



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

## Sustainable Rural Destination Management for CBTOs

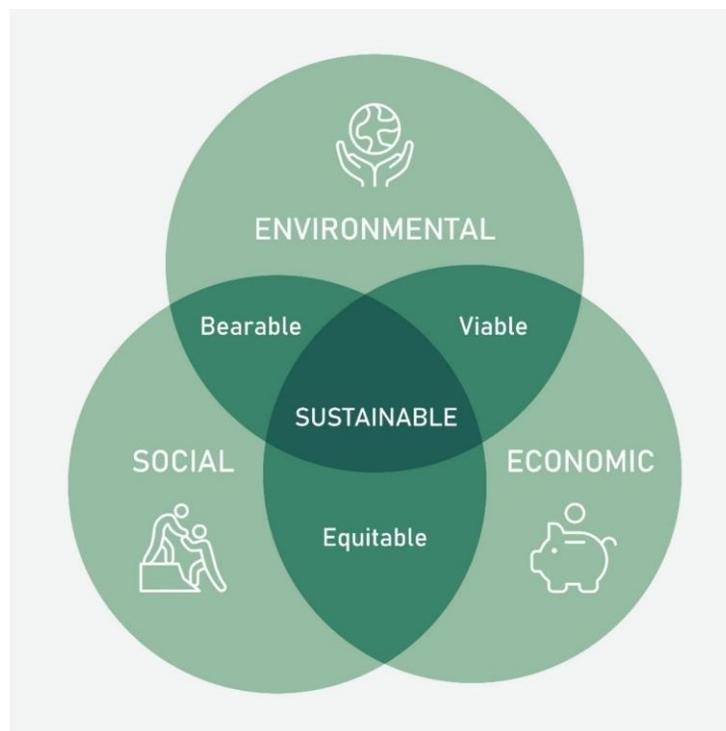
This Lesson, presented from the perspective of **Kitara Foundation**, outlines the critical elements of **Sustainable Rural Destination Management (SRDM)**. For Community Based Tourism Organizations (CBTOs), SRDM is not just about protecting the environment; it's about strategically managing resources—cultural, natural, and financial—to ensure tourism benefits the community for generations, rather than causing harm.

### 1. Defining Sustainable Rural Destination Management (SRDM)

SRDM involves the **coordinated management** of all elements that make up your tourism destination, ensuring that the activities meet the needs of present tourists and host communities while safeguarding opportunities for the future.

#### A. The Three Pillars of Sustainability

Your management strategy must balance three equally important pillars:



1. **Environmental Sustainability:** Protecting and managing your natural resources (water, land, biodiversity).
2. **Economic Sustainability:** Ensuring the tourism enterprise is financially viable long-term and that benefits are distributed fairly.
3. **Socio-Cultural Sustainability:** Preserving the local culture, heritage, social structures, and ensuring community satisfaction with tourism.

## **B. The CBTO as the Destination Manager**

Unlike conventional tourism where an external government agency or private company manages the destination, the CBTO must act as the **primary destination manager**. This requires cooperation among all local stakeholders: homestay owners, guides, elders, farmers, and local government.

## **2. Environmental Management and Conservation**

The natural environment is often the primary draw for rural tourism. Managing it sustainably is crucial for product survival.

### **A. Resource Management**

- **Water and Energy Conservation:** Implement simple, low-cost technologies. Encourage homestay owners to collect rainwater, install low-flow showerheads, and educate guests (using **digital nudges**) to reuse towels and conserve energy.
- **Waste Management:** Establish a clear system for collecting, sorting, and responsibly disposing of or recycling waste. If recycling is not locally available, minimize plastic use by providing filtered water and discouraging bottled drinks.
- **Land Use Planning:** Designate specific, well-marked trails and routes for tours. Prevent activity sprawl that could encroach on farmland or environmentally sensitive areas.

### **B. Conservation Linkages**

- **Eco-Fees:** Integrate a small, mandatory **conservation fee** into the overall price of your tours. This fee, tracked transparently through digital systems like Equera, is allocated directly to local conservation initiatives (e.g., funding a forest ranger, supporting tree nurseries).
- **Use Local Knowledge:** Employ local experts and traditional plant healers as guides. This transforms them into conservation ambassadors and links the economic success of the CBTO directly to the health of the ecosystem.

## **3. Socio-Cultural and Governance Management**

Protecting the local culture and ensuring community cohesion is essential for the long-term viability of the CBTO.

### **A. Managing the Visitor Experience**

- **Cultural Preservation Policy (The Kitara Principle):** Formally define which aspects of culture are off-limits (sacred sites, private rituals) and which can be shared. Communicate this policy clearly to guests using **digital pre-arrival information** and local guides.
- **Managing Host-Guest Interaction:** Train community members on how to interact respectfully with guests while maintaining their personal boundaries and dignity. The interaction should feel like a genuine exchange, not a performance.

## B. Managing Internal Equity and Governance

- **Capacity Building:** Continuously invest in local training (leadership, financial literacy, foreign language skills) provided through partners like the **Kitara Foundation**. This ensures that the community maintains management control as the operation grows.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Establish a formal, community-accepted process for resolving disputes that arise from tourism (e.g., noise complaints, disagreements over shared revenue). **Fair and transparent governance** is the best defense against internal conflict.

## 4. Economic and Market Management

The financial health of the CBTO must be managed sustainably, focusing on local retention and resilience.

### A. Leakage Reduction

- **Maximize Local Procurement:** Demand that the CBTO management and its members buy goods and services (food, materials, transport, guides) from within the local community first. This keeps tourist money circulating locally and strengthens other local businesses (agro-tourism, handicrafts).
- **Fair Pricing:** Resist pressure from tour operators to lower prices to unsustainable levels. Your price must reflect the **true cost of quality service and social/environmental contributions** (the CDF).

### B. Resilience and Digital Strategy

- **Diversification:** Do not rely on only one or two products. Develop a wide range of activities (cultural, agricultural, nature-based) to attract different types of travelers and offset seasonality.
- **Digital Visibility (Equera's Role):** Use digital platforms to track which markets (e.g., specific countries or traveler demographics) are most profitable and sustainable. This data helps the CBTO make informed marketing decisions, avoiding dependence on a single unstable market source. .

By integrating these strategies, the CBTO effectively manages its entire destination, turning the unique assets of the rural community into a **sustainable and long-lasting** source of empowerment and income.