

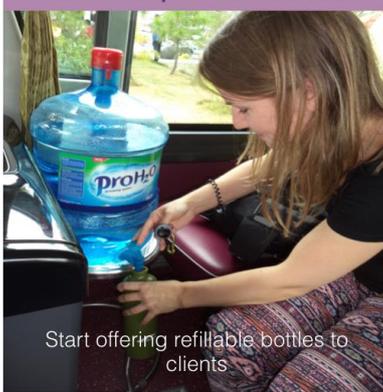
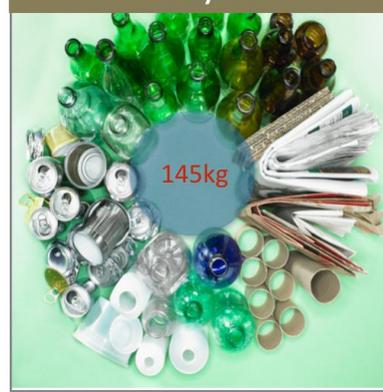
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our 2016 annual Sustainability Report.

At EXO Travel, we truly believe that responsible tourism is the future of travel and the role of a destination management company like us is vital to secure this future. Our commitment towards sustainability was first marked by the establishment in 2011 of EXO Foundation, an apolitical, secular and independent not-for-profit organisation.

This commitment was then further formally structured and systematised by our adoption of [Travelife](#), a comprehensive certification scheme which offers tour operators knowledge and tools to implement positive changes within their businesses and supply chain to reach sustainability. Travelife certification consists of 245 criteria and is internationally recognised.

These criteria cover all areas of a tourism business; internal management (human resources and social policy, and environment management), responsible product development, the supply chain (transport, accommodation, guides, restaurants and activities), customer relations and cooperation with destinations. Therefore, it requires the involvement of all departments in the business. Importantly, Travelife certification acknowledges that sustainable tourism management is a gradual process, thus it helps to continuously improve the company’s sustainability performance through a cycle of “plan, do and review”.

<h3>HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR</h3>  <p>EXO Travel Laos is the first company to have reached the <a href="#">Travelife</a> Certified award in Laos</p>	<h3>Energy saving</h3>  <p>Reduce 21% of total energy consumption of Vientiane and Luang Prabang offices</p>	<h3>Guide Training</h3>  <p><b>Be a Responsible Tour Guide!</b></p> <p>30 tour guides were given training on Responsible Tourism</p>
  <p>37 tour guides and office staff are trained on child protection by Childsafe Movement.</p>	<h3>Reduce plastic waste</h3>  <p>Start offering refillable bottles to clients</p>	<h3>Recycle</h3>  <p>145kg</p>

2016 marks a remarkable milestone in the sustainability journey of EXO Laos. We were the first company to

## 2016 Sustainability Report – EXO Travel Laos

have reached the Travelife certified award in Laos. The award was a great acknowledgement of our commitment and efforts in making Laos a better place to live and to visit.

Read on to learn details about how far we have progressed and our ambitions to do even better more.

### 2. EXO TRAVEL GROUP AND EXO TRAVEL LAOS AT A GLANCE

EXO Travel (formerly Exotissimo Travel) was founded in 1993 in Ho Chi Minh City as the first foreign company to be granted a tourism license in Vietnam. The world has changed a lot since then, and so has EXO. Today, EXO has over 23 offices and 770+ full time people working from our destination-based offices in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, China and Malaysia. Although now a large global business, EXO remains firmly committed to its roots in each destination and its core values that has enabled this growth for over 20 years.

EXO Travel Laos was established in 1999. It is managed by the original local partner Mrs Duangmala and an experienced General Manager Jason Rolan. With 3 offices (Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Pakse) and 50 people, EXO Laos is the biggest Destination Management Company (DMC) in the country. In 2016, we have serviced approximately 6,000 tourists in Laos. EXO Laos is also playing a leading role in sustainability in the country's travel industry.

#### ***You can find all of our important policies on our [website](#)***

Responsible Tourism policy

EXO Travel Ethical Code

Tips on Responsible Travel (English - French - Spanish)

Guidelines for Wildlife Viewing and Protection

EXO and Elephants

EXO Childsafe Policy

### 3. A MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

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#### 4. A WORKPLACE FOR EVERYONE

##### 4.1. Better lives for our people

*We commit to our people*, this is the first commitment stated in our Responsible Travel Policy. We know that people do their best work when they feel valued, happy and healthy. We want EXO Travel to be one of the best places to work for everyone, no matter who they are and where they come from.

At the end of 2016, 45% of our team are women and occupy 50% of all management positions. 88% of our team was Lao nationals.

In 2016, EXO Group has revised our Human Resources (HR) Policy, on which each EXO country will base to adapt its own version to local labor law and culture. In Laos, we have finalised our HR policy and introduced to our team. Read our HR Policy [here](#)

We understand that it's important to recognise the hard work and commitment of our people. Part of the way we do this is through our loyalty programme. It provides a bonus to our co-workers who have reached

## 2016 Sustainability Report – EXO Travel Laos

3, 5 and, 10 years working with us. Additionally, we promote excellence and hard work by rewarding the best employee every year.

### Health and Safety

At EXO Laos, we believe that a strong body helps the mind.

A small gym is available at the office for use at any time.

We enjoy a daily 10 minute exercises session which our team takes turn to lead.

We participated in community sport activities such as the International Half Marathon in Vientiane and Luang Prabang in March and October 2016 (19 runners) and Vientiane Classic Run in December 2016.

First Aid Training by Vientiane Rescue (<https://vientianerescue.org/>) was organised in April for the office team and our tour guides.

### *First Aid Training in Vientiane Office*

### Internal Communication

EXO destinations strongly benefit from the dynamics and resources the group has invested in trainings and Internals communication.

Communication is vital. Our people need to stay up to date with information, new activities, and messages. We need to know what our people think and their hopes and concerns. We use different channels of communication:

- \* EXO24 is our intranet. It's the main point of contact through which our people across our 10 destinations can stay in touch with the latest news, exchange experiences, best practices, jokes, or good stories.
- \* Newsletters (Sustainability Newsletter, Product Newsletter)
- \* Regular meetings, notice boards, and training allow our people to keep in touch with every day development.



We encourage people to have open conversations with their managers. If a person of our team feels uncomfortable to discuss a specific issue with their managers or human resources, they can use our "Anonymous Suggestions" line to report their concerns.

### **What we aim for HR Policy in 2017?**

- \* Private medical insurance: 100% of our local staff is covered by an additional private medical insurance.
- \* Employee feedback (An online survey to seek for formal feedback from our employee, in order to understand what they think of us and what their needs are)

## 4.2. Training and learning opportunities



## 2016 Sustainability Report – EXO Travel Laos

As a service and customer-focused business, our people are our most valuable asset. Therefore we invest in training to empower our people, to get the best out of them and to encourage them to achieve their full potential. Each of our people is unique and everyone brings new perspectives and ideas. They *An example of what we share on intranet* all may make important contribution to our company's culture and business. We promote a culture of passion, innovation, sharing and caring, life-long learning in EXO Travel.

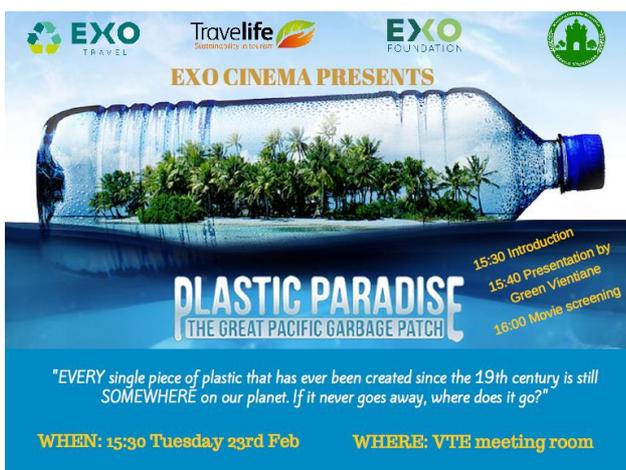
EXO Academy was organized by Mekong Train Coaching Agency for the last four years. EXO Group has now hired Training and Development Manager who is in charge of building training programs for EXO countries and also promotes our culture of lifelong learning. Tips on professional and personal development are shared every day on the company intranet. We also started a book club where people are encouraged to read a book per month and share what they learn from it.

Our travel consultant team go on inspection and familiarisation trips every year to learn more about our destinations and products we offer.

At EXO Travel, we believe that real sustainability is only achieved when this journey is driven by our employees. Sustainability is everybody's concern in our company. We encourage our people to be involved, to suggest improvements, and we celebrate our successes together.

Early 2015, a Sustainability Team (S-Team) was created with volunteer members at all levels and from all departments of our company. This way, we can widely enhance employee engagement and have an efficient communication across our organization, our S-Team also benefits from the variety of its members' experiences and expertise. We now have a committed team of 10, creative and communicative members. People are proud of being part of something bigger and part of a meaningful movement. We meet every two weeks to discuss one particular subject and brainstorm ways to do it better and more sustainably. We set targets, assign responsibilities, define timeframe, and review our implementation.

In 2016, we have done many training activities to improve our people's understanding of various matters



of sustainability.

*Movie screening poster*



*Childsafe Training at Vientiane office*

- Screening two movies/documentaries: *Plastic Paradise: The great pacific garbage patch* and *Before the Flood*.
- Training on Child Protection by Childsafe for office and tour guide teams. We also invite two of our top hotel partners to join the training with two representatives each. Later on, one of them organise their own Childsafe training for the whole hotel.
- Training on Responsible tourism for guides and drivers
- 100% our managers passed the online Travelife training.

A monthly sustainability game was set up by the EXO Foundation across all Travelife destinations in 2015. We have awarded our most responsible employees in 2016 who participated most and scored highest. The game includes a quiz and/or a mission with a specific theme, such as: responsible tourism, environmental management in the office, local communities, climate change, etc. Questions are specifically relevant to tourism and EXO Travel.

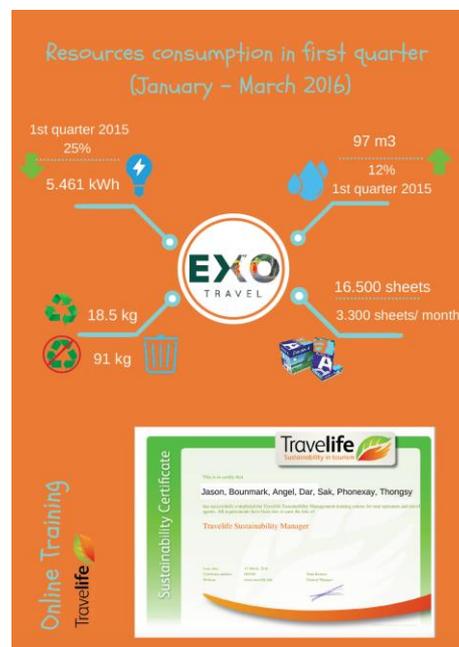
EXO Laos recorded the highest participation ratio among all countries it varied between 42% to 51%.



**Topics of 2016 and our participation rates:**

- What is Sustainability? (20%)
- What is your New Year Responsible Resolution? (14%)
- EXO Foundation (55%)
- Ecosystem and Biodiversity (33%)
- Plastic Waste (37%)
- What is a Responsible Hotel? (35%)

Sustainability Newsletter was published quarterly, highlighting our developments, our targets and best practices.



**What we aim for in training and learning opportunities in 2017**

- \* Provide knowledge of health and safety inside and outside work (healthy eating, etc.)
- \* Promote peer-learning: sharing each person’s best “know-how” at work and also outside work.
- \* Create new and fun sustainability game/activities to get people more involved
- \* Empower our S. Team, encourage them to take initiatives and be in charge.

*An issue of our Newsletter (March 2016)*

**5. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT: ENVIRONMENT**

The strategy developed by the Foundation is to first be a genuine responsible business avoiding green washing before we can advance a convincing sustainability policy towards our suppliers. One of the main goal beyond improving EXO business practices is to get staff understand the issues at stake and apply best practices in their daily lives, spread them around to relatives & friends so we can hope our actions have a cascading effect over Lao society.

This includes a responsible social policy which we have explained above and a commitment to minimize the negative environmental impacts of the office operation and activities. In other words, we must be an example for our staff, our suppliers and our clients.

EXO Travel Laos, have been making efforts to reduce our energy, water and paper consumption as well as our waste generation. Moreover, we now also purchase goods and services in a more responsible way.

**Monitoring tool**

On our intranet EXO24, we keep records of water, paper, energy consumption to keep track on our progress as well as to have corrective measures. Moreover, we also record our business flights for our carbon compensation plan.

**5.1. Energy**

In our last sustainability report, we highlighted how we change habits of our people to save energy. Given the fact that all of our offices are rented, we can’t change much the way they were designed . It’s important then to change our habits. Messages and consumption report were sent regularly to remind our team about how a small habit change can add up to big results.

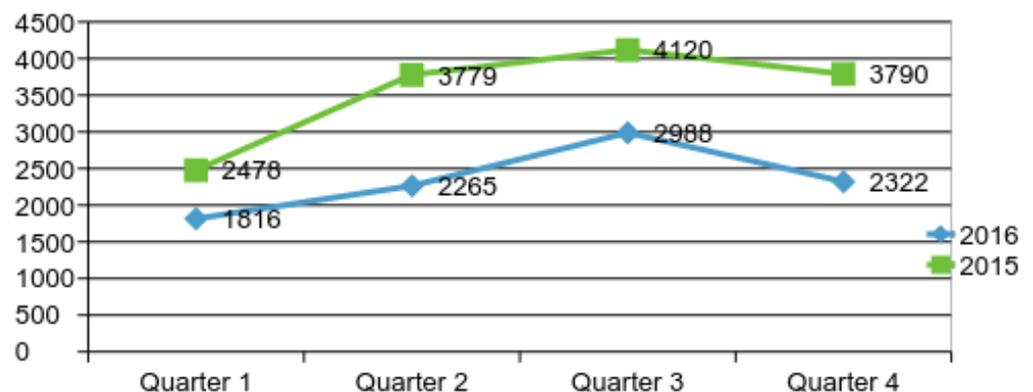
## 2016 Sustainability Report – EXO Travel Laos

In 2016, we have continued reducing our energy consumption by **17%** in Vientiane office and **33%** in Luang Prabang office. (Add weather report) compared to 2015?? Please compare since start of record is it 2015 not 2014? always leave starting year as benchmark

**Kwh**

### EXO Travel Switch-off policy

**Chart 1: Vientiane Office's Energy Performance in 2015 and 2016**



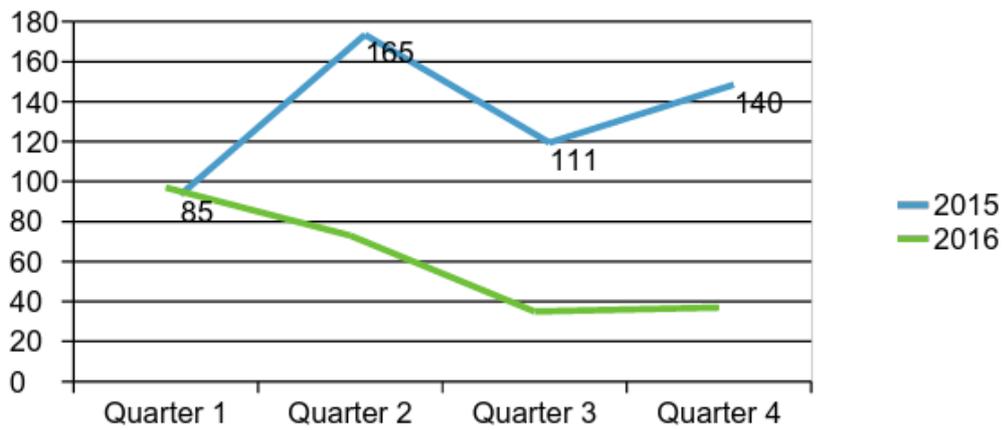
**Chart 2: Luang Prabang Office's Energy Performance in 2015 and 2016**

### 5.2. Water

In 2016, we reduced by 259 m3 of water at our Vientiane Office, after having installed water saving taps with aerators at our office, as well as set our single flush toilets to a lesser water mode (by adjusting the floating ball.).

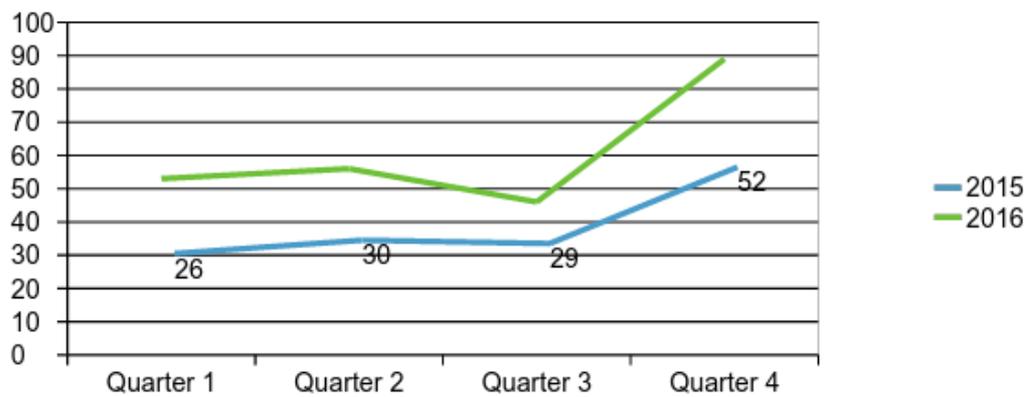
The water consumption in Luang Prabang increased 107 m3 as some areas in Luang Prabang had water cut sometimes and our team got water from the office for their daily wash.

**m3**



**Chart 3: Vientiane Office's Water Consumption in 2015 and 2016**

m3



**Chart 4: Luang Prabang Office's Water Consumption in 2015 and 2016**

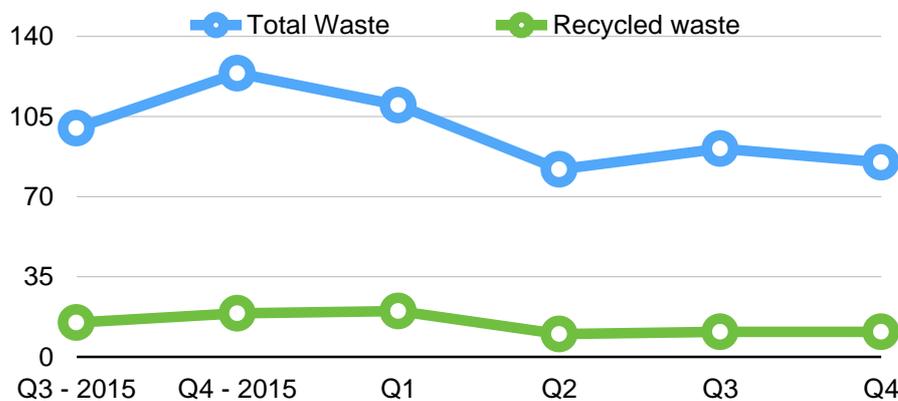
### 5.3. Waste

We started sorting and monitor our waste since quarter 3, 2015. Up to this point, we haven't been able to compare yearly statistics. As you can see from the chart below, our total waste has been reduced since quarter 3 2015.

In 2016, part of the team who usually has lunch at our canteen now use reusable containers to buy their take aways. It helped reduce the consumption of plastic bags and disposable containers.

KG

**Chart 5: Waste produced and recycled in Vientiane office in 2016**



In 2017, we look forward to close the gap between our total waste and recycled waste.

so what are your quantitative and qualitative objectives for 2017 on energy, water, paper , waste ???

### REFILLABLE BOTTLE INITIATIVE

On average, EXO Laos’ travellers consume 120,000 plastic water bottles every year.. Importantly, recycling facilities for plastic are nonexistent in Laos, and people burn their waste. Plastic, when burnt, releases toxic gases such as carbon monoxide, dioxins and furans which can cause cancer, impotence, asthma and a myriad of other allergies.



Aware that plastic waste is putting a lot of pressure on our environment and to minimise traveler’s negative environmental impacts, we have launched in 2016, the ambitious Refillable Bottle project.

#### What did we do?

- Communicate the initiative to our top hotel partners and all transport suppliers, inviting them to join by providing water refill stations at their hotels and in the vans.
- Train our tour guides on: the importance of the initiative, information about the bottle, where and when to remind travellers to refill their bottles, etc.
- Selected a few pilot clients at group level to test the operations first.

#### How does it work on the ground?

- Prior to travellers’ arrival, our operation department double-checks with hotels, transport supplier to ensure that water refill stations will be available.
- Each traveller is given a 600ml water bottle, made of aluminium, SCG tested upon their arrival in Laos.
- The tour guides inform travellers “When - Where - How” to refill their bottle.

#### What is the feedback?

We piloted the project with one group series from Germany in November and December 2016. We have offered refillable bottles to 14 travellers who were touring in Laos for 5 days, which translated to a reduction of 280 plastic water bottles. We have received positive feedback from our travellers, as well as, our hotel partners and transport suppliers.

Our operation team has become more familiar with the implementation process. We are now ready to scale up this initiative.

#### What is our plan in 2017?

We offer refillable bottle to independent travellers from some of our top agents. We expect to have 400 travellers using refillable bottle in Laos, meaning a reduction of 8.000 plastic water bottles in 2017.



In 2017 we plan to compensate travel emissions by travellers for domestic and regional flights booked with us.

#### 5.4. Paper/ Printing

In December 2015, we changed our office paper type to DoubleA Khanna which is a sustainable paper in many aspects. It utilizes the "KHAN-NA" or the vacant spaces around and in between Thai farmer's rice fields for planting trees, bringing the best value out of these empty spaces that would otherwise be unused. Paper from KHAN-NA is an exemplary model that serves as a unique source of quality materials for paper production that no single pulp is obtained from natural forest. This model also creates extra income for the

We set a target to reduce an additional 5% of our paper consumption

farmers and contributes to reduce global warming. Our printers are set to double-sided printing as default. We also print on one side printed paper for internal used documents. We organized training on responsible printing for all of our staff, department by department.

In 2016, our average consumption of paper per month is 7.9 ram (3,950 sheets), 47,400 for 2016 which mean on average, we used 79 sheets of paper per month per person. It was a drop of 9% compared to 2015. Please provide data compared to benchmark year and tell how many trees saved if program not in place and accumulated trees saved from start of program

Dispatch between LPQ and VTE?

As discussed refer to yearly consumption as monthly does not mean much

How many trees saved

#### 5.5. Carbon Offsetting

In 2016, total distance of our business flights was 96,647 km. This translates into 14.27 tons CO2 emissions. The Foundation chose to offset EXO Group CO2 emissions with Nexus and selected projects that cut carbon emissions, create livelihoods, create clean water, create new energy access in our region among others TerraClear,

#### 5.6. Sustainable Purchasing

- **Welcome Gifts to clients**



**Making Clean Water a Reality in Laos TerraClear** is providing households in Laos with access to safe drinking water through the manufacture and distribution of ceramic water purifiers. They are the first scalable producer of household water filter products in the country. 10

TerraClear filters remove up to 99.99% of bacteria, critical in a country where 43% of people lack access to clean drinking water

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EXO Travel Laos is supporting local not-for-profit organizations, social enterprises or local ethical businesses by purchasing from them gifts for our clients. We have made a gift brochure and require our team to strictly purchase gift items from these businesses. Please estimate what is spent and so spread into local

 **Traditional Arts & Ethnology Center**  
These are Job's tears seed bead products. They were launched along with the latest exhibition at TAEC, Seed of Culture: From living plants to Handicrafts., which EXO Foundation proudly sponsors.

*Job's Tears Seed Bead Products*

  
Akha Nuqui Beaded Coaster  
(#121-4-1) 30,000 kip each

  
Akha Nuqui Bead Necklace  
(#121-5-4) 45,000 kip each

  
Akha Nuqui Decorative Ball  
(#121-5-9) 35,000 kip each

  
Tai Lue Handspun Cotton Elephant Doll  
(#423-2-2) 70,000 kip each

  
Tai Lue Handspun Cotton Horse Doll  
(#423-2-1) 60,000 kip each

[www.taeclaos.org](http://www.taeclaos.org) – [information@taeclaos.org](mailto:information@taeclaos.org) +856 71253364. TAEC Boutique, Museum shop (LPQ) and Monument Bookshop (VTE)

economy.

*A page in our Gift Brochure*

- **Cleaning materials**

A recipe (white vinegar, baking soda and locally produced essential oil) spread across all countries by the EXO Foundation, is used in Laos office . Many of our staff is now applying our natural cleaning mix at home also. EXO Laos is also using locally produced organic soap for hand washing.

### 6. DEVELOPING RESPONSIBLE PRODUCTS

In 2014, EXO Foundation has designed a strategy called “Sustainability in Action” to communicate, assess and promote sustainability within our supply chain we work with. It includes several steps:

1. Communicate our March towards sustainability by sharing our RTP and core -commitments
2. Assess level of sustainability of our main suppliers to identify the responsible ones and those interested to implement best practices.
3. Review and validation by the EXO Foundation of responsible suppliers
4. Qualify in our internal booking database suppliers identified as responsible to
5. Highlight with special identification icons these responsible suppliers to offer an informed choice to clients
6. Train sales staff to sell these product better and integrate them in tours

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7. Monitor our performance in selling responsible suppliers
8. Share best practices with hotel swilling to improve their performances

There are different components in a tourism product, such as accommodation, transportation, activities, guides, restaurants, etc.

Category	Number of supplier	Top suppliers (70% of total business)	Description
Accommodation	131	25	Provide accommodation to our clients (Hotels, Resorts, Guesthouses, etc.)
Excursions / Activities suppliers	30	10	Provide day/half day trip, activities which we package in for your clients (including cruises, elephant camps, farms, etc.)
Transportation	7	7	Transport our clients from one to another destination during their travel in Laos

At the centre of our relationships with suppliers is EXO Sustainability Contract Addendum. It sets out our minimum requirement on business ethics, environment, social and working conditions.

In addition to the Sustainability Contract Addendum, EXO FOUNdation has developed specific questionnaires (hotels, excursions & activities of different types, elephant camps) specifically to assess the level of commitment and repsonsibility of accommodation suppliers, excursion suppliers and elephant camps.

Those addendum and questionnaires set an important foundation, however our collaboration with suppliers is about more than compliance and assessment. By working alongside our suppliers, we learn about their business, their policies, as well as opportunities and challenges they are facing. At the same time, they also learn and understand more about us. We support each other to find better solutions.

### 6.1. Transportation in the destination

Apart from a variety of cycling tours, EXO Travel Laos has been offering E-bike tours in Luang Prabang. In 2016, we have offered E - Tuktuk as an option for 6 tours in Luang Prabang.

Mention tips for cars when do you plan to put them inside cars

<b>OPTIONAL</b>
 <span style="color: #4CAF50; font-weight: bold;">For a low-carbon local experience,</span>
Note: Please confirm this service with your Travel Agent

**<sup>1</sup>Hotel assessment questionnaire**

This questionnaire comprises of 35 questions on 4 activity areas: Internal HR, & socio-economic benefits toward the community, environment;; communication to guests and heritage conservation. This set of question is designed to help EXO Travel acknowledge better the level of commitment of our hotel partners. Moreover, it also intends to suggest initial guidelines to suppliers who wish to engage, so they see how sustainability can be integrated in their daily operations.

**<sup>2</sup>Responsible Contract Clauses**

This document covers basic requirements regarding business ethics, environment, & biodiversity, cultural heritage. This document now is a compulsory part of any contract renewed in 2016.

**6.2. Accommodations**

In January 2015, EXO Travel Laos sent a communication named “Sustainability in Action” to inform 110 hotel suppliers (91% of our hotel suppliers in total) about EXO Responsible Travel Policy and our commitment towards this sustainability journey. This communication included a questionnaire<sup>1</sup> detailing main best practices a hotel could implement. In addition, the hotel suppliers were invited to sign a Responsible addendum to our Contract<sup>2</sup>.

Up to	Hotel signed Contract Addendum	Hotel answered questionnaire	Hotel inspection	Hotel Ratings (completed)
Dec 2016	30	31	30	6

In 2016, we weren’t productive in hotel assessment due to several reasons. We aim to finish the assessment of our top 25 hotels in the end of March. Then, based on the assessment part results, we plan to do the followings in 2017:

- Promote responsible hotels on our new website (Please see section 6.5. for more details)
- Identify best practices, disseminate by different channels such as sending back our assessment reports to hotels and organise workshops for them sharing best practices.

**6.3. Excursion and activity suppliers**

**6.3.1. Excursion and activity suppliers’ communication**

There are various steps are similar to the strategy used for hotels. We apply a slightly different process to assess our excursion suppliers. It is much more complex to assess excursions than hotels as it includes various elements and, as well because many providers are non English speakers and may not understand the questions. Finally it is difficult to have one

**<sup>3</sup> Checklist for excursions**

A document comprises of 62 questions covering various aspects which may be included in a tour: transport, food & drink, shopping, child policy, social empowerment, social, cultural and economic benefits/impacts for the visited communities, conservation & environmental impacts.

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check list which fits all types of excursions; a diving trip cannot be assessed the same way as a homestay. So the evaluation check list <sup>3</sup> is sent only to suppliers we foresee as responsible (or claiming to be) and who can speak good English. For others the SC and other staff in the mid term will directly go on inspection.

We prioritize the communication and follow-up to top 10 suppliers (out of the total of 30 suppliers). So far five (07) excursion suppliers have signed the Responsible Contract Clauses, 4 has completed our questionnaires. First identified responsible activities will be communicated on our new website by the end of March.

### 6.3.2. Identifying sensitive excursions & activities

We are aware that some excursions and local activities have some hidden negative social, environmental and economic impacts on the destinations. Therefore we are being very cautious when selecting activities for our customers.

We have developed policy and codes of conduct for sensitive activities such as “Guidelines for Wildlife viewing and protection” and/or the alms giving in Luang Prabang. We assess all elephant camps thanks to an internal questionnaire we work with to ensure mahouts and elephants are treated well and enjoy good working conditions. We ban those not respecting so.

We progressively ban and try to encourage our clients not to get involved in these activities or visits which are not acceptable according to our values and ethics explaining them why it is detrimental and offering alternatives..

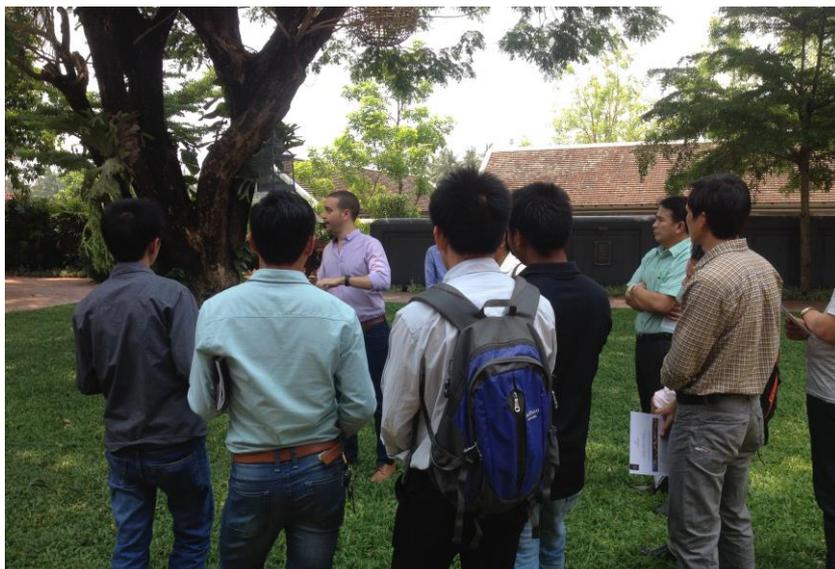
### School, orphanage and children centers' visits

EXO Travel has made the decision since 2013 to cease visits to schools, orphanages and other children's centers following reports on the numerous unseen negative impacts of such visits from child welfare organizations such as Friends International, Save the Children, UNICEF, which work closely with disadvantaged children and families. EXO Travel Laos is implementing by offering more meaningful experiences and possibilities to exchange, share and give back to the local communities such as (provide examples).

REFILLABLE BOTTLE INITIATIVE HERE ?

### 6.4. Tour guides

All of our tour guides are locals and we offer them fair employment conditions. They are in large majority freelance.



As people who are in direct contact with both clients and suppliers in the destination, our tour guides have a remarkable influence on our clients' experience as well as our efforts to achieve sustainability in all areas.

Therefore we invest in guides' training to continuously improve their knowledge and skills, as well as the impacts of our travelers.

Since 2015, Guide training on Responsible Tourism has been an annual activity. In 2016, we organise a

#### *Guide training in Luang Prabang*

In 2017, we plan to organise guide training on two topics: The refillable bottle initiative and excursion/activities assessment.

Set targets

All guide sto be trained childsafe they are not yet only how many ? as figure above indicates guides + staff please separate

guide training at one of our responsible hotel partners. Apart from general knowledge, they had the opportunity to tour around the hotel and learn about what sustainability practices a hotel/office can implement. There were 30 tour guides (80% of all tour guides frequently working for EXO Travel Laos) attended in this training.

#### 6.5. Promotion and communication of responsible products



Part of our engagement towards our suppliers is to offer responsible partners promotional advantages. EXO Marketing have designed icons to highlight responsible suppliers in all our communications.

There are two labels and three stars level of responsibility. One for eco-friendly best practices and one for social best practices. Once a hotel's commitment to sustainability is demonstrated, it will be labeled in our internal booking system and on the new

website (to be launched in first quarter of 2017)

All employees, including our travel consultants have been informed about EXO Responsible Travel Policy, as well as our sustainability assessment along our value chain. We have organised thorough trainings for our sales team on two major tasks:

- To incorporate sustainability in the supplier evaluation done on their inspection / FAM trips.
- To promote and communicate responsible suppliers to our clients.

In 2017, we plan to incorporate knowledge of responsible products in every monthly product training for our travel consultant team. In addition, more incentives will be given to team members who sell the most responsible activities.

## 7. COMMUNICATION

### 7.1. Communication to travelers

The booklet « Tips for Responsible Travelers » in English, French, or Spanish is given to travellers upon arrival. It provides advice to maximize their positive impacts and minimize the negative ones.

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- The first part gathers cultural tips explaining specific aspects of Asian etiquette and culture and advice on ethical behavior to ensure travelers have rewarding cultural exchanges. Information about sex tourism and child exploitation, illegal souvenirs, etc. is clearly mentioned in this booklet.
- The second part addresses environmental best practices to minimize our footprint and contribute to biodiversity conservation.
- Last but not least, it provides guidelines on how travel can significantly benefit local communities and contribute to poverty alleviation providing as well best addresses for sopping locally made crafts and products which are either social enterprise, NGOs benefiting projects, organic and /or fair trade shops,

In 2016, we have distributed:

- English version: 986 booklets
- Spanish version: 292 booklets
- French version: 301 booklets

### **What we are going to do in 2017?**

We are launching an online survey to get feedback from our travellers in 2017. It includes two questions on sustainability. They are:

- 1.
- 2.

## **7.2. Communication to oversea agents**

Sustainability news is included in our E-Newsletter sent out to all of our oversea agents by the EXO Group, with the EXO Foundation and the Product Department monthly contributions. Laos is sending a monthly product updates to our top 20 agents which includes sustainability highlights, both in our products and operation.

## **9. CSR/DONATION**

### **8.1. EXO Travel Laos**

Stated as one of our 7 core values, “Yes we care” represents our willingness to give back to the communities. Apart from the financial support which EXO Foundation is giving to a number of social and environmental projects in Laos, EXO Travel Laos has also been active in supporting community development.

#### **\* Luang Prabang Film Festival (\$5000)**

The Luang Prabang Film Festival (LPFF) is a charitable cultural organisation committed to the celebration of Southeast Asian film and to the growth and support of local and regional film industries and filmmakers. This annual event brings together the boldest storytellers and the most talked about films in Southeast Asia. Most importantly, it offers many unique opportunities for filmmakers and industry professionals. Through these programs, the festival inspire new ideas and support local artists by giving them the skills

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and experience to be their own media makers. One of the 2016 programs is the local short film competition focusing on environmental issues in Laos, which is aligned with our sustainability activity.

More information about the LPPF [www.lppfilmfest.org](http://www.lppfilmfest.org)

### \* **WIG Bazaar (\$500 tour voucher)**

WIG Bazaar is an annual event organised by WIG - formerly the Women's International Group - was founded in 1990 and has built up a unique and privileged position in Lao PDR over the past 25 years. The Bazaar is a highlight of the Vientiane Calendar, featuring live entertainment, a raffle and fun and games for children, as well as exhibits from international NGOs, business and diplomatic missions.

Income from the Bazaar is used to fund WIG's health and education projects. More information about WIG Bazaar [www.wiglaos.org](http://www.wiglaos.org)

### \* **Chaktomuk Short Film Festival (Cambodia) - \$500 tour voucher**

In collaboration with EXO Travel Cambodia, we are proud to support the 2016 Chaktomuk Short Film Festival focusing on human trafficking issue. Chaktomuk Short Film Festival, aka CSFF, is an annual short film festival taking place in Phnompenh, Cambodia since 2012. It is organised by Kon Khmer Koun Khmer, aka 4K, and aims to promote talented filmmakers and to nurture culture of cinema for both making and watching in and out of Cambodia.

More information about the festival [www.chaktomukshortfilmfestival.com](http://www.chaktomukshortfilmfestival.com)

### \* **Vientiane International Half Marathon (Support by participating)**

On 6th March 2016, 18 people in EXO Vientiane team joined Vientiane International Half Marathon. This first international marathon in Vientiane aimed to promote the importance of living a healthy lifestyle that emphasizes regular exercise. The theme for this year's half marathon is "Run for a Reason". This year, they worked with Village Focus International (VFI) to support the girls empowerment component of the Protection & Empowerment of Women and Children (PEWC) program. VFI will host a "Empowering Girls Through Sport" clinic in September, with the aim to enhance the leadership of girls through participation in sports in Laos. This initiative will address the barriers experienced uniquely by girls, and requires organized activities for girls (and dedicating funding to doing so), ensuring these activities take place in a safe space, and establishing trust between coaches and parents.

## 8.2. EXO Foundation

EXO Foundation was established by EXO Travel in 2011. Although EXO Travel is the main donor and covers all operational costs, the EXO Foundation acts as a separate and independent NGO. The Foundation has two roles:

- Accompany and guide EXO Travel and its clients on the responsible path having initiated, developed and Responsible Travel Policy, supervised and coordinated its overall implementation including Travelife certification program.
- To directly support (fund) projects which are contributing to the sustainable development of destinations.

In 2016, EXO Foundation has funded 5 projects/organisations in Laos.

### \* **Seed of Culture: from Living plants to handicrafts (\$2,000)**

We are proud to sponsor a special exhibition at the Traditional Art and Ethnology Centre (TAEC) named Seeds of Culture: From Living Plants to Handicrafts. This exhibition draws on Dr. Ochiai's field research in Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar to show that the wild and domesticated plants of Job's tears are used as food, medicine, and beads by ethnic groups belonging to different linguistic categories. In addition, this

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special exhibition provides insight into the clothing and changing lifestyles of the region's ethnic minorities, including the Akha, Chin, Karen, Jinghpaw and Palaung. In particular, the seed beads have been used for costume decoration in beautiful and striking combinations. On display are unusual artefacts, including a Chin headdress that uses porcupine quills and magnificent necklaces from 14 different countries in Africa, Asia, and South America. More information about TAEC and the exhibition [www.taeclaos.org](http://www.taeclaos.org)

### \* Lone Buffalo (\$2,400)

EXO Foundation sponsors 2 English classes at Lone Buffalo, a Phonsavan - based organization who is committed to improving opportunities for young people in Laos by providing quality English study. Their English Development Centre and community outreach program currently benefits around 200 young people in rural Laos. Lone Buffalo does not charge the students for their English lessons. Many of their students have gone on to further their studies at Universities in Laos, Vietnam, China and Korea. Watch a video of Lone Buffalo's students: <https://vimeo.com/channels/560896/182571036>

### \* Luang Prabang International Half Marathon (\$500)

This is an annual event, organised to raise fund for the Lao Friends Hospital for Children, supporting their mission to provide free medical care to over 1000 children per month in Luang Prabang and surrounding areas. The 2016 event has raised a total of USD 53,543 for the Hospital. More information about Luang Prabang International Half Marathon [www.luangprabanghalfmarathon.com](http://www.luangprabanghalfmarathon.com) and Lao Friends Hospital for Children [www.fwab.org](http://www.fwab.org)

### \* Pha Tad Ke Botanical Garden (\$2,000)

Pha Tad Ke is the first botanical garden in Laos, created to be a regional research centre with the first living collection of the flora of Laos that provides opportunities for collaboration with international botanical institutions.

The garden develops educational program for all age groups while conducting research into plant reintroduction, horticulture, ethnobotany and medicinal plants to address critical problems ranging from the management of local natural resources to conserving biodiversity worldwide.

The Garden is officially open to public in November 2016. More information about the Botanical Garden [www.pha-tad-ke.com](http://www.pha-tad-ke.com)

### \* Vientiane Rescue (\$10,000)

Vientiane Rescue is the first ever free emergency service in Laos. We started our long-term support to Vientiane Rescue in January 2013, which was critical to the “reborn” of Vientiane Rescue. Read full story about Vientiane Rescue here [www.vientianerescue.org](http://www.vientianerescue.org) . They are now one of the most successful humanitarian project in Laos, in 2016 they won the much coveted Mayhem award.

## 9. POLICY INFLUENCING

### 9.1. Consultation Workshop: “Greening the Lao Tourism Value Chain”

This workshop was organised by the Tourism Development Department of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MOICT) and the Regional Economic Integration of Laos into ASEAN, Trade and Entrepreneurship Development (RELATED) project of the Lao – German Development Cooperation.

The aim of this workshop is to introduce different standards and tools for a sustainable tourism development. There were presentations about GSTC, Travelife, Earth Check and Green ASEAN standards. Based on these presentations, Lao public and private tourism sector stakeholders discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of these different standards and tools in the Lao context.

EXO Travel SC Thuy Nguyen made a presentation on our experience with Travelife certification. We received positive feedbacks from the audience. It was also a great opportunity to network with many tourism actors in Laos.

### **9.2. ASEAN Ecotourism Forum (June 2016, Pakse)**

The ASEAN Ecotourism Forum 2016 organised by the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Lao PDR, in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is poised to be one of ASEAN's most important forum for ecotourism.

EXO Travel Laos participated in the conference, exhibition (with a booth) as well as presented our experience with Travelife Certification at one of the discussions in the Forum. More information about the Forum [www.aef2016laos.com](http://www.aef2016laos.com)

### **9.3. National Level Workshops on branding and promotion of Lao PDR as a tourism destination. Ate + place**

Swiss Contact has been working on branding and promotion of Southern Laos as well as Lao PDR as a tourism destination. They supported the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism of Lao PDR to establish a national level Destination Management Network (DMN), which is a flexible structure with the purpose of making tourism destination development and management better coordinated and more effective. EXO Travel Laos has joined the DMN and participated in several workshops, facilitated by Swiss Contact.

### **9.4. Input Session on Product Development in Southern Laos - Swiss Contact**

We participated in and has been following up with the input session in product development in Southern Laos, organised by Swiss Contact and ILO (International Labor Organisation) We shared information about our business, market and product development plan as a way of partnering with the project to develop more responsible tourism products in Southern Laos. More information about the project [www.southern-laos.com](http://www.southern-laos.com)

## **10. CONCLUSION**

We strongly believe that sustainability can only be achieved when it is integrated into the core of our business. It is not an “add-on”. It must be part of our decision making process. This means that we will commit to a continuous improvement in all aspects of our business regarding sustainability.

The adoption of sustainability in our business has especially sharpened our culture. It enhances team spirit and collaboration among departments across our organisation. Our employees are proud of being part of a meaningful movement, of a higher purpose.

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As one of the first tour operators committing to sustainability in Laos, we hope to better promote responsible tourism and to potentially influence perspectives on sustainable development of tourism in Laos and maintain the essential assets that make Lao such a beautiful and unique destination for the sake of its people, travelers and businesses like ours.