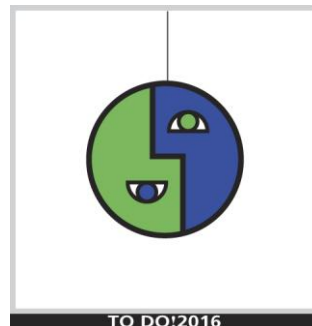


## **TO DO! 2016**

### **Contest Socially Responsible Tourism**



### **Award Winner**

## **KABANI – THE OTHER DIRECTION**

**Represented by:**

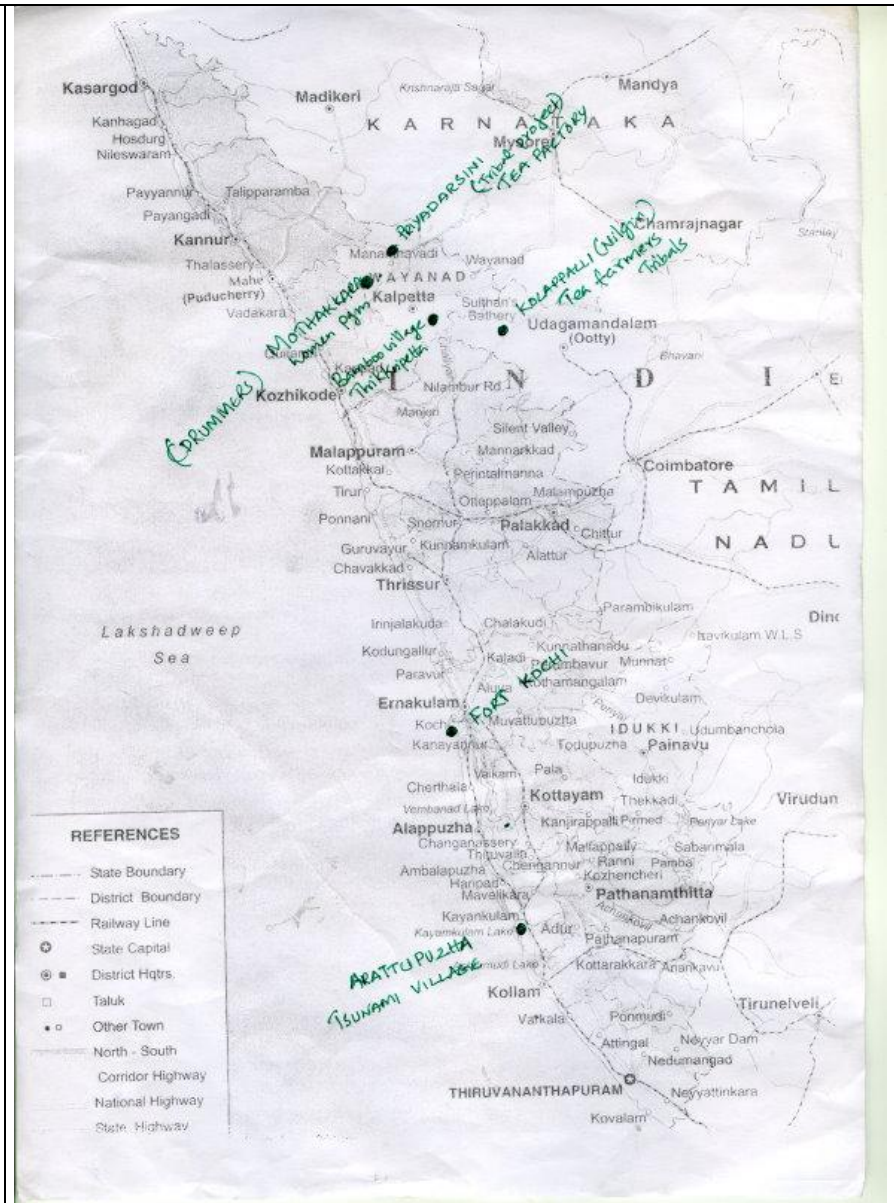
**Sumesh Mangalasseri,  
Director of the NGO Kabani – The Other Direction  
Managing Director and Chairman of Kabani - Community Tourism and  
Services "  
Kozhikode, Kerala  
India**

**Award Rationale**

**By**

**Dr. Christian Adler**

# MAPS



## 1. INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e. V.) the author travelled to Kerala in late November 2015 in order to check the application of Kabani Community Tourism the NGO "**Kabani – The Other Direction**" and the "**Kabani Community Tourism and Services**" on location. During the 12 days of his visit, he stayed in the village of Thrikkaipetta in Wayanad District and in places in Southern Kerala and took part in the activities offered by local people. The information given in the application documents submitted was verified in detail.

On the basis of his insights and findings and in recognition of their objectives, working principles and activities, the appraiser recommends awarding the applicants with the TO DO! at ITB 2016.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### Kerala – a State in the South West of India

The state of Kerala lies in the South West of India, on the Arabian Sea, bordering Karnataka in the North and Tamil Nadu in the East. The fertile coastal region slowly rises in the East to a hilly area and then to the Western Ghats, a mountain range in South India with average elevations of 1,000 metres and maximum altitudes of 2,695 metres.

Various water ways, lakes and lagoons – the so called "backwaters" – stretch across the central coastal region of Kerala, between the cities of Kochi and Kollam.

Due to its proximity to the equator, Kerala has a tropical climate which is strongly influenced by the monsoon. Rich rainfall leads to high humidity throughout the year. Day time temperatures may reach up to 35 degrees Celsius and even more.

Kerala has a population of about 33.4 million and a high population density of 859 inhabitants per square kilometre. In comparison: The Indian average is only 416 inhabitants per square kilometre, in Germany it is 232 inhabitants per square kilometre. Seat of the state government is the capital Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum) in the South. Malayalam is the state's vernacular, English is also an official language.

The district of Wayanad has a population of 817,420 with a population density of 384 inhabitants per square kilometre. Seat of the district administration is Kalpetta, a town with 32,000 inhabitants. (Source: <http://www.laenderdaten.de>, [wikitravel.org/en/Kerala](http://wikitravel.org/en/Kerala))

In terms of religion, Kerala is a conglomerate of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. These religions have been present for centuries and mostly coexist peacefully.

Agriculture and fishing are the most important economic sectors. About 86 percent of the land in Kerala is used for agricultural purposes. The main agricultural products are rice, coconut (45 percent), rubber (92 percent), betel nut (24 percent), cashew nut, tea and coffee (63 percent) and a variety of spices – above all pepper (97 percent), based on whole India's harvest. A large part of these products is exported or processed industrially. The fisheries sector is also strongly export-oriented.

Kerala's per capita income (2011/12: 83,725 INR = about 1,200 €) is one third above the Indian average. Dramatic cases of poverty as in other parts of India (slums) can hardly be found in Kerala, since consistent agricultural reform and job creation schemes have been implemented during the past decades. Furthermore, Kerala sends a lot of migrant workers to the Middle East. The remittances by workers from abroad and the money earned by returnees contribute significantly to a relatively high living standard.

As compared to other states of India, the educational and health systems are well developed. Between 2002 and 2006, average life expectancy in Kerala was 74.0 years – significantly higher than the Indian average of 63.5 years. (Source: [wikitravel.org](http://wikitravel.org))

Politically, Kerala has 14 districts with rather independent administrations. Accordingly, the administrators ("collectors") enjoy significant powers. Many decisions may be taken directly at local level. Accordingly, the administrators ("collectors") enjoy significant powers.

In the villages there are various groups, so-called "commissions", who work in the interest of different groups of the population, e.g. in agriculture or fisheries, to market agricultural products, in the field of education, etc. This may also apply to tourism as an important economic sector.

### Tourism in Kerala

Kerala has become quite an important destination for both international and domestic tourists and has seen considerable annual growth rates. In 2014, 11.7 million Indians and 923,000 foreign guests visited the state, an increase of 7.7 percent over the previous year.

Kerala's foreign exchange earnings in 2014 amounted to 914.13 million euros. The total turnover generated from tourism was 3.5 billion euros, an increase of 12.1 percent over the previous year (Source: [www.keralatourism.org](http://www.keralatourism.org))

Such growth rates are also due to the infrastructure that has been created over the past few years. However, in several respects this development also had very negative impacts on the population and the environment. The Indian government swiftly declared thousands of hectares all over India as "Special Tourism Zones" in order to attract investors. Coastal areas were bought up by hotel chains and real estate speculators and local people were cut off from their free access to the sea. This not only violated the traditional rights of the local population, but also the "Coastal Regulation Zone" (CRZ) – legal provisions for environmental protection. Fishermen lost their livelihoods and were forcefully displaced. Adivasis, indigenous population groups, suffered a similar fate when their customary land was declared national parks. If at all, local people are employed in the new resorts only at rather poor conditions, as national legislation allows hotel owners and operators to bring their own staff from the urban centres or even from abroad.

It is the scenic beauty that makes Kerala such an attractive tourist destination. Apart from the coast, the lagoons, lakes and canals of the backwaters are highly frequented travel destinations. The Periyar National Park in the Western Ghats is one of the most popular tourist destinations in India. The hilly areas of Wayanad with their forests, scattered villages, paddy fields and tea plantations also attract visitors. In addition,

Wayanad has a comfortable, cool climate due to its average altitude of 800 to 1,200 metres.

Wayanad District counted a total of 564,274 domestic tourist arrivals and 11,795 foreign guests in 2014 (Source: [www.keralatourism.org](http://www.keralatourism.org)).

### **3. THE NGO "KABANI – THE OTHER DIRECTION" AND THE COMPANY "KABANI COMMUNITY TOURISM & SERVICES LTD."**

#### History

"Kabani – The Other Direction" is a non-governmental organisation and at the same time a social enterprise based in Kozhikode (Calicut). The NGO draws attention to the negative impacts of tourism on the local population and on natural resources. Through training programmes Kabani works with the local population, engaging them in socially responsible tourism development in order to provide sustainable tourism models including tourism as one component as opposed to mass tourism with its negative impacts.

The NGO's principle is "oppose and propose": On the one hand, Kabani engages in campaigns and lobbying against current models of mainstream tourism. On the other hand, Kabani also promotes a new culture of fair travel, encourages the rural population to become self-determined entrepreneurs and offers legal advice. The prime objectives are sustainable socio-economic development of local communities and conservation of natural resources that provide the basis of community livelihood.

The NGO was founded eleven years ago and named after the Kabani river which is one among very few rivers in Kerala that does not flow from East to West, but in the "other direction". Some of Kabani's co-founders already had a lot of previous experience in tourism and sustainable development. In the aftermath of the Tsunami that devastated many parts of the South Indian coastline in December 2004, Kabani worked with affected communities to empower them to defend their rights and livelihoods.

In 2005 the NGO "Kabani – The Other Direction" established itself in Wayanad District and started the first home stay project with farmers in Thrikkaipetta. Thrikkaipetta has several groups as local decision makers. Representatives of these groups have formed a village committee which is in charge of monitoring tourism and of deciding on the utilisation of the village development fund. It encompasses 25 persons including representatives of the Panchayat (elected local self-government), representatives of the residential association, of the group of home stay providers, of the "tribal committee" representing the Adivasis living in the area, a women's group, a group representing small entrepreneurs, etc

Tourism programmes also need to be marketed, but the non-commercial NGO does not see its tasks in functioning as a tour operator. Therefore, the company Kabani Community Tourism & Services Ltd. was set up in 2013 as a commercial wing. Co-founder of the NGO and the company is its managing director and chairman Sumesh Mangalasseri.

The board includes another four members:

Subini S. Nair, Director Operations

Simon Joseph, Director

Jaya Prakash, Director

Jithendran M.K. (Business Relations, Ayurveda)

In Kozhikode, "Kabani Community Tourism & Services" employs four salaried staff. As a tour operator and incoming agent, the company develops tour programmes of one to three weeks' duration, offers them to domestic and foreign tour operators and cooperates with local tourism coordinators. Kabani also caters to individual tourists.

Apart from its permanent staff, the company also works with Indian and foreign volunteers. Between April and December 2015, 14 interns were in charge of different tasks. For example, they supported the costing and accounting, developed a business plan, did market research, developed the website [www.kabanitours.com](http://www.kabanitours.com), updated Kabani's social media presence and helped with the language training of guides.

### Home Stay in Thrikkaipetta

The homestay programme in the village of Thrikkaipetta in Wayanad District is already established and one of the major aspects is now to monitor the project. New innovations and problem solving, if they occur are further tasks. Kabani's community tourism programme is now concentrating on the development of a new home stay project in the village of Mothakkara and a "tribal project" in the tea plantation area Priyardarsini. If and when licences are granted by the authorities, more home stay programmes like Kolapalli village, Nilgiri District, Tamil Nadu - just behind the border will be added to portfolio.

For guests who arrive at the international airport in Kozhikode, Wayanad can be reached after about 60 kilometres. It takes a drive of about three hours, part of which leads up a serpentine ghats road. The other option for international guests is to take a flight to Bangalore and then on via Mysore to Wayanad.

Upon arrival at Thrikkaipetta, the author was surprised not to find a village centre. The houses of the rural population are spread over a large area. He was also surprised to find the families living in rather big, relatively new and modern houses. There is hardly any house with less than 200 square metres. Some houses almost appear like villas. It is also striking that many house owners have their own cars, in addition to motor bikes or scooters.

The obvious prosperity may be explained by the fact that by cultivating pepper the villagers generated quite a good income for Indian standards, and that they contributed their own labour when constructing their houses. But the impression of prosperity is deceiving.

Economically, the district Wayanad is currently in a difficult situation. Pepper plants, one of the main sources of income, have in the past few years been affected by a disease and died. Due to the decline in world market prices, tea does not earn an income and does not even cover the costs of production.

Loans taken by the farmers were often used for other than the intended purposes. They were not used for income generating investments, but spent on expensive weddings, for instance. Once tea and pepper no longer earned an income, farmers got into difficulties that even threatened their livelihoods. Many were not able to face the pressure by the banks who demanded the due repayment of loans. About 200 farmers saw no other way out and committed suicide.

This tragedy alarmed not only the Indian public, but also the Kerala government. In order to prevent further acts of desperation, farmers were offered a restructuring of debts, with liabilities of up to 50,000 rupees being waived entirely.

For the farmers involved in Kabani's programmes, their participation offers an important additional income that helps them continue agricultural activities in times of crisis.

All houses participating in the home stay programme offer a very welcoming and cosy atmosphere. The guests are put up in spacious, comfortably furnished rooms with attached bathrooms. The tiled floor in light colours is kept very clean.

On the ground floor, the guests first reach the dining room with a big table for a large family. As the meals are traditionally served on banana leaves and eaten using (the right) hand, there is a washing basin in the dining room, so that people may wash their hands before and after the food. The kitchen and the hosts' bedrooms are also on the ground floor.

As the grown-up children of the host families have already moved out of their parents' home, their rooms on the first floor can be used as guest accommodation.

Every family cultivate organic fruits and vegetables in their garden and the house is surrounded by numerous flower pots. Through the windows, the guests will see a beautiful cultivated and garden landscape with coconut trees, pepper and banana plants, taro plants with their large leaves, coffee trees, etc. Next to the house there is a small shed for two to three cows. In addition, every farmer keeps a few goats and chicken in their separate sheds.

The daily work is shared by the couple. At 5:30 a.m. the housewife goes to the shed to milk the cows. Then the farmer takes the livestock to their grazing grounds. In the morning and afternoon, the family works in the fields as required, depending on the season. Before sunset, the animals are fetched from their grazing grounds and are taken care of in the shed. The family and guests come together for the meals. Every day, different, mainly vegetarian curries are served. Along with the food, sweetened tea with milk and water is served, less often coffee or fruit juice. The preparation of meals is a task left to the housewife alone. The hosts converse with their guests during meals and go to bed early.

Alcohol consumption is frowned upon and the guests are not allowed to consume alcohol.

### The Touristic Offer

New guests are heartily welcomed by their host families in Thrikkaipetta and offered a cool milk shake or tea. They are shown their rooms and left to decide whether they would like to take some rest or would like to go for a walk around the village.

The hosts time and again ask whether the guests had any wishes that they would be ready to fulfil immediately. Guests who have difficulties with the spicy South Indian food may without hesitation ask for less spicy food.

On the following day, the guests may want to take a longer walk to visit the various small crafts units in Thrikkaipetta. Visitors may watch a whittler or artist do their work and may also buy some of the objects they produce. The women of the village have formed groups. One group produces bags, another one fries rice flour cannoli (Kuzhalappam) which are delivered to restaurants, a third group produces a spice mix and prepares pickles.

What is particularly interesting is to get to know "Uravu". The NGO implements integrated, end-to-end programs in the bamboo sector, which include providing skill

training in bamboo processing, establishing micro enterprises, marketing of bamboo handicraft, cultivation of bamboo and promotion of eco-tourism. Uravu strives for empowering marginalized social groups, especially the traditional artisans, women and the Indigenous People.

Thrikkaipetta calls itself "Bamboo Village", as bamboo may be the most important raw material processed in the village, creating the largest number of the jobs.

The 200 involved people produce a broad range of products, e.g. sun-blinds, umbrellas, furniture, table sets, etc. – up to ball pens.

Finally, Thrikkaipetta also offers good opportunities for hikes, for example with a Brahmin, a member of the highest Indian caste who lives here as an ordinary farmer. Furthermore, he is an excellent animal photographer and ready to go bird watching with the guests.

The guests never walk around alone, but are always accompanied by one of the four local guides, who speak good English and have a lot to tell about the medicinal plants of the region. Guests who are interested in Ayurveda, the traditional Indian art of healing, may find their botanical knowledge significantly enhanced.

Those who prefer sports activities may climb the nearby mountain, which would be a two to three hours walk. From there, one may enjoy a fantastic panorama of lovely scenery. It is therefore worth walking not just across the plantations and along the small paths in the paddy fields. In this environment, every visitor can enjoy recreation according to their own preferences.

What is particularly worth emphasising is a special tour programme that Kabani Community Tourism and Services has developed for Indian children. In this programme, children from urban centres learn about the rural life of the farmers and their animals. This tour programme already took place twice and has been a success.

#### **4. EVALUATION**

**Comparing Kabani's community tourism activities as example in Thrikkaipetta with the TO DO! criteria for socially responsible tourism leads to the following assessment**

##### **Contest Criterion**

#### **4.1. Taking into account the different interests and needs of the local people through participation**

Community Based Tourism (CBT) is understood as a form of travel in which rural communities are not only the primary beneficiaries of tourism development in financial terms, but also key decision makers in control of such a development – in line with their needs and interests and involving large parts of the population: as direct service providers such as home stay providers, guides and taxi drivers. But small industries and craftsmen, traders and farmers are also involved, and farmers who cultivate organic products.

Without doubt, the NGO "Kabani – The Other Direction" has managed to establish such eco-social networks in Thrikkaipetta – also because of the very difficult economic situation in Wayanad and the people's common need for an additional



source of income, which has been found in tourism. The process was facilitated by the fact that the village already had structures in place which allow for autonomous democratic decision making processes at the local level.

#### **4.2. Enhancing the awareness of the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development for their economic, social and cultural lives**

The way the NGO proceeds when developing a relationship with a community was described to the author as follows: First, villages that are to be considered are being evaluated with regard to their suitability for a partnership with the NGO Kabani - The Other Direction. Using a comprehensive questionnaire, the various aspects that characterise a community are assessed and given points. If a minimum number of points as stipulated by the NGO has been reached, all the villagers interested are invited for a meeting.

During this meeting, the NGO and its objectives and intentions are introduced. The risks associated with tourism are presented in detail, along with the opportunities for a village that could emerge from a home stay programme, for example, and from sustainable tourism development. This presentation is followed by a discussion.

If the villages would like to proceed, the next step is a training programme conducted and financed by the NGO, in which anyone who is interested may participate. This training programme is comprehensive, modular and caters to different target groups. It has been designed to prepare the respective service providers, home stay providers, drivers, guides, etc. for the tasks they are to take up later and to enable the community to plan and manage their tourism programme themselves.

During these training programmes, Kabani again highlights possible negative impacts on the daily lives that the people are used to and offers help as to how to address possible problems. Village committees monitor the development of the project.

#### **4.3. Participation of broad local population strata in the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism**

Enabling as many villagers as possible to participate in the benefits and economic advantages of tourism is an important objective of social responsibility in this sector. In Thrikkaipetta, six families have agreed to host guests. A rotational principle ensures that all the families take turns in hosting tourists.

These families are not the only ones to benefit from the home stay programmes. The eight local taxi drivers are also involved. Furthermore, there are four guides in the village who are used time and again. There is also a rotational principle for these groups.

During the walks, the guests often reach houses that may not be part of the home stay programme, but where the guests are offered meals during a break. The tourists also buy items from local enterprises and thus also provide an additional income for small enterprises.

In Thrikkaipetta, a total of 86 persons (about 1/3 of the population) are directly or indirectly involved in tourism. In addition, part of the travel costs that the visitor pays to the tour operator goes directly to the village development fund which uses the money to finance projects of general value to the community (see point 4).

Guidelines have been developed to prevent negative social and cultural impacts (see point 5).

#### **4.4. Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism or of income opportunities for the local people**

At first, during the development phase of a home stay programme, the NGO works as a facilitator sharing know-how. Once the programme had been established in Thrikkaipetta, "Kabani Community Tourism and Services" began to market the programme as an 'incoming agent'.

The price of a home stay including all meals is currently about 40 € for two persons per night. 11 € are charged for a local guide.

This income is distributed as follows:

- 60 % go to the community service and home stay providers
- 10 % go to a village development fund
- 5 % go to the NGO to finance training programmes, campaigns, research and policy level interventions
- 25 % go to Kabani Community Tourism and Services to facilitate and market new community projects, develop programmes and provide additional networking and training

#### **4.5. Strengthening local culture and cultural identity of local people in the tourism destinations and avoiding/minimising any social and cultural damage caused by tourism in tourist destinations**

This programme invests in people. No extra guest rooms or infrastructure are necessary for the tourism programme. So the home stay provider will not need any further money from the bank. Furthermore, a home stay programme does not create any dependency on tourism, as it does not negatively affect the farmers' daily lives. On the contrary: The tourists often participate in the daily work, might often help with the harvest and take care of the livestock.

To prevent too many visits which might be a burden on the families, the maximum carrying capacity has been set at twelve guest nights per month per family. Another reason for this limitation of visitor numbers is also to ensure the families' privacy, time for social commitments, and leisure.

The guests are expected to observe certain "dos and don'ts". Here are a few points from a comprehensive list:

##### **Do's**

- Do dress modestly, and most importantly adequately if you are female.
- Do greet people with a big smile.
- Do bring some small gift from your home country or region. It may be as small as a postcard.
- Do avoid waste.

##### **Don'ts**

- Don't offer to shake the hand of a person of the opposite sex unless they offer their hand first
- Don't walk over paper, newspaper or books, as Indian people treat paper as a metaphor for the Goddess of learning.

Don't wear short dresses, no shorts.

Don't touch anyone or give anything with your left hand, as the left hand is only used for hygienic purposes.

Don't express your affection for your partner in public.

Don't drink alcohol or smoke in public.

Don't give gifts to children.

Taking photos is allowed if you ask for permission. People are usually ready to pose for a photo, as it is a way of recognition.

What is also worth mentioning is a guidance booklet in German language, "fair unterwegs in Kerala", edited by Christina Kamp and Sumesh Mangalasseri, which has been published by the NGO Kabani – The Other Direction.

When tourists book a tour, Kabani Community Tourism and Services will check if the tourists' expectations are in line with this culture of travel. If the guests give the impression that they might only be looking for hotel accommodation, or that they might not be able to adapt, they are advised to refrain from a visit or their booking is not accepted.

Tourism as it currently takes place in Thrikkaipetta does not negatively affect the farmers' culture. All the programmes are focussed on activities related mainly to people's daily lives and the environment.

Intercultural exchange with the guests also enriches the hosts, as one house wife says: "Running a home stay has helped us to get exposure to a lot of different cultures. Now my family and I are much more broad-minded and are able to better understand people from elsewhere."

#### **4.6. Environmental compatibility**

Refuse is managed in Thrikkaipetta in three different ways. Sewage from the toilets goes to a modern three chamber septic tank. Organic discards are composted and inorganic material, glass, plastic, etc. is collected and bought up and taken away by traders from the lowlands.

The cleanliness in the houses and their surroundings has already been pointed out.

Water is a valuable resource in India. The guests are advised to save water. Similarly, they are asked to try and save electricity.

#### **4.7. Are there any examples which document that women as well as men participate in the planning/implementation phase of the project/measure? Considering gender relations, have there been any improvements through your project/measure?**

Social life in Kerala is mainly determined by men. Etiquette, however, demands to give preference to women in many areas of public life, e.g. in queues or on waiting lists, separate bookings in public transport, etc. It therefore does not come as a surprise that there are many women in committees of local self-government and play a role in planning and implementation processes. Local self-governments even have a binding women's quota.

As described in three examples given above, women are also entrepreneurs of their own. In Arattupuzha, seven women set up a bamboo cottage on their own, without the help of men, and now market it themselves as holiday accommodation.

Kabani Community Tourism and Services employs more women than men. It is particularly interesting to note how the tour operator transfers the money to the villages. The money owed to the families for the home stays is not transferred to the men's accounts, but directly to the wife's accounts. Some of the women first had to open their own bank accounts for this purpose. At the beginning, some of the men in Thrikkaipetta were annoyed and protested, but in the meantime they have accepted these modalities of payment.

Within the families, the division of labour is derived from traditional gender roles, the agricultural work and animal husbandry are done together.

The women mainly look after the house and prepare the food. They dress in saris, the strangers may talk with them and they are also actively involved in the conversations.

#### **4.8. Measures to ensure economic and institutional sustainability of the project**

Since the beginning of the project, visitor numbers in Thrikkaipetta have increased year by year.

An overview:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Guests staying over night</b>
2011	179
2012	198
2013	185
2014	245
2015	340

Kabani Community Tourism and Services has a very informative and well-designed website (<http://www.kabanitour.com>)

Additional marketing material, maps, flyers etc. are to be produced by March 2016 for ITB.

Kabani already has connections with different tour operators in England, France, and Italy. The NGO works in partnerships and in cooperation with organisations such as Tourism Watch – Bread for the World, Eine Welt Netz NRW (One World Net North-Rhine-Westphalia, Working Group on Tourism & Development (Switzerland) and different universities.

With these and other marketing efforts it may be expected that Kabani will get increasingly known.

As a new field of activity, Kabani is planning to share its expertise in larger governmental and private projects and apply as a consultancy. A "Concept of the proposed Consultancy to develop Sahyadri Guided Forest Project into a sustainable tourism project" has already been developed.

To start Kabani Community Tourism and Services, five investors contributed capital resources of 2.5 million INR = 35,700 €. Thanks to its very positive development, the company is expected to break even in 2017.

The NGO Kabani – The Other Direction, however, does not make any profit and works only with volunteers.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Kabani a positive example of a successful cooperation between an NGO and a tour operator in a joint effort to make community-based, socially responsible tourism in Kerala more prominent and to counter the negative developments on the coast and in the backwaters. The living conditions of the local population there had deteriorated significantly through this kind of tourism.

In Thrikkaipetta, the NGO Kabani - The Other Direction has facilitated a functioning home stay programme which is managed by the local people themselves, to the benefit of all those who are directly or indirectly involved – without damage to the traditional rural life.

The people of Thrikkaipetta identify themselves with their way of handling tourism, so they regard it as their own project. Kabani's prime objectives are sustainable socio-economic development of local communities and conservation of natural resources that provide the basis of community livelihood."


Kabani has already started to transfer this model to other villages and to make it increasingly known in India and abroad.

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