



tourism

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Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Deputy Minister Thabethe hosts the Women in Tourism dinner

10 May 2018

More than 300 Women in Tourism (WiT) had an opportunity to interact during a networking dinner at the uShaka Marine World in Durban, as part of the activities taking place at the Africa's Travel Indaba last night.

The WiT program is aimed at creating a platform for advancing radical socio-economic transformation and integration of women from different socio-economic backgrounds and spectra within the sector.

“For the past four years, the Networking Dinner sessions have provided a unique platform for women in the tourism industry, stakeholders and experts to share ideas on building strong business skills and leadership capabilities amongst women. The ultimate goal is to enhance and nurture more top leaders, entrepreneurs and industrialists in the sector,” highlighted the Deputy Minister.

In 2010, the UNWTO released the Global Report on Women in Tourism, highlighting the value of the sector as an engine for economic development through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of direct and indirect employment. The report also indicated that Tourism growth presents both challenges and opportunities for gender equality and women's empowerment.

While tourism often contributes to community development and provides opportunities for women's self-employment, the report also found that women are contributing a large amount of unpaid work in tourism family businesses, especially when compared to other sectors. The formal and informal opportunities tourism provides women can have a significant impact on poverty reduction in rural communities. The proportion of women “own-account workers” is much higher in tourism than in other sectors across all regions.

With regard to opportunities, tourism presents a number of income generating activities for women and the jobs are flexible, able to be carried out at different locations e.g. homes, community and the workplace. The challenges facing women however are their concentration in the low status, low paid, and precarious jobs in the sector.

“Women make up nearly 70% of the workforce in the industry, however, there is a marked under-representation of women in senior positions, with women holding less than 40% of all managerial positions, less than 20% of general management roles and between 5 to 8% of board positions.

Tourism offers the potential for women to hold leadership positions, however, women still only represent one fifth of all tourism ministers and tourism board chairs. This is one of our women empowerment flagship events that sees women not only from South Africa but from the rest of the continent, taking time to network and expand their business and professional horizons”, the Deputy Minister concluded.

The dinner was also attended by delegations from Ghana and Lesotho.

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