

Concept Paper: A study on existing and potential avenues for IT based entrepreneurship for women and women with disabilities in the tourism industry

Preface.

This concept paper aims to set a feasible **scope** and lay out the **baseline** for an advocacy and policy implementation-oriented study of **IT based entrepreneurship/self-employment** opportunities for **women**, and women with **disabilities** in the **tourism sector**

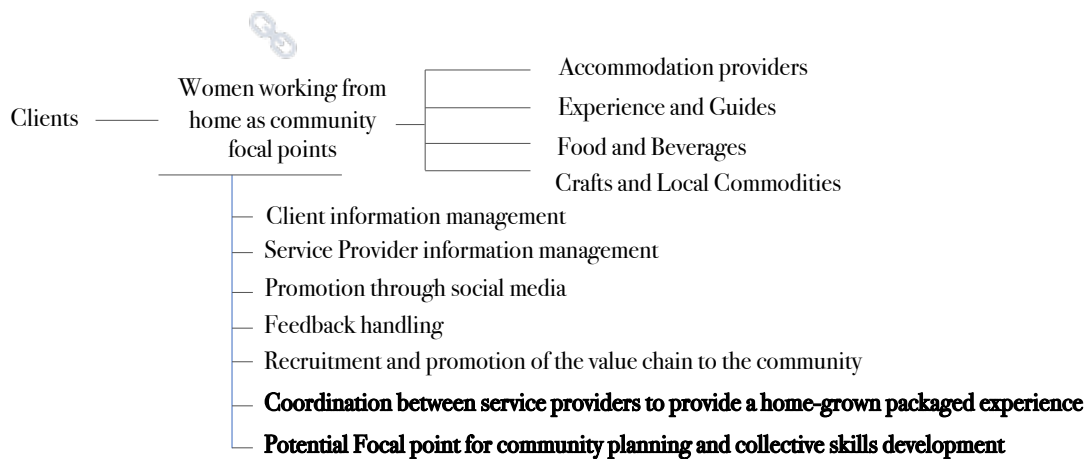
Focus:

- Vocational pathways for developing IT, bookkeeping and English based communication skills of women with disabilities and economically underprivileged backgrounds.
- Focus on women working from home as promoters, coordinators and access points to small scale, community based local tourism micro-economies.
- Women working from home as key service and logistical coordinators in local value tourism chains

Focus:

The internet has transformed the relationship between small and medium scale tourism service providers and tourists. Service providers are now privier than ever to the fact that direct promotion and communication to clients through online channels will return a yield which far surpasses that of traditional promotional/ support intermediaries such as SLTDA. The popularity of AirBnB and the surge of direct promotions on social media has shown that small, cottage-scale service providers are reaping the benefits of a connected world.

This paper aims to outline the potential local-tourism value chains that women can help generate and maintain from the comfort of their homes. Treating each village, each community as tourism eco-system where women will be the key managers and promoters of what each destination has to offer.



The paper believes that every community has potential goods/services that remain undersold and underpromoted due to the service providers being unable to communicate through modern channels in English. Furthermore, we assert that an agglomerated output from a variegated community of providers will present a value proposition to tourists that exceeds the sum total of their individual outputs in isolation. Local women (group or individual capacity) even with restricted mobility can be the focal point as well as the backbone of this agglomerated value chain, bringing clients and vendors together.

While it is nearly impossible to provide advertising, client management, logistical and organisational skills to every individual vendor or service provider in a community, a locally sourced, upskilled community agents can serve as the skills-based structural support system of a local tourism economy, promoting each locale as a destination of its own with a carefully organised, unique experience.

Women in Tourism/ Concept Paper 2

Client Request: A campaign that can result in enrolment of women for tourism-related work that is part-time and/or work from home to balance their family/caretaker commitments. Which will increase enrolment at vocational institutions and increase women's labour in the workforce.

Preface

This concept paper is ideally read alongside Concept Paper 1; as it shares the fundamental premise of upskilling women in tourism related work as part of work from home/ part time work arrangements; we will focus particularly in increasing enrolments at vocational institutions as *both* a potential outcome, and a contributing factor in increasing women's participation in tourism related work.

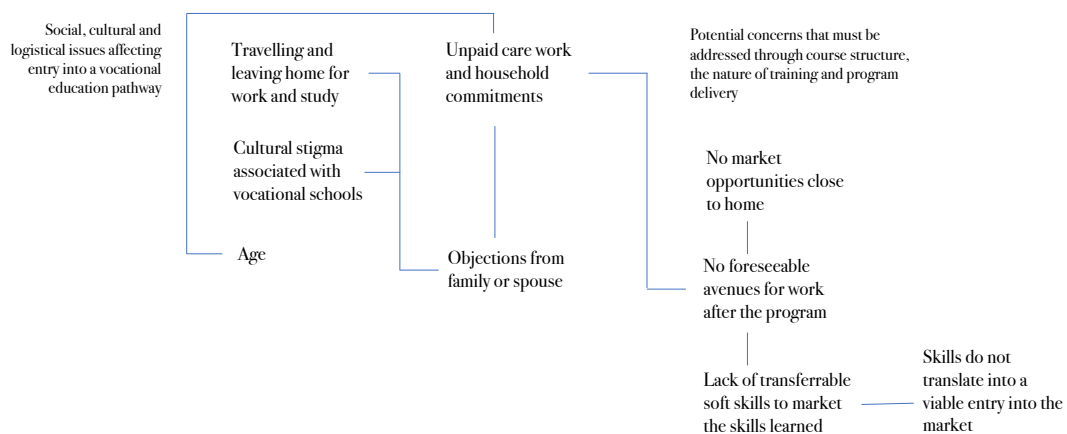
Focus: Increasing women's enrolment in vocational training programs

General: While the particular scope of the intervention deals with a specific industry, any program or policy that aims to increase women's participation in vocational training must involve at least a cursory glance into systemic barriers that hinder women's entry and retention in skills based tertiary education. One discovers, based on existing reading that the following two critical factors require intervention to make the idea of vocational training more congenial to women.

- **Changing the traditional masculine notion of "Vocational Training":** Communication campaigns aimed at dismantling the archaic notion that vocational training is necessarily about craft based physical labour and is inferior to university education, by heavily promoting modern learning components such as IT, hospitality, soft skills and client interaction development.
- **Raising awareness of gender issues at the institutional level of vocational training providers,** understanding institutional hindrances that discourage women's enrolment in order to gear the institutions themselves towards greater gender parity by unlearning some of the more masculine attributes inherently attached to trades and entrepreneurship and adopting gender responsive training strategies and counselling within the institutions.

Specific: Tourism related working from home or part time work

This paper suggests four potential avenues that will widen the communicative catchment area of the intervention by mitigating the challenges women quite often confront when considering a vocational training-based career pathway.



- **Training in place:** Understanding the importance of the regional economy in tourism, and gearing pilot programs to be geographically relevant, assessment based, practical programs which will ensure that learning outcomes translate into real pathways to self-employment and entrepreneurship. (Ties into Concept Paper 1)

- **Focus on soft skills:** Programs designed with an understanding that technical skills or craft competences do not necessarily translate into successful employment/entrepreneurial outcomes; Ensuring that traditional hospitality-oriented training programs incorporate essential modules on communication, English as a second language and IT skills.
- Contrasting and expanding on the idea of *sole tradership* to **family owned, family run** businesses where communications efforts are geared towards the household, rather than the individual (gender agnostic); where the **desired end** is to uplift women's participation in the labour force by **means** of enticing the entrepreneurial spirit of the family unit.
- **Factoring in Age:** Vocational training programs geared towards school leavers often leave behind older women who are more likely to have caretaker commitments. As this group might be more inclined to find a work from home/part time arrangement attractive, targeted promotion and awareness aimed at women over 25 would be an effective starting point.