compliance and impact. The Group was included in the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index in 2020 and 2021 in recognition of its policies on female leadership, equal pay and gender parity and sexual harassment. While gender inequalities in the workforce remain, the introduction and monitoring of such policies provide a good example of measures towards gender mainstreaming in the tourism context.

## 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking

A ground-breaking trekking organization in Nepal run by women for women. It was set up in 1994 to provide training for Nepalese women to penetrate the largely male-dominated trekking profession. To this end, an NGO called Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN) providing practical skills-based training for women as guides on treks. Since then, close to 2,000 women from all over Nepal have completed the training and are earning salaries equal to their male counterparts. Many have become guides and/or gained self-confidence to find employment elsewhere. Some were low caste women whom society looked down upon, others were socially disadvantaged and facing challenges in life. It has been a life changing experience for all the participants and also for trekkers, women in particular, who feel far safer being led by qualified female guides.

## The International Union of Food, Farm, Hotels and more Global Union (IUF)

In 2019, the IUF signed the first ever agreements focusing on tackling and bringing an end to widespread sexual harassment, which disproportionately affects women and is particularly prevalent in the hotel sector. Comprehensive agreements based on a zero tolerance policy with maximum disciplinary sanctions against perpetrators were signed with the Meliá and AccorInvest Group in that year. In the case of AccorInvest, the agreement applies not only to company employees, but also to “suppliers of goods and services who operate on behalf of AccorInvest.” In November 2021, an agreement was also signed with RIU Hotels, Spain’s largest domestic operator of holiday resorts with over 100 hotels in 20 countries. The agreement provides clear definition of all forms of sexual harassment and stipulates the need for the recourse available to victims to be widely disseminated. Under this ground-breaking agreement, harassment by customers, as well as co-workers, is also recognised. Under the terms of all these agreements, the hotel companies agree to regularly review procedures and evaluate the progress of their actions.