

CHILD SEX TOURISM — ACTION

Raising awareness will help combat child sex tourism. Compared to other countries, Canada's child sex tourism laws are underused and insufficiently understood.

Approximately 38 countries have extraterritorial child sex tourism laws. Such laws do not get rid of the problem, but can act as a deterrent against potential sex tourists.

The Canadian government has done little to inform the public about its law. In contrast, the US State Department has given grants to World Vision to place billboards in Thailand and Cambodia with the slogan: "Abuse a child in this country, go to jail in yours." From 1995-2007, Australia undertook 158 investigations, laid 28 charges, and made 19 convictions using its child sex tourism laws. From 2003-08, the United States made 67 arrests and 47 convictions using similar laws. Alternatively, it took 8 years for Canada to make its first conviction (in 2005) and a total of only 7 arrests have been made. Canadian law enforcement is largely reactionary when investigating such crimes.

Action by Canadian Companies

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives can help companies take action against child sex tourism. The Harvard business program defines CSR as "encompass[ing] not only what companies do with their profits, but also how they make them." CSR emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for your impact on society and the environment including engaging with stakeholders and respecting international norms. Companies and governments often enact codes of conduct as a general strategy to combat child sex tourism.

The use of targeted in-flight videos by airlines such as Lufthansa and Air France is a positive example of a CSR initiative against Child Sexual Tourism. These videos warn passengers that they could be prosecuted at home for committing sex crimes abroad. Air Canada recently followed this lead and launched its own video. These proactive measures can alert travelers to report incidents of child exploitation abroad.

The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (The Code)

The Code is an initiative that unites the tourism sector with ECPAT International. It aims to prevent sexual exploitation of children at tourism destinations.

The Code was initiated in 1998 by ECPAT Sweden in cooperation with Scandinavian tour operators and the World Tourism Organization (WTO). As of 2011, the Code had 1030 industry members and local affiliates in 42 countries, including hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, tourism associations, and tourism unions.

The Code was launched in North America, in April 2004 by ECPAT USA, UNICEF and the WTO. The Code encourages companies to commit to:

1. Establish an ethical corporate policy against sexual exploitation of children.
2. Educate and train personnel in the country of origin and travel destinations.
3. Introduce a clause in contracts with suppliers that repudiates the sexual exploitation of children.
4. Develop information and awareness raising materials.
5. Provide information to local "key persons" at the destinations.
6. Report annually on the implementation of these criteria.

An information and training kit to implement the Code is available. For more information see www.thecode.org.

Unfortunately, Canadian companies are not sufficiently engaged in the prevention and fight against Child Sex Tourism. There are only two companies that have signed The Code, compared to 89 in Brazil and 81 in Japan.

Action by Individuals

Individuals can report suspected child sex tourism to the RCMP or to Canada's national tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children: <http://www.cybertip.ca>. Cybertip's mandate is to protect children from online sexual exploitation by receiving and analyzing tips from the public about potentially illegal material; referring relevant leads to the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or child welfare authority; and providing the public with information and other resources, as well as support and referral services.

Sources

- *The Canadian Context* (International Bureau for Children's Rights, February 2010).
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- www.thecode.org
- Mark Erik Hecht, *Private Sector Accountability in Combating the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* (ECPAT International, November 2008).
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