A preview

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Despite 20 years of efforts, sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism has expanded, out-pacing attempts to respond

The precise scale and scope of SECTT are unknown ... but we do know:

• no region is untouched, no country is immune and the risks are growing
• SECTT is now mainly a domestic and intra-regional crime, found in the world’s richest countries, as well as its poorest
• offenders are not just tourists but also business and domestic travelers, migrant/transient workers and volunteers
• SECTT touches the entire tourism industry including guest houses, zero-star hotels, taxi drivers
Why is it on the rise? More opportunities for offenders

More people are on the move: travel and tourism have doubled

Remote places are now within reach, thanks to cheaper travel and the spread of the Internet

The Internet and mobile technology give offenders new pathways and greater anonymity

Law enforcement efforts are inconsistent, hobbled by weak laws and lack of coordination and information sharing

Impunity remains widespread for traveling child sex offenders, with alarmingly low conviction rates
Lack of protection for increasingly vulnerable children

Child victims include boys as well as girls, younger children as well as teenagers, children from minority groups and children in poverty.

Children who are already vulnerable are at greater risk because of the greater opportunities to offend.

Children must contend with changing social norms and peer pressure.

Services for child victims remain woefully inadequate and offenders often use their wealth and power to exploit children and evade justice.
Travel and tourism in Latin America

- Tourism generates about nine percent of GDP across the region, and more than sixteen million jobs.
- Tourist arrivals have quadrupled since 1980.
- Several countries – perhaps millions of households – depend on tourism and travel.
- Travel and tourism hotspots are often developed near poor communities: this can increase disparities rather than incomes.
- New forms of tourism and travel: eco-tourism, large sporting events, business- and conference-related travel, transient workers, migration across borders and from rural areas to cities. All present risks.
What fuels SECTT in Latin America?

- *Income inequality*: better-off offenders offering cash or goods to worse-off children
- *Crime and violence*: trafficking, gangs and the drugs trade
- *Social tolerance and social norms*: attitudes to gender, adolescent victims and homophobia
- *Corruption, impunity and lack of appropriate responses*
- *The rise of modern technology*: offenders can make direct contact with intermediaries and victims.
Five priority areas for action

1. **Awareness raising:** bring SECTT into the light, drawing on good information

2. **Prevention:** a strong focus on prevention by the travel and tourism industries could be a game changer.

3. **Reporting:** people need confidence in reporting mechanisms

4. **Ending impunity:** governments need to tackle the persistent impunity that reinforces offenders’ sense of entitlement and victims’ disempowerment.

5. **Access to justice, care and recovery:** survivors can help policy makers create appropriate responses, and governments need to invest far more in their child protection systems
Next steps

Cross-sectoral, coordinated and comprehensive approaches, starting with a global campaign

Convert the UN World Tourism Organization’s Code of Ethics into an international convention

Build robust reporting systems in every country

Engage technology companies worldwide to tackle the sale of children for sex via Internet sites

Build an effective, proactive global system for law enforcement to share information about offenders

Expand or create effective rehabilitation services for victims

Fill the data gaps, based on a clear definition of the crime:

*Acts of sexual exploitation embedded in a context of travel, tourism, or both.*
The regional response

• Region-wide efforts by the Inter-American Children’s Institute, UNWTO, the Regional Action Group of the Americas, and The Andean Community of Tourism Authorities.

• Many national campaigns: The ‘I am the Wall’ project in Colombia, the ‘Unforgettable Costa Rica’ campaign in Costa Rica, plus project between Canada and Costa Rica to address SECTT in source and destination countries.

• BUT this crime still needs to be higher on the region’s political agenda, together with other forms of child sexual exploitation.

• Lack of reporting flagged up by the Committee on the Rights of the Child
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Thank you!