



SCOPING STUDY

ENHANCING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOURISM
SECTOR THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

AUGUST 2021

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Section 1. Scope and Purpose

Context:

In contrast to the high levels of female participation in the tourism industry worldwide, women are highly underrepresented in the Sri Lankan tourism industry with females accounting for less than 10% of the workforce, compared to the 54% globally (IPS, 2020). The numbers only become more austere when it comes to women from marginalised communities and women with disabilities. Within Sri Lanka's hospitality sector, men are found to outnumber women in all occupational categories, except for Guest Relations and Front Office staff and Marketing functions (ILO, 2016).

The underrepresentation of women in the tourism sector does not bode well in the context of the significance of Tourism in the Sri Lankan economy and the country's already low female labour force participation rate (33.6% compared to 73% for men), despite both men and women reaping largely equal dividends of Sri Lanka's high literacy rate (DCS, 2020).

Purpose:

In this context, Skills for Inclusive growth aims to map the terrain of IT based entrepreneurship in the Tourism industry, with the view to;

- Developing evidence-based strategies to increase women's enrolment and participation in tourism related work through part-time and/or work from home arrangements which will allow them to balance their family/caretaker commitments.
- Increasing women's enrolment in vocational training institutions, by extension increasing women's representation in the labor force.

The scoping study aims;

- To assess the current and potential applications of Information Technology as a functional component of value generation and value addition in the Tourism sector in Sri Lanka.
- Position within the above landscape, women and women with disabilities where they can be the potential beneficiaries of location independent, mobility agnostic, demand driven opportunities for skills development, skills augmentation leading to income generation and economic mobility.
- Identify IT based applications that would result in measurable capacity boosts or value addition to an individual's skillset or the repertoire of a small business.

The knowledge thus explored will aid the conceptualization of strategies which facilitates learning, skills development and capacity building aimed at facilitating and empowering women and women with disabilities to enrol in IT driven tourism value chains or enhance the quality and scale of existing ventures.

Section 2. Key Terminology and Abbreviations

IT: Information Technology

That which pertains, in the case of this particular exercise, to the use of traditional computers, mobile devices, and other related hardware, software with access to connected technologies, services and platforms.

Tourism

That which pertains, in the case of this particular exercise to the tourism value chains, both local and foreign that are within the practical scope of service provision by the particular group of beneficiaries discussed in this intervention. (Further clarification will follow)

Disabled, Disability, Persons with Disabilities

Shall be disaggregated and specified where pointed interventions and tools are discussed (visually impaired, physically impaired, mobility restricted, hearing impaired etc)

Accessibility, Accessible

That which pertains, in the case of this particular exercise to specialised approaches, protocols, interventions and technologies which would enable the beneficiaries to utilise the outcomes of the program/ toolkit over the restrictions imposed by their particular disability.

ICTA	Information and communication technology agency
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
PwD	Persons with Disabilities
ICT, IT	Information Communication Technologies, Information Technologies
S4IG	Skills for Inclusive Growth
SLASSCOM	Sri Lanka Association for Software Services Companies
SLTDA	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
FARO	Foundation for Rural Opportunity
ILO	International Labour Organisation
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing, Business Process Outsourcing enterprise
ADB	Asian Development Bank
KPI	Key Point Indicator

Section 3. Executive Summary

This scoping study attempts to identify factors hindering women’s employment in the tourism sector and suggests ICT driven remote and part time work opportunities to increase women’s participation and visibility in the tourism sector.

Stigmatised public perceptions of the tourism industry and family/caretaker commitments are found to be primary factors that hinder women’s participation in the tourism industry. The study looks into ICT driven remote work that would enable more women to enrol in the tourism industry without compromising their care duties.

The study also observes gender segregation and skill mismatch in the vocational training sector as contributing factors that lead to the underrepresentation of women within the tourism industry. The study posits that Sri Lanka’s TVET sector must incorporate a gender sensitive attitude towards curriculum design and incentivise girls and women to take up non-traditional roles. It also notes a demand-supply mismatch in the TVET sector’s output and emphasises that transferable skills and soft skills, particularly IT and English Language skills are paramount in ensuring that graduates can thrive in the marketplace. The study further notes that the TVET sector must reduce its latency in updating and adjusting to market demands by frequently engaging with industry stakeholders.

The study finds room for improvement in ICT based distant learning opportunities in Sri Lanka, particularly within the TVET sector and emphasizes the value of distant and part time learning as key factors that would encourage women to enter into the tourism industry.

The study also notes that there is great value and opportunity in incorporating ICT tools in women owned business in the tourism industry, whereby the businesses will be able to reap the benefits enhanced customer-vendor interaction. The study identifies a potentially gender equalising quality in the role of applied ICTs within the tourism industry and explores the intersection between the ICT industry and the tourism industry to better understand opportunities and entry points for women and PWDs

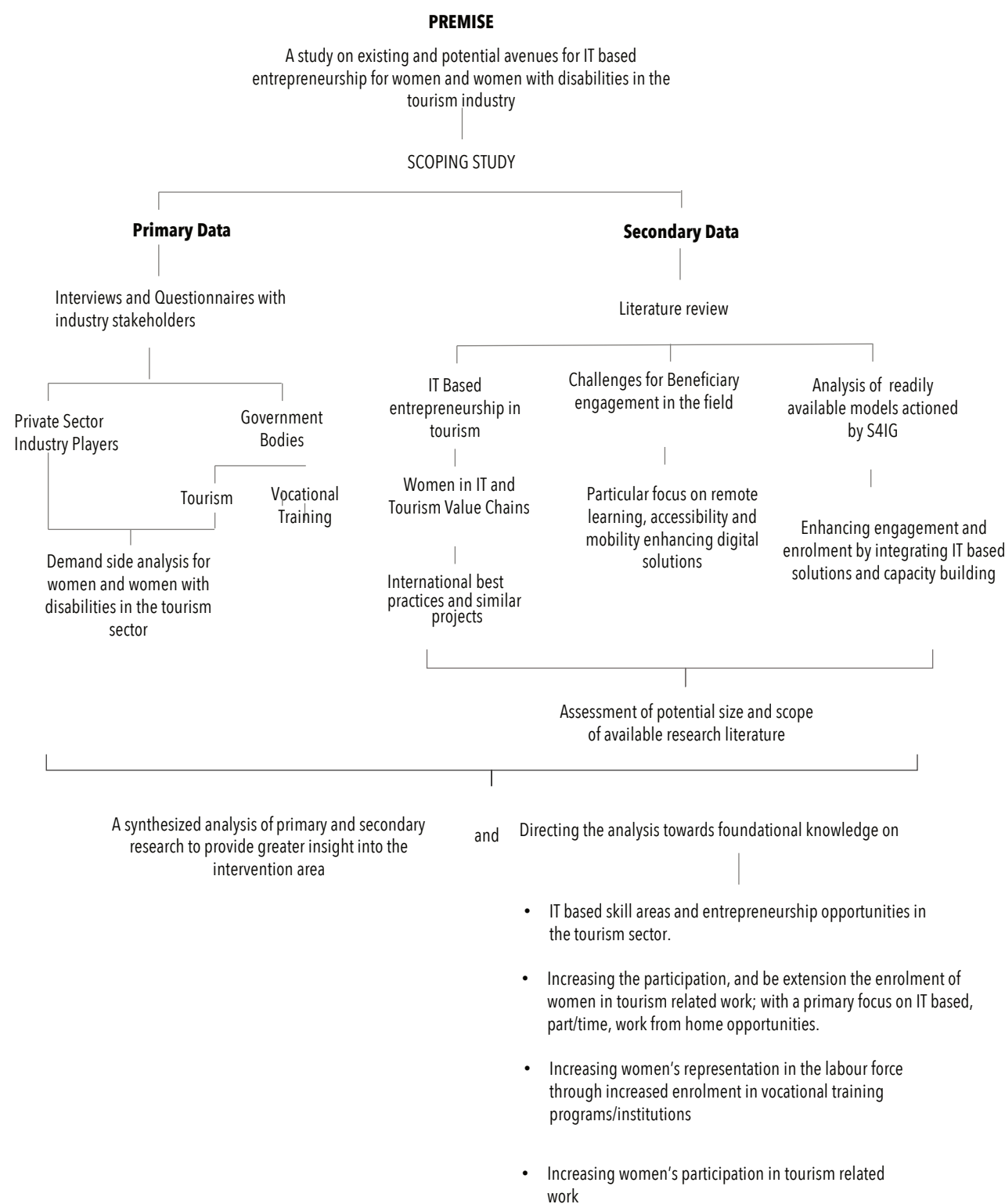
The study finds that ICT based skills development enables women to develop a higher degree of occupational mobility through transferrable skills that will enhance employment opportunities. The survey emphasises the use of ICT tools, particularly an online presence through social media in enabling rural SMEs to gain more exposure and reach out to potential visitors as well as create value chain linkages with other SMEs in the community.

With the view of enhancing the appeal and visibility of community tourism through use of ICTs, the study explores the idea of women led “Community MSME resource networks” as a means to improve women’s visibility and enrolment in the tourism industry. Community MSME resource networks (RN) are presented as pathways to community based skill sharing, skill pooling and value chain creation for sole traders and MSMEs. The intervention seeks to organise, educate and train MSMEs within a particular community to collectively promote their specific destination; by extension multiplying the effectiveness of their individual promotional activities within the elevated presence they collectively create for the destination. By putting women at the forefront of these networks, the study speculates a potential ripple effect that will enable more women to venture into a traditionally gender segregated industry.

Section 4. Research Methodology

This study draws on information gathered from both primary and secondary sources and presents an analysis of the variegated factors that hinder women’s representation in the tourism sector. The study is prognosticative in nature, and integrates the conceptualization of two interventions designed using the knowledge gathered. A graphical outline of the processes is provided below.

4.1. Outline of Process



Information, both primary and secondary were gathered along the following areas of discovery:

- Delineating as part of secondary research, challenges to women’s employment in the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry
- Research on the intersection between IT and Tourism value chains, especially where they pertain to rural, grassroots applications
- Success stories in Digital Tourism and IT based value addition and value generation opportunities in tourism with a focus on women and women with disabilities.
- Exploration of linkages, demand side motivation and opportunities for women and women with disabilities by engaging a select number of industry stakeholders.
- A review of vocational training facilities, focused on student centric, distant learning delivery systems to up-skill women and women with disabilities in IT based tourism sector service provision.

A review of secondary data incorporated over 20 documents from Sri Lankan sources to identify the core issues around the underrepresentation of women in the Sri Lankan tourism sector.

Secondary data gathered from TVET and other educational institutions were analyzed to systematically verify if there were deficiencies within TVET institutions that would lead to the core issues discussed.

Women’s engagement in the ICT sectors, particularly in rural and underprivileged backgrounds was studied through (a) A secondary data driven case study on Rural BPOs in Sri Lanka as well as (b) Interviewing key stakeholders attached to the project over the phone.

The intersection between tourism and the ICT sector was reviewed through both secondary research (limited on the subject in Sri Lanka) as well as over 10 online and over the phone interviews with a variety of knowledgeable stakeholders or key informants (KIs) over a two-week period in. Personnel and organizations as well as the guiding lines of questioning are shown in the appendix.

4.1. Key Limitations

Due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic; a direct, primary study of the core beneficiary group is unfeasible. For this reason, the study will be mostly facilitated by secondary data, with primary data gathered from industry stakeholders to gauge the market demand for particular skills.

This study was delivered within three weeks of request, while it provides a baseline to the field of intervention, the delivery of specific objectives, campaigns and strategies must be preceded by a granular, context specific supply and demand assessment. We emphasise that the diversity of ICT applications as well as the diversity of the beneficiaries cannot be sufficiently serviced in generalised strategy.

Section 5. Literature review

5.1. Women and PWDs in the tourism industry: Issues and Challenges

In contrast to the high levels of female participation in the tourism industry worldwide, women are highly underrepresented in the Sri Lankan tourism industry, with females accounting for around 10%* of the workforce, compared to the 54% globally (SLTDA, 2020). Moreover, female enrolment in hotel schools in Sri Lanka is disturbingly low. These figures do not bode well in the context of a growing sector and the country’s already low female labour force participation rate (33.6% compared to 73% for men (DCS,2019).

Within Sri Lanka’s hospitality sector, men are found to outnumber women in all occupational categories, except for Guest Relations and Front Office staff and Marketing functions. Attracting more women into the sector will also help to address the growing labour shortage, a crucial deterrent to the industry’s growth(IPS,2020)

In this context, the research attempts to explore several key questions:

Are there obstacles for women and PWDs to join the tourism industry that are distinctive or peculiar to the readily documented obstacles that have kept female participation in the labour force quite low?	The propensity of work arrangements to clash with unpaid care work such as household reproductive labor, childcare and elderly care Cultural stigmatization of the tourism industry, and ill-conceived notions and societal prejudices on women working in the tourism industry discourage women from entering into the industry
To what extent do these obstacles stem from a skill gap, rather than much more structurally embedded/systemic socio-cultural reasons?	Apart from the socio-cultural reasons pointed above; there appears to be a severe mismatch between the tourism industry demands and the capacities of Sri Lanka’s tourism oriented TVET output
What is the role of ICT in alleviating any skills deficit that hinders women from joining the tourism industry? What is the extent of the training available to bridge the skill gap?	Remote work is found to encourage more women to venture into employment areas that are traditionally gender segregated, in part, the removal of the requirement to be physically present in a given place of work alleviates a significant amount of socio-cultural pressure from the work.
Will the integration of ICT, especially remote working into the intervention, potentially enable women and PWDs to circumnavigate the systemic or socio-cultural obstacles that would otherwise hold them back?	

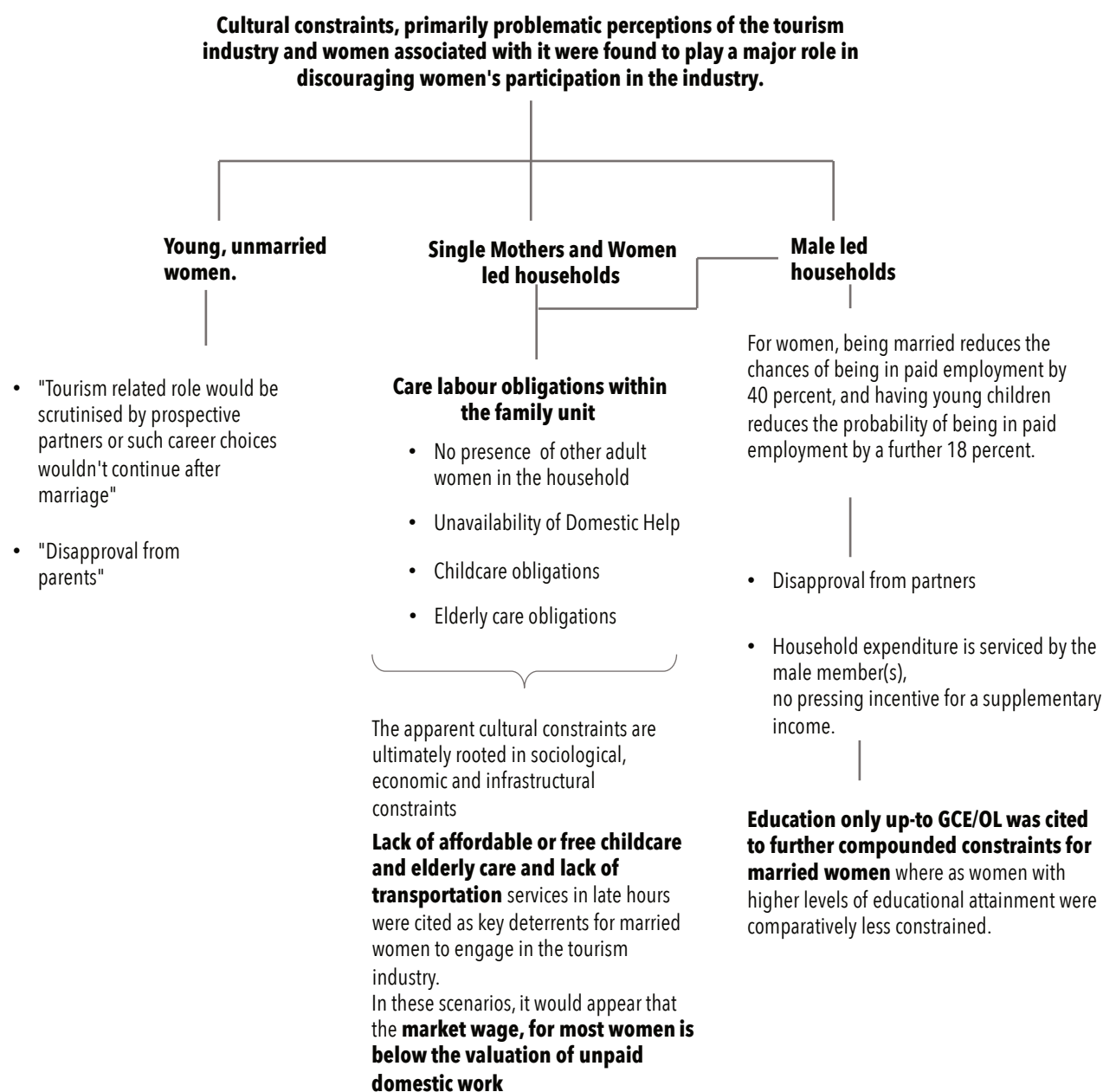
In order to attempt to answer these questions, we present a literature led analysis of the factors which affect women’s enrolment and participation in the Sri Lankan tourism economy. We follow this analysis with a disaggregation of what different opportunities in the tourism industry would mean to different women, emphasising the necessity of a multimodal strategy to ensure the accessibility and scale of the forthcoming interventions. We also address where applicable, the differential effects these factors would have on women with disabilities.

The literature survey also includes a summarised compilation of best practices in pro-poor innovations in digital tourism; to point at accessible strategies that have proven to be feasible at a grassroots scale.

*10% figure by the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Authority, released in 2020 in the Sri Lankan Tourism Development Roadmap is cited here. As per Sri Lankan Department of Census and Statistics Labour force data for Q4 of 2020, women’s employment in the Food and Accommodation Service Sector rose from 26% in Q1, 2020 to 42% in Q4 2020. (Where severe fluctuations are routinely observed in women’s participation in proportion to men’s participation)

5.2. Socio-Cultural Constraints for women entering the tourism industry

Across the vast majority of surveys, anxieties stemming from cultural misperceptions and stigma associated with the tourism industry were cited as key reasons for women to be discouraged from engaging in the sector. This was often closely coupled with the fact that the working demands of the industry required women to significantly reduce or altogether forgo their family/caretaker commitments



Abeywardana, H. and Priyadarshani, I. (2017) 'Barriers to recruiting and retaining youth including women to the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka', (March), p. 54. ILO (2016) Factors Affecting Women's Labour Force Participation In Sri Lanka. ILO (2016) Factors Affecting Women's Labour Force Participation In Sri Lanka. Nanayakkara, S. A. (2015) 'Women's Participation in Tourism Development in Sri Lanka, Women's Employment in the Hotel Industry-An Exploratory Research into Focusing on Women Currently Employed in the Hotel Industry', 151(September), pp. 10-17. Gunewardena, D. (2016) 'Why aren't Sri Lankan women translating their educational gains into workforce advantages?', (January).

Healthcare and nursing, as well as domestic work abroad often demand a similar, or even greater degree of compromise of family/caretaker commitments. Provided that these industries in contrast to the tourism sector are serviced mainly by women, one draws the following observations.

- The compromise of caretaker commitments may not be a uniform variable that discourages women from working across all sectors that demand such compromise. In the case of the tourism industry, the cultural stigmatisation associated with the industry appears to elevate the visibility of this compromise to family and partners.
- Domestic labour abroad is also associated with a high degree of stigmatisation as well as a greater compromise in caretaker commitments; both of which appear to be eclipsed by the remunerative pull

5.3. Challenges facing women in tourism focused vocational training

Women and girls were more reluctant to enroll in hospitality and tourism focused vocational education (Nanayakkara, 2015). Educational enrolment leading to a socially stigmatised career path would be naturally low, that being said, TVET and NVQ institutions appeared to have fundamental demand supply mismatch issues caused by antiquated curriculum design and delivery (ILO, 2015).

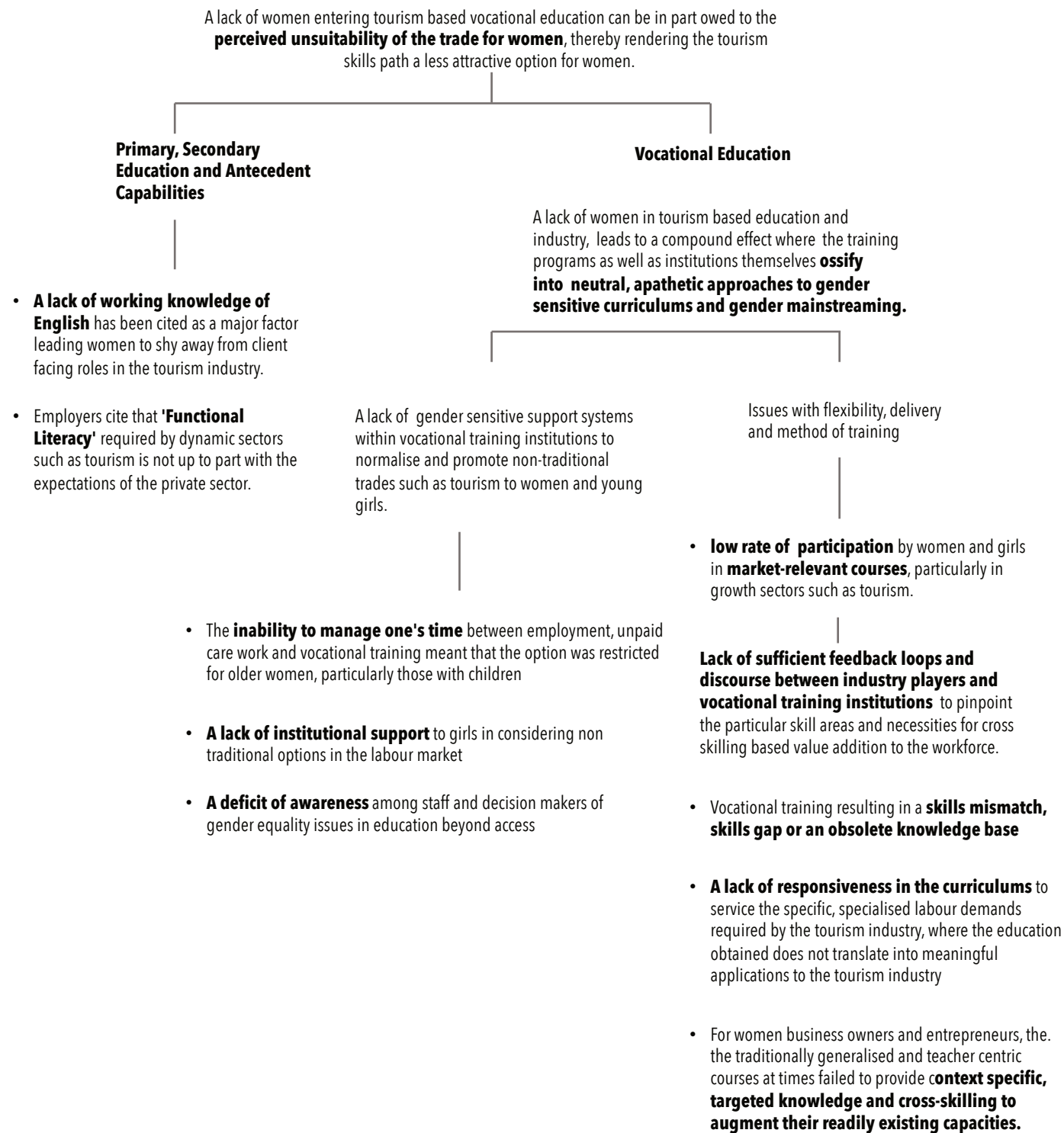
While there is a paucity of gender disaggregated data on course specific TVET enrolment in the hospitality sector and the ICT sector, qualitative investigations of the TVET system presented a number of challenges

An ILO survey, in 2017 noticed a lack of active outreach and publicity for non-traditional training opportunities for women and girls. For the most part the role of TVET institutions in promoting the merits of its own offerings was rather unenthusiastic (Illangasinghe, 2012). The lack of active promotion of non-traditional areas such as Tourism to women and girls meant that candidates who might have had an impetus to explore these fields if they were aware of their merits and offerings, were largely absorbed into traditional gender segregated vocations and training.

Gunewardena (2015) Claims that TVET, training, and apprenticeships provide no advantage beyond that of general schooling. This suggests that even if more women and girls were attracted to these programs it would not necessarily translate to employment in the sector as the programs are not sufficiently aligned with employer demands. There is also an anxiety within the industry about the quality of the output generated by the mushrooming of private, small scale non-standardized hotel schools and courses (Gunatilaka, 2013)

The issues with the quality of the labour supply is further emphasised by the tendency for larger tourism chains in Sri Lanka to opt to provide their own training; where at times, a lack of previous TVET training has been cited as adding to the appeal of a candidate, It was found that often, the larger hotels that have their own in-house training are reluctant to adopt a new confined curriculum. (Abeywardana, Priyadarshani, 2017).

Our primary research with stakeholders also revealed that there was a need to retrain and reskill staff by the employer even in entry level IT based occupations such as BPO operations. Soft skills such as verbal and written communication and comprehension skills, presentation skills and interpersonal skills were lacking among the TVET output, and could further constrain opportunities to employment in client facing applications required heavily by the tourism industry.



While Inadequate communication between TVET institutions and the tourism industry leads to outdated, mismatched skill sets that are incongruent with market demand, inadequate discourse between TVET institutions and progressive policy institutions, professionals, business leaders and their own female students mean that Sri Lanka's TVET system has developed a certain gender insensitivity, which in turn perpetuates the widespread occupational segregation in employment.

5.4. Disability, vocational education and employment

While actively discriminatory and stigmatising attitudes towards the disabled have been observed to be easing, the general cultural outlook on disability has not adequately transitioned from a charity-based perspective to a rights based perspective. Some researchers observe a significant amount of normativity and tokenization in the discourse on disability in the country. (Chandani ,2017)

High cost of needs-specific accessibility tools, The lack of local language based interpretive devices, and the inability to integrate and mainstream accessibility technologies and tools into the national education system has led to significant school dropout rates and unemployability among the disabled population.

The 2012 national census indicates the number of PwDs enrolled in the TVET sector to be 2,445. Which as a proportion of the total number of people with disabilities (1.6 million) is less than 2%. The percentage of economically active PwDs is around 5.3%.

Around 55.4% of the disabled population aged 15-19 and 86% of the disabled population aged 20-24 are not engaged in any educational activity or vocational training. Although the government provides a vocational training program specifically targeted at PwDs, the program is currently only implemented in 05 vocational training centres located in 3 districts.

Protection Of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (1996) and the national policy on Disability for Sri Lanka (2003) stipulate the construction codes on accessibility. While Institutions such as banks, schools, hospitals and busports have achieved compliance to a certain degree, the lack of accessibility conscious planning in the overall built environment and the lack of accessibility provisions in public transit vehicles themselves severely offset the progress of what has been achieved.

Access to ICTs is also covered in the Protection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1996, National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka, 2003, and the Telecommunications Ten Year Development Plan, 2006-2016. However, any realistic appraisal of accessibility must also take into account compounding factors such as gender, economic ability, ethnicity and geography.

A 4% sample survey of PwDs aged 15-65 by After Access (2019) noted that over 67% of respondents viewed the use of ICT tools as having no significant improvement on their economic status or wellbeing. 51% of respondents maintained that technology has had little impact on their knowledge or skills. The same survey found that 94% of the respondents did not own a computer, 95% of respondents had never used one.

High cost, lack of availability and the lack of knowledge to use the assistive devices were given as the main reasons for not having assistive devices. A high rate of assistive device failure due the failure of general infrastructure such as power and internet was also reported.

Disability is more prevalent in rural areas (88% urban to 12% rural). This compounds challenges to accessibility as resource centers usually located in urban centers are inaccessible due to poor public transport; remote working from and within rural areas require reliable access to infrastructure

5.5. Challenges in ICT driven education and vocational training

- An online survey conducted on 21 July–18 August 2020 by the Asian Development bank, showed that between 60% and 70% of major TVET courses continued during the pandemic. The survey showed 92% of institutions provided at least one online TVET course, and 93% of student respondents attended online learning mostly through low-tech solutions using social media. Prior to COVID-19, only 36% of TVET institutions provided distance learning.
- There was no significant change in gender disparity in the online continuation of TVET courses, while an increase of care duties at home and a rise in domestic violence during the pandemic may have differential effects on the productive activities of women and girls, overall literature suggests that the mobility and time agnostic nature of remote learning is expected to benefit women and girls
- Among course offerings, 82% of the TVET institutions could deliver online TVET for information technology courses. However, other major courses, such as automobile mechanics, beautician, building and construction, electrical engineering, electronics and telecommunication, and tourism and hospitality were within the range of 60% and 70% (ADB,2021)

Online student engagement through ICT tools were categorised in the survey into three groups;

Ease of online delivery

High	Medium	Low
Theoretical learning in Accountancy and management etc. English language learning material delivered as non interactive content	Group led real time planning and strategy discussions Interactive Scenarios through teleconferencing Timed VLE tests	Tourist guide training Simulated practical sessions (Food and Beverage preparation, Bartending and Stewarding etc)

Technologies used

Low Tech	Medium Tech	High Tech
Email, Social Media, Sharing of course material through platforms such as WhatsApp or Viber	VLEs, Zoom, and Google Classroom lectures No data on VLEs and real time collaboration through interactive online content in tourism and tourism management TVET courses	Online delivery of pre-recorded A/V material No Data on online delivery of pre-recorded material for field and practical was not offered in TVET courses

Low tech engagement was the most prevalent, while teleconferencing incurred high data costs and required good connectivity, low tech, asynchronous learning appeared to be far more economical and accessible (ADB,2020). However, it is worth noting that the digital tools and basic skills required by low tech, asynchronous engagement does not double up as the digital tools or the antecedent digital literacy required for remote work.

While the high degree of involvement in online learning facilities is a promising development, Computer aided learning should not be misconstrued with the simple dissemination of learning material online; it should be noteworthy that across almost all disciplines there was no ICT driven enhancement of the learning experience, but merely simple transmission. In fact, most students observed a notable drop in the quality and engagement with the learning material(ibid.).

The use of virtual break-out rooms, videos and open questions to re-energise learners, diversification of assessment formats, Oral exams using Zoom or Skype and online presentations that were shared online were minimal, and accessible only to a minority of students and institutions.

It should be noteworthy that the impetus to establish widespread remote learning came upon as a result of circumstances, and not as a supplementary, value-added offering that boosted the availability and accessibility of learning opportunities to students.

A culture of online learning is an essential component to a culture of online work. The rapid normalisation of distant learning and working from home opens up new opportunities for both beneficiaries and training organisations. It also opens up opportunities for partners such as ICTA, SLASSCOM and Ministry of Skills development and Vocational training to explore the possibilities for interactive, objectives-based learning and skills augmentation for adults, particularly in local languages.

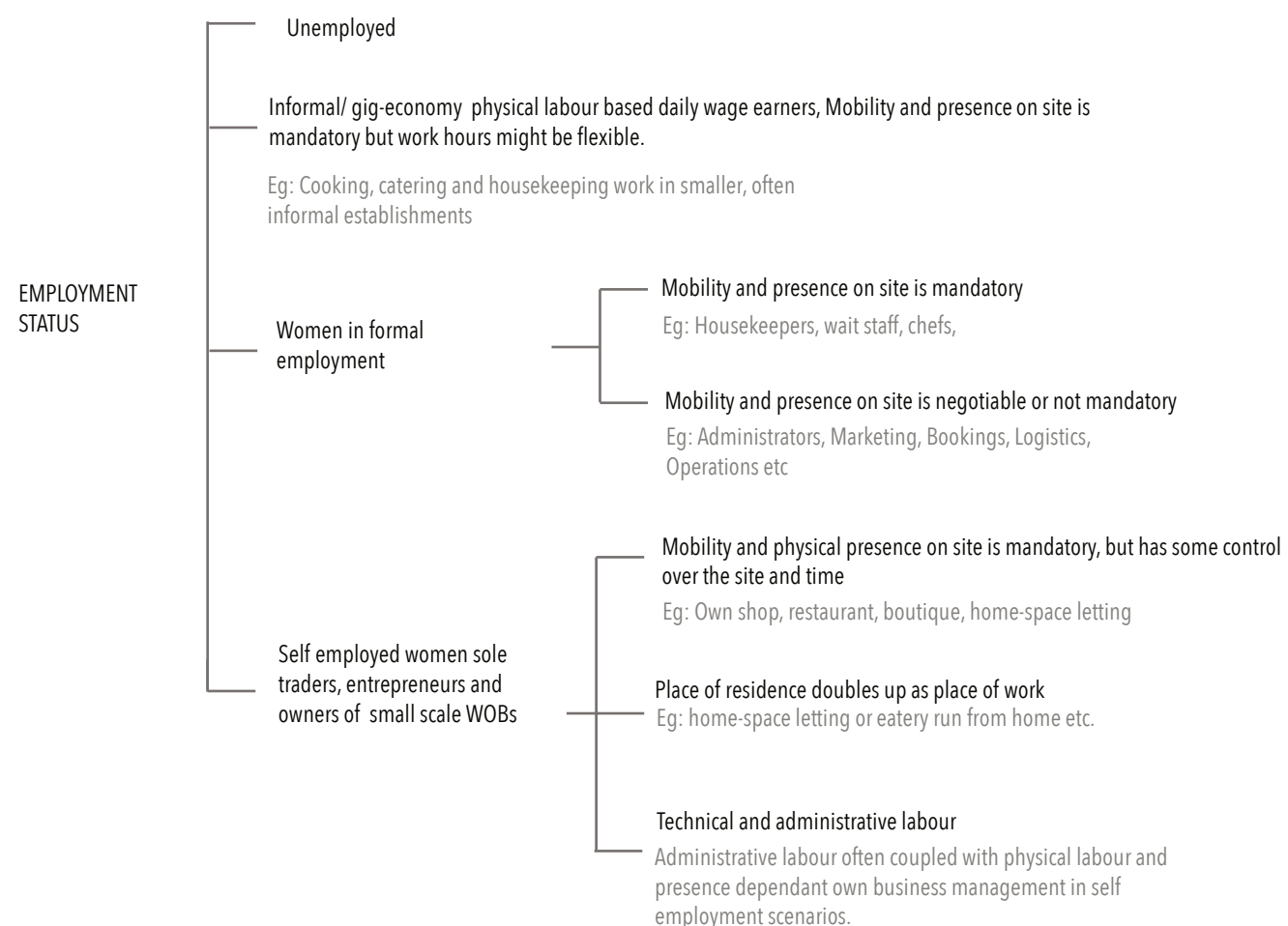
While online engagement can improve accessibility and availability, it also renders the marginalised invisible; Over 60% of Sri Lankan school children are said to be cut off from access to distant learning. Underfunding of schools to purchase ICT resources, high cost of ICT tools, high cost of ISP services, poor ISP coverage and low internet penetration and poor digital literacy among teachers have impeded the geographical and demographical scalability of remote learning, often leaving the most marginalised communities further behind. (Rameez,2020)

The nearly two year disruption to formal education would also mean that there may be potential psychosocial shifts or jolts in the cognitive and attitudinal characteristics as well as age dependant employability metrics of Sri Lankan youth, particularly women and girls (Chandradasa, et al,2021); Overall national policies that ensure the return of the youth to formal and vocational education and skilled employment will determine the playing field for any forthcoming interventions we may plan.

5.6. Disaggregation of women in the tourism industry: Acknowledging the diversity of the beneficiaries

Women in tourism is a category too vague in itself. Women working in the tourism sector, in a considerable amount of literature reviewed for this study, had been represented in aggregate forms.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study, we engage in a cursory compartmentalisation of what it means for different women to be involved in different sectors and manifestations of the tourist trade. In the diagram below, we've attempted to capture the variegation of beneficiaries to whom IT based entrepreneurship or IT based opportunities in the tourism sector might have rather different implications.



This enables us to acutely identify the specific roles where IT based applications or skills augmentations are feasible, as well as enabling us to filter down lines of work particularly conducive to remote working or flexible working arrangements.

For instance, there are no IT based solutions or remote working arrangements to bridge the roles that require physical presence and physical exertion at the site of work, such as housekeeping or kitchen staff roles. In contrast, marketing, guest relations, bookkeeping, BPO services, managerial roles and other technical, skilled lines of work lend themselves to more flexible, mobility agnostic work arrangements, it is prudent to calculate the inclusivity of a bottom of the pyramid intervention that relies principally on ICT and English language skills.

5.7. Data Gaps

Research Area	Data Gap	Areas for research
Use of ICTs by SMEs	<p>The use of ICTs within the tourism SMEs in Sri Lanka</p> <p>Digital marketing and digital outreach by SMEs in the rural sector</p>	<p>The extent to which rural sole traders, gig economy workers and small business use ICT tools as business infrastructure</p> <p>Participation of women in E-tourism in local languages, prevalence of social media based bookings out of colombo?</p> <p>Limited scoping study available, no gender disaggregated data: https://www.ips.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Social-Media-for-Business.pdf</p> <p>What are the tools most commonly used?</p> <p>How many Sri Lankan women freelancers operate on digital platforms? What is the economic and geographical distribution and skill level attributed?</p> <p>To what extent is social media marketing in the rural sector?</p>
Type of digital assistive aids used by PwDs in the rural sector	<p>PwDs with accessibility tools for using desktop computers and mobile phones, quality and functionality of government provided accessibility aids.</p> <p>No surveys of enough scale to assess accessibility provisions for employees in the ICT sector</p> <p>No gender disaggregated data on the wider statistics of ICT based businesses run by people with disabilities</p>	<p>Types and the quality of accessibility tools provided by educational institutions to disabled students. What are the limitations? Can they be better? Is there data disaggregated by type of disability</p>

Section 6. ICTs as a key driver in empowering women in the tourism industry

6.1. The role of digitalisation and remote work in alleviating constraints

Computer literacy and English have become highly demanded transferable skills across most modern professional applications in Sri Lanka (Sarvanathan, 2016); these capabilities constitute the foundation on which one's subject specific skills can then be deployed.

- ICT driven remote working arrangements can enable women to enter the tourism industry without being subjected to the cultural stigmatisation that is typically associated with tourism.
- Opportunities for remote work will potentially entice women with household commitments such as caring for women and the elderly since the arrangement allows one to balance their household commitments with productive employment.
- CT driven work, even at entry level will enable one to develop a more transferrable and agile skillset, applicable across industries; allowing women to have more choice, mobility and autonomy in the labour force.
- In lieu of physical presence at the workplace, digitalisation introduces to one's workflow an intermediary interface. This interface demands from the user a layer of additional knowledge, from basic ICT skills, use of digital tools, and for the most part, a working knowledge of English.

This would in turn mean that the levels of computer literacy and English skills of the beneficiaries would either need to be at readily elevated levels, or elevated as an integral part of a campaign for an ICT based intervention to be accessible to, and scalable across all skill levels.

Similarly, access to telecommunications infrastructure and affordability of ICT tools would also play a crucial role in ensuring the accessibility and scalability of the intervention.

While remote working arrangements will enhance the access to work for otherwise able, mobility restricted PWDs, those with visual and auditory impairments as well as learning disabilities will need assistive technologies that are far more specialised, extensive and quite often custom made for the specific nature of disability. The paucity of assistive learning technologies in local languages is also a concern that needs to be taken into account.

6.2. Transferability of Skills and Occupational Mobility

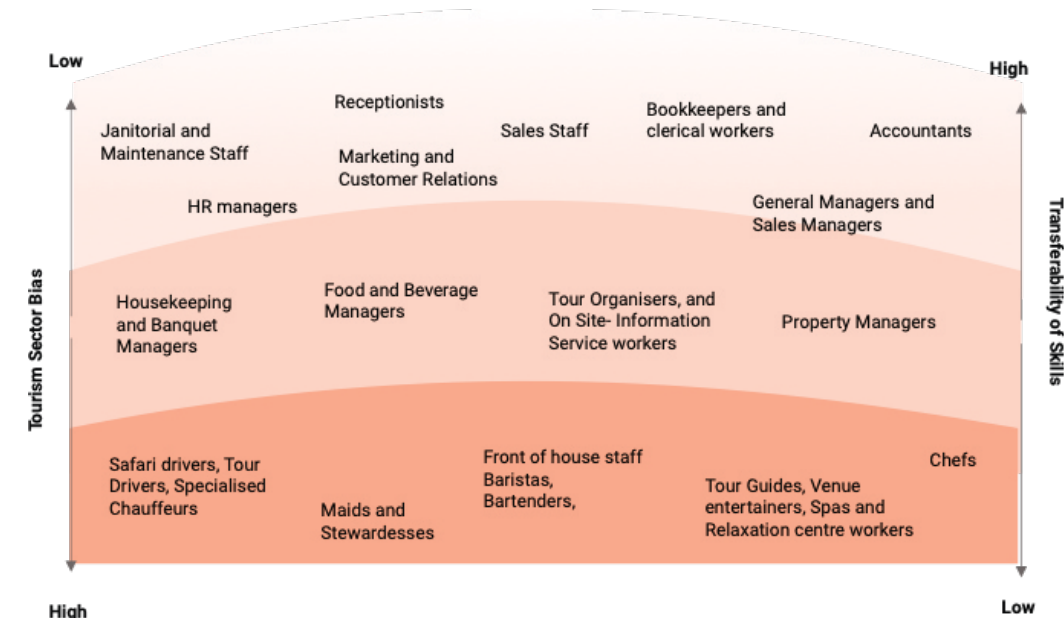
IT based roles also tend to offer a higher degree of skill transferability, skill agility and occupational mobility, which greatly reduces the structural dependence of an individual's income on the demand for tourism specific services.

A high degree of occupational mobility:

- A high dependency on either travelling to, or being close to the location of employment
- A high degree of specialization on a set form of repetitive/pre-determined physical labor whose required output is dependent on a very specific set of skills and routines
- Cross skilling and Multi Skilling generally do not affect the quality of the job specific output, nor is demanded by the industry. (Eg: A chef's digital literacy has no discernible impact on his/her job specific output)

A low degree of occupational mobility:

- A high degree of transferable skills, often enabling the employee to be easily absorbed into sectors other than tourism.
- Cross skilling, multi-skilling and the ability to dynamically adapt one's core skill set to new contexts will impact the quality of the output
- (Eg: BPO staff are often required to provide commodity services across various industries, with an affixed core skill set that is adaptable to multiple contexts)
- A greater tendency to be location agnostic, higher volume operations more likely to rely on outsourced staff.



Skill level itself has no direct correlation to sector bias, although most entry level low skilled hospitality sector jobs readily available to those from marginalised backgrounds more frequently display a high sector bias.

Within Sri Lanka's hospitality sector, men outnumber women in all occupational categories, except for Guest Relations and Front Office staff and Marketing functions (IPS,2020), these areas indicate a relatively higher level of skill transferability.

6.3. The need for a multimodal strategy to address employment and entrepreneurship

While categorising roles into physical/desk work can help identify the possible injection points of ICTs for employment within the tourism sector, the promotion of entrepreneurship requires a different approach.

- More women would be willing to seek employment in tourism sector roles where the demand for physical presence at the workplace is flexible and/or non-essential; these would effectively be desk/office roles, as opposed to roles that involve physical labour. (Eg: Sales staff, marketing staff, accounting staff, data entry, booking, management etc)
- Tourism based entrepreneurship, as opposed to employment, does not lend itself to simple division of labour or mobility agnosticism. Those who operate Micro and small enterprises as well as the self-employed are often multitaskers.

In micro and small enterprises as well as among the self-employed, one's work is often variegated and entails both physical labour as well as desk roles. For instance, a chef might manage marketing and accounts for their own eatery, small home lodging providers will often cook, housekeep, perform front office work, maintain accounts, and strategize the business all by themselves.

The role of IT based applications in these instances would be to augment value to the business, in areas of efficiency, quality of offering, exposure, customer appeal and customer assurance etc rather than fundamentally transform the core offering of the business.

This is also often one of the reasons as to why highly technical, skills specific vocational training programs are not particularly conducive to entrepreneurship. A tunnel visioned single sector skills development program would not be able to produce successful, self-sustaining entrepreneurs; incubation of rural entrepreneurship opportunities for women in the tourism sector would require a multi-skilling approach with a strong emphasis on ICT skills and communications skills.

For the injection of ICTs into tourism roles to have a discernible impact on the immediate condition of those stuck in vertically segregated, low income, low skilled physical work (Eg: waiting staff, menial services), there would need to be on the job upskilling and cross skilling opportunities.

The long-term intention here is to mitigate the oversupply of low-skilled labour by ensuring that women from marginalised backgrounds are not systemically destined to be employed on the low-skilled, low-income end of the spectrum. Highly transferable basic skills in ICT and English would open up more opportunities at the low end of the spectrum to overcome systemic occupational segregation.

6.4. Women in the IT sector, and startup incubation VS Bottom of the pyramid capacity development

In 2017, 46.8% of all ICT graduates were women. (DCS, 2018) While there are no cultural barriers or stigmatising viewpoints affecting women's enrolment in the ICT sector, albeit evidence that points to women's relative enthusiasm in the IT sector compared to the tourism sector, women are underrepresented in the IT industry.

A 2017 ILO survey found that the percentage of women at the junior/entry levels in the ICT industry to be approximately 32%. Only 2% of women were reported in senior management. Most female students with ICT degrees preferred careers in academics or civil services to the ICT sector. This was reported to be a significant loss of trained resources. Furthermore, many female employees in the ICT sector were reported to leave the industry after marriage owing much to the same care work demands that we had enumerated to have hindered women's retention in the tourism sector.

As most ICT/BPO based roles were located in Colombo; relocating after marriage continued to be a challenge for women. Operations after COVID 19 have shifted to working from home arrangements in most non-physical labour sectors. Most industry leaders indicated a willingness to continue working from home arrangements into the future on some scale after COVID 19 subsidies.(lankabusinessonline,2020)

In recent years, there has been a drive towards startup camps and hackathons aimed at absorbing young talent into regional economies. In a recent study on Sri Lankan startups undertaken by SLASSCOM, it was revealed that 86% of startup entrepreneurs had a Bachelor's degree or above; with 48% of them graduating in computer science, 18% in engineering and 17% in business management. The gender distribution for startups, according to the SLASSCOM survey, stood at around 4% for women.

Startupranking.com, a startup curator indicates that a vast majority of startups are based in Colombo, with only a handful located towards the peripheries, although the survey reported that around 87% of startup employees were from areas outside Colombo. Jaffna in particular had a higher concentration of startups compared to the rest of the provinces (excluding Colombo), this was related to a rejuvenation of entrepreneurialism brought about by the connections of the area with the Diaspora. (SLASSCOM, 2019)

With over 50% of aspiring and existing entrepreneurs opting to utilize personal savings to start their business, the survey noted that external funding and the lack of support from the banking system were clear barriers to Sri Lanka's start-up ecosystem.

In 2016, under the The Women ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI), the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for development in partnership with ICTA, launched a campaign titled 'Suhuruliya' (Smart Woman). WIFI was an ICT capacity development programme for promoting women's entrepreneurship. It aimed to promote the economic empowerment of women in Sri Lanka through the use of ICT in entrepreneurial activities.(ICTA, 2016)



In its initial roll-out, WiFi Suhuruliya focused on 'war widows' or female household heads in post-conflict Sri Lanka. It launched with a Training of Trainers (ToT) program and a community workshop in the northern province in the country in Jaffna district, areas that were severely affected by the civil war. Participants of the ToT, drawn from district-level development workers working in government and civil society, served as resource persons in the community workshops. Facebook's globally renowned SheMeansBusiness programme also partnered with the Suhuruliya programme. (ICTA, 2016).

At the time of finishing the study, the tracer data on the effectiveness of the program has not been made available; the task of obtaining any significant tracer data from ICTA could not be completed by the time of submission, although indication was given that a report is underway.

It is worth noting that for purposes pertinent to S4IG's intervention, women in IT might be too broad a category to explore for a pointed intervention which operates within the domain of tourism. Insofar as the work is pertinent to the tourism sector, certain IT based client facing and creative roles (which we enumerate later) that can be fulfilled remotely should be the core focus.

The use of IT and the application of IT literacy itself in tourism related roles and the application of ICTs in WOBs would provide a more effective pathway for an intervention at the bottom of the pyramid.

The high degree of skill and specialization required for startups remains a constraint in the scalability of an intervention that seeks to operate at the bottom of the pyramid, the more inclusive solution would be to start with an approach congruent to that of Suhuruliya in tandem with high skilled business incubation to not only create supply, but also expand the demand in the industry through entrepreneurship.

Section 7. ICT based opportunities and the use of ICT based Resources & assets by Rural SME and WOBs

7.1. The role of applied ICTs in SMEs and use of ICTs in the Tourism Industry

The value addition to tourism from the IT sector is manifold, while this study does not allow for a comprehensive discussion of E-Tourism and its transformative nature, we outline here the most prominent contributing applications that have directly impacted, and at times disrupted the tourism industry in the recent past.

Much like any other industry, there are two fundamental ways in which Information technology is utilised in the tourism industry.

ICTs as assistive tools

Firstly, and most ubiquitously, there is the automation and digitalisation of processes that were traditionally performed manually; From typesetting, point of sales services, data management to accountancy, here, the role of Information technology is to increase the efficiency and the ease with which otherwise manual tasks are performed. The transformation of processes that happen here, do not fundamentally alter the core offering or value proposition of the tourism industry. These are utility processes whose skillsets are often general and transferable.

ICTs as transformative tools

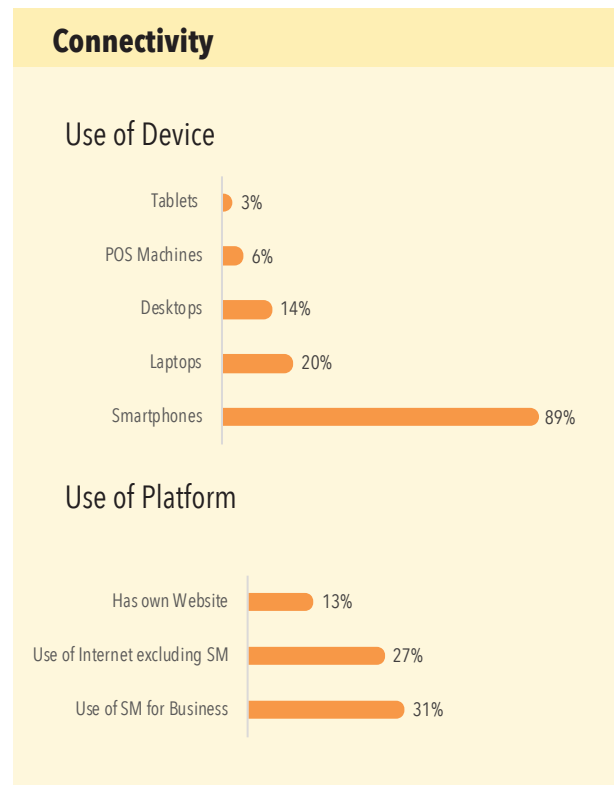
The second, more impactful role is one of fundamental transformation, where the technology used directly impacts the core offering and the value proposition of the industry; for example - online travel agents such as Kayak or Booking.com or lodging sites such as AirBnB have fundamentally transformed the way in which consumers select, purchase and interact with the industry rather than merely digitalising a manual process.

The core benefit common to both applications is a marked increase in the efficiency and ease with which things happen; in the tourism industry, for this benefit to be transformative or disruptive; often the dividend of this improved ease/efficiency itself is presented/transferred as a value proposition to the customer.

7.2. Adoption of ICTs in SMEs

SMEs in Sri Lanka account for over 75% of all businesses (IFC,2020) of which women owned formal SMEs amount to around 25%. Limited access to finance and restricted capacities leaves most WOBs stagnant in the low income, informal sector.

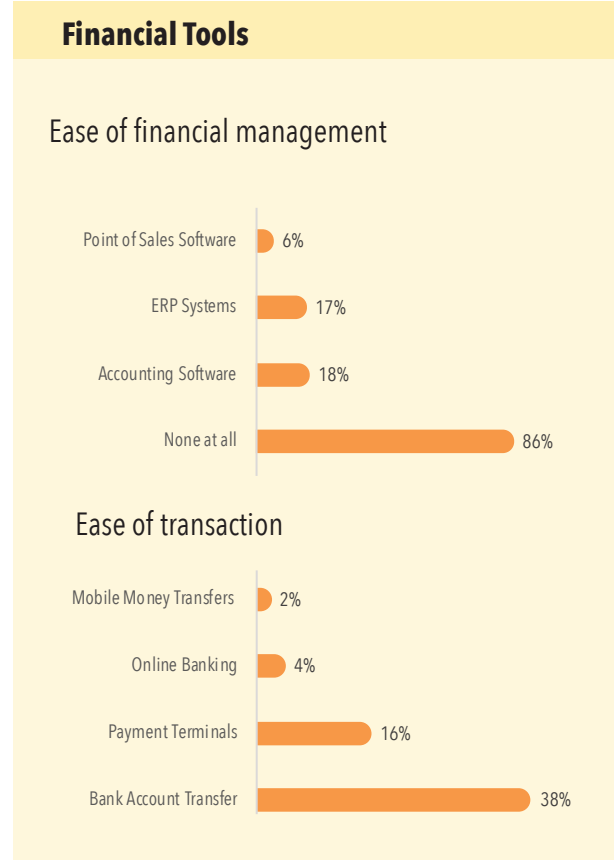
Prevalence of ICT use among Sri Lankan MSMEs (LIRN Asia, 2020)



With the ICT revolution in the country around the year 2000, entrepreneurs started to utilise ICT for the development of SMEs. The Government and the private sector have taken initiatives to promote ICT for the development of SMEs. With these initiatives, most SMEs – particularly in the urban and peri urban sector in Sri Lanka have adopted e-commerce in their business activities.

Use of ICTs can reduce costs, expand marketplaces, enhance competitiveness, and improve consumer outreach and revenue.

Sri Lanka's internet penetration rate, according to the World Bank Collection of Development Indicators is 34.1%. Independent Organisations such as LIRN Asia suspect that the number might be somewhat higher due to the historical rate at which internet penetration has grown in Sri Lanka, coupled with the ubiquitous availability of entry level smartphones.



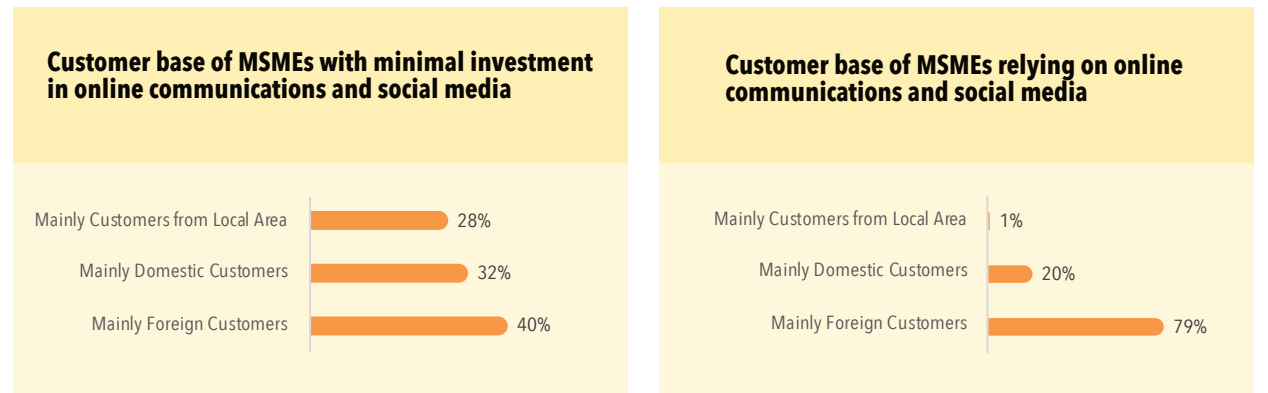
A 2021 analysis by datareportal.com, stated that social media penetration stood at 30%. The remarkable growth in both the internet penetration rate and the social media penetration rate is largely driven by the availability of basic smartphones. 98.7% of social media engagement was based on smartphone use.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN apex body on ICTs, annually benchmarks prices for voice, SMS, and fixed and mobile broadband for its member states. Sri Lankan ISP charges are among the lowest prices in the world.

Sri Lanka has the lowest data prices among SAARC countries in terms of absolute prices as well as price as a percentage of GNI per capita, despite the third highest tax rate. This being said, gaps are still present in Sri Lanka's telecom infrastructure, reliable and consistent access to electricity becomes sparse as the terrain becomes more rural (ITU,2019)

Use of point of sales, accounting and ERP software tends to sit low at around 24% of SME's using one of the three. There is room for expansion in accountancy and data processing skills here, with only 49% of the employees reporting that they have separate finance accounts for their businesses.

The value and the impact of social media for exposure and communications is widely understood by the vast majority of enterprises with access to the internet, with 70% of the business agreeing that social media leads to direct increase in sales and footfall. Over 52% of SMEs with internet connections receive orders online.



Mobile money transfers, bank account transfers and credit or debit card transfers sit low compared to the use of cash. 38% of SMEs use bank account transfers with online banking and mobile money transfers sitting collectively around 6%.

Those who had invested in, and were using social media and the internet for business had average revenues about 3 times more than those who tended to rely on traditional communications, over 71% of those with an internet connection for business advertised more frequently and used digital channels as well as social media, only 24% among SMEs that did not use internet or social media for business advertised in any medium. Rural SMEs were shown to be affected by this digital divide, there is a space here for capacity building and the integration of ICTs into the workflows of rural, women owned SMEs

7.3. Use of ICTs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

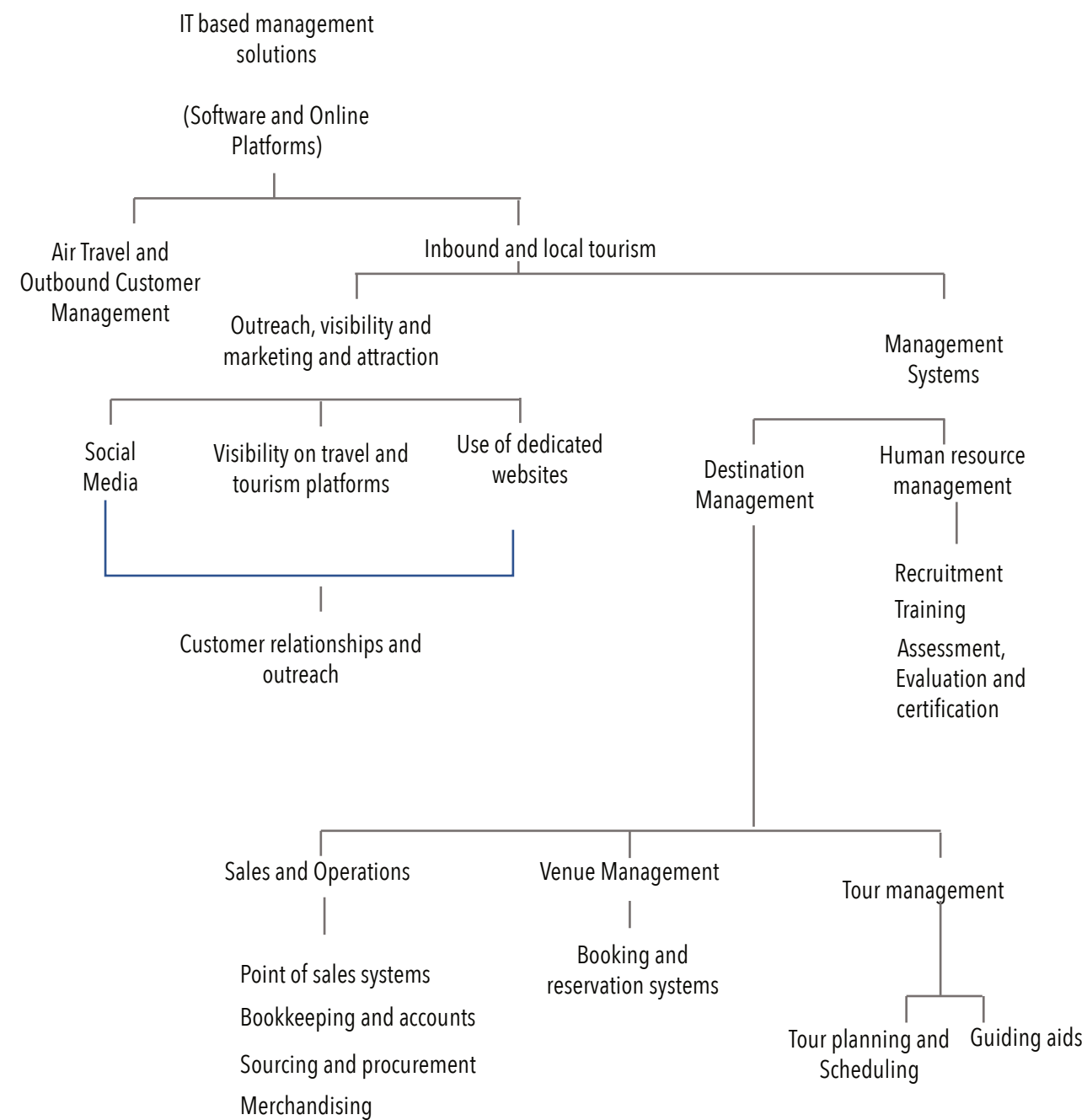
COVID-19 pushed more SMEs to attempt to incorporate digital tools into their business, IFC's report on Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Sri Lanka reveals that while one-third of all SMEs surveyed attempted to set up at least one new digital business channel since the onset of COVID-19. WSMEs were significantly less likely to have done so at 26%

When asked why they were not using digital channels, survey respondents referred to not having access to the right equipment, not knowing how to use it, and not having awareness of the types of online channels they could use. WSMEs were also more likely to request support for transitioning to digital payments systems and using digital business platforms.

The few WSMEs that adopted digital platforms achieved an overall increase in sales and fewer challenges to commerce than those who had no digital outlets at all. The Survey also found that while 62 percent of women said they were aware financial transactions could be carried out through a mobile phone, only 32 percent claimed to be comfortable doing so.

7.4. Classification of ICT applications in tourism

While day-to-day operational activities in the tourism industry have benefited from a marked increase in speed and efficiency owing to digitalisation, literature on the subject posits that the most noticeable and disruptive contribution of IT to tourism has been in client-service provider interaction.



Client Facing Roles and Operational Roles

Modes of Interaction of an employee with a tourism destination can be split into two main parts

Client Facing :

- Promotional and operational tools that are fully or partly visible the client, and are thus integral to client interaction can include
- Outreach, visibility, marketing, attraction tools and content creation
- Digital solutions for bookings, BPO, sales, merchandising, tour scheduling and customer relationship management

Operational:

- Functional and administrative tools that are not visible to the client, but enable businesses to manage background processes that directly impact the standards, efficiency and quality of service
- Bookkeeping and accounts systems
- Sourcing and procurement systems
- Human resource management systems

The reason why we have noted the above classifications is to preface the following points:

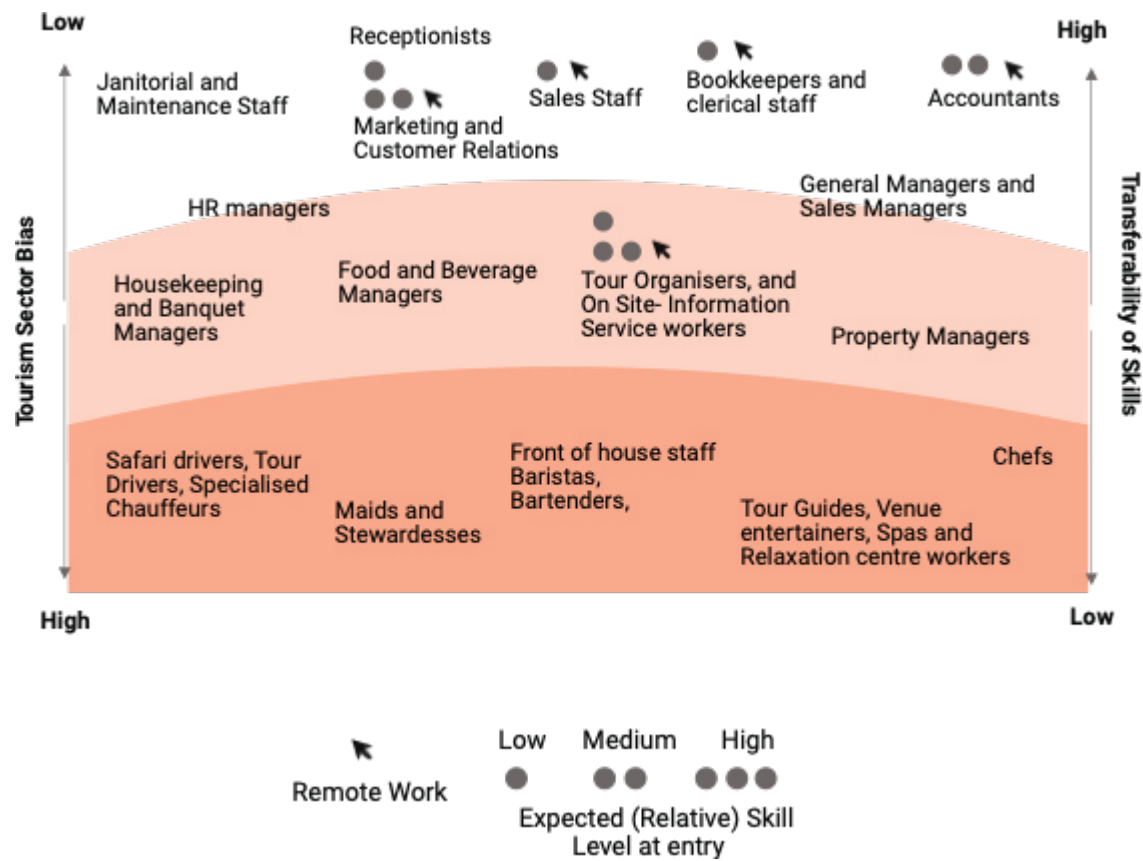
- To emphasise the distinction between IT based opportunities in the tourism industry and Tourism based opportunities in the IT industry and query, which of these approaches will lend our intervention the greatest degree of success?
- To posit that IT based operational skill sets used in the tourism industry are often highly transferable, and upskilling therein is often more pertinent to the IT industry than the Tourism industry
- To posit that IT based client-facing requirements of the tourism industry are not satisfied by IT skills alone, and successful interventions in this area will have to involve cross-skilling and/or multi skilling;
- To cross skill those with IT skills and literacy to utilize them in a way that is required by market demand.
- To cross-skill businesses and individuals already in the tourism industry to incorporate IT skills and digitalised solutions into their value proposition and workflow to increase growth and job creation prospects.
- To present the idea that the most transformative/impactful IT based interventions in the tourism industry happen in client facing areas
- To better assess upskilling pathways and identify the antecedent skill levels at which people would be absorbed into our intervention.

It is also prudent to focus on those specific IT based solutions in the tourism value chain that are within the capital, infrastructural, and technological limitations and requirements of small and medium sized businesses, self starters and entrepreneurs with basic skill to intermediate skill levels.

For instance, social media marketing, online visibility and outreach can increase the yield of any small or large business across the board; tools such as complex, proprietary bookings systems and administrative software that are intended for large businesses with complex operations would lead to diminishing returns in a small or niche outfit.

7.5. Remote working opportunities associated with the tourism industry.

In section 6 we enumerated tourism sector roles that were conducive to working from home arrangements. The diagram which follows outlines the expected skill level at entry level for those roles.



(Measured in terms of High, Medium and Low-skilled employee categories. High skilled category includes NVQ Level 3-Level 4. Medium skilled category includes NVQ Level 2-3. Low skilled category certificate courses and short courses at entry level)

Tourism associated creative applications in ICT

The growth potential of micro and small businesses in both formal and informal sectors suffers not only from a lack of standardised practices, but also due to the inability of small businesses and individual service providers to promote their offerings and communicate their value proposition to visitors.



The integration of disparate offerings in the form of a community based tourism package, where each village, each area and each regional cluster of tourism service providers is digitally catalogued and publicised might potentially add to the value proposition of the community as a tourism destination, rather than a collection of individual businesses tied together by a cultural attraction.

There is an opportunity, particularly in the cultural triangle for a combination of theme specific branding, storytelling, and a regionally flavoured experience that brings individual businesses together to produce a value proposition larger than the sum total of their individual offerings taken in isolation.

There may be an opportunity for locally sourced, locally trained digital marketers, content creators and outreach agents to act as a focal point to the community. These focal points will not only interact with customers on behalf of businesses and create promotional material to increase sales, they will also provide business to business value chain coordination.

Platforms such as UberEats, AirBnB, PickMe and Social Media in general enable small businesses to significantly boost their profile. It would be interesting to observe how the availability of well trained, locally based content creators and digital marketers that publicise the offerings of a rural community to tourists, particularly the backpacker community can boost the attractiveness of the community as a whole.

As a synthesis of utilising the opportunities discussed herewith, as one of our recommended interventions, we recommend the establishment of community MSME resource networks with women at the forefront of their operations as an intervention both creating and utilising local creative talent in the tourism industry.

We emphasize the value of skill agility, skills sharing and skills pooling through a systematic, organized arrangement that brings local actors together. We also emphasize the importance of integrating accessibility contingencies into the training and recruitment processes of the resource networks to ensure that PWDs will also be able to contribute to a tourism based regional economy.

Section 8. Recommendations and Intervention options

Summary of findings thus far:

The survey found that the share of female representation in Sri Lanka's tourism sector as well as female representation in vocational training to be disproportionately low.

The survey found cultural misperceptions and stigma associated with the tourism industry as well as the weight of women's domestic care obligations to be key factors hindering women's engagement in tourism sector work.

Demand-Supply mismatch in TVET sector's output, as well as a deficit of gender sensitivity within mainstream TVET institutions were discovered to further compound women's underrepresentation and vocational segregation in the Sri Lankan labour force.

Societal peripheralization, paucity of accessibility tools and a lack of specialised training further hindered those with disabilities, particularly women with disabilities from being productive and skilled members of the workforce.

Strategic interventions are therefore required to find opportunities to increase women's enrolment in tourism related work. These interventions should focus digitalisation of work, remote work, part time work and must aim to introduce ICT driven employment and upskilling opportunities in the tourism sector.

The interventions proposed herein is conceived through a combination of secondary research of Sri Lanka's tourism sector and IT sector linkages, engagement of resource personnel across various disciplines as well as an analysis of international best practices which have successfully increased women's employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the tourism sector. The toolkit addresses three principal intervention areas.

- Increasing women's enrolment in vocational education.
- Increasing opportunities for employment in the tourism sector.
- Increasing opportunities for entrepreneurship in the tourism sector and ICT based value addition.

Increasing women's enrolment in vocational education, or providing vocational education and capacity development to beneficiaries serves as an essential precursor to increasing employment opportunities as well as increasing opportunities for entrepreneurship.

We synthesise the information gathered in the study to conceptualise community based Micro Small and Medium Enterprise resource networks which combine community tourism with ICT tools and digitalised processes.

We believe that placing women at the forefront of these networks will increase women's representation in the tourism industry as well as challenge the gendered societal prejudices regarding the tourism industry in Sri Lanka by making women more visible in the domain of Sri Lankan tourism. As a gender segr. Firstly, we outline a number of pointed recommendations for ICT aided value addition to women run and women owned SMEs.

8.1 Key Interventions:

8.1.2. Intervention 1 : Development of Digital Literacy and ICT capacities of MSMEs with a view to boost visitor interaction, visitor awareness and footfall.

<p>This intervention is based on the following evidence outlined in the research</p>	<p>MSMEs that employ ICT tools for marketing, advertising and customer outreach generate more revenue than those that do not.</p> <p>A large proportion of MSMEs in the tourism sector suffer from a lack of ICT skills and associated soft skills to market their offerings in a way that generates consumer traffic. Most small businesses report a lack of knowledge to employ the use of social media and online platforms to improve footfall.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for women content creators, social media marketers, graphic designers etc to interact with MSMEs to improve their online presence and social media marketing capacities.</p>
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<p>Basic Premise of the intervention</p>	<p>Technology development, proliferation and the trend of digitization is driving transformation of the tourism industry and increasing requirements for ICT technologies and associated skills. Technology is changing the nature of jobs and the skills required for them, generating new business models and creating new business opportunities. Our literature review notes the impact of ICT technologies on the tourism sector and notes that to survive and grow, SMEs in the tourism sector must differentiate themselves from their competitors, evolve in their business model and rapidly integrate ICT in their organizational fabric.</p> <p>MSMEs may face challenges in investing in new technologies or finding workers with the skills to use them, which can create challenges in keeping up the technological adoption in the sector as well as limit the ability to take advantage of new opportunities. Larger enterprises are more likely and quicker to adopt new technologies and practices, while MSMEs typically have fewer resources to invest and experience limited spillover effects from larger enterprises.</p> <p>With the contribution of key players such as ICTA, SLTDA and SLASSCOMM, and TVET institutions to improve the capacities of individual MSMEs to use online tools and platforms to boost the competitiveness and customer interaction through practical courses on digital literacy, ICT skills and the use of client-facing soft skills online.</p> <p>The intervention is aimed at MSMEs who already have baseline ICT and English skills with adequate resources to fund and sustain the tools and devices necessary to work online.</p> <p>Small restaurants, homestays, arts and crafts shops, and travel experience can be encouraged and trained to develop an online presence, accept and respond to customer queries, reach out to potential customers through basic content creation and creating an online brand/identity and presence through social media to enhance the interest and value addition to their business.</p>
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How is progress measured? Volume, ratio and growth of direct word-of-mouth footfall vs online presence driven footfall on an average business week.

The impact on overall customer turnover and revenue generated through footfall driven by online presence and social media advertising (See appendix for KPIs).

8.1.3. Intervention 2 : Development and implementation of community MSME resource networks to promote growth and profitability through the use of ICTs.

This intervention is based on the following evidence outlined in the research

There is an opportunity for SLTDA to introduce pro-MSME destination management strategies and tools to assist MSMEs is to promote inbound tourism

Tourism MSMEs are largely dependent on the unique features of destinations and may possess a competitive advantage in taking advantage of them due to local knowledge. Given that MSMEs may face disadvantages due to the dominance of larger enterprises and MNCs in mass tourism, measures by governments to improve and highlight the uniqueness of destinations can create opportunities for MSMEs to create differentiated tourism products with higher value-added. This process of value addition is much more effective if deployed at a community level, than an individual business level.

Basic Premise of the intervention

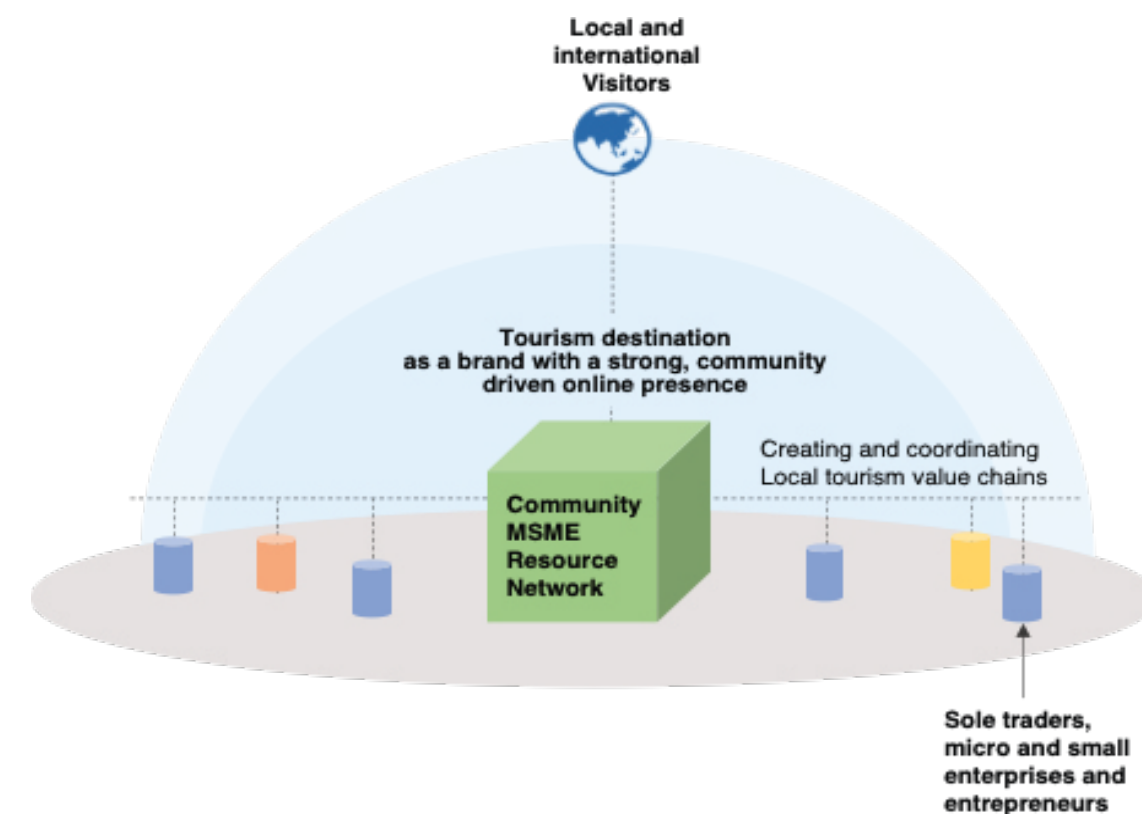
A Community MSME resource network is a pathway to community-based skill sharing, skill pooling and value chain creation for sole traders and MSMEs. The intervention seeks to organise, educate and train MSMEs within a particular community to collectively promote their specific destination with the added competitive advantage of their local knowledge; by extension multiplying the effectiveness of their individual promotional activities within the elevated visibility they collectively create for the destination.

At a collective level, the intervention provides the MSMEs a framework to organise themselves as a business community using ICT tools and collectively enhance their communications capacities and linkages within the community as well as with visitors.

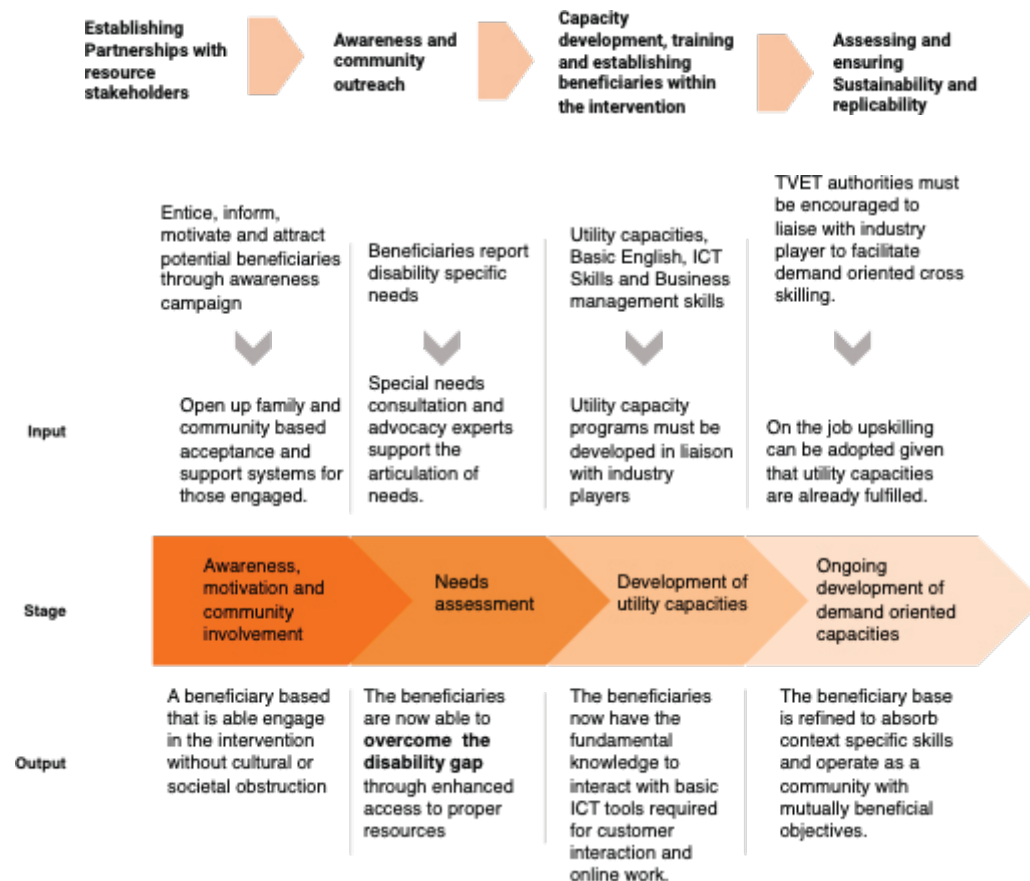
The organisation and training process will be designed by SLTDA and TVET organisations; the ICT tools and infrastructure that are required for the program will can be obtained through organisations such as ICTA.

The resource networks will not only encourage and incubate entrepreneurship and business growth; they can also have a direct impact on the local tourism economy through;

- Facilitation of horizontal linkages between local tourism actors, thereby establishing community tourism value chains.
- Developing supplier buyer linkages for MSMEs in the community
- Developing service provider - client linkages by promoting small tourism service providers to both local and foreign tourists
- Opening up linkages and opportunities for women content creators, social media marketers, graphic designers etc to interact with MSMEs
- By virtue of the above, help promote community tourism experiences as value added, packaged offerings.
- Remedying the information asymmetry that sole traders, micro, small and medium businesses suffer by making market information more accessible, particularly in Sinhala and Tamil.
- Empowering and fortifying local entrepreneurship by becoming a value addition focal point, centralising otherwise disjointed information and services MSME usually have to spend a tremendous amount of time and energy to access.
- Enabling precise and granular data collection of, and data availability for MSMEs



8.2. Implementation of the Community MSME resource network: Process Inputs, Outputs and Stages



We introduce a multi staged approach to ensure that the intervention is able to create a leveled playing field for all potential beneficiaries involved at the onset of the program, this will involve laying out the initial communication pathways and resources to establish a resource network :

- Partnering with resource stakeholders to address training, expertise, industry input and infrastructure.
- Partnering with industry resource persons as role models, involving families as well as the communities in communication campaigns to normalise women working in non-traditional industries.
- Partnering with special needs education and accessibility focused skills development partners to perform a participatory needs assessment of the beneficiary base and identify disability specific tools and interventions to facilitate skills training
- The cost(s) of delivery, replenishment and short-to medium term use and availability of these tools will need to be ensured by the development body, governmental or private sector partners until income driven self-sufficiency for consumables and replenishments is created within the beneficiary base.
- Partnering with vocational training organisations to deliver specialised, short-term introductory courses for English Language Skills and baseline ICT skills.

- Demand based cross-skilling and skills refinement can then commence; ensuring that the antecedent capacities have been sufficiently reinforced in the preliminary steps.
- A stage-by-stage progress assessment conducted through participatory self-reporting by trainees and on part of the liaising industry players and government institutions is required before the beneficiaries can be deemed to have grasped the idea behind the resource network.
- A strong base of antecedent capabilities, coupled with community education initiatives and identifying needs through a participatory assessment (rather than a top down assessment) will ensure the long-term sustainability of the intervention, and will reduce the risk of demotivation or burnout of the participants.

8.3. Inculcating gender friendly policies and gender sensitive training within TVET institutions to minimize gender segregation in tourism based TVET courses.



Using the TVET system to train member of the resource network and sensitising TVET partners to gender inclusive, demand oriented training

- Having observed the documented deficiencies within the TVET sector to be gender responsive, market responsive and accessible; we propose that TVET partners are educated and trained on how to refine their curricula, delivery methods and student interaction
- Training must ensure that the TVET sector attracts women, women with disabilities through gender sensitive policies and communication of those policies to the wider public.
- Training must ensure that the core institutional objectives are steered at increasing employability as opposed to increasing the volume of training.
- The intervention must support TVET partners to liaise with the industry more closely and adapt to the dynamism of the industry. We suggest involving industrial partners in periodical reporting of industry skills demand to the TVET sector.
- Curriculum experts, reviewers and curriculum development committee should be invited to engage in collective planning on how to review the present curriculums to deliver a practical skill set that can be used to enhance the value addition and visibility of MSMEs
- Gender mainstreaming and gender friendly shifts in process, attitude and culture should be inculcated within the TVET system through policy.
- Periodical assessment of gender disaggregated tracer data of the TVET output will provide high-fidelity, granular data on reproductive and care work stresses on TVET graduates and the likelihood of these stresses forcing women to eventually withdraw from the labour force despite having employable skills.

We suggest this **theory of change** as common to the underlying principles of both interventions suggested above. Cultivating gender friendly policies within the TVET sector is paramount in ensuring that more women will be able to pursue traditionally gender segregated vocations. We recommend, as the interventions are implemented, to pay particular attention to the gendered aspects/modalities of behavior of TVET partners at involved.

By advocating the core values embedded within our interventions as policy suggestions, we may be able to achieve a greater degree of transformation not only within the scope of the intervention, but also in the Sri Lankan tourism industry as a whole.



At Policy Level

The vision for the “Decade of Skills Development” under “Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour” must embed into the national policy framework, an explicit recognition of the TVET sector as a core tool in correcting the lack of women’s representation in the Sri Lankan Labour force.

TVETs must become Gender friendly environments

Gender Sensitive Counselling and career guidance facilities.

Participation of women and PwDs as External resource personnel to both sensitise the institution and motivating the students

Internal and external communication policies on gender equality

Reporting and Data Collection

TVETs must collect gender disaggregated tracer data on course leavers at 3 months, 6 months and 1 year intervals

Easily accessible reporting and review policies for sexual harassment and gender discrimination

Public and Private TVET institutions should be offered a certification based on gender friendliness through participatory student surveys.



At Trainer and educator level

Gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity training must be simplified and internalised as core organisational values by trainers

The language, presentation, concepts and interactions of gender sensitivity within the organisation must be communicated to trainer, trainer of trainers and resources persons in a simple, intuitive manner.

Comprehension of gender inclusivity, and gender sensitivity training, must be assessed before and after the intervention.

Driven adopters of GIT must be recognised and engaged as role models and communicators to across the TVET system.

8.4. Additional Recommendations for ICT aided value addition to SMEs

The following recommendations are based on best practices that may help ameliorate barriers to entry and barriers to operation facing women and WSMEs in the online space.



- Establishment of web-based portals that enable women to access destination specific travel and market information that provide them the necessary insight needed to make business decisions.
- Spread awareness and sensitise communities on challenges such as cyber harassment and cyberbullying women face in their digital lives.
- Provide loans to obtain basic technologies such as entry level smartphones, incorporate readily available free organisational productivity tools such as google docs and google calendar into training programs.
- Liaise with industry players such as Ikman.lk, UberEats and Pick me to launch branding and exposure programs that curate and highlight women owned enterprises and small businesses
- Fortify regional telecentres such as NenaSala to offer training on the use of smartphones and basic ICT productivity tools for better organization and business growth.
- Launch freely accessible online courses, available in local languages on basic management and communications skills.
- Develop in-the-field education advisory programs with TVET trainers to improve, evaluate and assess the general ICT capacities and service specific capacities of small businesses.
- Create workshops to spread awareness on minimally expensive ways in which value can be added to a business with the use of digital tools. Link standardisation and good service directly to enhanced profitability through real world examples.
- Make general English education programs within the TVET institutions less theoretical and more use case based on their content specific applications.
- Reduce the cost and promote the use of mobile phone paired card payment terminals to reduce the requirement on physical banking infrastructure, ensure that online banking applications and websites are disability accessible.

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Section 10 : Appendix

Annex 1 : Startup and Women in ITC incubation programs

Program Specifically for	Type of Program	Conducted by	Program Name
Industry	Talks	SLASSCOM	Women entrepreneurs disrupting business,
	Workshops	SLASSCOM	Start-up Sri Lanka Boot Camp, Agile Testing demystified
		ICTA	Industry capacity Building Domestic workshops to provide additional training to workforce which is not provided by training institutes Voucher Scheme (subsidy on certifications) for entry level workforce,
		FITIS	Tech forums on Big data, disruptive technologies Training programs for top & middle management in the ICT/BPM sector
	Conferences	SLASSCOM	SLASSCOM Conclave 06, Colombo Test Automation Conference
		FITIS	"Women in IT Forum" as part of the annual INFOTEL ICT exhibition
	Initiatives	SLASSCOM	Future Careers, Mobile Monday
		ICTA	The Women and ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI), also known as "WIFI Suhuruliya", is aimed at enhancing Women entrepreneurs ICT capabilities
		ICTA	The Women and ICT Frontier Initiative (WIFI), also known as "WIFI Suhuruliya", is aimed at enhancing Women entrepreneurs ICT capabilities
		SLEDB	Enabling women led businesses in IT/BPM and tourism sectors to access local and global markets, under the ITC IORA project.
		CSSL	CSSL certification to improve the industry readiness of university graduates for the ICT/BPM sector. Young IT professionals aimed to understand to provide a platform for Young IT professionals to network & share their ideas leading to greater knowledge transfer & collaboration which lays the foundation of a strong ICT base.
		EDB	Shetrades SheTrade was launched in Sri Lanka in 2016 by EDB Sri Lanka in partnership with several institutions that support trade and investment including the National Chamber of Exporters (NCE), Women 's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Association of Small and Medium Enterprise in Touris

Universities	Talks	SLASSCOM	The art of fearless programming
	Workshops	SLASSCOM	SLASSCOM Directlink
	Competition	ICTA	Weekend Hackathons, help to code programs, disruption based events, entrepreneurship awards, code camps
	Initiatives	SLASSCOM	Career fairs at Jaffna, Kandy, Galle
		ICTA	Career Guidance & fairs at Batticaloa, Sigiriya and Vavuniya
		CSSL	"Females Can": The Sri Lankan women in the ICT chapter has been established to encourage females to consider ICT as a career choice and to encourage them to pursue professional goal
FITIS	Young Scientist Award	FITIS	Young Scientist Award
		FITIS	Young Scientist Award
			National & International School Software competition, here many participants come and involves knowledge sharing & capacity building. IT mastermind a school program aimed to hone the IT schools at an early stage
	Initiatives	ICTA	Career Guidance
		SLASSCOM	The Women Technopreneurs forum is connected to the SLASSCOM key target which is growing the IT/BPM industry to generate revenue of USD 5 billion in exports while creating 200,000 highly skilled workforce and facilitating 1,000 startups by 2025. To achieve these goals, SLASSCOM has 'forums and accelerators' which are sub-groups who will take up the hands-on efforts which will help us succeed delivering the required outcome. Specifically, In order to achieve the goal of 1,000 startups by 2025, there is a requirement to harness the potential of female tech entrepreneurs.
		Ceylon Chamber of Commerce	Training, mentoring, funding and incubation opportunities. The organization is a part of Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and also organizes several events and programmes each year to guide and encourage ambitious entrepreneurs.

Annex 2 : Client Facing Roles and Operational Roles : A cursory assessment of income

	Most frequently mentioned Education level required at entry level (of 5 searches)		
	GCE O/L	GCE A/L	UNIVERSITY
Operational roles			
Accountancy		X	
Database Management	X		
Itinerary Management	X		
Web development	X		
Written content creation		X	
Advertising and Communications		X	
Sales platform data entry	X		
Data collection	X		
Graphic design and static content creation	X		
Client Facing Roles			
Inquiry handler	X		
Travel Planner		X	
Tour management and digital destination management		X	
Personalised digital tourism guide			X
Bookings manager for online platforms	X		
Social Media Outreach		X	

Salary at intermediate level (Data at trainee level unavailable)

Operational roles	Intermediate to after 1 year
Accountancy	25,000 – 30,000 LKR PER MONTH
Database Management	32,000 – 45,000 LKR PER MONTH
Itinerary Management	30,000 - 68,000 LKR PER MONTH
Web development	28,000 – 40,000 LKR PER MONTH
Written content creation	15,000 – 30,000 LKR PER MONTH
Advertising and Communications	20,000 – 65,000 LKR PER MONTH
Sales platform data entry	15,000 – 45,000 LKR PER MONTH
Online Data collection	20,000 – 40,000 LKR PER MONTH
Graphic design and static content creation	20,000 – 40,000 LKR PER MONTH
Animated content creation	30,000 – 70,000 LKR PER MONTH
Client Facing Roles	
Inquiry handler	(No data)
Travel Planner /Travel Agent	60,000 – 120,000 LKR PER MONTH
Tour management and digital destination management	(No data)

Personalised digital tourism guide	(No data)
Bookings manager for online platforms	(No data)
Social Media Outreach/ online marketing	
Reservations management	70,000 – 120,000 LKR PER MONTH

Methodology: Averages of Data collection from following platforms, Entry level data was excluded.

Ikman.lk/jobs

www.topjobs.lk

Jobs advertised on social media through randomised search.

This synthesis of data is presented for cursory analysis only, there are no fixed gradations of salaries for most content creation roles, and requires a regional assessment of average salary/ hourly rate levels.

Annex 4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation processes will be guided by 3 distinct sets of KPIs, The first measuring the impact of training on employability, The second measuring the gender specific impact of training on employability, and the third measuring the sustainability of the Resource Network itself.

Assessment of the wider impact on the community through the use of KPIs alone is not recommended, we suggest a survey assessed Theories of Change framework to measure community impact and the transformation of livelihoods in the community.

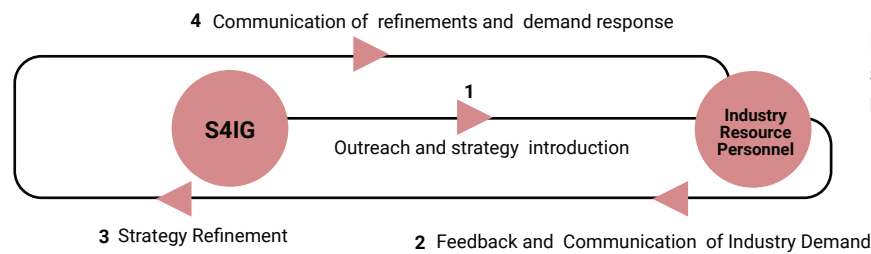
Impact of Resource Network on Employability and Business Growth

	KPI	Measured For	
A	Efficacy and effectiveness of the workshops		
1	Membership Data at entry	Aggregated by gender, origin, education, vocational background, income etc.) Provides a baseline	
2	Dropout Rate	Quality of training and perception of training; Demand for labor and financial situation of students (students leaving for work before finishing training).	
3	Member Satisfaction		
4	Rate of Skill graduation	Measured with NVQ gradation criteria over time	
5	Persistence of Engagement	Attendance over time Contact hours per member over time	

Annex 3 : Suggested feedback loops for incubating community MSME Resource Networks

We recommend the establishment of the following feedback loops as an integral part of strategy implementation and monitoring.

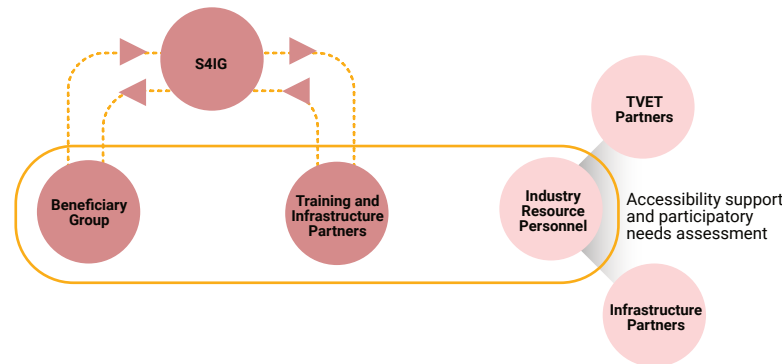
Stage 1 : Implementation Stage



Refinement and fine tuning of strategy, several iterations recommended.

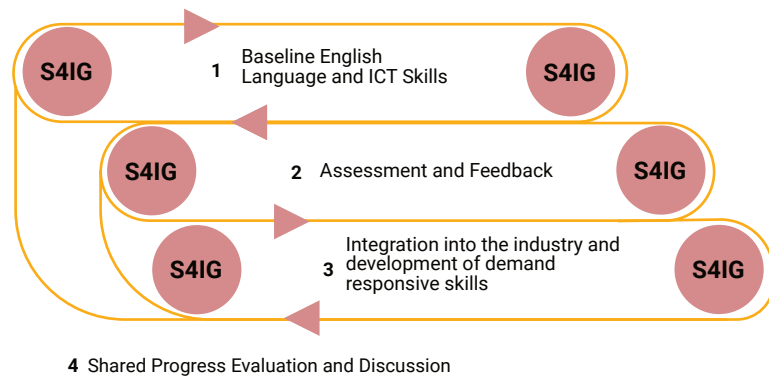
- Introduce the core strategy to industry partners
- Assess demand, and fine tune the strategy based on feedback and expertise.

Stage 2 : Primary Stage of execution : Outreach and levelling the playing field



- Structured, mediated feedback loops between industry and training partners, aimed at communicating the refined strategy and training needs to the training partners.
- Outreach, publicity and baseline capacity assessment of the beneficiary group

Stage 2 : Secondary Stage of Execution : Training, and capacity development



Once the basic English and ICT training objectives have been fulfilled, the beneficiaries can be absorbed into the RN, where industry partners, in liaison with TVET partners will aid the development of demand responsive skills development curriculums.

- The tertiary stage of the execution will oversee and incubate the resource network until it is able to self-sustain. Periodical monitoring and evaluation will take place in order to assist both the beneficiaries and partners to make the necessary course corrections.

- During this stage, S4IG should aid and support outreach and client-service provider linkages between industry players and the BPO centre; in time, as those within the BPO qualify in their assessment based gradation, they can eventually form a middle management layer that is able to reinforce the BPOs commitment to autonomy and sustainability.

- 3 sets of KPIs and a Theories of change model is provided for monitoring, evaluation and assessment.

Annex 4 : Rural BPO Case Study

CASE STUDY:
RURAL BPO CENTRES;
A PRO-WOMEN, PRO-POOR
DEPLOYMENT OF ICT SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT



We employ a local case study to provide an example where a pro-poor, pro-women ICT driven intervention has proven to be successful with the view to integrating the lessons learned from this intervention to the tourism sector.

Process

In 2007, Kapila Gunawardana, the founding director of FARO noticed the lack of opportunities for young school leavers in rural areas to enter into the ICT sector.

While much of IT industry players are concentrated in Colombo, it was observed that rural areas saw little to no development with youth remaining unemployed. The aim was to create employment that did not involve migration to Colombo.

The first two candidates for the OnTime BPO in Mahawilachiya were chosen based on a baseline level of computer literacy; the candidates were then sent on an experience based training in Laos and India with the support from ICTA and DDD. OnTime started operations on 10th of May in 2007 with two operators for their first client, John Keells Holdings. Dialog Axiata also outsourced their back office work for OnTime.

By 2010, the BPO had over 15 operators, each receiving training in English and ICT, extending to basic web development, programming, accountancy and data entry. Training was facilitated by both ICTA and workshops by Infomate.

After developing the infrastructure and facilitating a corporate customer base and job training, the ownership and management responsibilities of the rural BPO was handed over to the selected village youth. Infomax and FARO continue to provide administrative support to the BPO, understanding that certain leadership capacities and industry linkages would require some guidance.

FARO and ICTA, with the help of John Keells holdings, went onto set up two more BPOs. The BPO at Seenigama, set up in 2010 is overseen by Foundation of Goodness, the BPO at Uduwil, set up in 2011 is hosted at the Uduwil Girls College. Both BPOs are owned and run by its employees.

Outcomes and conclusions

currently, each of the BPOs employ in excess of 15 employees. Those who have received training and experience from the BPOs have received employment in the ICT sector. Thus far, collectively the BPOs have produced in excess of 150 accomplished IT technicians and developers working in the industry. Over 90% of the employees operating the BPOs are women. During the COVID 19 Pandemic the BPOs have started operating from home, and have stated that a working from home arrangement may continue even once the threat of the pandemic has subsided.

Mangala Karunaratne. The Board Member of FARO expressed that the larger impact of the BPO as a skills incubator and a gateway for younger people from rural communities to gain exposure, motivation, grit and a demand driven skillset is far more significant than its business case, albeit profitable.

Rural BPOs to power the tourism economy

Community owned, community run women led BPOs can help bridge the digital divide in the Sri Lankan tourism industry and increase the visibility of women in regional tourism.

The internet has transformed the relationship between small and medium scale tourism service providers and tourists. Service providers are now privy 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. 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.

Changing connectivity provides some support for new firms in the tourism sector. It provides a channel for guides, small tour operators and travel agents to market and then link to niche customers. These processes can be important in the survival of firms and thus the situation of its owners and employees. We enumerate in the recommendations section as to how we may be able to deploy the lessons learned from this case study in a tourism related intervention.

Actors Involved

Actor	Description	Role
Foundation For Advancing Rural Opportunity	We are a nonprofit organization assisting rural youth in Sri Lanka to establish and operate their own "outsourcing" business service facilities (BPO's) in their villages	Conception and development of the initial plan for the ruralBPO center in Mahawilachiya
John Keells Holdings	John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH) is a diversified blue chip company operating in multiple industries including tourism, retail Food and Beverages, Logistics, and ICT	Infomate supported the setting up of the OnTime ruralBPO in mahawilachiya and continues to provide infrastructure, support and guidance as well as a stream of outsourced work
Infomate Pvt. Ltd	Infomate is a fully owned subsidiary of John Keells Holdings.	
Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA)	The Information and Communication Technology Agency is the lead agency in Sri Lanka for implementation of information and communications technology initiatives by the Government of Sri Lanka.	Funding for Infrastructure and Training
Digital Divide Data (DDD)	DDD is the largest technology-related employer in Cambodia and Laos and recently won Kenya's Vision 2030 Award for the Best BPO. DDD's unique Impact Sourcing model has developed a growing network of young professionals and propelled hundreds of families out of poverty.	Funding for Infrastructure and Training
OnTime BPO at Mahavilachiya	OnTime was the first BPO Company formed in a rural village in Sri Lanka, in 2007 with partnership of Faro, John Keells, Infomate, ICTA and DDD	Currently employs over 15 employees providing a variety of backend services for John Keells and Dialog Axiata
BPO at Seenigama	BPO at Seenigama Launched in 2010, The project was initiated by ICTA and implemented FARO. The BPO supported by John Keells Holdings with the funding for infrastructure and training coming from an ICTA Replication Grant For Rural Capacity Building	Currently employs over 15 employees providing a variety of backend services for John Keells and Dialog Axiata
BPO at Uduvil, Jaffna (Eliza Agnew BPO service)	BPO at Uduvil Launched in 2011 as the third collaboration between ICTA and FARO with Additional Capital from The Reconcile & Rebuild Sri Lanka, Washington DC Group	Currently employs over 50 employees providing a variety of backend services for John Keells and Dialog Axiata
The Horizon Lanka Foundation	Horizon Lanka Foundation is a not for profit social enterprise, running academic programs. In Rural Villages in Sri Lanka	Funding for infrastructure and premises
The Foundation for Goodness	Foundation of Goodness was established in 1999 and is a Voluntary Social Services Organisation focusing on holistic rural community development	Operates as a coordinating partner for the Seenigama BPO, ensuring the administrative needs of the BPO is met
The Uduvil Girls College	Located in Uduvil, Jaffna one of the oldest and largest schools in Jaffna	Hosts the Jaffna BPO in School Premises

6	Fixed Cost and Running cost per member	Measures market value of training	
7	Fee amount per member	Measures long term sustainability of the resource network.	
8	Trainer cost per member		
9	Accessibility resources per member	Enables project to adjust capacity for PWDs	
B			
1	Absorption into other businesses, as employees as a result of the training	Quality of trainers and training; Quality of workshops	
2	Rate of members productively engaged as a result of the workshops (i.e. employment part time jobs, pre-employment internship, starting a business) after 6 months of having finished training	Quality of training and its capacity to equip students with the right skill for the labor market; Needs of the labor market.	
3	Increase/decrease (%) in member's income after the training	Quality of training; Needs of the labor market; member's ability to improve the business and improve their standard of living.	
C			
1	Numeracy		
2	Subject specific technical knowledge		
3	ICT skills		
4	Ability to follow technical instructions		
5	Turnover time for work		
D			
1	Enthusiasm and positivity		
2	Skill agility and adaptability		
3	Punctuality and motivation		
4	Client interaction, congeniality		
5	Ability to work unsupervised		
6	Leadership traits		
7	Commitment		
8	Emotional Stability		
9	Discipline		
10	Teamwork Skills		
11	Management Skills		

Gender specific impact of the resource network

	KPI	Measured For	Measured By
E	Gender specific impact of workshops		
1	Member enrolment (F as % of M)		
2	Number of workshop hours on gender-related topics	(Qualitative assessment of the impact through workshops should follow, quality and comprehension must take precedence over the number of training sessions)	
3.	Gender disaggregated comparisons in averages)	5a. Member Average (overall satisfaction F)/Average (overall satisfaction M) 5b. Rate of Skill graduation Average delta between NVQ Grade per evaluation cycle (F)/ Average delta between NVQ Grade per evaluation cycle (M) 5c. Persistence of Engagement (Also see E15) Average attendance over time (F)/Average attendance over time (M) Average contact hours per student over time(F)/Average contact hours per student over time(M) 5d. Absorption into other businesses, and employment Average Wage/Salary at absorption (F)/Average wage/Salary at absorption(M) 5e. Rate of member productively engaged as a result of their training (i.e. employment part time jobs, pre-employment internship, starting a business) after 6 months and 1 year of having finished training	
13	Absenteeism	Cumulative number of absent days: Number of which related to childcare Number of which related to household work	

Destination performance and sustainability KPIs

	KPI	Measured For	Measured By
F	Outreach		
1	Website click rate		
2	Social media follower count		
3	Direct inquiries		
G	Performance		
1	Active part time businesses		
2	Active full time businesses		
3	Clients serviced		
4	Average project delivery period		
	Project diversity (Number of projects by distinct Skill areas employed)		
5	Client Assessment Rating		
6	Referrals to and from local businesses		
7	Turnover		
8	Gross Profit		
9	Turnover per employee		
10	No. Linkages with local businesses		
11	No. Linkages with local tourists		
12	No. Linkages with foreign tourists		
13	Employee intake/turnover	*Gender Disaggregated figure	
14	Employee retention period	*Gender Disaggregated figure	
H	Leadership : Internal appointment of project and team leaders*		
1	1:1's Completed with Team Members		
2	Team Health Index		
3	Peer Assessment Score		

Annex 5 : KIs interviewed

Resource Personnel / KIs	
Nadeera Fernando Senior Manager - LUXE ASIA (PVT) LTD Nadeera@luxeiasia.lk	Soft and Hard Skill Gaps in regional tourism Deficiencies in policy towards community tourism Deficiencies in policy towards women in tourism Cultural hindrances to capacity development
Anuruddha(Anu) Karunatilaka Regional General Manager Asia Pacific Intrepid	In house tourism BPOs Main services provided Soft and Hard Skill Gaps Sourcing of employees and employee retention (Focus on Women) Intrepid's inclusive BPO model, scalability and specific challenges in adopting the model to tourism
Shohan Kulasooriya Deegenics info@deegenics.com	Women in travel and tourism sector Key constraints to hiring women as drivers Models of socially motivated ICT enterprises run by deegenics
Fazana Ibrahim Director Seenigama BPO: fazana@foguc.org	Preprepared questionnaire (Re: Seenigama BPO)
Nirosh Ranathunga, Chief Executive Officer OnTime Technologies (Pvt. Ltd): fo@ontimetechologies.net	Preprepared questionnaire (Re: Ontime BPO)
Chaminda De Silva Executive Director SLASSCOM ed@slasscom.lk	Industry outlook on the Potential value case of Rural BPOs Core challenges Ongoing project bridging the skill gap Key constraints to women entering the ICT sector
Mangala Karunaratne Founder & CEO - Calcey Technologies Board Member and Founding Member of FARO	Core motivation for launching ruralBPOs Performance of the Rural BPOs Employee skill level Profitability and scalability Wider social impact Soft and Hard Skill Gaps Thoughts on applications to tourism
Manique Guneratna (The Employers' Federation of Ceylon)	Inclusive economic development and creating long term sustainable employment and livelihoods for persons with disabilities. EFC's role in alleviating disability based constraints in private sector employment Capacity to train PwDs in rural setting

Ruwindhu Peiris Managing Director - Stax Inc.	Sourcing rural talent for ICT work Skills deficiencies and gendered roles within the ICT sector Lack of innovation in e-tourism Deficiencies with value addition to rural tourism through the use of ICTs
Jehan Perinpanayagam - CEO - Infomateworld	Core motivation for launching ruralBPOs Performance of the Rural BPOs Employee skill level Profitability and scalability Wider social impact Soft and Hard Skill Gaps

Questions given to ruralBPOs (Two rural BPOs were assessed to develop the case study)

Please briefly state for the survey the core offering(s) of your business	
How many employees are currently employed at your company?	
How many, or what percentage of your employees are women?	
How many, or what percentage of your employees are living with disabilities?	
What working languages are most prominent within your organisation? Internally, Externally (With customers and buyers etc)	
Have you encountered any difficulties sourcing employees?, if so please specify	
Have you attempted to attract more women employees, contractors or women service providers to partner with your business for certain roles and services?	Yes; We thought women were better placed in the roles or services concerned Yes; We thought women were underrepresented the roles or services concerned If yes, please specify the roles and services concerned: No; gender was not a specific criterion in the hiring process No; we didn't think women were well placed in the roles and services concerned.
What particular skill areas do you most find lacking among applicants and trainees?	

Would you say that there is more opportunity for women engaging in IT based work as employees in your organisation?	<p>Yes, there is opportunity but we cannot find women applicants with the skills required</p> <p>Please specify the opportunities:</p> <p>Yes, there is opportunity and readily available candidates in the job market</p> <p>Please specify the opportunities:</p> <p>No, we currently have fulfilled/saturated our labour requirements, but there may be opportunities as we grow.</p> <p>No, we do not see expansion in this area as adding significant value to the business</p>
You currently provide services for the hospitality or tourism sector?	
Roughly what proportions of your client base would you say are local and foreign?	
What particular industries do you cater your services to?	
What is the average salary/remuneration range for an employee at entry level?	
In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, has there been a shift in your company towards working from home?	<p>If YES, to what extent would you agree with these statements?</p> <p>We would be considering continuing working from home arrangements after the pandemic given that they have shown to be successful</p>
	Working from home arrangements have been counterproductive, and we will attempt to discontinue them once the pandemic subsides
	We will be open to looking at a hybrid model where certain IT based components and forms of work that can be performed remotely will be conducted from home.
Do you offer part time work options?	<p>YES</p> <p>NO, part time work options seem to negatively affect performance and quality</p>




Skills for Inclusive Growth

SCOPING STUDY

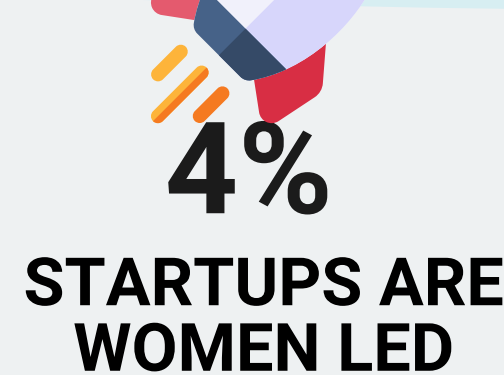
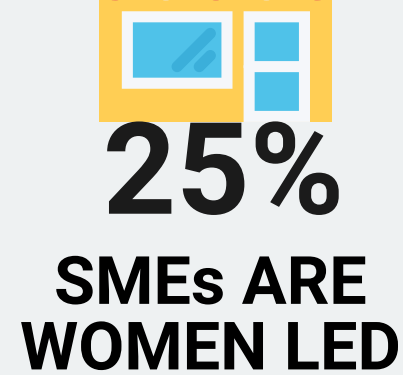
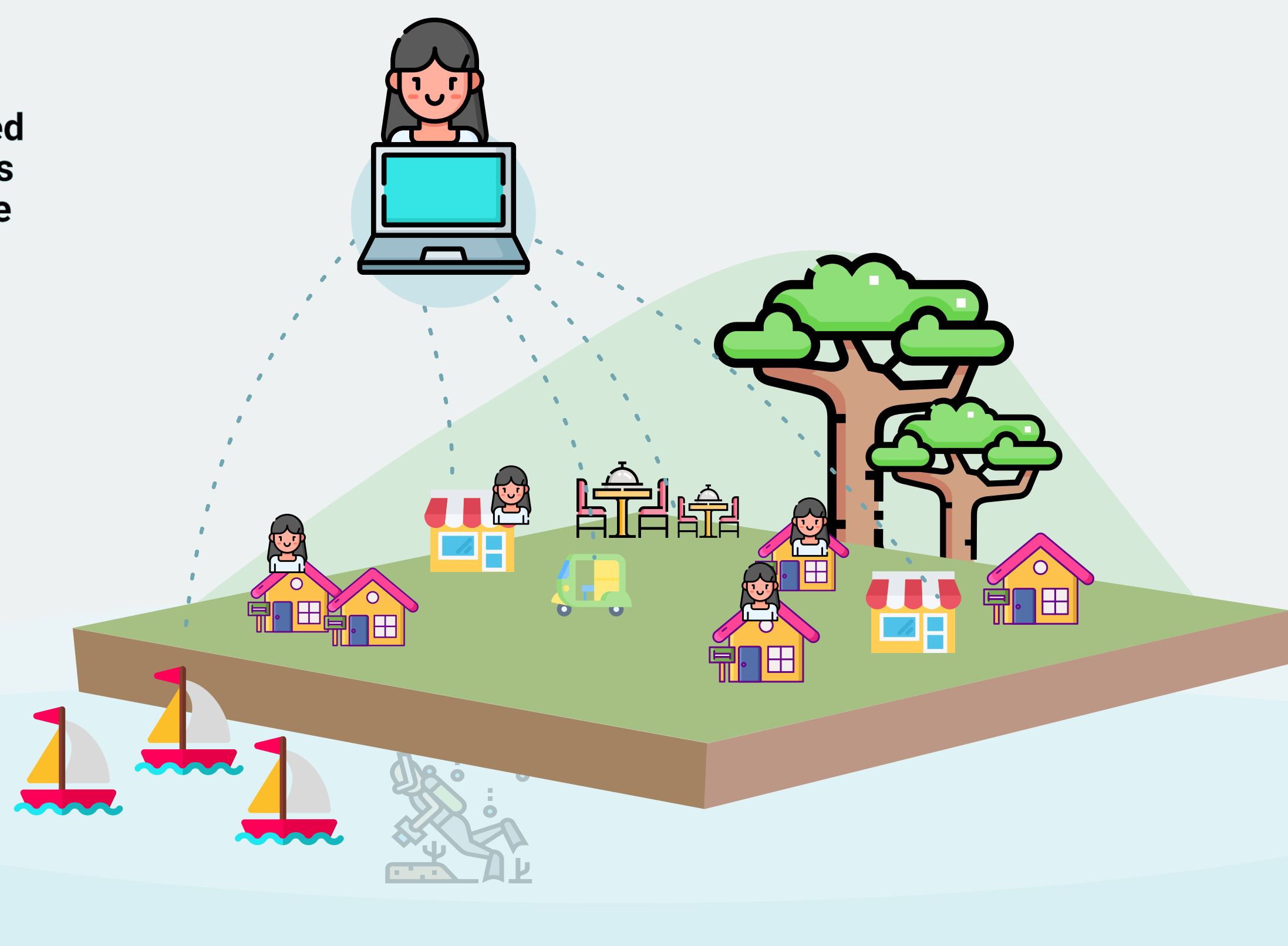
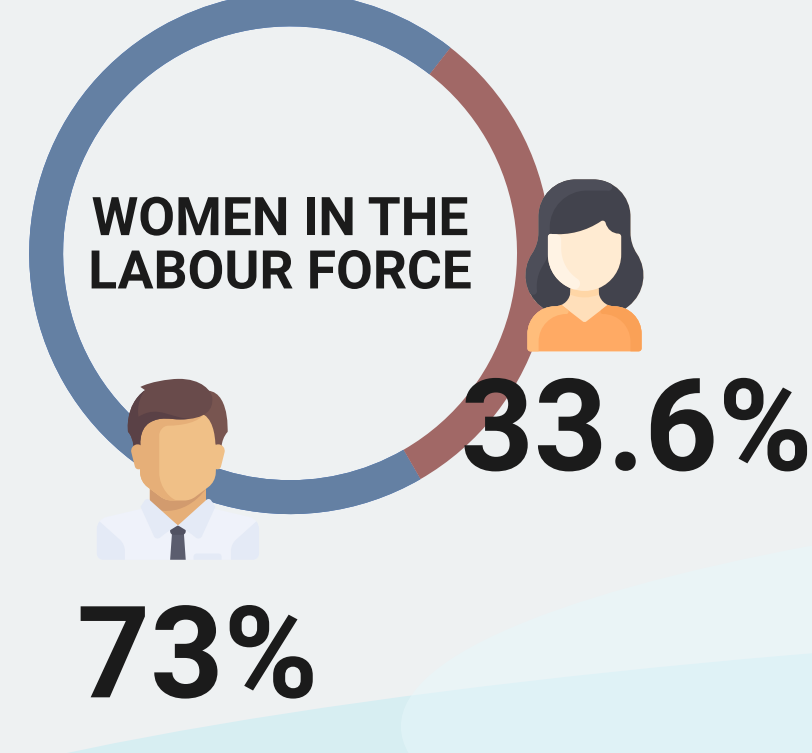
ENHANCING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOURISM SECTOR THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

AUGUST 2021

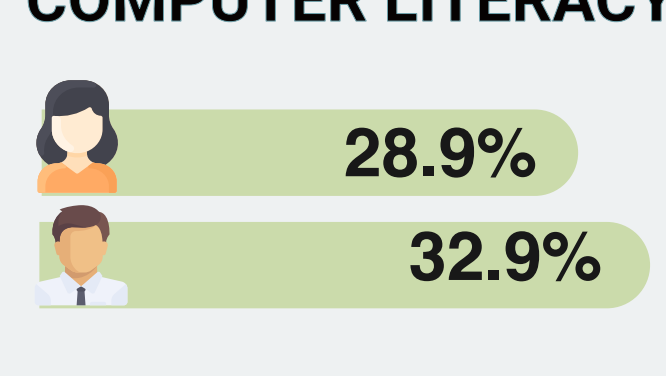
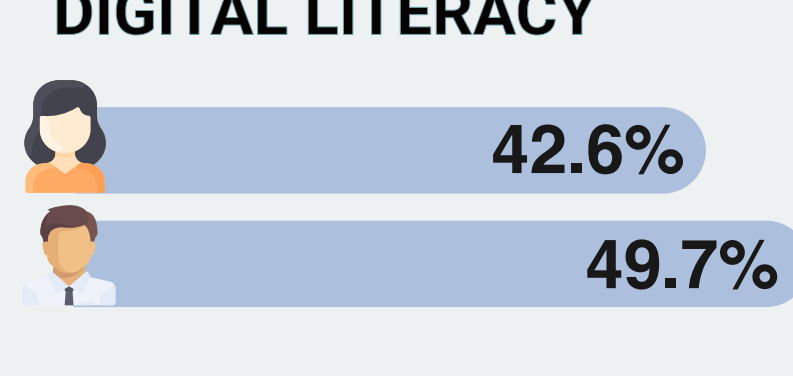
COMMUNITY MSME RESOURCE NETWORKS

WHY?

Women are highly underrepresented in the Sri Lankan tourism sector, as well as the Sri Lankan Labour Force Overall.



Women SMEs in the tourism sector, suffer from income stagnation, invisibility and hindrances to growth owing to a lack of client focused soft skills and digital literacy



WHAT'S THE STRATEGY ?



CREATING LOCAL TOURISM VALUE CHAINS BY BRINGING LOCAL SMEs AND ENTREPRENEURS TOGETHER

COMMUNITY MSME RESOURCE NETWORK

SOLE TRADERS, MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES AND ENTREPRENEURS



WHAT WILL IT ACHIEVE?



Facilitation of horizontal linkages between local tourism actors, thereby establishing community tourism value chains.



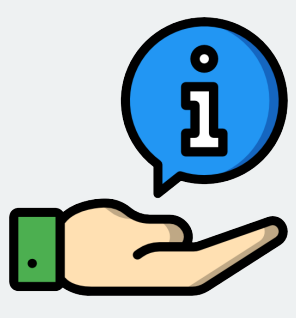
Develop supplier buyer linkages for SMEs in the community.



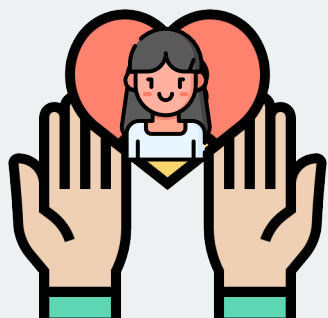
Develop service provider - client linkages by promoting small tourism service providers to both local and foreign tourists.



Opening up linkages and opportunities for women content creators, social media marketers, graphic designers etc to interact with SMEs.



Remedy the information asymmetry that sole traders, micro, small and medium businesses suffer by making market information more accessible, particularly in Sinhala and Tamil.



Empower and fortify local entrepreneurship by becoming a value addition focal point, centralising otherwise disjointed information and services SME usually have to spend a tremendous amount of time and energy to access.

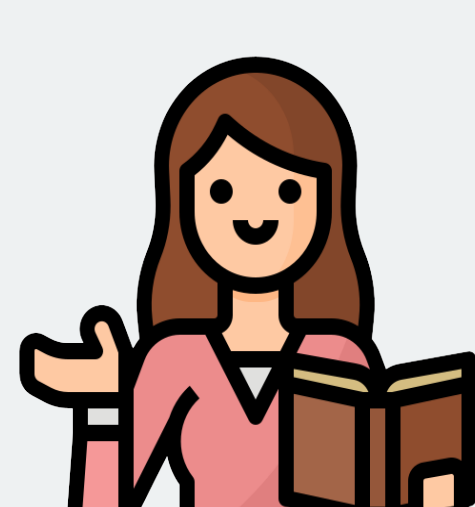
HOW DO WE GO ABOUT IT?

ORGANISING THE COMMUNITY, INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTIVE WORKING



A communications campaign, which consists of motivational activities and workshops must be targeted at the specific community undergoing the intervention. These programs must increase the awareness of the community on the value and the importance of digital literacy and the benefits of working collaboratively to improve the overall visibility and appeal of their destination.

BASIC BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS.



Communicating online

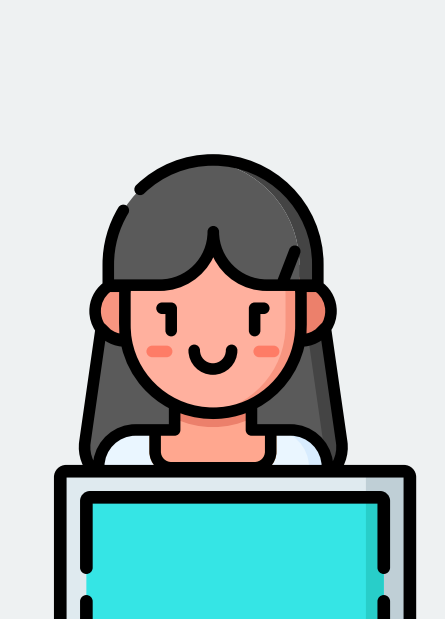
Introduction to Email and instant messaging, business cases, benefits and readily available free resources.

Introductory guide on online banking

Technical support and introduction on setting up a bank account and a debit card for your business

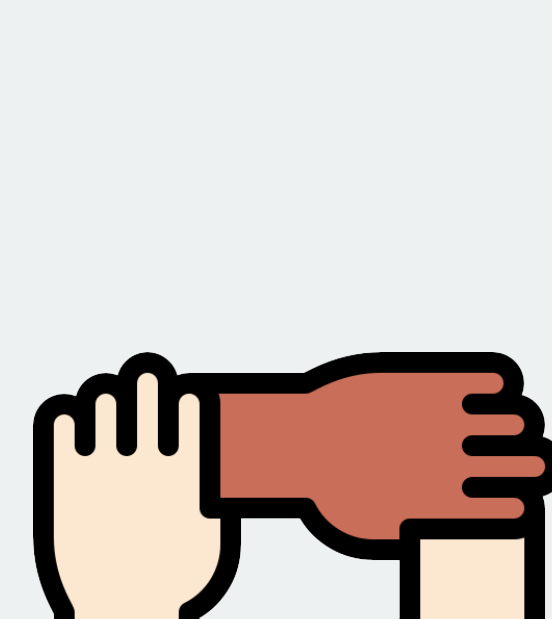
How to bank online, accepting and making online payments.

COMMUNICATION, SOCIAL MEDIA AWARENESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING FOR BUSINESSES



- Setting up a social media page for your business.
- Building your business an identity on social media; basics of brand image.
- Basic photography and videography for social media
- Simple content writing and customer interaction over social media
- Using social media as an online market space and selling your products online.

USING SOCIAL MEDIA COLLECTIVELY, NETWORKING WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY AND REPRESENTING YOUR LOCALITY TO VISITORS.



Communicating within your community

- Using closed Facebook groups and shared documents to network between businesses (suppliers and buyers) and share market and customer inflow information.
- Using groups and shared documents to share learning material, introduce new members to the business community to each other, and create collective campaigns to increase visibility on regional issues affecting ease of business.
- Help secure better rates and prices for supplies and services through improved accessibility to market information through community forums.
- Encouraging and welcoming new businesses and entrepreneurs into the community, where the new members will have access to material and market knowledge produced by other members in the network.

Communicating with visitors.



Setting up collective social media accounts for each tourist destination and training members of the community on correct social media etiquette and customer interaction on social media.

With the support of ICTA and SLTDA, securing a domain and developing a website for community tourism for each destination. Each community will have their own domain name and web server. And each subscriber will be able to host their own web page under their community domain name; detailing services/goods offered and prices. Training courses on using the website can be delivered by ICTA.

SLTDA can liaise with and assist the administrators of community social media pages by offering help and advice with content developers (photography, graphics, videography) to enhance the quality of the page.

Communicating Collectively with Resource providers



SLTDA and TVET organisations can utilise community social media pages and community websites as hubs/focal points to publicize and deploy educational campaigns.

Periodical studies (surveys, questionnaires and assessments) conducted by SLTDA based on and deployed through social media focal points can enable SLTDA to assess potential for capacity development programs and link communities with resource providers or resource persons.

SLTDA can use the community social media pages to provides consistent and up to date updates on market trends and visitor inflows.

Assessments can be trained to conduct participatory needs assessments and communicate their needs to relevant tourism development authorities such as SLTDA.

Data Sources

Women in Labour Force and Digital Literacy Statistics
Department of Census and Statistics : www.statistics.gov.lk

Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Sri Lanka
International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group : www.ifc.org

Women's startups
Country Overview of the Start-up Ecosystem in Sri Lanka, SLASSCOM: www.slasscom.lk