

# TOURISM INDUSTRY SHOULD DO MORE TO PROTECT CHILDREN



Travelers to South -Eastern Asia have voiced concerns pertaining to children exploitation and the need for their protection through tourism industry. This is one of the findings of a new report issued by Project Child Prevention Pillar, an Australian initiative carried out by the World Vision in conjunction with the University of Western Sydney.

Last year alone, well over 36 million sightseers journeyed to Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. **In all those places, tourists came across children living in dangerously vulnerable situations.** They hence raised concerns about the urgent need to guarantee protection of children against the blatant violation of their rights and freedoms.

These findings were published in the study called the “Child Safe Traveler” for which around 270 vacationers from 44 countries were interrogated. The revealing study showed that 95% of travelers encountered local children living in grossly neglected and vulnerable conditions. As such, the miserable site of the destitute and the neglected children left a great number of tourists feeling disappointed, sad, concerned, and guilty.

At present, there is an increasing awareness of the significant perils to which children are exposed. Great scores of children could be spotted begging from strangers or selling mean items to visitors – according to the program manager of the Project Childhood Prevention Pillar for World Vision, Aarti Kapoor.

Around three quarters of the sojourners that were interrogated opined that they were well aware of young children who are prone to the ills of exploitation and abuse with regard to tourism and travel. Whereas a great number of the tourists suggested that they were ready to help the vast number of at-risk children, **the findings revealed the fact that they were not precisely decided on what measures to take in order to reach the most critical needs of such ignored children.** As such, they looked forward to getting more information on how to go about this humanitarian task.

With various global barometers suggesting that Asia is going to have a booming tourism future in less than 20 years, it is instrumental to ensure that safe and conducive tourism environment for children is created. Afrooz Kaviani Johnson, the technical director for World Vision said that educating travelers on how they can contribute towards bettering the lives of these children is a fundamental step.

The study established a number of crucial things. One is that having the requisite information towards helping these children is very important. Again, it found out that travelers who really cared about the future of such children avoided giving any handouts so as to discourage the begging culture. Further, **many sightseers confirmed their commitment towards promoting businesses that did their enterprises within the principals of child safety.**

According to the Child Safe Traveler, more concerted effort among travelers is needed to boost children safety. Different tourism organizations from various countries have unanimously agreed to work as a team towards eradicating the adamant menace of child exploitation and abuse.

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