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## PUBLIC SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESS REPORT ASEV LAOS – AUGUST 2019 – AUGUST 2020 –

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We evolve today in a world more and more aware that actions have consequences and it is everybody's responsibility to decide on how we can improve for a more sustainable, ethical and social world we live in. ASEV Laos, as a tourist operator has taken a step back and tried to see how we could participate in a more sustainable world. But the process is wide, from protecting the beautiful countries and cultures that we promote to improving the social and human rights in the destination visited. We needed a guideline, so we engage ourselves in the **Travelife certification**.

This adventure began last August 2019, and after one year, it is time to assess our achievement, progress and our objectives for the years to come.

### 1 INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

#### ► OUR COMMITMENTS TO OUR PEOPLE

1.1

##### ASEV Laos' Human Rights and Labor Practices Policy

Our first step was to assess the human rights and labor situation at ASEV Laos: we are a small structure with a lot of verbal communication. We had to assess what was formalized (employment contract) and what was already applied but not written.

##### ACHIEVEMENT:

- Redaction of our Human rights statement and a full handbook policy (rights and obligations) in English and Lao.
- Meeting with the team for explanation of all the rights and obligations formalized.
- Signature of the "ASEV Human rights and handbook policy"

##### Training, wellbeing, quality and sustainability

We believe that knowledge is the key to a pleased team, contented guests and helps everybody to become more involved in our sustainability process.

In order to empower our employee, we have provided multiple training to our team.

##### ACHIEVEMENT:

- The health and safety policy were written with the entire office. Fire-safety training and fire aide trainings have been conducted.
- We ensure through regular trainings that employees are comfortable with their position and evolve at the same rhythm as the company.
- Job description have been updated with sustainability tasks and responsibilities.

- 95% of the team have successfully passed the "**basic sustainability training**" and received a diploma delivered by Travelife.
- 100% of our permanent guides have successfully passed the "**leading the way – guide training**" and received a diploma delivered by Travelife
- Child Protection training: All the key staff: tour guide, operation team, general manager have successfully passed the "**Child protection training**" and received a diploma delivered by Travelife

**> Improvement needed; action planned:**

- To improve the formal communication about sustainability issues in office and agency
- **Summer 2021:** prepare a trainee position – announcement, supervision.
- **Summer 2021:** Be part of the ChildSafe Movement and become a "Child Safe supporter"
- **Summer 2021:** To extend the "**leading the way – guide training**" and "**Child protection training**" to freelance tour leaders.



**► OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT**

**1.2**

**ACHIEVEMENT:**

**Redaction and implementation of our office environmental policy:**

○ Energy and water reduction plan

- Electricity and water consumption are recorded and monitored to follow-up our improvement.
- Create note/reminder for light, air-conditioning and equipment switch off.
- Energy saving mode: purchase equipment with energy saving mode or sustainable label, training for computer saving mode during break.
- Collect rain water to water the garden and clean the outside area.
- Good maintenance schedule for equipment
- Cleaning product using biotechnology: dry cleaning: reduce water and reduce grey water.

○ Waste reduction and sustainable purchase policy

- Office is a 100% free plastic zone: no single use plastic.
- Purchase policy: to buy with a mind for packaging, locally made product, durable product.
- Refillable water bottles have been given to the whole team.
- Reducing paper consumption and ink by printing only when necessary: email, QR Code, printing in A5 instead of A4, re-use paper.
- Good maintenance schedule for equipment
- Our A4 paper come from certified sustainable company.
- Marketing material: **40% reduction** of our brochure printing between 2019 and 2021 and switch to a sustainable printing company

○ Mobility policy:

- We monitor our carbon footprint for.
  - Staff transportation to/from office
  - Business travel in and out of the country
- Average transportation distance for employees to/from office is 4 km round trip. Bicycles are at disposal for employees.

**Presentation of these policies to the team, training, environment issues include in monthly meeting.**

**> Improvement needed; action planned:**

- **2021:** Replacement of all lightening equipment to 100% LED: it was supposed to be done in 2020, but with the COVID situation, the budget has been frozen until borders open again. To do in 2021
- **2021:** Carbon Offset for business travel: the budget has been validated for our first carbon offset in 2021. The offset company have been selected:  
<https://www.goldstandard.org/>

**2**

**OUR SUPPLY CHAIN**

As a travel agency we work with various tour operators: hotels, restaurants, activity providers. Our choice of partners has an impact on our sustainability level and we continuously build a sustainable network and create privileged partnerships.

**ACHIEVEMENT:**

- ♦ Assessment and evaluation of the sustainability level of our suppliers.
- ♦ Highlight to our sales team and travel agent partners our most “engaged” suppliers.
- ♦ Inform our partners about our sustainability engagement and what this will mean for them.
- ♦ Encourage our partners to engage in more sustainable practices:
  - We have provided them with a sustainable guideline for self-assessment.
  - We have Included sustainability clauses through a contract addendum that they have to sign. We clearly indicate that the compliance to these criteria has a direct impact in our partnering choice process. They need to be:
    - Actively engaged in reducing their environmental impact: energy and water reduction and waste management.
    - Support the local community, be sensitive to environment projects and wildlife protection.
- ♦ Creation of a “sustainability logo” to highlight our “engaged” partner in our program and when the logo is not possible, a sentence is added “social and environment friendly partner”
- ♦ Refuse to work with suppliers who are not complying with our fundamental sustainable requirements:
  - **For hotels and restaurants:**
    - Respect human rights
    - Child protection
    - Customer privacy
    - Promotion of souvenirs and/or food that contain threatened flora and fauna species listed in the CITES treaty ([www.cites.org](http://www.cites.org)).
  - **For activities:** same regulations as for hotels and restaurants, with an extra clause about captive animals and wildlife interaction
- ♦ To have in every program proposed and validated at least 1 restaurant, 1 hotel and 1 activity “sustainable”
- ♦ Amendment to our transportation service contract to include security and sustainability good practices.

**> Improvement needed; action planned:**

- To create a Sensible activity guideline. This guideline would be sent to our activity provider to help them improve their sustainability level.
- To create an inspection report for our operation team that includes sustainability criteria.
- **2022:** Hotel and restaurant: To ask our partner to do a sustainability self-assessment and send us the result.

- **2019:** we have been assessing shared transportation to airport for FIT, from October 19 to March 20. The first result has not been satisfying for several reasons:
  - o Very few guests have flight scheduled in the same time-frame.
  - o For these few guests, when emails were sent to inform them of a potential shared transportation, they were asking for reduction

*Conclusion: if we wanted to implement these shared airport transportations, communication should be done prior to booking, in the program. But concern have been raised by the sales team that guests were going to complain. Would it be worth it if in reality, very few scheduled flights would permit a shared transportation?*

- To increase our "sustainable" supplier portfolio and add more and more sustainable partner in our program.

### 3

## WORKING FURTHER TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

### \*\*\* ACHIEVEMENT \*\*\*

#### 3-1. Local community

- o Supporting local projects:

ASEV Laos is involved in several local projects:

- Sponsored runners for "Run for children - Luang Prabang half marathon" in October 2018 and 2019. All revenue went to the Lao Friends Children Hospital.
- In 2019, ASEV Laos financed the construction of a traditional eco bungalow for the Mekong Eden Farm, an organic farm located 30 minutes by boat outside of Luang Prabang. 50% of the construction is a donation, 50% is an "advance on future booking."
- Participate in community projects: Tree planting days, blood donation campaigns, donation to villages for traditional festival days, etc.

- o Support local sustainable programs by raising awareness to our customers and propose to them a variety of ways to support local initiatives:

2019-2020: implementation of donations through our guests for 2 projects:



*The Mekong Elephant Park in Pakbeng*



*The Discovery Center in Luang Prabang*

When customers choose to participate in these activities, the donation is automatically added to the invoice. Refund to project is done every 4 months.

#### > **Improvement needed; action planned:**

- **In 2021**, the Discovery Center donations will be replaced by Mekong Eden Farm project. The Mekong Eden Farm project will be featured more in our program proposal through day excursion and/or 2 days/1-night package.
- We will work on improving communication by giving more details about the project financed by donations.

#### 3-2. Destination

- o Assessment of all tours proposed and removal of sensitive destinations/activities: elephant riding, school visits....
- o Creation of 100% sustainable packaged tours.

#### > **Improvement needed; action planned:**

- To create more sustainable packages.
- To be involved in more biodiversity conservation project.

Our customers have always been our priority in terms of privacy, transparency, services and satisfaction. Our main changes this last year have been to communicating about our sustainable engagement, bringing awareness about sustainability issues in their destination and giving our customers sustainable tools to make informed decisions.

### \*\*\* ACHIEVEMENT \*\*\*

- ▶ **Prior to booking:** We work to provide travelers with more and more sustainable options in terms of transport, activities, accommodation and restaurants. We highlight these sustainable options with a “sustainable logo” in our programs and website.
- ▶ **We created our “Laos sustainable practice guide”** that give guest knowledge before and during their stay about:
  - Providing them with relevant information about Laos (culture, history, religions) for a broader appreciation of the country.
  - Giving them necessary health and safety information for a hassle-free trip (emergency contact, health tips...)
  - Informing our guests about the key sustainability issues of the destination
    - General Information: do’s and don’ts tips, supporting the local economy...
    - Commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children and adolescents.
- ▶ **All FIT guest** arriving in Laos received a travel bag with a water bottle with QR code giving access to our sustainability policy, the “Laos sustainable practice guide”
- ▶ **Carbon Offset:**
  - Sales have been trained to calculate the carbon impact for each program sent to guest before booking.
  - Program mentions now the carbon impact for:
    - National flight
    - Regional flight for multi-destination tours
  - With the total carbon impact for their national and regional flight operated by ASEV Laos, we give suggestions for carbon offset project in south-east Asia

#### > **Improvement needed; action planned:**

- **2022 target:**
  - Carbon offset of air transport is integrated as voluntary option in the booking form with the payment channeled through the travel company.
  - To improve ASEV Laos team knowledge and involvement in all carbon offset projects that we support.
  - In the feedback form given to guests at the end of their stay in Laos, add more sustainability questions.
  - To develop the QR Code access for guests (the QR code gives access to the sustainability policy and the “Laos sustainable practice guide”); ideas to develop: stickers in the cars, on the water refill point...

In this road toward sustainability, we, as a travel agent working with travel agent partners, guests, and suppliers, are in a key position to raise awareness about sustainability. One way to do this is through communication: to introduce the notion of sustainability, share information and tools and communicate about our own actions and engagement.

**ACHIEVEMENT:**

- In general: sustainability policy at disposal in our public website and B2B website, newsletters, Facebook publication.
- To our team: meetings and training, sustainability tasks and responsibilities integrated to job description, internal newsletter.
- To our suppliers: through newsletters, sustainability survey, self-assessment tools, addendum to contract.
- To our guests: "Laos sustainable practice guide" given prior and at arrival, sustainable logo in programs, carbon impact calculated for all flights operated by us, travel bag given at arrival for FIT.

**> Improvement needed; action planned:**

- Publication of this report on our website.
- "Sustainable signature" in all email communication (link with our sustainability policy + mention of "Travelife partner" status.)
- 2021-2022: Update ASEV Laos sustainability policy