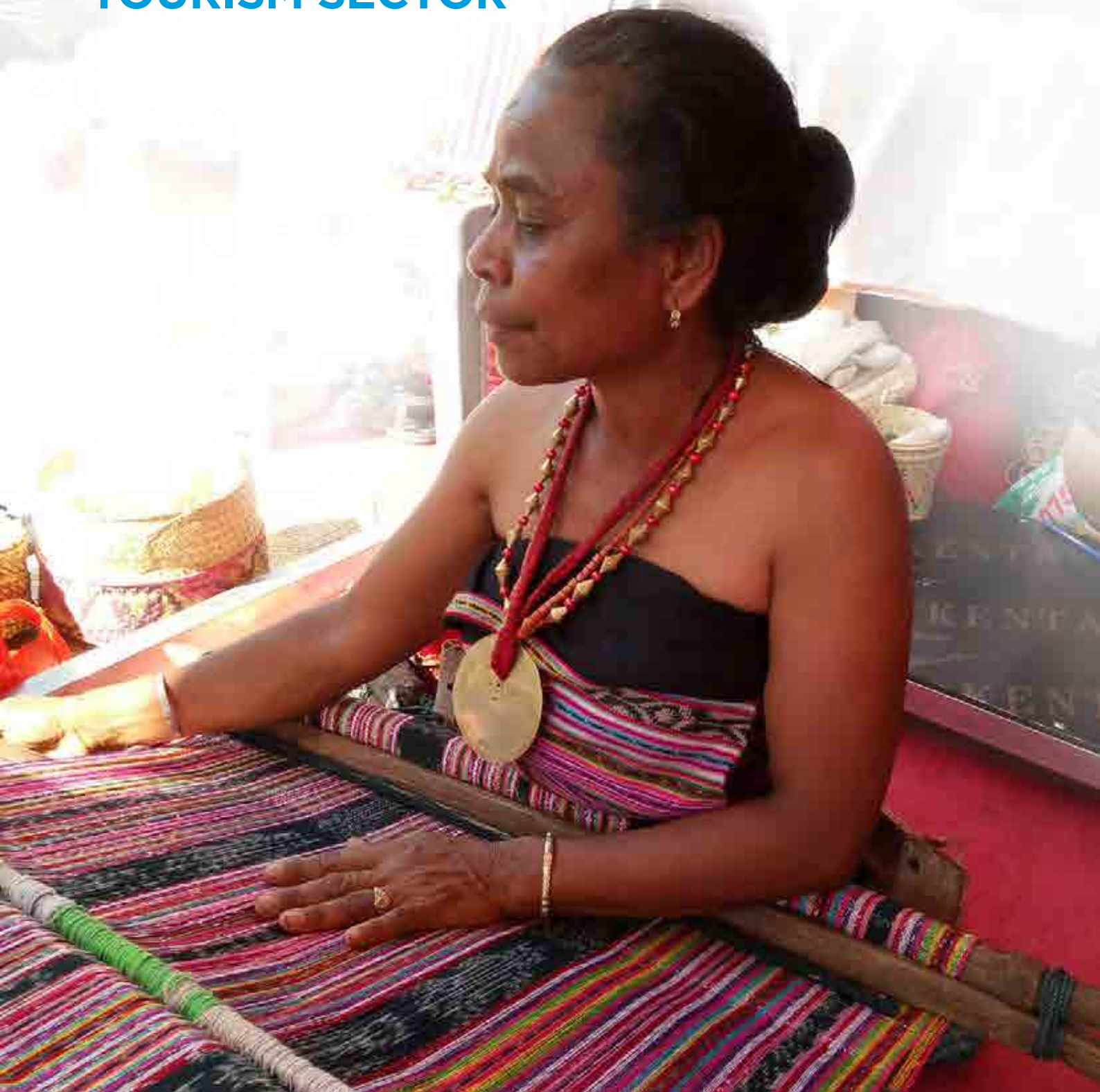

FOR EQUALITY AND THE ECONOMY: EXPLORING THE GENDER DIMENSIONS OF TIMOR-LESTE'S TOURISM SECTOR



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ABOUT UN WOMEN

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality. (www.unwomen.org)

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**UN WOMEN TIMOR-LESTE COUNTRY OFFICE
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	5
METHODOLOGY	9
Study limitations and further research	9
OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS	10
Glaring gaps in gender pay and sex-disaggregated data	11
Women's roles, collapsing of private sphere and work	12
Community tourism: opportunities for economic empowerment	15
Social norms as barriers to women and men's success in tourism	15
Safety in tourism	16
Gender gaps in skills and opportunities	17
Women's representation and leadership	18
The business environment for women in tourism	20
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	27
Representation and leadership	28
Education and training	29
Institutional gender mainstreaming	30
Gender-responsive policies and environment	30
REFERENCES	32
ANNEX 1	33
ENDNOTES	34

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism has the potential to be an important sector to drive economic growth, create jobs, and promote innovation for more sustainable development. Globally, the tourism industry employs more women than men around the world¹, and women account for 60% of employees in Accommodation and Food Services in Timor-Leste. This offers the potential for tourism investments to contribute to closing Timor-Leste's gender gap in employment and to provide better opportunities for women entrepreneurs and women's leadership in the industry.

In 2010 and 2019, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) conducted global studies on trends for women in tourism, in collaboration with UN Women, GIZ, the World Bank and Amadeus. The reports found that women represent the majority of the workforce, yet are over-represented in service and clerical level jobs, while representing an estimated 25% at the decision-making levels². Women make up a higher proportion of self-employed workers across sectors, but in tourism, this percentage varies across countries, highlighting factors that may contribute or limit women's entrepreneurship in tourism. Furthermore, women perform significant amounts of unpaid work as part of family tourism businesses. Despite these drawbacks, sustainable tourism has been shown to provide significant opportunities for women's advancement through formal and informal employment and enterprise development.

The Timor-Leste National Tourism Strategy aims to increase tourist numbers to 200,000 per annum by 2030, up from 73,837 in 2017. As such, Timor-Leste's tourism industry has an ambitious vision for growth, which creates an opportunity to ensure the sector develops in a sustainable way that promotes women's meaningful and equitable involvement, and where their voices and experiences directly shape the environment in which they work. This research found a broad range of barriers and opportunities for women in the tourism industry in Timor-Leste. The tourism industry does not exist in a vacuum, and gendered social norms play a significant role in the types of work women perform and have access to, and which roles and opportunities they are restricted from.

With business in Timor-Leste predominantly focused in the capital Dili, but with 70% of the population living in rural areas, and 83% of employed women in rural areas working in vulnerable jobs³, the tourism industry needs to consider approaches that both direct resources to the development of rural communities and provide women decent economic employment opportunities in municipalities outside the capital Dili. The findings of this research support the recommendations of the 2010 and 2019 Global Reports on Women in Tourism that a gender-responsive policy environment is necessary to support the empowerment of women in this industry. The Global Reports recommend strengthening legal protections including minimum wage, equal pay laws,

equitable access to land and property rights, including tourism in gender-sensitive and macro-economic policy and committing sufficient human and financial resources to their implementation. Toward advancing this policy environment within Timor-Leste, five recommendations are made:

- Collect and utilize sex, age and disability-disaggregated data specific related to tourism leadership, employment, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment to inform policies & programmes;
- Support policies and regulatory frameworks that facilitate women's entrepreneurship and access to markets;
- Promote industry policies that address discrimination and stigma based on gender identity and sexual orientation, in line with Timor-Leste's human rights commitments and obligations;
- Ensure formal and informal tourism workers access and benefit from social protection measures; and
- Conduct gender analysis, consult civil society actors, and integrate a gender perspective into all phases of tourism policy development and programming.

In addition to creating a positive business environment for women in tourism, gender equality needs to be mainstreamed within institutions so the approach remains central and leads to structural changes. Institutionalizing gender equality principles plays a key role in ensuring an ongoing commitment beyond individual leaders. This is true in both the public and private sector. The Global Reports recommend providing gender equality training to the tourism sector, and the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental components of corporate social responsibility activities,

in line with the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The report presents five recommendations for Timor-Leste to better integrate gender in tourism as follows:

- Mainstream gender in tourism policy, planning and operations and allocate sufficient budget into promoting gender equality and addressing barriers to women's participation in tourism);
- Ensure the Ministry of Tourism has a functional and staffed Gender Working Group financed by the State Budget and complementary funds;
- Integrate gender analysis in the development and monitoring of legal and macroeconomic policies within the tourism industry;
- Support gender-responsive procurement measures to empower artisans and micro, small and medium-enterprises that might not have information or access to procurement opportunities; and
- Encourage private sector companies to sign the WEPs to contribute to a more resilient and equitable tourism industry.

Closing gender gaps in skills and opportunities, including education, access to entry level formal positions and technical training are key to women realizing their potential as tourism employees, in provision of good and services, as entrepreneurs (informal or as micro and small to medium enterprises - MSMEs), and for their leadership within the sector. However, women also need a supportive business environment, including access to business networks, access to financial and information and communications technology (ICT) products and services, and an effective social and legislative environment to enable their creative engagement in developing the industry and eliminate the discrimination, restrictive

gender norms and barriers that limit the roles they can take, and the activities in which they can engage.

In the area of education and training, the Global Reports recommend the promotion of women's participation in tourism education and professional development, improving the educational level of women already working in the industry, investing in skills and leadership training for women, including soft skills, digital literacy, awareness raising of available training opportunities, and targeting of women industry representatives. In Timor-Leste, six recommendations are made:

- Create temporary special measures for women to access training and education opportunities, including scholarships, and remote training options;
- Develop programmes tailored for rural women entrepreneurs to gain exposure to tourism experiences and also develop the quality of their services and products;
- Develop professional skills-building opportunities that recognize and facilitate women's participation given their burden of unpaid care work and promote equitable care-giving roles among both women and men;
- Incorporate gender into tourism and hospitality curriculums, ensuring a more sustainable tourism industry;
- Provide training on gender equality for tourism educators and address gender-related barriers in tourism education institutions;
- Provide targeted training for diverse groups of women (including those with disabilities) to ensure that they can use digital technologies and have access to resources to innovate through digital technologies in tourism.

Toward increasing women's representation and leadership, the Global Reports recommend supporting grassroots women's organizations in tourism communities, facilitating women's participation and leadership in sector-specific trade unions, providing income generating opportunities, improving product diversification, and expanding market outlets to encourage handicraft innovation and reduce market crowding. In Timor-Leste, five recommendations are made:

- Provide capacity development and resources to women's tourism networks, NGOs and tourism cooperatives to actively work towards women's social and economic empowerment in the sector;
- Facilitate and encourage women's representation and leadership in trade unions;
- Raise the visibility and profiles of women champions in industry;
- Promote equitable sharing of unpaid care work in communities and companies engaged in tourism, and support initiatives that engage female entrepreneurs and their spouses to promote more equal household decision-making and respectful relationships; and
- Create platforms for women in tourism to network & access peer-support, utilizing ICT to promote women-owned businesses, connecting female entrepreneurs with opportunities.

The Timor-Leste National Tourism Policy highlights five key themes for stakeholders to focus their efforts for sector prosperity and sustainability until 2030. These are Purpose, Prosperity, Protection, Partnership and People. For these themes to be realized, the industry needs to invest in the four areas of comprehensive action identified above. This must increase **women's representation**

and leadership, taking an intersectional approach which recognizes the diversity of the **people in Timor-Leste**, with investment in groups most marginalized. There must be targeted **education and training**, creating opportunities and removing barriers created by gender inequality, which can catalyze **prosperity** for all people as envisioned in the Tourism Policy. The industry must work with a **purpose to mainstream gender** in tourism, recognizing that women can bring a unique contribution of knowledge and expertise to the industry and efforts to **protect** Timor-Leste's distinct historical narratives, cultural processes and artefacts. Finally, it

is critical that the all **partners** contribute to **gender-responsive policies and an enabling environment** to further the industry actively promote tourism ownership decision-making processes that reflect the diversity of the population. This begins with ensuring diverse women and men, including those in rural areas, with disabilities, or identifying as LGBTIQ, have a seat at the table to represent their interests, provide their insight, and to benefit from their contributions. Together, this will create a tourism industry which contributes to equality, the economy and the people of Timor-Leste.



Photo credit: UN Women Timor-Leste



Photo credit: UN Women Timor-Leste

INTRODUCTION

Since its independence, Timor-Leste has identified and taken steps to grow a sustainable tourism sector as part of its efforts to diversify the economy. Tourism is an inclusive industry that has the potential to shift the economy away from being reliant on finite oil and gas reserves. Since 1999, Timor-Leste has identified tourism as a means to diversify the country's economy and fight poverty, which has prompted research on tourism in support of the industry's development⁴. The linkages between tourism and gender equality have not been as visible in local research conducted to date, despite Timor-Leste's significant commitments to promoting gender equality as part of its sustainable development. Evidence from the two global analyses conducted by UNWTO, in collaboration with UN Women, found that tourism plays an important role in

challenging cultural stereotypes, and contributing to women's political and economic empowerment.⁵ This analysis aims to highlight the potential of the sector and actions required for tourism to provide a channel to accelerate Timor-Leste's efforts to promote gender equality and economic development. **It should be noted that the research for this analysis was conducted prior to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and as such, findings and projections will need to be revisited as part of tourism recovery efforts in the current context.**

Timor-Leste's history of tourism has evolved through the country's transition from occupation to independence. From the end of the 1960s up until 1975, Timor-Leste was an island destination similar to other neighbouring South-East Asian and Pacific countries. This was followed by a sharp drop

in tourists during the conflict with Indonesia from 1975 until 1999, when visitors were often monitored under suspicion of collusion with the resistance. Since the historic Referendum for independence in 1999, the majority of travellers arriving to Timor-Leste have come as part of the influx of international workers residing in the country in its transition from a fragile post-conflict State into a stable and peaceful United Nations Member State. This group has become the transitional tourism demographic. In more recent years and as part of the next phase of the country's development, the tourism industry has the vision to become a destination for tourists once again, which offers an important opportunity to offset the gender disparities currently visible in the sector and the labour force overall.

Tourism provides a near equivalent income for Timor-Leste as coffee exports, which is the country's largest export after oil and gas. Both contribute approximately 1% of GDP, despite coffee being a well-established export product, and tourism being an emerging industry.⁶ In 2017, the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture issued 73,837 tourist visas, with the country aiming to reach an annual target of 200,000 tourists by 2030.⁷ The potential for growth in this infant industry has a direct scope to benefit women given women's high representation in the tourism sector globally. However, tourism employment strategies will need to use temporary special measures or targeting considering women are not well-represented in tourism decision-making positions.

Globally, women account for 54% of people employed in tourism (based on data across 157 countries), compared to 39% of those employed in the broader economy.⁸ Women also make up a much higher proportion of own-account workers overall, with

some countries showing tourism having higher rates of female entrepreneurs than other sectors.⁹ With the tourism sector providing 10.4% of overall jobs globally in 2019,¹⁰ there is both significant room for industry growth, and for women's participation in the industry in Timor-Leste. The 2018 Timor-Leste Business Activity Survey (BAS) estimated 5,000 people (3,000 female and 2,000 male) were employed in Accommodation and Food Services in Timor-Leste out of a total 53,000 employed in businesses (with 9% women)¹¹. Despite the limited number of people employed in Accommodation and Food Services, it is notable that this is the only industry where women outnumber men and comprises 21% of total women employed in business. Overall, women's labour force participation rate remains low, but has increased significantly between 2010 and 2016, from 14.5% to 40.6% (compared to 33.3% to 53% for men), in part due to women moving from subsistence food production into production for the market.¹² It should also be noted that the estimated total number of people in the Accommodation and Food Services did not change between the 2014 and 2018 BAS. This reinforces the importance of ensuring women are not marginalized as the tourism sector pursues its ambitious growth to employ an estimated 15,000 workers by 2030 as set out in the Timor-Leste National Tourism Policy.¹³

Although tourism has the potential to catalyze women's economic empowerment, it also has the potential to deepen disparities if attention is not given to the results from tourism growth. While globally the wage gap is lower in the industry, the industry as a whole has lower wages for both women and men.¹⁴ In Timor-Leste, the 2018 BAS showed that Accommodation and Food Service employees earned an average annual income of USD 2,100,

or USD 175 per month,¹⁵ less than the total average annual wage for employees in 2018 of \$3,100 (USD 258 per month).¹⁶ Furthermore, women perform a greater share of unpaid work as “contributing family workers” in the hotel and restaurant sector than in any other sector (70% vs 56% globally).¹⁷ Expanding tourism without acknowledging the vulnerabilities women face may disadvantage women or lead to their exploitation, as men may control the outputs of their labour. As such, unpaid work by women may subsidize the development of their communities, while not providing them direct benefits of their contributions.

Tourism work involves a plurality of activities that service the industry, which can cover various forms of work and entry points to ensure the sector contributes to gender equality in Timor-Leste. A challenge in the sector is defining what activities are part of tourism, including unpaid work in household tourism enterprises or childcare for tourism workers. Measuring the gender implications of the industry requires first establishing the

parameters and identifying what activities comprise tourism as a tangible product. It also requires collection of sex, age, and disability disaggregated data to measure and monitor the impacts of the industry on diverse women and men. Women’s participation in tourism is important to both contribute to a more successful industry and to ensure their value and contributions are recognized as ‘work’ rather than seen as an extension of their domestic duties. Collectively, efforts to expand opportunities for women in tourism must be led by women themselves, and inclusive of women from rural areas, with disabilities and LBTIQ persons, safeguarding against unintended labour burdens and other barriers based on discrimination. Gender mainstreaming can contribute to gender awareness in the sector, as well as the generation of data and evidence, analysis of opportunities and programmes with attention to transforming gender dynamics for more adequate representation of women in their diversity and more equitable benefits from all tourism development efforts.







METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was adopted to conduct an initial assessment on the current gender dimensions in Timor-Leste's tourism industry:

- an analysis of approximately 70 existing articles, brochures and literature on tourism in Timor-Leste (*secondary information*),
- qualitative collection of data from 45 face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 86 tourism stakeholders of which 64 were women (74%), using purposeful sampling across four sites in Dili, Atauro, Baucau and Oe-cusse. A breakdown of the stakeholders can be found in Annex 1.
- participatory observations obtained during the field study.

The analysis looks at the elements that contribute to gender disparities in tourism and actions that can be taken to promote the sector to grow and develop in more gender-equitable ways.

This report summarizes relevant findings and information obtained, highlighting key themes and issues raised by interview respondents. Suggestions

and recommendations are made to provide industry stakeholders (including government, civil society, private sector and development partners) with a guide to action that is needed to empower women in tourism in line with Timor-Leste's gender equality commitments and aim to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

With limited sex-disaggregated data available for the tourism industry in Timor-Leste, it was not possible to investigate whether findings from this research can be verified against industry-wide data. Additionally, several local NGOs working in the area of women's rights raised the issue of trafficking of Timorese women and female immigrants for sexual exploitation within the tourism industry as a concern. The gender-specific data gaps and concerns related to sexual exploitation and human trafficking are important areas for further investigation as Timor-Leste seeks to expand the industry, although beyond the scope of this study.



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OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

Addressing Gender Gaps for Timor-Leste's People and Prosperity

The government of Timor-Leste recognizes that rural development is a key priority for the next decade. In addition to agriculture, tourism offers the potential for enabling the country's ambitious plan for economic growth. With 70%¹⁸ of the population of Timor-Leste living in rural areas, rural development will not only ensure that those families start having access to the same opportunities as families in urban areas, but it will contribute to delivering food security, generating jobs and alleviating poverty at a national level. According to the Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan (TL-SDP), 'by 2020, families in rural areas should have the same opportunities as those in urban areas', notably by promoting income generating opportunities specifically

targeting rural communities, which will require 'diversification into new economic activities, as well as improving the efficiency of current activities and scaling up neglected activities'.¹⁹ With 61%²⁰ of unemployed or economically inactive women ages 15- 64 living in rural areas, rural women are amongst the most excluded economically. Addressing this challenge, the Ministry of Tourism was one of an initial 9 government institutions to adopt commitments to improve the lives of rural women and girls in support of the TL-SDP. This commitment (the Maubisse Declaration), was renewed with commitment from 17 institutions in 2018 and includes actions such as increasing women's access to grants, training, financing and entrepreneurship opportunities, improving market infrastructure, improving sex disaggregated data gathering, and

increase women's participation in tourism with specific focus on eco-tourism. As of 2020, the situation of rural women has not drastically improved, and as investments in tourism grow, they can only be transformative and reach the TL-SDP targets if they harness the contributions and potential of women in rural areas in line with the Maubisse Declaration.

Women are key actors in shaping Timor-Leste's tourism products and activities, with the National Tourism Policy highlighting the overall industry scope for growth around eco-tourism, marine tourism, community tourism and entrepreneurship. Across these areas, in-depth analysis can contribute to a clear strategy for addressing the barriers to women's participation and opportunities for their leadership and engagement.

For example, women are making particular contributions to cultural and historical tourism. According to the 2017 Survey of Travelers to Timor-Leste, cultural attractions are popular, with 50% of travellers doing cultural activities.²¹ Most visible is women's role in weaving *tais*, which is now recognized as a sector where investment has the potential to enable rural Timorese women to gain a livelihood and income which can support their power to make and act on economic decisions²². Since 2019, Timor-Leste has proposed that weaving *tais* is safeguarded as intangible cultural heritage with UNESCO recognition, which shows the value of this female-led artistic and cultural practice, and can help to protect and promote traditional weaving products and practices for future generations.²³ In addition to the creation and promotion of artisanal good such as *tais*, women's knowledge of Timor-Leste's history and experiences in its struggle for independence are an important part of its tourism narrative. National non-governmental organizations

such as Asosiasaun Chega! Ba Ita (Acbit) and Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Násional (JDN) have promoted guided walks featuring women who contributed and faced grave human rights violations during the resistance. These highlight the potential of cultural tourism, and the importance of women-led processes guiding how historical stories are shared, valuing women's voices and role as agents of change, not limited to their experiences as victims of the past.²⁴ When the industry counts women's contributions, the resources available offer a promising picture for the future.

GLARING GAPS IN GENDER PAY AND SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA

Data can be both a source of power and potential barrier to promote gender equality in tourism. Consistent with tourism globally and other small island developing states, Timorese women have a high level of engagement with the tourism industry. Whilst not inclusive of all tourism positions, women make up 60% of the total Accommodation and Food Services workforce (average between 2014 - 2018).²⁵ This is the only female-dominated industry in Timor-Leste and is the lowest paid on average (with an average annual wage of USD 2,100, the same as with Manufacturing). All other industries are male-dominated and have an average annual wage for employees in 2018 at \$3,100. Average sector wages include: \$2,500 for Retail and Wholesale Trade, \$2,800 for Construction, \$5,000 for Transportation and Storage, \$7,600 for Information and Communication and \$16,300 for Finance and Insurance.^{xii} Across industries in Timor-Leste, a 2016 study found that women account for 64% of people receiving a monthly salary of \$100-\$200, but only 20% of those receiving \$500-\$1500.²⁶

While not specific to tourism work, this clear economic disparity in wages across the board, combined with the disparity between female and male-dominated industries, raises questions about the extent to which women's labour is undervalued in general, and specifically in industries that reflect work dominated by women in Timor-Leste. The 2019 UN World Tourism Organization Global Report on Women in Tourism notes the gender pay gap within the tourism industry, which is ascribed to "the relegation of women to lower-level positions within the industry, despite women being the majority of workers".²⁷ While available information in Timor-Leste suggests a similar trend, there is a lack of sex-disaggregated data within the industry to confirm this trend, including the positions held. Data is available for role distribution within "Services", which shows an over-representation of men as managers and professionals (4,700 and 14,100 men and 1,500 and 6,700 women respectively), and of women as salespersons (40,900 women and 26,200 men).²⁸ It should be noted, however, that "services" is not exclusive to the tourism industry, so this data has its limitations. Similarly, Timor-Leste has data on the proportion of women who are employers and own-account workers by age, but not by sector.

WOMEN'S ROLES, COLLAPSING OF PRIVATE SPHERE AND WORK

Gender norms and roles shape the perception of tourism sector opportunities for women as employees or entrepreneurs. These are often based on restrictive gender norms related to domestic roles, for example, linking hospitality and service work to women's unpaid care work or women's roles as the gatekeepers of some cultural artefacts and practices. While women's

contributions to these industries are important, the skills in Accommodation and Food Services or in creating and sharing their knowledge on artisanal products should be equally valued to skills in other parts of the industry. Since this work might be done close to an individual's homes, there is often invisible care work that women in home-based industries are expected to manage around their tourism-related work.

These are among the gendered assumptions within the industry, which generate several related challenges. Aspects of work performed by women in the tourism industry, such as work related to hospitality, is often informal. This blurs the line between work and unpaid care work, a conflating of the public and private sphere. The work is often viewed as supplementary or secondary to domestic work, which is also true at the global level. The value of the work reflects the undervaluing of care work, which is dominated by women and gendered social norms which restrict women's roles and mobility outside of the household. Women have limited access to the full variety of work available in the industry, based on perceptions of their ability, social status and perceived risks from the work, as discussed below. These gendered assumptions are inherent in the division of leadership and decision-making power in society, which is reflected to a lesser extent in tourism in Timor-Leste.

Creating more gender-equitable opportunities in tourism means that the gendered assumptions in the industry need to be identified and addressed, and creating more options for women to engage in tourism, noting that this might not always lead to formalizing their work as employees or entrepreneurs. Among the Informal workers interviewed for this analysis, all expressed their preference for informal home-based work over formal

work opportunities specifically because it is flexible, safe, and easy to manage around domestic duties, which require them to remain close to their family and community. A gender analysis of the 2013 Labour Force Survey showed that 66.3% of people not seeking formal employment due to family responsibilities were women.²⁹ Some respondents noted an expectation for female students who are educated in Dili to return home after completing their education. For example, several female hospitality and tourism students interviewed for the study expressed a desire to return to their homes outside Dili, as they wanted to open their own businesses and promote the development of their communities. The students expressed this as a way to raise a family while being able to work.

The respondents also commented on the work itself being easy, convenient, and a good means to earn money. The work for these respondents is largely centred around producing and selling home-made food or craft products and providing rooms in their homes for homestays. However, the conveniences of this work, the perception that it is easy because women can do it out of their homes as an extension of their domestic duties, limits informal work being viewed as work, and undervalues the work since women often perform these types of labour without compensation within the domestic sphere. This devaluing is then reflected in the price-setting of home-based work products, such as *tais*, where only direct costs are considered when selling; the labour itself is largely unrecognized, and potentially also the value of material inputs grown on their properties (such as cotton and flax for weaving). Global research has found that women's traditional unpaid care-work are often prioritized over their roles as business professionals, and that tourism activities are often viewed as supplementary.

As a result, women can be economically active, but gain limited social and economic empowerment, which highlights the importance of macroeconomic and social welfare policies in ensuring women experience tangible social and economic empowerment from their participation in the tourism sector.³⁰ Another result of tourism seen as a supplementary income is the low investment in raising the quality of community-based tourism establishments, and the low reach of tourism capacity development programmes to women-owned accommodations.

During COVID-19, unpaid care work has increased considering the number of people in need of care, the preventive measures disrupting mobility, education and loss of livelihoods, among other restrictions. The Joint UN Socio-economic Impact Assessment conducted in Timor-Leste found that there were significantly more women than men (who were not full-time students) among the economically inactive persons due to household work and providing care to others (17.4 percent for women in contrast to 2.3 percent of men).³¹ However, expectations for women's unpaid care work remain a norm, as illustrated in time-use data collected as part of The Asia Foundation's COVID-19 Survey in 2020, which included analysis of the gendered distribution of unpaid care work during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. The data considered the percentage of men and women contributing to common household tasks, rather than a stated number of hours. Women's participation in various household tasks ranged from 27% who cared for household members, to 46% who prepared meals. Men's participation ranged from 4% for laundry to 28% for household finances, followed by 17% for grocery shopping. Women perceived 33% of household tasks to be "mostly female" tasks,

while men perceived 44% of household tasks to be “mostly female” tasks. There was no difference between genders on satisfaction for this division of labour, with 60% saying there was no change in satisfaction from prior to the State of Emergency, and 36% saying the division was better.³²

According to the 2017 Travelers Survey mentioned above, 50% of travellers visited the *tais* market, which sells traditionally woven cloth (*tais*), made almost exclusively by women (often from rural and older age groups).³³ While *tais* has a place of cultural significance in Timor-Leste, as well as a form of alternative currency, the quality standards and product diversification for *tais* are still developing to enhance its place as a tourism product. Recognition of *tais* as an element of tourism increases the scope of potential economic opportunities within the sector in order to increase the presence of *tais* as both a tourism attraction (weaving demonstrations of skill) and as a tourism product. This industry also struggles with accurately gauging the labour input of the women weavers, as the practice is done in between other domestic tasks and is not easy to estimate. Instead the final product is considered to have taken between days and months to complete, rather than hours of dedicated work. Without clear pricing based on sustainable returns, weavers can be pressured to accept lower prices at the

point of sale, particularly when sold by a third party on their behalf.³⁴

The challenge of informal labour conflated with domestic unpaid labour disproportionately affects women, and is a particularly significant issue in the tourism sector. Of total employment in 2016, an estimated 73.6% of women are own account workers (self-employed) or contributing family workers (50.9% own account, 22.6% contributing family worker). This is in comparison to 47.2% of men (37.3% own account, 9.8% contributing family worker).³⁵ These two kinds of work are considered vulnerable employment due to the difficulties of regulating for employment standards, and the high risk of exploitation.³⁶ Considering that women in general perform contributing family labour throughout their lives, it puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to men, who largely perform this labour as youth, and to a lesser degree as they get older.

Work within the tourism industry has the additional volatility of unpredictable demand, which is seasonal and may be impacted by external factors such as weather, politics and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. The current inaccessibility of many areas adds to the uncertainty of receiving visitors.

TABLE 1. STATUS CONTRIBUTING FAMILY WORKER BY SEX AND AGE GROUP IN TIMOR-LESTE 2016

AGE GROUPS	MALE %	FEMALE %
15-24	29.4	38.4
25-34	6.9	21.7
35-44	4.8	19.9
45-54	4.3	20.2
55-64	7.7	18.8
65+	16.1	15.8

Data sourced from the International Labour Organization report “Timor-Leste Labour Force Surveys 2010-2013-2016”

COMMUNITY TOURISM: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In Timor-Leste, approximately 83% of employment and 91% of total income from businesses takes place in the capital Dili.³⁷ Tourism can contribute to the potential expansion of business opportunities to the other municipalities. Women in vulnerable employment are concentrated in rural areas and advancements in tourism could be designed in a way to improve their economic empowerment, if other risks are taken into consideration. For example, considering the small size of communities, tourism investments need to promote models of collaboration and complementary roles for community entrepreneurs rather than fostering competition for tourism business. Research respondents shared the current challenge for new tourism opportunities to potentially create social discord and backlash against female entrepreneurs working in community tourism.

Efforts taken within the tourism industry to empower women through economic opportunities also need to consider the interconnected nature of the work women perform in the industry with the work performed in the home. Valuing women's labour in tourism alongside investments in supporting them to deliver quality tourism services and products, whether as crafts persons, hosts or vendors, needs to be explicitly recognized as a strategy to enable women to be adequately compensated, and not have their labour subsidize local development, or travellers' experiences, as noted in the 2010 Global Report on Women in Tourism. The undervaluing of women's labour in tourism through its connection to unpaid domestic labour may be an explanation for why a common theme

among respondents in this research was the perception of tourism and hospitality work as being low-paid and low-skilled. There was also a desire to pursue study and work opportunities in other industries, which are seen to be more exciting, prestigious or lucrative. Providing capacity development opportunities for women in tourism is also critical to for improving quality of services, and increasing their value, as a basis for them to succeed in the tourism market. This might also improve recognition of women's labour as work and creating options for women to formalize their work, if desired.

This observation links closely to SDG 5, Target 5.4, which makes the connection between valuing women's economic labour and valuing women's domestic labour. Target 5.4 is to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate." Addressing and promoting the value of unpaid domestic work, and work performed informally by women, including in the tourism industry, is key to promoting improved balance of domestic duties within the household, which in turn empowers women to grasp further opportunities within a more equitable society.

SOCIAL NORMS AS BARRIERS TO WOMEN AND MEN'S SUCCESS IN TOURISM

Discrimination based on gender identity as well as sexual orientation and gender inequitable social norms restrict the kinds of roles that women and men can occupy in tourism and leads to multiple negative outcomes. Globally, patriarchy and gender stereotypes were identified across regions

as factors limiting women's potential and growth in tourism. As in other settings, respondents noted the socially imposed restrictions on women's mobility, linked to a perception that women should not work in bars, businesses which serve alcohol, or work that requires them to travel away from family overnight with 'strangers'. For example, the Asia Foundation found in 2016 that 71-78% of men and 83% of women agree that *"A women's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family"*.³⁸ Respondents shared the stigma that women working in tourism might face, for example, having family members accusing women 'of lying', 'behaving inappropriately' or being 'involved in prostitution'.

Discriminatory attitudes related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) persons was also noted by respondents, who shared examples of men who were assumed to be gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer if they worked in hospitality services or faced social pressure that they were performing work for women as a way to restrict their participation.

The stigma that both women and men working in tourism experience are connected to harmful gender norms which are based in patriarchal systems of power and control. The social perceptions restricting what tourism work women can perform has a significant impact on their access to different roles, and in turn, access to decision-making and leadership positions. These social norms also expose women to stigma from family and neighbours, and harassment from men who perceive that they are acting outside their pre-defined acceptable role. While the informal work performed by own account workers and contributing family workers described above is considered appropriate because of its connection to the domestic roles of women, it perpetuates imbalanced levels of care-

related work between women and men, and restricts their contributions both within and outside the home. Formal employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the sector pose a number of additional barriers.

SAFETY IN TOURISM

In addition to these harmful attitudes, the work conditions in tourism are also gendered. Perceived levels of safety or insecurity in specific tourism roles and activities can deter women from pursuing a career in the sector and contribute to their families being reluctant to support their participation. Female tour guides shared their experiences of harassment while performing this role, by both male clients and male community members. Sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in service roles also create additional barriers for women, who are likely to be blamed if they experience abuse when performing this work or face assumptions about their integrity or sexual availability.

In addition to the service industry, some women vendors who travel to urban centers to sell crafts are forced to stay in unsafe improvised accommodation when they lack family connections in the area. The concerns around this insecurity are mirrored by vendors in the agriculture sector, who sleep with their products, lack access to toilet facilities, are forced to wake early to travel long distances, sometimes with children, and reported facing sexual harassment and the threat of assault, as well as the fear of eviction from public land³⁹. Women vendors might respond to this risk by having male relatives sell their products, which reduces their decision-making role in the sales and restricts their ability to engage higher within the product supply chain.

Women owners of on-site accommodation establishments are also at risk of sexual

harassment and violence from patrons. One female guesthouse owner, a single mother, shared her experience physically defending herself from a male guest, which she then reported to police. Recalling her actions and the result, she has taken measures since the incident to mitigate the risks she faces as a woman and being the only adult staff member on site. For example, she ensures all guests are asleep before she goes to sleep herself and requests the assistance of male family members when she has many male guests.

Representatives from establishments with larger numbers of employees that participated in this research who were asked about safety, recognised their responsibility to keep employees safe by providing transport home for employees working in the evenings. This is particularly important for women who might otherwise not have safe transport options, considering that fewer women drive compared to men and there is a lack of public transport at night. One urban-based employer also provided suitable free on-site accommodation for female employees who came from rural areas. This enabled women to work in the sector who would otherwise be excluded by the combined challenges of safety and distance to their homes. This provision may also help women to navigate barriers from their family members who do not support them to pursue work that requires travel away from home and staying with strangers.

Participant employers who provided employees with flexible working hours and conditions, including around maternity leave, breastfeeding arrangements and child-care, reported good staff retention. Some businesses allowed for parents to bring children to work when they had no childcare available. These measures are good practices and assist in equalizing women's access to hospitality employment, which often does not have standard hours. It importantly

supports employees to balance work with family responsibilities, recognizing these are usually assigned to women. With regards to employee safety, only a few companies discussed sexual harassment with staff systematically, and none made reference to their policies on the issue.

GENDER GAPS IN SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Both professional and technical skills determine who can participate in activities offered within the tourism industry. For example, considering the scope of marine tourism in Timor-Leste, there is a clear gender disparity in their employment as water sports instructors, such as diving, snorkelling and boat operators, who are overwhelmingly male. This is again linked to both social perceptions around women's roles, the mobility required in these roles and the time required to train and engage in these roles, which might be restricted due to women's unpaid care work. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle; even when employers want to hire more women into these roles, their formal advertisements receive significant numbers of unqualified applicants. Roles are more easily filled by using word of mouth recommendations, which benefit existing dive instructors, who are male. There are also qualified foreign workers willing and able to do this work, who have the required qualifications, technical knowledge, and foreign schooling, which is a convenient option for employers. This can discourage employers who want to hire more female employees locally and could be a potential area for industry action. For example, companies could use temporary special measures applied in other sectors to increase women's participation. Women who are interested in entering tourism also experience social push-back due to gendered expectations

for this skillset. One respondent who was a successful female employee in the marine tourism industry explained the challenges she faced in pursuing work in an area which did not have many female employees as she tried to pursue a career in the industry. Whilst she succeeded and was able to prove to her family and community that this was a beneficial career for her, she recognized that other Timorese women might face additional barriers or be less inclined to struggle with gender biases as she had.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

According to the 2016 Labour Force Survey, while 74% of women who work at the management level do so in the service industry, only 24% of managers in services are women.⁴⁰ Although comprehensive data is not available, several accommodation establishments who contributed to the study in Timor-Leste had women well-represented in managerial and supervisory roles, with men disproportionately filling lower service housekeeping and driver roles. This appears to be the result of deliberate policy on the part of members of the Hotel Association of Timor-Leste (HoTL) to prioritise the women's empowerment within the industry. This could be an area for further analysis, as it is different from

the general findings of the Global Report on Women and Tourism. Determining the factors which led to these results could also support the development of women's empowerment strategies within the sector in Timor-Leste. Increasing the visibility of these practices can contribute to more deliberate commitments in the future across the tourism industry to be gender-responsive and empower women into leadership positions, which supports SDG 5 target 5 "to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership". Representation of women in leadership roles and planning for tourism development is critical given the potential for tourism to economically empower women entrepreneurs in rural areas through creating a market for their goods and services. Engaging women through existing groups and networks, such as the recently established municipal Weavers Networks, provides an opportunity for insight into goods and service provision in each regional context, and for gearing developments towards the objectives and visions of these stakeholders. With 87% of working rural women in vulnerable employment,⁴¹ strengthening labour rights, securing markets, and promoting women as leaders in tourism can reduce the gender inequalities in employment and specifically benefit rural women.





THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN IN TOURISM

Opportunities for tourism employment and entrepreneurship in Timor-Leste is also limited by women's own experience using and providing such services, access to employment and training opportunities, a supportive business environment, access to tourism infrastructure and tourism networks.

Tourism Experience

There is limited data and evidence on the extent to which the Timorese population are engaged in domestic and international tourism activities. Considering that 70% of the total population live in rural areas and 41%⁴² of the population is living in poverty, it is likely that the majority of the population are not actively participating as tourism customers. When women are more engaged in the industry, they will have greater access to gain experience and knowledge of tourism industry practices and potential tourism industry opportunities, both as employees and as entrepreneurs. This will also improve the quality of tourism products and services. For employers as well, a lack of experience using tourism-related services can limit the imagination of potential business developments and opportunities. As noted by respondents and the 2019 Global Report on Women in Tourism, individuals working in tourism who have received educational, training and travel opportunities have clear advantages over those who have not. Women have made great gains in labour force participation in the last decade with a participation rate of 40.6% in 2016 (up from 14.5% and 21.3% in 2010 and 2013 respectively).⁴³ However, these gains need to be sustained, especially as the country recovers from COVID-19, and needs to be followed by actions to address their under-representation in the industry.

One example clearly shows the potential transformation that can be catalyzed through access to an entry level opportunity and lead to cumulative experience and advantages. One respondent, Sarah⁴⁴, is a young woman from a rural area in Timor-Leste. She gained access to hospitality skills training through East Timor Development Agency (ETDA) as part of the Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) Programme funded by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The following year, she gained access to employment in a kitchen, despite no experience other than the training. Within two years of the initial course, she was second in command in the kitchen, and was supported to travel to represent the business, including speaking to ministers about her experience. In year three following the course, she became the Head Chef and was developing menus. By her fourth year, she was promoting her Timorese food to international audiences through her employers' networks, including further travel. She subsequently received a scholarship to study hospitality overseas and has a guaranteed management job on her return. At the beginning of this journey in 2015, Sarah did not speak English, and as of 2019, she can comfortably communicate in English to promote her work and represent the industry on behalf of Timor-Leste.

This story shows the immense value of investing in opportunities to give entry level experience to young women and the importance of continued professional development, as well as exposure to networks, to complement individual skills-building. Sarah credits her success to the support and trust she received from her employer throughout this time, but is also proud of her efforts and the significant personal development she experienced. Her skill development shows not only technical cooking skills, but also soft skills

in terms of inter-personal communication, creativity and initiative.

Many tourism-specific education and training opportunities in Timor Leste are Dili-centric, which limits access to people unable to be based temporarily in Dili.

While Sarah gained much from her experience, it is notable that to do so she had to be based in Dili. Many tourism-specific education and training opportunities in Timor-Leste are Dili-centric, which limits access to people unable to be based temporarily in Dili. Inability to travel disproportionately negatively impacts women who may be unable to leave domestic responsibilities for the needed period, or whose families may be concerned for their safety living away. As such, opportunities for training in the municipalities, whether through mobile or semi-permanent remote campuses in areas targeted for tourism development, could be a targeted measure to benefit women in tourism employment.

Furthermore, only 64.2% of adult women are literate, which directly impacts their ability to enter programs.⁴⁵ Beyond these tangible factors, there are other factors that are critical to replicate the success in Sarah's story. This includes family support and the financial and time resources required to participate in training and other opportunities (digital literacy to access and apply for opportunities, mobility, and time), which many women, especially those with children, might not be able to access, despite their qualifications and skills.

Education is key to bridging the opportunity gap between the informal and formal sector.

Other studies have found that women in the Asia region generally become business owners due to education and training barriers precluding them from qualifying for formal employment.⁴⁶ Mau-Quei et al (2019) found that the impact on employment of no education and living in an urban area are only statistically significant for women in Timor-Leste.⁴⁷ As such, there is a strong statistical correlation between education, gender and types of informal employment. In Timor-Leste, women are disproportionately involved in the informal sector, are more likely to be uneducated or have low levels of education, and disproportionately have informal businesses providing food and beverage activities, retail and crafts.⁴⁸ These businesses use skills directly transferable to formal employment in the tourism industry. Despite the relevance of skills and experience gained in this informal work, women often face barriers to entering formal employment.

Literate women whose highest education is primary school do not meet entry requirements for skills training options according to a government participant and several small business owners who wish to upskill and gain a formal qualification. While the full range of accessible education options needs to be verified, if women perceive that they are not qualified for opportunities, they will be discouraged from seeking them. So, while women make up the majority of the tourism workforce, they are less able to access the skill building needed to thrive in this space. The Global Report on Women in Tourism 2019 notes that training proved indispensable for women's success in all regions. The success of women in the tourism industry in Timor-Leste may be closely linked to support for opportunities for them to gain skills within their own contexts, such as practical vocational training, which they can apply



within their informal businesses, or outside of Dili, and with access to opportunities for formalisation of their skills and increasing the quality of their services.

Access to formal training also benefits employers. Respondent employers noted that finding new capable staff can be difficult because applicants often lack customer service and soft skills, or have less technical knowledge than would be expected from on the job training in their previous stated positions. Formal training helps to standardise the expectations of skills of entry level staff, easing new staff into busy workplaces, and supporting a high standard of service to tourists. Considering the gender gap in the workforce and unpaid care work responsibilities of many women, these formal training opportunities need to be targeted to not further exclude women from the tourism workforce. In this regard, it is positive to see that the Dili Institute of Technology incorporated a “Gender and Tourism” subject within its school of Tourism, which will assist students to use an intersectional lens when considering tourism opportunities.

Business Environment

A supportive business environment can include business networks, the legislative environment, financial services and accessibility to each of these. This aligns to efforts under SDG Target 5 A: “Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.”

Timor Leste has a Hotel Association of Timor-Leste (HoTL). This body brings together leaders in the tourism industry to collaborate on furthering their mutual interests. The group has committed to

promoting gender equality and employing women in positions of leadership, though the Board itself has not yet reached gender parity. The island of Atauro, within the Dili Municipality, has an Atauro Homestay Association, which is woman-led and acts as a central booking space for tourists interested in staying in a homestay while on the Island. It has a single phone number, email and Facebook page for contact, and tourists are allocated to a house based on availability. The [Women’s Business Association of Timor-Leste](#) (AEMTL) is a civil society organization which focusses on supporting women in business. The World Report on Women in Tourism cited many examples of how civil society organizations, such as AEMTL, can contribute to more gender equality in tourism, by supporting women entrepreneurs to network, develop recommendations for the sector, support training and capacity development for their members, among other actions. The network has developed its strategic plan with consideration to the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs) and is committed to promoting women’s equality and empowerment in the private sector.

Employers, both national and international, noted areas where there is a lack of clear knowledge on the labour laws of Timor-Leste. These related to areas such as laws regarding maternity leave, social security, sexual harassment and working hours and demonstrates an opportunity for better connecting employers to business development institutions and services and areas for services to be further developed.

Women entrepreneurs expressed a reluctance to access credit, which is considered by many to be ‘too high risk’ due to high interest and strict lending conditions, which mirrors previous findings that informal sector actors may be concerned about their

ability to repay loans, or that borrowing from a formal institution could lead to legal difficulties if they are unable to repay.⁴⁹ The 2010 Global Report on Women in Tourism recommended improving women's access to credit, land and property. The 2016 Demographic and Health Survey for Timor-Leste showed that there is both a gender and age gap in bank account use. Younger people aged 15-29 have significantly lower access than older people, but are similar between the genders, with women having slightly more access (ages 15-19 Women: 2.6% Men

3%, ages 20-24: Women 8.4% Men 7.3%, ages 25-29: Women 14.3% Men 12%). However, from ages 30 to 49, women only experience a small increase in access to 15.6% whereas men's bank account use increases to 26.9%. There is also a significant urban and rural divide; 22.9% of women in urban areas use bank accounts, compared to 28% of men, but in rural areas only 5.3% of women and 9.4% of men have access. This data highlights the practical barriers that might limit female entrepreneurs' access to credit and financial services in general, and for women



Photo credit: WHO Timor-Leste/Shoban Singh

in rural areas in particular. Addressing such disparities will be a pre-requisite for tourism sector growth in the municipalities.⁵⁰

The SDG Target 5.C is to “adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels”. The tourism sector is one such area where policy and legislation can be effectively targeted towards gender equality, to strengthen confidence of women to act within this space.

Since the SDGs were adopted in 2015, Timor-Leste has made progress on issues such as addressing sexual harassment in the civil service, disaggregating business ownership by sex in the annual Business Activity Survey, and increasing policy attention on issues of banking for rural women, regulations supporting informal workers, industry standards and pay scales with the adoption of the 2015 Maubisse Declaration and its renewal in 2018, the National Employment Strategy and Equal Pay Resolution in 2017, among other policies. The government has streamlined the business registration process, so there is now a one stop shop called SERVE. This is beneficial for women who are less flexible in their time and travel. With women being disproportionately represented among informal workers, legal protections for this group will directly support women, in particular rural women. The Gender and Private Sector National Action Plan (2014-2017) is another policy framework that could be revisited in the context of promoting gender equitable tourism development.

Analysis on tourism-related supply chains and business procurement from women producers is limited and an area of further examination. Considering the low number

of female business owners compared to male owners and previous barriers identified in regards to capital, skills and other supports, it is likely that women enjoy fewer procurement opportunities linked to a lack of strategic partnerships and market linkages or due to low demand for female-dominated goods, including artisanal and food products.

Infrastructure

As the COVID-19 crisis has made more apparent, there is a need to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular ICT, to promote and empower women, in line with SDG Target 5.B. Globally, the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA) found that in 2018, women in low- and middle-income countries are, on average, 10% less likely to own a mobile phone than men and 26% less likely to use mobile Internet (18% less likely among mobile owners).⁵¹ Rural women are the least likely to have reliable access to mobile phones and internet; while 80% of rural households and 96% of urban households have a mobile phone, the ownership is skewed towards men, which may impact practical access for women. In urban areas, 78.5% of women and 86.9% of men own phones, while in rural areas 59.2% of women and 72.4% of men own them.⁵² Information provided by Timor Telecom from sales data shows that the overwhelming majority of people use non-smartphones, and are thus not connected to the internet, particularly in rural areas. Rural areas also struggle with poor internet coverage, and relatively high costs of using internet in relation to income.⁵³ One indication of a disparity of internet access between men and women is the use of social media. Timor Social keep statistics on the use of internet and social media, which shows as of January 2020, 39% of the population are internet users, 31% of the

population use social media, and that 98% of social media users do so via mobile phones. In Timor-Leste, 91.6% of Facebook users access the application exclusively through mobile phones. In 2016, women accounted for 35% of Facebook users, and this has increased to 45% in 2020, showing a narrowing of the gender gap in social media use, though a gap remains. Instagram use appears to be near equal based on ad audience (51.1% women, 48.9% men), and ad audience for Twitter is 43.5% for women and 56.5% for men.⁵⁴ Coupled with other barriers, such as the quality of services, the under-representation of Timorese women on the internet, and particularly in rural areas, limits their ability to promote their businesses, especially to international tourism audiences.. It also limits their access to information for informed planning, market fluctuations, and general knowledge and opportunities, available from online platforms. The Women in Tourism Global Report 2019 notes the need for training for women in using ICT, in particular digital tourism platforms.

Considering Timor-Leste is an emerging tourist destination, information on the internet is a critical path for engaging potential tourists to decide whether they will visit the country. Women typically own micro, small and medium sized businesses, and these are less likely to be represented online. As an example, at the time of writing, the official Timor-Leste tourism website⁵⁵ only has one homestay guesthouse listed in its accommodation search engine, which is based in Dili, while the 20 guesthouses listed are a selection of hotels and established formalized accommodation. A similar search on Google finds more options, however they are similarly concentrated in Dili, with some on the Island of Atauro (of the coast of the capital Dili). For other accommodation

options listed in the Google search, there is limited information, such as only the name of the road and not the geographic location in the country. As such, a tourist interested in staying in homestays to experience Timorese hospitality and support female-owned businesses would struggle to identify options, and would be led towards more established, and more urban, enterprises. If they do find a homestay through other means, they would then have fewer options to share the experience or recommend other people to visit, such as sharing online pages, leaving online reviews, or tagging the business in social media posts.

Support for developing ICT, in terms of access for women-owned, rural, micro, small and medium enterprises has the potential to significantly increase business opportunities for women. Ensuring women-owned business have an online presence, rural tourism can develop organically according to the desires of the tourist market and allow these small and medium businesses to compete for tourism dollars against larger and more established businesses, such as hotels and restaurants. However, support must go beyond physical access (though this is also needed) and include ICT training for women in business with continued skills development, and the inclusion of women-owned businesses in Timor-Leste's tourism industry promotional spaces. Initial training could include putting a business on Google Maps, creating a Facebook page, and applying for inclusion on Timor-Leste's tourism website *Explore the Undiscovered*.

A dedicated campaign to recognize women in business, using profiles of industry champions could also assist in centring women as part of tourists' decision-making process when deciding their itineraries.



Photo credit: UN Women Timor-Leste/Helio Miguel

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with tourism globally and other small island developing states, Timorese women have a high level of engagement with the tourism industry. The sector's potential is significant as Timor-Leste seeks to grow Tourism in the coming years, but must address the challenges and barriers which restrict women's empowerment within the industry. Women must be recognized in diverse roles, beyond managers of the household and related services, or knowledge-holders and gatekeepers of particular cultural artifacts, including dances, ceremonies and crafts. This requires gender mainstreaming in the sector and addressing gender discrimination and harmful social norms which limit women's access to entrepreneurship infrastructure, opportunities, and skills development as well as promotion and leadership pathways. Eliminating the barriers to decent

work in tourism, through recognizing and mitigating the risks of vulnerable aspects of employment overwhelmingly affecting women, leads to a more equitable distribution of benefits from tourism, and direction of resources into communities and rural areas.

Opportunities for women's employment and entrepreneurship within the tourism industry can be greatly expanded with investments into entry level skills, including targeting skills and targeted capacity development into rural areas (such as within eco, marine and community-based tourism). Success within the industry is also dependent in large part on participation in supportive business networks, and access to business infrastructure, most notably internet access and platform management skills. A supportive environment includes attention

to resourcing, implementing and monitoring existing gender-responsive legislation and equitable access to resources for women – the foundations for equality already exist.

Promoting gender-responsive tourism strategies in Timor-Leste supports the country's efforts towards success in the SDGs, as success in this area offers the potential for empowerment of rural women in particular, a sub-group in the population which is often left behind. However, the potential gains for these women from developing the tourism industry are not guaranteed, but instead must be obtained through strategic inclusion of diverse women in decision-making positions, in education, and in industry planning, complemented by sustained attention to dismantling the social and institutional barriers that keep women from reaching their potential.

This analysis shows that by recognizing and addressing gender inequality as a central aspect of developing the tourism industry in Timor-Leste, the country has the potential to move closer to its Tourism Strategy aspirations that *“by 2030, the country will have a vibrant tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country; is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable; helps promote a positive image of Timor-Leste overseas; and is an industry that people wish to work in.”*

The following recommendations offer entry points for the diverse partners in the tourism industry to collaborate and continue their investments, in support of Timor-Leste's development and its people. The tourism industry will be successful when efforts are not only collaborative in design, but supported by coordination between many areas of society and the economy, including public institutions, industry

associations, leading private sector, civil society and community groups, with support from UN agencies and other international development partners. Considering the dynamic context of COVID-19 and its impact on the tourism industry worldwide, these recommendations offer ideas for consideration, which should be revisited and adapted as the context evolves.

REPRESENTATION AND LEADERSHIP

The findings of this research support the recommendations of the 2010 and 2019 Global Reports on Women in Tourism that women need to be recognized for their contribution to community development. The role of women in tourism work needs to be promoted, properly visible and rewarded, taking into consideration the blurring of their public role as tourism business operators, and their private unpaid domestic roles.

Despite the higher proportion of women in tourism management positions in Timor-Leste, women in the tourism industry continue to need support in ensuring they are consistently well-represented in the industry. This means not only within management positions, but at all levels including within the public and private sectors, in the community, politically and economically. Further analysis could better determine whether the proportion of women in leadership is high across the industry or inflated in certain areas. Women business owners also need opportunities to further develop their leadership and networking skills to ensure women-owned business have equal access to tourism procurement opportunities. This will also require promoting more equitable care-giving roles among women and men and shifting the harmful gender norms that limit women's entry and career progression in the industry.

The 2010 Global Report on Women in Tourism recommends supporting grassroots women's organizations in tourism communities and fully facilitating women's participation and leadership in trade unions across the sector. Improving the quality and visibility of women-owned businesses can play a key role in them developing their businesses. Visibility of artisanal products can support the development of a tourism market for these goods. The 2019 Global Report on Women in Tourism recommends providing income generating opportunities and improving product diversification and market outlets to encourage handicraft innovation and reduce market crowding. Some concrete actions that can be enacted include:

- Provide capacity development and resources to women's tourism networks, NGOs and tourism cooperatives to actively work towards women's empowerment in the sector, monitoring and addressing any potential of intimate partner violence by providing information on violence against women and girls and pathways for accessing support;⁵⁶
- Facilitate and encourage women's representation and leadership in trade unions;
- Raise the visibility and profiles of women champions in industry;
- Promote equitable sharing of unpaid care work in communities and companies engaged in tourism, and support initiatives that engage female entrepreneurs and their spouses to promote more equal household decision-making and respectful relationships;⁵⁷ and
- Create platforms for women in tourism to network & access peer-support, utilizing ICT to promote women-owned businesses (e.g. facilitating centralized bookings for female accommodation owners in rural areas), connecting female entrepreneurs with opportunities.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The 2010 Global Report recommends the promotion of women's participation in tourism education and training, and to improve the educational level of women already working in the industry. This recommendation includes recognition of the different areas of the industry where women work, which should be complemented by a targeted and strategic program of action. The 2019 Global Report also recommends investment in skills and leadership training for women, including soft skills, digital literacy, awareness raising of available training opportunities, and targeting of women industry representatives. In Timor-Leste, promoting tourism education could:

- Create temporary special measures for women to access training and education opportunities, including scholarships, and remote training options. This should include expanding access of training opportunities to rural areas and covering digital literacy and foundational skills-building that could be accessed through different formats (online, peer-to-peer, etc.);
- Develop programmes tailored at rural women entrepreneurs to gain exposure to tourism experiences and also develop the quality of their services and products to meet the expectations of an international tourist market.
- Develop professional skills-building opportunities that recognize and facilitate women's participation given their burden of unpaid care work and promote equitable care-giving roles among both women and men;
- Incorporate gender into tourism and hospitality curriculums, ensuring a more sustainable tourism industry;

- Provide training on gender equality for tourism educators and address gender-related barriers in tourism education institutions (e.g. related to infrastructure and facilities, policies or criteria that might discourage or disadvantage women)
- Provide targeted training for diverse groups of women (including those with disabilities) to ensure that they can use digital technologies and have access to resources to innovate through digital technologies in tourism.

INSTITUTIONAL GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Institutionalizing gender equality principles through mainstreaming methods of inclusion plays a key role in ensuring an ongoing commitment, even in the face of changing leadership priorities. This is true in both the public and private sector.

The 2019 Report on Women in Tourism recommends providing gender equality training to the public and private tourism sector. The 2010 Report recommends the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental components of corporate social responsibility activities within the tourism sector, in line with the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). This encourages the private sector to take concrete steps towards addressing inequality in their workplaces, including through using women as champions, mentors and role models to advocate for gender equality in tourism. Recommendations for mainstreaming gender in Timor-Leste's tourism industry include:

- Mainstream gender in tourism policy, planning and operations (from Annual Action Plans, Tourism Strategy Updates, and allocating sufficient budget into promoting gender equality and addressing discrimination and barriers to women's participation in tourism);

- Ensure the Ministry of Tourism has a functional and staffed Gender Working Group financed by the State Budget and complementary funds, in line with the Resolution on Gender Working Groups and to advance its responsibilities under the Maubisse Declaration, among other gender equality commitments;
- Integrate gender analysis in the development and monitoring of legal and macroeconomic policies, including promotion of a conducive legal environment for women's entrepreneurship and monitoring the Equal Pay Resolution and Sexual Harassment Guidelines within the tourism industry;
- Support gender-responsive procurement measures to empower artisans and micro, small and medium-enterprises that might not have information or access to procurement opportunities; and
- Encourage private sector companies to sign the WEPs to contribute to a more resilient and equitable tourism industry by systematically promoting equality and better business practices, including related to zero tolerance of sexual harassment.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICIES AND ENVIRONMENT

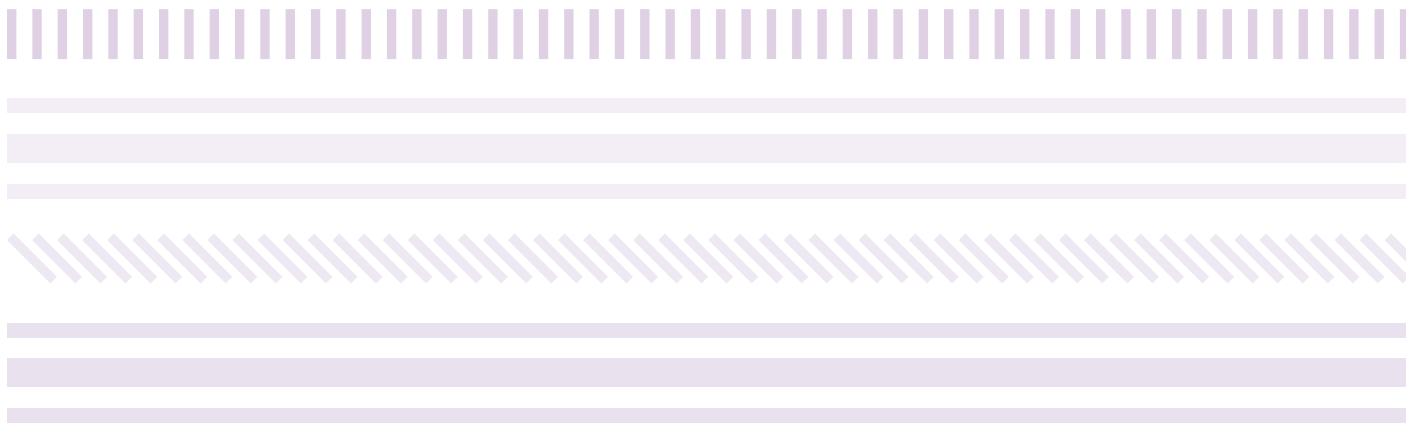
The findings of this research support the recommendations of the 2010 and 2019 Global Reports on Women in Tourism that a gender-responsive policy environment is necessary to support the empowerment of women in this industry. The 2010 Report recommends strengthening legal protections, including minimum wage, equal pay laws, and equitable access to land and property rights. It further recommends creating social welfare policies that reduce the burdens of unpaid care work on women,

in order to increase their time for economic pursuits. The 2019 Report recommends including tourism in gender-sensitive and macro-economic policy and committing sufficient human and financial resources to their implementation. The following actions can create an effective policy environment based on evidence in Timor-Leste:

- Collect and utilize sex, age and disability-disaggregated data specific related to tourism leadership, employment, entrepreneurship, and economic empowerment to inform policies & programmes; include gender statistics in tourism publications and monitoring reports (covering occupations, time-use, unpaid care work, wages and benefits);
- Support policies and regulatory frameworks that facilitate women's entrepreneurship and access to markets, in line with the 2017 National Employment Strategy, the [2018 Maubisse Declaration](#) and other national gender-equality commitments;
- Promote industry policies that address discrimination and stigma based on gender identity and sexual orientation, in line with Timor-Leste's human rights commitments and obligations;
- Ensure formal and informal tourism workers have access and benefit from social protection measures; and

- Conduct gender analysis, consult civil society actors, and integrate a gender perspective into all phases of tourism policy development and programming.

Women, with their diverse identifies, abilities and backgrounds, are key stakeholders in the tourism industry in Timor-Leste and around the world. Investing in women's inclusion, empowerment and leadership is imperative in order to create a prosperous tourism sector which invests in the people of Timor-Leste to protect and promote the country's unique cultural heritage, history and environment. The success of this industry requires the deliberate inclusion of women by a wide range of partners, as an active part of efforts to empower women and promote gender equality and within the broader process of economic diversification. COVID-19 has reinforced the need for inclusive economic development as part of recovery from the pandemic. The tourism industry has the potential to support the country's recovery from COVID-19, if it is guided by Timor-Leste's existing gender equality commitments and promotes partnerships that build on the strengths of the people of Timor-Leste.



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ANNEX 1

STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

STAKEHOLDERS	SITE - Dili			SITE - Atauro			SITE - Baucau			SITE - Oe-cusse			TOTAL # INTERVIEWS	TOTAL # FEMALE RESPONDENTS	TOTAL # MALE RESPONDENTS	TOTAL # RESPONDENTS	
	# Interviews	# Female Respondents	# Male Respondents	# Interviews	# Female Respondents	# Male Respondents	# Interviews	# Female Respondents	# Male Respondents	# Interviews	# Female Respondents	# Male Respondents					
Government	1		2				1		2			1		1		4	5
Educational institutions																	0
Students	2	10											2	10			10
Faculty heads	2	2					2	3					4	5			5
Development agencies and international donors incl. Un agencies	5	5	3										5	5	3		8
Industry associations	1		2										1		2		2
Private sector																	0
Employees	3	5	3		2	2	2	3	1				7	10	4		14
Locally owned small to medium sized tourism and hospitality enterprises incl. guesthouses, homestays, restaurants					2	1	2	2					6	9	1		10
Informal workers					1	2	1	1					2	3			3
Women's Working Groups					1	5	1					1	5	1	1	1	11
Foreign owned accommodation establishments	2	1	3										2	1	3		4
Foreign owned food and beverage establishments	3	1	2										3	1	2		3
Tourism activity providers	2	2	1										2	2	1		3
Gift shops							1	1					1	1			1
Local non-government organisations	3	3	1		1	2	1	1					5	6	1		7
TOTAL	24	29	17	7	16	1	10	11	3	4	8	1	45	64	22		86

ENDNOTES

- 1 54% of people employed in tourism are women based on data from 18 countries. World Tourism Organization. 2019. Global Report on Women and Tourism.
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- 22 Considering that a woman is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions - GOLLA, Anne Marie et al. - Definition, Framework and Indicators Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment, ICRW, 2011
- 23 Cultural preservation is high on Timor-Leste's priorities as evidenced by the 2016 ratification of the World Heritage Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the approval of the cultural heritage legal regime in 2017 and practical measures to recognize and value traditional weaving, such as the introduction of *tais* into public service uniforms.
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- 56 UN Women Timor-Leste works to end violence against women through Connect with Respect, which educates adolescents about respectful relationships, and through the Spotlight Initiative. Further information can be found on the [UN Women Asia Pacific](#) website.
- 57 UN Women has produced a range of resources exploring unpaid care work, its impact and solutions. These can be found on the [UN Women Asia Pacific](#) website.

