

CHILD SEX TOURISM — GENERAL

Child sex tourism is the commercial sexual exploitation of children by people who travel from one location to another and engage in sexual acts with minors. Often, they travel from a richer country to one that is less developed.

Child sex tourists come from all walks of life: they may be married or single, male or female, wealthy tourists or budget travellers. Some child sex tourists (preferential abusers and pedophiles) target children specifically; however, most child sex tourists are situational abusers, who take advantage of a situation in which a child is made available.

Factors leading to child sex tourism include:

- Anonymity
- Availability of children
- Being away from the moral and social constraints that normally govern behaviour

Child sex exploiters may try to rationalize their actions by claiming that sex with a child is culturally acceptable in the place they are visiting or that the money or goods exchanged benefit the child and community. Sex tourism preys on sexual inequality and contributes to the demand for trafficking for sexual exploitation, which entraps children.

Where does Child Sex Tourism Occur?

Destinations can change. As prevention and protection efforts are stepped up in one country, child sex tourists may choose another country as their destination. For instance, as countries such as Brazil and Thailand increase their vigilance, child sex tourism rises in other countries, such as Ecuador, Cambodia and Indonesia. The opening up of markets and transportation routes and unregulated mass tourism development can cause child sex tourism destinations to shift from one country to another.

Tourism is not the cause of child sexual exploitation, but child sex exploiters often make use of facilities offered by tour companies, hotels, resorts, restaurants, and airlines. Some businesses may be involved, for example, a hotel that turns a blind eye to exploitation on its premises or travel agents that knowingly arrange sex tours abroad.

The Role of the Tourism Industry

The tourism industry is an important player and a valuable ally in the protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism. Many national travel and tourism organizations have recognized this danger to children and are working together to take action against people who sexually exploit children in tourism.

Sources

- Stephanie Delaney, *Young Persons Guide to Combating Child Sex Tourism* (Bangkok: ECPAT, 2008).