

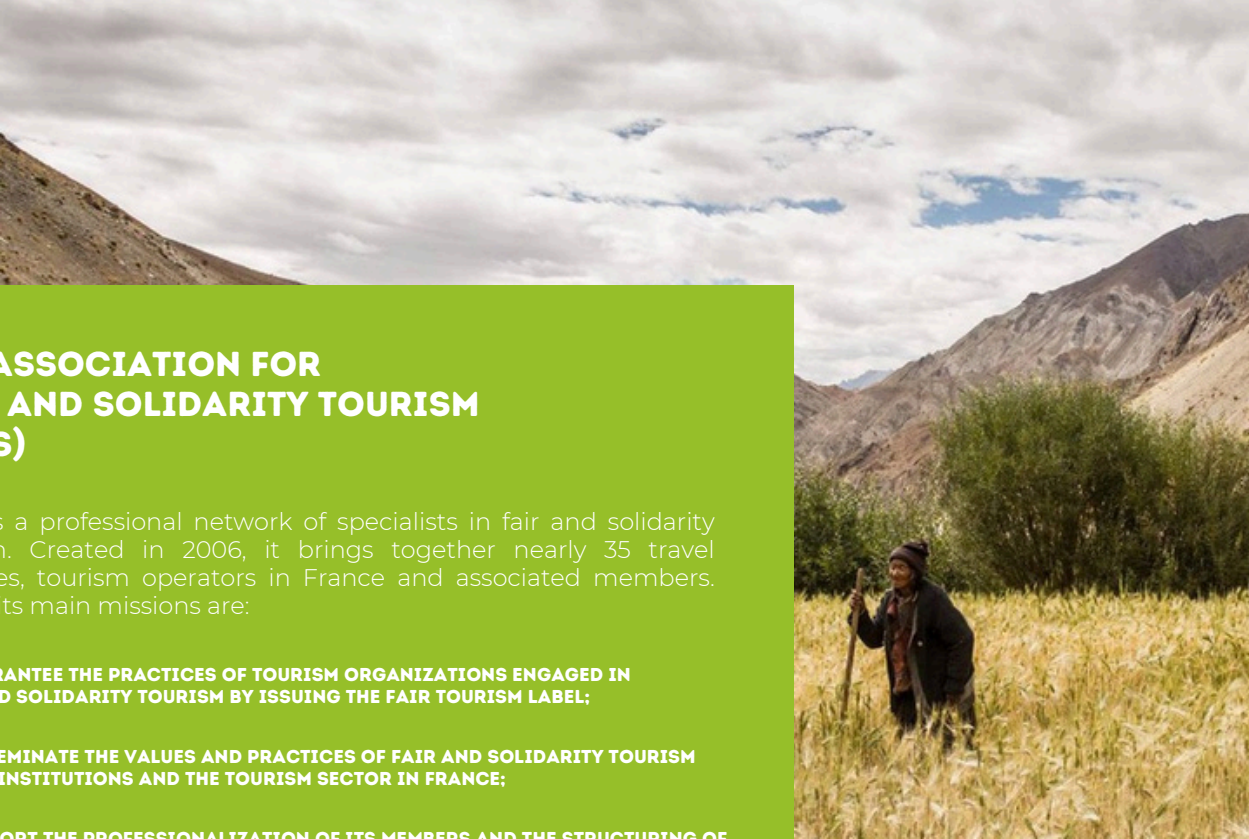


BUILD AND SUSTAIN

PARTNERSHIPS IN

FAIR TRADE TOURISM

**Fair tourism partnerships study
summary**



THE ASSOCIATION FOR FAIR AND SOLIDARITY TOURISM (ATES)

ATES is a professional network of specialists in fair and solidarity tourism. Created in 2006, it brings together nearly 35 travel agencies, tourism operators in France and associated members. Today, its main missions are:

- TO GUARANTEE THE PRACTICES OF TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGED IN FAIR AND SOLIDARITY TOURISM BY ISSUING THE FAIR TOURISM LABEL;
- TO DISSEMINATE THE VALUES AND PRACTICES OF FAIR AND SOLIDARITY TOURISM AMONG INSTITUTIONS AND THE TOURISM SECTOR IN FRANCE;
- TO SUPPORT THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ITS MEMBERS AND THE STRUCTURING OF THE FAIR AND SOLIDARITY TOURISM OFFER IN DESTINATIONS;
- TO RAISE TRAVELERS' AWARENESS OF FAIR AND SOLIDARITY TOURISM ISSUES.

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INTRODUCTION

"To travel is to go from oneself to oneself through others"

Tuareg proverb.

For who? What for?

Fair and solidarity tourism requires a co-construction of stays between tour operators and their partners in the destination countries, **in close collaboration with the local populations.**

By implementing these partnership approaches, they develop **learning** that should be shared to nourish collective practices and provide keys to new people seeking to launch themselves as fair trade tourism operators. Far from being a single model to follow, the idea of ATEs was to carry out a study showing the multiplicity of ways of doing things. This document is a synthesis of the key lessons learned.

And what about the Fair Tourism Label?

Since 2014, ATEs has issued the Fair Tourism label, which guarantees the practices of tour operators, incoming agencies and tourist offices in France. Based on a reference framework of 30 criteria, the label guarantees:

- A relationship with partners in destinations based on fair trade principles
- Concrete commitments to local development
- An activity rooted in the territory and beneficial to inhabitants





With who?

Certified fair trade tour operators¹ that participated in the study are:

- A'Tibo Timon
- Endallah
- Grandir Aventure / Grandes Latitudes
- ICD-Afrique
- Rencontres au Bout du Monde
- TDS Voyage
- Terres des Andes / Les Nouvelles Terres
- Vision du Monde

One of the striking elements within the network is the diversity of structures that are part of it. Each has its own history, culture and operating logic.

The local partners are characterised by their heterogeneity depending on the country of destination². The majority of these organizations are:

- Incoming agencies
- Community based structures
- NGOs or associations

On average, tour operators have a limited number of partners per country (around 3), which confirms the priority given to relationships of trust among a small number of players.

¹ five associations governed by the law of 1901, two cooperative and participative companies (SCOP) and a simplified joint-stock company (SAS) recognised of Social Utility (ESUS). All these structures fall within the scope of the social and solidarity economy (SSE).

² For confidentiality reasons, the names of the partners have been anonymized.



³ Benin, Cape Verde, Cuba, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Mexico, Peru and Tanzania.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology was participatory and evolving, adapting as best as possible to the temporalities of the operators and partners. In short, the key figures:

- **3** Collective workshops for sharing experiences between tour operators
- **8** individual exchanges with each tour operator
- **2** field missions in Morocco and Peru with numerous partner meetings
- **3** WhatsApp groups, in 3 languages, made up of partners from **11** countries³
- **79** people were directly involved in the study

And to go deeper...

The complete report includes many lessons and additional peer-to-peer advice, as well as a mapping of local partners.

The video "How are fair trade certified tourism stays built?" gives the floor to the partners of Morocco and Peru.

Two photo booklets (one for the general public, one for tourism practitioners) illustrates the practices observed through images.



⁴ The quotes are from the managers of the 8 tour operators and/or their local partners participating in the study

THE MAIN LESSONS

FOR...

1- IDENTIFYING YOUR PARTNERS: KNOWING EACH OTHER, UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER, AGREEING ON COMMON PRACTICES AND VALUES

*"It's always a story of encounters."*⁴

"KEEPING OF THE BEATEN TRACK", AN ESSENTIAL RISK?

Tour operators first focus on identifying players **who do not benefit or only slightly from the manna of mass tourism**. The construction of the products therefore requires a strong investment, a risk for the various stakeholders, and time - about 2 years - to achieve a solid partnership.

RELYING ON RELIABLE RESSOURCE PERSONS TO IDENTIFY PARTNERS

In destinations that are already known, existing partners are best placed as resource persons. The existence of a local project can also be reported by **an NGO** that supports communities, for example through **fair trade actions**.

AGREEING ON COMMON VALUES

The tour operator and the partner ensure that a **minimum base of common values** is shared. These result in common principles, in particular the absence of hierarchical links or imbalances in the partnership relationship.

THE CHOICE TO COMMIT: MINIMUM CONDITIONS?

- **Language:** some tour operators explicitly prefer to work with French-speaking people to facilitate exchanges, others do not.
- Respect of the **Fair Tourism Label's** terms of reference
- Constraints related to the welcoming of guests (hygiene, safety...)

Training or investment needs (accommodation upgrades) on certain aspects can be identified: both parties then ensure that they can meet them.

BE ATTENTIVE TO POWER ASYMMETRIES

Power relations linked to social classes, gender, and ethnic origins structure the communities in which partners will be chosen. At the very least, **through discussion and observation**, tour operators try to be aware of this.

The main asymmetry to which the certified operator must pay attention remains his own. By engaging in a potentially **lucrative** partnership, the tour operator is in a position of strength in the eyes of the local partners, which can lead to several effects, including **self-censorship or an absence of contradictions**.



Peer-to-peer advice

"Start small" with a limited number of travellers in order to take the time to test the approach and adjust the stays.

THE PARTNER'S POINT OF VIEW: A GUIDE IN PERU

"To build the partnership, we understood the importance of intercultural understanding from the three key people: First, the international operator [the tour operator], the local operator [myself, the guide] and the communities themselves. What facilitates this construction is constant communication, horizontal training, and constant feedback."



THE MAIN LESSONS

FOR...

2- ENSURING A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP: MAKING A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

"When we work with a partner, the relationship is built little by little, both on the production of our trips, but also on the understanding that the partner will be able to have the commitment that must be put in place."

CO-CONSTRUCTING AN OFFER: TESTING EACH OTHER

The co-construction and experimentation of a tourist offer make it possible to deepen the knowledge between the two partners. It also serves to carry out **reciprocal educational work** concerning fair tourism, its principles on the part of tour operators, and in relation to the dynamics within the destination on the part of the partners.

CONTRACTUALIZATION: DEFINING THE FRAMEWORK AND TOOLS FOR MANAGING THE PARTNERSHIP

The formalization of a partnership through a **written document** (contract, agreement) is a recommended practice to define the bases of cooperation. Ideally, it should include any subject that allows the partnership relationship to be framed (shared values, the roles of each partner, etc.)

The **annual review** of this contract is required when there are changes in the operation, in accordance with the Fair Tourism Label.

PERMANENT COMMUNICATION: FORMAL AND INFORMAL

Staying in constant communication with local partners is fundamental. This can be done in several ways: (i) by strengthening the **activity link** and (ii) by a **geographical proximity link**. This illustrates the importance of being available and accessible to your partners, thus strengthening trust and collaboration.

AND CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

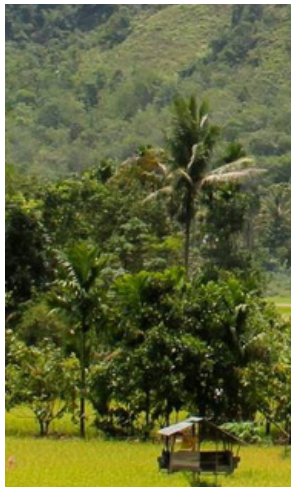
The aim is to monitor travellers' feedback through satisfaction questionnaires, either paper or online.

Giving feedback to your local partner from this satisfaction survey in a benevolent and non-judgmental setting also helps to strengthen the partnership link.



Peer-to-peer advice

Listening to the temporalities and proposals of local communities makes it possible to inscribe the journey in the existing activities of the communities. This makes it possible to avoid: (i) the creation of activities disconnected from the dynamics in place and (ii) dependence on a single activity.



THE PARTNER'S POINT OF VIEW: A LOCAL ASSOCIATION LEADER IN CAPE VERDE

« The partnership with the labelled operator was built in stages. The first contact was made by email, followed by meetings and phone calls, field visits to stop at the local potentialities and the actors on the ground. This phase also served to harmonize our proposals, those of our partner and the requirements at the Cape Verde level. So far, we have positive evaluations from our visitors and this encourages us to improve the quality of our welcome. ».



THE MAIN LESSONS

FOR...

3- SUPPORTING THE PARTNER'S SKILLS DEVELOPMENT... AND TOUR OPERATOR

"What my partners teach me is that I don't know anything [about their context]."

The **reciprocal** contribution is systematically evoked: from the partner - through its acute knowledge of the destination areas and its balances, - and from the tour operator - through its mastery of customer expectations.

LEARNING BY DOING

The organisation of a first test stay is already an opportunity to refine several points concerning the circuit itself or the tourist reception. And as the first trips progress, many improvements are made on an ongoing basis, provided that a space conducive to regular dialogue is set up.

ONE-OFF TRAINING

Several tour operators offer **specific training** courses depending on their means (reception, safety, hygiene, etc.). They are based on local requests from partners or after customer feedback that is analyzed. Local trainers are preferred.

PEER-TO-PEER SHARING

Members of the ATES have chosen to promote the **sharing of experiences** between partners from the same area or the same country, facilitating the pooling of know-how between several individuals. Host families have been brought together in India and Peru. Exchanges between different countries (between Ecuador and Mexico), which are rarer, have been very fruitful.

"STRUCTURAL" SUPPORT

Finally, mutual reinforcement revolves around the tour operator's ability to support its partners over the long term on **more systemic issues**: training young people in tourism professions, links with institutions, setting up national networks, etc.



Peer-to-peer advice

Promote inter-partner exchanges both through the creation of WhatsApp loops and face-to-face time.

THE PARTNER'S POINT OF VIEW: A RECEPTIVE AGENCY IN MEXICO:

« With the support of the tour operator, we trained several people in the community: first aid, for community guides. We trained young people from rural communities, partners from tourism businesses, young people close to these businesses. There were also three women trained as "nature" guides. We emphasize that development funds are [also] useful for human capital training ».



THE MAIN LESSONS

FOR...

4- COMMITTING TO FAIR REMUNERATION: AGREE ON FAIR PRICES

« In the villages, we have never refused a single request for a price increase, and for the guides, I know that we are a little above the market ».

THE PRICE IS OFFERED BY THE LOCAL PARTNER

The price proposal comes from the local partner. It is little or not negotiated by the tour operator. **The price is adjusted over time** and with the construction of a relationship of mutual trust between the two parties to the agreement. In addition, some tour operators carry out a brief study of the economic feasibility of tourism production in conjunction with their local partner. This study provides a reference situation in relation to local prices.

ADVANCE PAYMENT

Once the conditions of the trip have been defined between the French tour operator and its local partner, the tour operator makes a **payment in advance** to its partner, in order to carry out the planned activities in good conditions.

PRICES ARE REVISED ANNUALLY (IF NECESSARY)

This is in line with the new market conditions and with the aim of **improving the living conditions** of local partners.

PRICES HIGHER THAN THE MARKET

Local partners, in conjunction with their other partners (associations, families, local communities, etc.) charge prices **a little higher** than what is practiced on the conventional tourism market.

THE PRIMACY OF THE HUMAN RELATIONSHIP OVER THE COMMERCIAL RELATIONSHIP

Particular importance is given to links and **human relations** by the structures of the social and solidarity economy, insisting on the fact that the benefits remain limited in fair tourism.



Peer-to-peer advice

To adjust prices regularly and fairly, it is important to cross-reference partner requests with travelers' satisfaction and the nature of their rfeedbacks.

THE PARTNER POINT OF VIEW: A GUIDE AND MEMBER OF A DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION IN MOROCCO

"He [the tour operator] came in 2002 to prepare a file and explain the working method. He asked about the prices, how much it costs in general, to get an idea of the costs etc. So, he took all the information from the basic general price and added a small margin to benefit the association with the development fund."



THE MAIN LESSONS

FOR...

5- ENSURING EQUITABLE SHARING OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

« When you work in tourism, people will see their standard of living increase, with the influx of foreign currency: others may be left aside ».

UNDERSTANDING HOW COMMUNITIES WORK, AN UNATTAINABLE NECESSITY?

Introducing outsiders into a locality is by definition an imbalance of the social and collective dynamics in place. As one Mexican partner reminds us: "rural communities are conflictual entities, far from being homogeneous as Western romanticism may conceive". While tour operators are well aware of this, **they do not have many tools or time** to take these dimensions into account.

DIVERSIFYING THE PEOPLE BENEFITING

The challenge is to try as much as possible not to work exclusively with a single individual, a single host family or a single guide, at least in the long term. **Rotations** are thus organized (but not systematically given the low flow of tourists).

GOING THROUGH ASSOCIATIONS, A GUARANTEE TO BETTER DISTRIBUTE THE TOURIST BENEFITS?

In several cases, the equitable distribution of economic benefits is facilitated by the **mobilization of well-established community-based organizations**. These may appoint one or more distributors, to keep the follow-up and to ensure that it is fair between the different host families.

TOURISM, BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT: ONE-OFF COLLECTIVE BENEFITS

Moving away from the destructive logic of conventional tourism makes it possible to make the arrival of travellers in proportions sustainable **respectful of natural balances**.

Fair trade tourism can be a concrete lever for changing practices, for example in Tanzania on the protection of wildlife.



Peer-to-peer advice

Supporting non-tourism activities (most often agricultural or artisanal) is a concrete way of limiting the risks of dependence linked to the reception of visitors.

THE PARTNER'S POINT OF VIEW: A LOCAL ASSOCIATION LEADER AND GUIDE IN ECUADOR

"In order not to affect the balance of communities with tourism, we have several key principles such as active community participation: from the start, it is the host communities who make the decisions on how to integrate tourism. They define the cultural, social and economic aspects they want and the areas they wish to preserve".



THE DEVELOPMENT FUND

This fund helps finance local projects that meet the collective interest. The minimum amount depends on several parameters set by the Fair Tourism Label reference system. On average, it reaches 4.5% of the price of the stay (excluding air travel).

MULTIPLE OPERATING MODES

Some tour operators have an **application file** to fill out (without a call for projects) for the projects to be funded, which is most often very flexible.

Most of them have an **allocation committee**, whether or not linked to their Board of Directors, to check and vote on funding. In some cases, the people welcomed systematically visit the funded projects during a stay, while others prefer to separate the trip from the supported solidarity project.

A "LEVERAGE" EFFECT FOR OTHER SUPPORTERS

In several cases, the supported partners mobilize the funds from the tourist reception in their applications and advocacy in order to obtain missing **co-financing**.

The communities themselves, the local authorities and the regional agencies have increased confidence in the project if part of the budget is already acquired via the development fund.

FOR WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS?

While tour operators and their partners will usually prioritize the renovation or construction of **infrastructure** (schools, drinking water, etc.), other types of initiatives are put in place, for example the **training** of young people in tourism professions. These funds sometimes target the "upgrading" of the host families' equipment (rooms, sanitary facilities).

STARTING FROM A LOCAL REQUEST

Tour operators have different practices in identifying the projects to be financed, but all aim to meet a specific demand **from the people concerned**. Ideally, the presence of several people within a group, whether or not formalized as an association, makes it possible to ensure on the one hand the collective dimension of the supported initiative, and on the other hand an increased presence in the long term for follow-up.

This collective is an integral part of the communities or is an association that is used to working with the population, and recognized by them as **legitimate**.



Peer-to-peer advice

Ensure that the management of funded projects will be ensured at the local level, with relays and people directly involved.



GENDER EQUALITY IN FAIR TOURISM

The actions carried out by the tour operators and partners interviewed around gender equality can be grouped into 6 categories:

NON-DISCRIMINATION ACTIONS

It is a question of prioritizing people's abilities before belonging to a specific gender during recruitment, and therefore, for example, not excluding a woman because she is a woman.

SHOWING OTHER "WAYS OF DOING THINGS" THROUGH EXAMPLE

That is to say, transmitting through action that it is not because behaviors have always been seen or adopted that it is the only way to do things (for example: a woman who shows that it is possible to be a guide and a mother).

DIALOGUE AROUND GENDER INEQUALITY

By addressing the subject more head-on. This attitude works with partners with whom trust has been established for a long time, favouring direct exchanges and small groups in the field.

CULTURAL MEDIATION

These are actions that specifically allow for dialogue and understanding between people from different cultures. These are often initiatives carried out by the guides through explanations of the different social norms around gender without necessarily wanting to convince the other.



POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION

That is to say, to make the explicit choice to voluntarily prioritize women in certain activities to give them opportunities and reduce inequalities. Examples of such activities include:

- Choose a women's association or a woman leader to organize the trips or an activity (reception, food, workshops, etc.).
- Buy products directly from women (e.g. baked goods) or facilitate the sale of their products.
- Train women so they also can be guides.

DEVELOPMENT FUND AND OTHER FUNDS

The goal is to prioritize investment in specific projects aimed directly or indirectly at improving the living conditions of women and children.



Peer-to-peer advice

Meeting directly with NGOs and women's civil society organizations in each country or working on these issues can facilitate actions, including affirmative action, to reduce gender inequality.

EMPOWERING SINGLE MOTHERS THROUGH TOURISM THE PARTNER'S POINT OF VIEW: AN ASSOCIATION'S PRESIDENT AND GUIDE IN PERU

« I have a friend on Lake Titicaca. When I met her, she was frowned upon because she had had a daughter without a father. For the community, it was her fault. Then I met her and little by little, I told her, all the people I send will go to your house. But we're also going to do social work here, through you, so that people see that you're not only able to have a tourist house, but that you're also important to your community.

With our tour operator partner in France, we have carried out a project around drinking water for schools. She donated part of her land and the water is pumped from her land and by gravity, falls towards the school. And little by little, she gained the respect of her community. Then she recently became president of the island's tourism association. And his daughter, five or six years ago, was the only one to enter the University of Puno ».

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