



# Inclusive Employment for Women and Youth in the Tourism Sector

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*Uniterra is a Canadian volunteer cooperation and international development program that is jointly operated by WUSC (World University Service of Canada) and CECI (Centre for International Studies and Cooperation). The program supports inclusive economic development to benefit women and youth in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Uniterra works with key private, public, and civil society partners to facilitate growth and inclusion in markets that have the greatest impact on marginalized populations.*

## Building Inclusive Markets through International Volunteering

When a market system is inclusive, marginalized groups are able to access the opportunities, skills, and resources necessary to take advantage of innovations and changes, thereby improving their living conditions and economic status. The Program works to facilitate inclusive markets by building the capacity of a wide variety of partner organizations, including producer groups, private businesses, training centres, financial intermediaries, and women's and youth groups. Capacity building and training is offered by skilled Canadian, Southern and National volunteers. Uniterra's global approach to

capacity building for market system change is built on the following core principles: ensuring that all activities are **gender and youth responsive**; attacking the **root causes** of exclusion and market failure; approaching all goals and activities through **partnerships**; ensuring that the program is **adaptable** to change; operating on a **scale** that corresponds with the development challenges faced by marginalized women, young women and young men; and ensuring that all programming is financially, socially and environmentally **sustainable**.

## Introduction

The tourism sector is in full expansion around the world and holds the power to generate employment for marginalized women and young people, as well as being a driver for environmentally sustainable economic development.

Women are often under-represented in the most lucrative positions within the tourism sector, and in some cases are missing entirely. They tend to work in informal accommodations, including operating homestays, guest houses and micro hotels, all which generate family income. In both

the formal and informal sectors, young women are most often involved in front desk jobs, cooking positions and housekeeping, all low status, low pay and insecure occupations. Higher status and higher paid positions, whether it be as tour guides or working in management, are often reserved for young men, who in many contexts have the education, confidence and language skills needed to succeed in these customer-facing roles.

## Main Issues & Constraints

The Unitererra Program's research in the tourism sectors of Bolivia, Tanzania, Sri Lanka and Vietnam highlighted that women face many constraints that contribute to their low presence in this industry. The Program chose to focus on the following key challenges:

- **Social norms leading to a division of labour based on gender.** Cultural factors and social norms cause women to work in specific departments of the hotel industry such as housekeeping, front desk operations and human resource management, all positions that have limited opportunities for advancement. Discrimination towards women is a significant barrier in the hotel industry of many countries as there is cultural and social stigma associated with service jobs. Young women are therefore often discouraged or hindered from working in this sector, considered to be men's work. For example, in Sri Lanka, hotel work is stigmatized as being dangerous and therefore socially unacceptable for young women. This has almost completely shut out young women from one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy.
- **Gaps in human resources.** As a result of the gap between the training supplied by Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) providers and tourism labour demands, a lack of training in soft skills including language skills, and the lack of certification of tourism relevant skills, the industry faces barriers for growth as well as challenges for young people to enter the industry. For example, in both Tanzania and Bolivia, tour guides are trained informally and lack specific certification of their skills. The lack of standardization both limits the accessibility to the sector for those who have existing social networks, and limits career paths for excluded groups such as young women. The lack of standards also reinforces perceptions of what makes a 'good' tour guide, usually based on more masculine traits, particularly in rural or adventure tourism.
- **The lack of information, collaboration and integration with other economic sectors,** such as the handicrafts and agri-food sectors, which often depend upon one another for supplies or services linked indirectly to tourism. In Bolivia, the growing tourism industry has few structured relationships with handicraft and textile providers. This leads to a disorganized handicraft sector that provides inconsistent quality and poor marketing to tourists, who wish to purchase sustainable products that have a social impact.



## Uniterra's Approach to the Problem

The Uniterra Program has adopted an Inclusive Market Systems approach towards development that intervenes across the tourism value chain and seeks opportunities to integrate women into the workforce. The Program works with multiple actors, including TVET institutions, employers in the tourism industry, such as hotels and restaurants, and government at all levels. One of the Program's key aims is to challenge social norms and bring about a change in attitudes and behaviors that will enable women to be fully represented in the labour market.

**In Sri Lanka,** women are educated and qualified for employment but there is a lack of jobs as a result of the gender segregated labour market. Female workers are susceptible to sexual harassment at work, given their limited job options and social norms, thus discouraging other women from working in the industry. To challenge the perception that tourism is a profession for men only, the Uniterra Program worked with partners to launch a series of radio programs offering examples of successful women in tourism and encouraging young women to work in this growing sector. Community awareness sessions, together with the radio recordings, created an environment where people were able to voice their concerns and were able to discuss the realities and experiences of women working in tourism. The stories from model families who had succeeded in the industry were very well received, especially by the family members of young women, who are often

those most concerned about work in this industry. The Uniterra Program also partnered with job centres, developing their ability to better service unemployed young women, and linking them with prospective employers in the hospitality sector.

The Program and partners recognized that the perception of the tourism industry as being unsafe for women, while outdated, was based on the ongoing lack of representation of women in the industry and the endemic harassment that they face in the workplace. The Uniterra Program networked with hotels, the *Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority*, and the *Kandy Hoteliers Association*. By bringing the issue of women's representation and safety within tourism to potential employers and leaders of the industry, the Program sought to promote change from within. Practical measures were encouraged such as clear and relevant human resource policies targeting recruitment and retention, flexible working hours to accommodate family life, safe transportation to and from work, and guidelines on sexual harassment. Through a series of workshops carried out by Uniterra volunteers across the country, managers were trained on human resource guidelines addressing women's employment related issues in the tourism industry. This was accompanied by a handbook on best practices developed in consultation with hoteliers, human resources professionals and Canadian gender equality volunteers.



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**In Tanzania,** the local communities surrounding major tourist attractions are among the poorest in the country. The Uniterra Program worked with the *Tanzania Tourist Board* (TTB) to support 66 accredited Cultural Tourism Enterprises (CTEs). Cultural tourism adopts a community-based tourism approach, involving community members in designing and organizing tours, and showcasing aspects of their lives to visitors. CTEs are primarily run by men, with women found in supporting roles rather than in managerial or decisional roles. To respond to this challenge, Uniterra volunteers facilitated a two-day Gender Action Learning System (GALS) training, in collaboration with local consultants, resulting in most CTEs signing a commitment to hire more women. The Uniterra Program also linked the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO) with the Tanzania Tourist Board (TTB) who have agreed to explore the introduction of two new awards categories in their annual awards program: a ‘Best Female Cultural Tourism Enterprise Guide’ and ‘Most Gender Sensitive CTE’ award. This will serve to recognize and encourage female tour guides.

While increasingly popular with tourists, many CTEs do not attract the number of visitors that they would like. Uniterra worked to stimulate broader demand for cultural and sustainable tourism in Tanzania, through capacity building in marketing and through direct connections with Canadian tourism companies. For example, the Program worked with Village Monde, a Canadian non-governmental organization that promotes a global network for sustainable tourism, to support a volunteer to survey and rate CTE accommodations based on Village Monde’s accommodation standards. Those that qualified were then showcased on the Village Monde website. As a result, a

number of CTEs now get direct bookings through the Village Monde website, thus increasing the number of tourists they receive. The Ukerewe CTE for example, has been able to double the tourists from the previous year.

**In Bolivia,** women make up most of the lama and alpaca based handicraft sector, but they do not take advantage of the tourism market’s potential. Customer service and sales are weak, as there is not much of a strategy for marketing and sales. To connect the handicraft and tourism sectors, a strategic alliance was developed between the Uniterra Program and La Paz Maravillosa (LPM), a municipal tourist development agency which seeks to improve access to and appreciation of socially responsible handicrafts made from alpaca and lama wool. Specific tools to increase the city’s visibility and promote tourism were developed; for example, a tourism and handicraft smartphone app, a web page presenting quality handicraft products and reliable handicraft stores in the city, and events organized to promote and strengthen the ties between tourism and the handicraft sector.

In December 2018 and February 2019, two courses were organized, in collaboration with the Association of High Mountain Guides and the School of Guides and Mountain Instructors, for the certification of Aymara indigenous women in mountain trekking and high mountain rescue. The certificates granted to these women enabled them to provide quality services to visitors and tourists. Their participation in this training will open doors to many other young women desiring to become mountain guides. This initiative promotes a significant change in roles, gender stereotypes and models, which differs from the current male dominated culture.

## The Value added by Volunteers: Capacity-Building and Facilitation

The international nature of tourism has shown itself to be a good 'fit' for a volunteer cooperation program. Canadian volunteers are often well travelled and have an intuitive understanding of what Western tourists are seeking. Additionally, younger student volunteers found that basic skills, such as social media management and campaigns, were in high demand by tourism providers and often unavailable locally.

In all of the mentioned cases, the facilitation and networking conducted by volunteers was key to the success of the projects. For instance, in **Sri Lanka**, volunteers were successful in facilitating a partnership between the University of Vocational Technology (UNIVOTEC) in Ratmalana, and Humber College in Toronto, resulting in UNIVOTEC creating a degree in Hospitality Management in collaboration with Humber. A partnership with Planeterra/G Adventures from Canada enabled tourism partner Women Development Centre (WDC) to add a small cafe to its handicraft shop to diversify its source of revenues, increase its visibility, attract new clients, and help build linkages with international tour groups.

In **Bolivia**, volunteers were instrumental in the mapping, branding and marketing of artisans in the textile industry to increase visibility with tourists.



**CATHERYN BERGERON**  
Graphic Image and Commercialization Advisor in Bolivia, has significantly contributed to improving the businesses of hundreds of artisans.

In **Tanzania**, partnering with Village Monde was essential to inform visitors of the existence and location of Cultural Tourism Enterprises that are not always on the direct routes of safari bound tourists. Village Monde's website enabled many CTEs to gain international visibility, while partnering with the big safari tour operators gave them the chance to be offered as a safari package add ons.

In addition to their promotional, facilitation and networking contributions, Canadian volunteers developed capacities in marketing, customer services, business management, gender, communications, entrepreneurship, tourism product development, soft-skills, HR management, and career development amongst a wide variety of tourism providers and support organizations. Throughout, an emphasis was placed on responding to the needs and capacities of women in the industry.



**ELIZABETH MATTE**  
Marketing Advisor in Tanzania, has trained many CTEs throughout the country, assessing their marketing needs.

## Summary of Findings and Lessons Learned

Through the use of an Inclusive Market Systems approach to understand and address challenges in the tourism sector and by acting through volunteer cooperation, a number of lessons and results relevant for future programs have been identified.

### In regards to social norms and social stigmatization

Changes in perception are difficult to measure, however, there are some clear, obvious results.

- In **Sri Lanka**, women and young girls have expressed interest in joining the tourism industry after hearing the radio programs that reached an estimated 224,085 people.
- In **Tanzania**, the GALS training had a significant impact on the CTEs and there was a change in behaviour towards hiring women. For instance, the CTE Friends of Usumbara, who previously had only 1 female guide, now have 6 female guides to lead trekking activities. Further, a new Women's Tour Guiding Network, composed of 30 women CTE employees from across Tanzania, was developed in partnership with the Tanzania Tourist Board to provide mentoring, skill-sharing, and networking opportunities. The network seeks to encourage more women to join the tourism sector, including becoming tour guides.

Tackling social norms and battling social stigma that exclude women from the industry is a long term process. The Uniterra Program has found that working directly with the industry, promoting positive role models, and using strategic communication tools have made it possible to broaden the discussion around gendered social norms and sexual harassment in the industry.

**Filling the gap in human resources** has been made possible by improving training, including practical internships, and developing entrepreneurship initiatives.

- In **Sri Lanka**, Uniterra supported UNIVOTEC, the University of Vocational Technology, to develop a new tourism curriculum from scratch. Doing so, in collaboration with faculty from Humber College in Canada, provided the opportunity to consider industry needs, particularly for soft skills, from the get go.
- Better linking tourism training with industry needs was also a foundation of the Program's work in **Vietnam**, where Uniterra Volunteers worked with the *Saigontourist Hospitality College* to develop a series of internships, and an on-site cafe and training facility. The Uniterra Program's ability to mobilize volunteers directly from the Canadian tourism and hospitality industry, including college faculty and hospitality professionals, has been key to developing the institutional capabilities of training providers to deliver soft skill training and industry related skills training. In **Tanzania**, the government has launched a safari tour guides' training, registration, certification and licensing (TRCL) program to elevate the status of the tour guiding profession in the country and improve the quality of services delivered by competent, qualified, and ethical tour guides. The Program, facilitated in the beginning by Uniterra, is self-financing through fees paid by students and tour operators. For the growth and sustainability of tourism, as well as for young women to be able to access jobs within this industry, it is essential to develop the capacity of tourism training institutions, and for government and the industry to recognize and develop certification for the soft skills required in the sector. Canadian volunteers, especially those with direct experience in tourism, marketing and social inclusion, are exceptionally well positioned to support partner organizations in this area.

- Communication and branding are areas of high demand as they increase the visibility of the sector. As a result of volunteer work in this key area, the Tanzania Tourism Board has a new, attractive website, with an interactive map and direct links to all the CTEs' websites and Facebook pages. Each CTE has its own personalised logo and brochure. Several CTEs report having more inquiries from tourists and 80% of tour operators are packaging cultural tourism programs with their safari offers. TTB recently partnered with the Tanzania Association of Tour Operators (TATO) which will greatly enhance the visibility of CTEs. As in the hotel industry, Canadian volunteers are well positioned to respond to communications challenges.



The approach to **Partnerships** has also been foundational to creating new opportunities by **reaching out to the tourism sector and facilitating joint initiatives**. The handicraft sector in Bolivia has greatly benefited artisans. La Paz now boasts a 100% Bolivian handicraft tourist route with 14 stores, more than half of which have increased their sales in recent years. The Program is able to work towards **sustainability** of programming through La Paz Maravillosa, which has the capacity, mandate and resources to create synergies between tourism and handicrafts, ensuring that the knowledge and experience that Uniterra brings to Bolivia will have a sustained

impact. Identifying these local partners who have the capacity to support others across sectors has been a key lesson, and a means to leverage local capacities that were previously not supporting inclusion of marginalized groups. **Tourism is a global industry, and tourism providers depend on local and international partners to grow and thrive. Canadian volunteers have shown themselves to be uniquely positioned to assist local sustainable tourism organizations and companies to develop and sustain international partnerships with Canadian and other international peer organizations and potential clients.**

## Conclusion

The training and facilitation provided by volunteers has enabled the development of local partner organizations' capacity to continue implementing their marketing and action plans on their own. New ties between the various actors within the industry contribute to ongoing dialogue and more collaborative action and activities to grow the tourism industry and, most of all, the inclusion

of marginalized women in the sector. Although Uniterra cannot claim full credit for the expansion of new CTEs in Tanzania, the increase of artisan associations joining the La Paz tourism route, or the reproduction of on-campus business models in Vietnam, it certainly showed the way and provided the capacity-building for the organisations to feel confident enough to go further on their own.