

# Southern India Regional Conference on Engendering Tourism: Work, Opportunities & Dilemmas

Co-organised by Indian Association of Women's Studies (IAWS) and EQUATIONS

Vishranthi Nilaya, Bangalore, 14th June 2013

The last decade of tourism development in the national and international arena has undeniably placed a much greater emphasis on women. The tourism sector claims that it generates significant employment opportunities for women. The UN World Tourism Organisation dedicated World Tourism Day 2007, to women, "Tourism Opens Doors for Women" and followed it with its Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 highlighting the role of tourism in empowering women politically and economically. The National Tourism Policy, 2002 recognises enhancing women's participation in tourism. For instance, the National Tourism Policy, 2002 recognises tourism as a priority sector; and also identifies rural and ecotourism as a means to poverty reduction, creating new skills, enhancing participation of women in tourism and thus, facilitating growth of a more just and fair social order.

These are fair intentions and it is undeniable that tourism does provide opportunities to women. However, it is worthwhile to examine whether the achievements are initiated by women as agents of their lives and future in an aspirational way, or imposed on them because they are forced to embrace them as a survival strategy. Within the sphere of Women and Work, it can be noticed that apart from women's overall presence in the industry, other factors indicate that women do not seem to benefit and be empowered particularly from tourism. As in many other sectors, there is significant horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market in tourism. The feminisation and informalisation of the workforce in tourism is a matter of concern. Tourism has also depleted natural resources, encroached on traditional livelihoods and increased the drudgery on women.

It is in this backdrop, we call for a discussion to highlight that merely creating opportunities is not enough unless it entails involvement of women as equal partners.

The conference attempts to engage with the following key questions:

- What are the impacts of tourism development on women's lives and livelihoods?
- What is the scope & nature of opportunities that tourism has offered to women?
- What approach has been adopted for women's empowerment in tourism?
- How gender concerns are weaved into tourism initiatives? Do women gain economically, socially and politically?
- How can we make tourism less exploitative of women?

The conference will be conducted as a round table with different themes leading the discussions. The outcome of this discussion will be a base to dialogue and influence tourism practices so that needs, realities & rights of women associated with tourism are taken into consideration and addressed.

For further information, contact us:

1. Surabhi Singh, Program Coordinator ,EQUATIONS (08105234444 / [surabhi.s@equitabletourism.org](mailto:surabhi.s@equitabletourism.org))
2. Shaila DeSouza ,Indian Association of Women's Studies, (09422442799 / [shailagoa@yahoo.com](mailto:shailagoa@yahoo.com))

**Keywords:** Women, Tourism, Work, Formal sector, Informal sector, Livelihoods, Labour, EQUATIONS, Indian Association of Women's Studies.