



BUREAU  
INTERNATIONAL  
DES DROITS DES ENFANTS

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FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

OFICINA  
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LOS DERECHOS DEL NIÑO

## Who Are the Main Actors?

### **The Offenders**

Most child sex tourists are males spanning all income levels, although on occasion women are also involved. Perpetrators often originate from Western Europe and North America and travel to developing countries in Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, etc.

While some tourists are pedophiles - or adults seeking children for sexual relationships - many child sex tourists are so-called "situational abusers," meaning individuals who do not actively seek children as sexual partners but who occasionally engage in sexual acts with children when an opportunity arises.

### **The Victims**

International NGOs estimate **that more than one million children worldwide are drawn into the sex trade each year.**

*According to ECPAT International, "victims of CST often come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. However, this is not their only characteristic: many come from ethnic minorities, displaced communities and other marginalized social groups. Victims are both girls and boys, some of whom may also have been victims of domestic abuse and neglect. Working children, especially those involved in the tourism industry and who are dependent on seasonal income, can easily fall victim to child sex tourism. Sometimes, simply being born in a tourism destination characterized by major wealth discrepancies between incoming tourists and local inhabitants can be enough for a child to become exploited in CST.*

*Regardless of the background of child victims of sex tourism, they all experience severe emotional, psychological and physical consequences as a result of their exploitation. The physical violence involved in the sexual exploitation of a child results in injury, pain and fear, while the acute psychological distress of sexual exploitation results in guilt, low self-esteem, depression and, in some instances, suicide. Children are also more vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections (STI), including HIV/AIDS.*

*Child victims of CST are often stigmatized by their communities and have difficulty obtaining formal or informal education. They do not receive community support, nor do they experience the same social interaction, or develop as members of the community in the same way as other children do. For these reasons, it is more difficult for victims of CSEC to support themselves financially or to live independently as adults later in life. The consequences of CST on children are severe and their health, well-being and future opportunities are all jeopardized by the exploitation to which they have been subjected". "*

**Information taken from ECPAT International. Combating Child Sex Tourism. Questions and Answers: [http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/CST/CST\\_FAQ\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/CST/CST_FAQ_ENG.pdf)**



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## **The Private Sector of Tourism**

The establishments and services of the travel and tourism industry may occasionally facilitate the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Staff members in hotels, travel agencies, restaurants and night clubs can play the role of “intermediaries” facilitating contact between tourists and children. This situation is even more common in developing countries, where intermediaries act in exchange for monetary compensation. The participation and commitment of the private sector of tourism is therefore essential to establish preventative actions against CST, in the framework of corporate social responsibility strategies.

## **The Role of Families and Local Communities**

Unfortunately, in some CST destinations the victims' families contribute to the problem in a desperate effort to escape poverty. In such cases the sexual exploitation of their children becomes a “strategy” to improve the family's basic income and well-being. Families are often unaware that CST constitutes a human rights violation.

To prevent this, families and communities should be sensitized and made aware of the implications and consequences of CST. Simultaneously, they could become key actors in the reporting of suspicious situations.

## **Governments**

Governments are one of the most important actors in the prevention and elimination of CST. They have the ability to inform potential offenders of the legal consequences of CST, to develop awareness raising campaigns and to enact and enforce child protection laws. Additionally, governments play a key role in promoting The Code of Conduct to protect children against sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.

**For further information on the role of the State, please click here:**  
<http://www.ecpat.net/WorldCongressIII/PDF/Publications/CST/Thematic Paper CST ENG.pdf>

## **Civil Society**

National and international NGOs play an important role in the fight against CST. These organizations can assist companies in the implementation of different tools to protect children against sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, such as The Code of Conduct. Furthermore, they can provide assistance to governments in the development of strategies against CST.

NGOs have been active participants in international discussion platforms and have helped design effective interventions and international campaigns.