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An Overview of the Situation in Various Latin American Countries

The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean is largely fuelled by poverty, social exclusion, weak law enforcement and the prevalence of corruption. Moreover, these practices are reinforced by an environment of social tolerance and the insufficient understanding and respect for the human rights of children, both in origin and destination countries. In addition, the issue of the Exploitation of Children in tourism is exacerbated by other forms of exploitation such as child pornography, child trafficking and underage marriages.

MEXICO

At international level, Mexico is considered as a primary destination for sex tourism. According to ECPAT International's 2006 *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* in Mexico, this problem is concentrated in the largest tourism hubs of the country such as Tijuana, Cancun and Acapulco (where child prostitution is most prevalent). These cities are home to an overwhelming number of children and adolescents who are confined to work in prostitution and are often exploited by foreign tourists. The majority of sex tourists visiting Mexico originate from the United States, England, the Netherlands and Germany.

Children and adolescents who live in the streets are particularly vulnerable and become easy targets for wealthy clients seeking to take advantage of their poverty. Sex tourists can be either regular clients or occasional customers and do not fit a generic profile. Sex tourism can thus be both irregular and systematic. As mentioned in ECPAT International's 2006 *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Agenda for Action)*, Mexican deputies have agreed with Unicef findings that Mexico is one of the most sought after tourism destinations for pedophiles, and that this is due to the tolerance of federal, state and municipal authorities.

COSTA RICA

The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents is a well known problem in Costa Rica, despite the country's notable political and economic performance. The problem manifests itself primarily in two related phenomena: Child Sex Tourism and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Exploitation. According to the IPEC's 2002 study entitled *Costa Rica: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors*, while the majority of offenders are locals, the number of foreign Child Sex Tourists has increased due to the country's reputation as a sex tourism destination. Additionally, the majority of child and adolescent victims of sexual exploitation originate from other Central American nations, primarily from Nicaragua and El Salvador, as well as other Latin American countries.



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COLOMBIA

According to ECPAT International's 2006 *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*, the rapid development of Colombia's tourism industry in recent years has seen a parallel increase in sex tourism in popular destinations such as the Eje Cafetero, el Valle del Cauca and the Caribbean. Child Sex Tourism is especially concentrated in the cities of Barranquilla and Cartagena. This phenomenon is increasingly linked to child trafficking in order to satisfy both an internal and international demand, predominantly from Ecuador, Spain, Italy and Japan.

PERU

The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Peru is considered problematic in view of its various manifestations throughout the country. Child sex tourism, however, is largely concentrated in the cities of Cusco, Iquitos, and Cajamarca. As one of the most important historical centers in South America, Cusco is the country's leading tourism center.

According to two studies on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Peru and South America conducted by the IPEC in 2007 and respectively entitled *Imperdonable. Estudio sobre la explotación sexual comercial de la infancia y adolescencia en Perú: Cajamarca, Cusco, Iquitos y Lima*, and *La demanda en la explotación sexual comercial de adolescentes: estudio cualitativo en Sudamérica (Chile, Colombia, Paraguay y Perú)*, Cusco has in recent years seen a steady increase in tourist visits. The city experienced a proliferation of entertainment hubs, such as bars, night clubs and *chicherias* which subsequently became focal points for the demand for Child and Adolescent Sexual Exploitation. In Cusco, this demand originates not only from foreign tourists but also from local residents.

BRAZIL

As ECPAT International's 2006 *Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* indicates, Brazil is a country that is increasingly visited and sought after by Child Sex Tourists. Foreign tourists as well as local clients are involved. According to the Ministry of Tourism, as many as 398 Brazilian municipalities are tourism destinations where Child and Adolescent Sexual Exploitation occurs. Sex tourism mostly affects the North and North-East regions of Brazil, the poorest areas in the country.

In 2003, a Mixed Parliamentary Investigation Commission (MPIC-CPMI) was created by the Federal Senate and the Chamber of Deputies to investigate Child and Adolescent Commercial Sexual Exploitation networks in Brazil. By 2004 the Commission had identified politicians, businessmen, members of religious communities and judges as some of the primary perpetrators of sex tourism in Brazil.