

Child Sex Tourism – Growing Problem of the World

Sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes has a very severe effect on millions of children across continents. Abuse of children through Child Sex Tourism (CST) is growing rapidly. This gruesome crime is fueled by various factors some of them include weak laws of the land, poverty, easy access to internet and frequent travelling.

People who indulge in CST are usually travelers heading to developing countries. Tourists from Japan would for example travel to Thailand, while an American would travel to Mexico or to Central American countries to indulge in CST. Situational abusers on the other hand do not travel to indulge in sex, but are more likely to take advantage of such sexually abused children.



Global Efforts

With the growing menace of CST a number of various government organizations of different nations, tourism industry officials, along with the affected governments have started addressing this issue on a war footing.

The World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation addressed and discussed this issue in Stockholm and Yokohama in 1996 and 2001, attracting a lot of international attention to this grave problem.

A task force was setup to combat the issue of CST by the World Tourism Organization, which gave birth to the global code of conduct for tourism, in the year 1999.

There has been a steady increase in prosecution cases against CST offences worldwide over the last five years. As of today more than 32 nations have committed to the extraterritorial laws that allow their citizens to be prosecuted for crimes that are committed on foreign soil regardless of whether the crime is eligible for punishment in the country where it has been committed.



Fighting Child Sex Tourism

A large number of countries have taken positive steps to fight child sex tourism:

Brazil conducted a national as well as international campaign to create awareness about sex tourism. Tour operators in Italy are required to provide information about the nation's extraterritorial law regarding CST. The ministry of education in France along with travel industry officials has developed some guidelines on CST for tourism school curriculum, while the state owned Air France donates some portion of their income gained through in-flight sales of toys to fund awareness programs on CST. Cambodia has established special police units to fight child sex tourism on their soil and have successfully arrested and extradited foreign nationals on charges of CST. Tour operators in Sweden have signed on a code of conduct agreeing to sensitize it employees about CST. Japanese citizens are strictly prosecuted if they are caught indulging in sex with children in foreign countries.



Operation Predator

The United States has strengthened their laws by introducing the Trafficking Victim Protection Reauthorization Act and the PROTECT act to fight the menace of child sex tourism. These laws work together in creating awareness by distributing information about CST and increasing the penalties to 30 years for people engaging in CST.

Through the Operation Predator, an initiative launched in 2003 to fight child sex tourism, child pornography, and child exploitation the law enforcement agencies in the United States has been able to successfully arrest 25 Americans on charges of child sex tourism.

These international level awareness campaigns have educated the global community about growing problems with child sex tourism and have started taking positive steps.

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