

**Jean Marc Mignon's speech
Session on community
tourism**

IIPT
Lusaka
February 7 2005

Since several years, new forms of tourism did emerge which could represent in the future a real tool for local development.

It is what we call "tourisme solidaire" in French, or Fair tourism in English or again responsible tourism, or also eco-tourism, though these different wordings do not cover exactly the same purpose, but which, in all cases, fit in the concept of **community based tourism**.

And this is the purpose of my presentation today in 3 short parts :

1. explain what are exactly the products that have been created in several countries of western Africa,
2. what is the perception of such products in sending countries, through the example of a poll and a public opinion study led in France very recently,
3. what is undertaken to network and market these products.

&&&&&&&

1. Examples of products

A first example is in Burkina Faso and Benin where an association called Tourism and Fair Development has supported the initiative of 6 local communities to build what they call "villages d'accueil" (guest villages). Built in the heart of the communities they consist of double rooms with simple bath rooms, a bar and a small restaurant. Teams of local people organize the stays and give also a particular attention to standards of hygiene and security.

Every one of these 6 villages has been chosen for the quality of its environmental and cultural surroundings and the size of its population (from 1500 to 5000 inhabitants). The program of each stay dedicates much time to activities with local people and this activity is controlled by the local council for development.

In order not to disturb the traditional economy of the village, the number of groups is limited to a certain number of groups per year, and the size of each group does not exceed 12 people.

The sale of these stays is a direct income for the local communities and profits are re-invested in the local development.

A second example is in Cameroon where a partnership between the local association of Cadrucom, in the community of Bahour, and an other French association, CVS, has created an 8 days tourist product with conferences on art, tradition and traditional medicine.

It has been decided to rehabilitate, with the money of the stays, the guest center of the community so that they can use it again as holiday center for young people.

A third example is in Senegal, in N'Dangour Village (160 km south of Dakar), a camp unit has been built to enable tourists to stay with integrated programs.

The local Association (Les Amis de Mamadou) receives 90 % of the cost of the stay (transportation not included) :

- 50 % for local services
- 30 % for food and board
- 10 % to support micro-projects.

A fourth example, in Mali, is given by the partnership established by the local Association Echaghill, in the nomad region of Goa and Croq'Nature.

With a campground, meetings organized with the local population, it has been already many groups who staid there since 8 years.

6 % of the total price paid by the traveller (flight included) goes to development plans : a school, an health point and a food bank have been financed.

At last I would like to take the example of Ghana where 15 local communities joined their forces to offer an original series of products, every one proposing accommodation plus a particular theme.

Many other examples could have been taken but it shows how tourism may be a tool for development even in small communities and not be conceived only in major hotels units even if it has also to be done and will remain by far the biggest volume within tourism.

2. The second question is to know if travellers are ready to choose this kind of products better than to go to the resorts or to the mainstream places, or in combination with stays there.

A study is being completed these days in France, and was paid by the ministry of foreign affairs.

It gives some results which are much more encouraging than what we thought.

The survey was made by Sofres, one of the major poll institutes in France, among and among only French people having travelled **abroad** (which are 5 million per year). Nearly 29 % of them heard about fair tourism already ; (among those there are mostly people having studied, which shows undoubtedly that the higher we are educated, the more we feel strongly on this).

For many people fair tourism belongs to the same sector as fair or equitable trade.

It is in the ages 35 to 64 that the concept is mostly known, which is explained by the fact that these are the ages of people travelling more abroad.

One interesting point concerns Africa ; it is indeed among these who travelled to Africa that there is the highest percentage indicating they know fair tourism (43 %). Here too, it can be explained by the fact that this concept of fair tourism mostly started in Africa.

(Always keeping on the profile, more than 70 % of those declaring to know fair tourism are involved in humanitarian associations.)

The other main question was to know if these people would decide to buy such a stay. 59 % say interest and 7 very interested ; it is in the Paris area that there is more interest.

An other point I am pleased to tell : 61 % of people interested in fair tourism would chose to go to Africa, ahead of all other continents.

What does fair tourism stand for these people :

- It's a tourism which helps more local populations,
- It gives more contacts with the local populations,
- It respects better traditions, people, and the nature (the perception of eco-tourism is very similar),
- To travel in small groups,
- To feel useful to the visited country,
- To know exactly where the money goes.

So, it seems there is a potential for this in France and from what we know, in the other countries of western Europe, for sure in Italy where it started earlier.

3. The last question, which is not the easiest, thus is :

- We have products
- We have potential clients

But how to market this ?

It is what several national associations are trying to do : Italy and France are a little bit ahead, but very good initiatives exist also in UK, Germany, Spain, Scandinavia...

BITS is, on its side, trying to give an international frame to all this and we are currently studying with the European Commission the possible way to be more active and efficient. A BITS Afrique section...and of a commission of fair tourism have been established in 2004.

Italian have created a dedicated travel agency, AITR.

In France, we have opened at Unat a dedicated web site www.tourismsolidaire.com
And we publish, within 2 weeks, a brochure presenting destinations in 35 countries, including 11 African countries, indicating the use of money for each one.

In Germany, a fair is organized in Hanover giving a large place to fair tourism.
(The Paris fair tourism, in the coming month of march, has asked me to deliver a conference on it).

Together with the national association I already quoted (AITR in Italy, UNAT in France) and BITS, we set up a database where by a local association in a southern country may be identified by a northern travel association.

Because, at the end of the day, the real issue is that these new forms of local tourism based on communities initiatives do host indeed tourists ! If it was remaining too confidential, it would be a missed opportunity.

However, we should not underestimate also the difficulty of the challenge, as we have to find good air tickets conditions, solve the language problem through training, be able to organize an active distribution, be also able to evaluate these programs and to correct it when needed. And do not forget that we shall always speak – in these programs – of small groups and not huge volumes, which would be totally contradictory with the objectives.

But the challenge is there ; fair / community tourism should not be neglected as it fits very well within the new growing approach of globalisation by public opinions.

I would add also a parenthesis after the speech of Mr Chande this morning. Domestic travel has also to be developed as it is a question of equity, but also for economical reasons : in most parts of the world it is more important than international tourism and has given a greater legitimacy to it. The best proof that there is no contradiction between international tourism and domestic tourism is that 6 of the 10 major destination worldwide France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Mexico and Hungary are also the most active countries to promote domestic and social tourism.

And as I heard it said in Africa :

Tourism is like fire ; it may make your soup cooked...but it may also burn your house.

Let's work together to have the better soup.