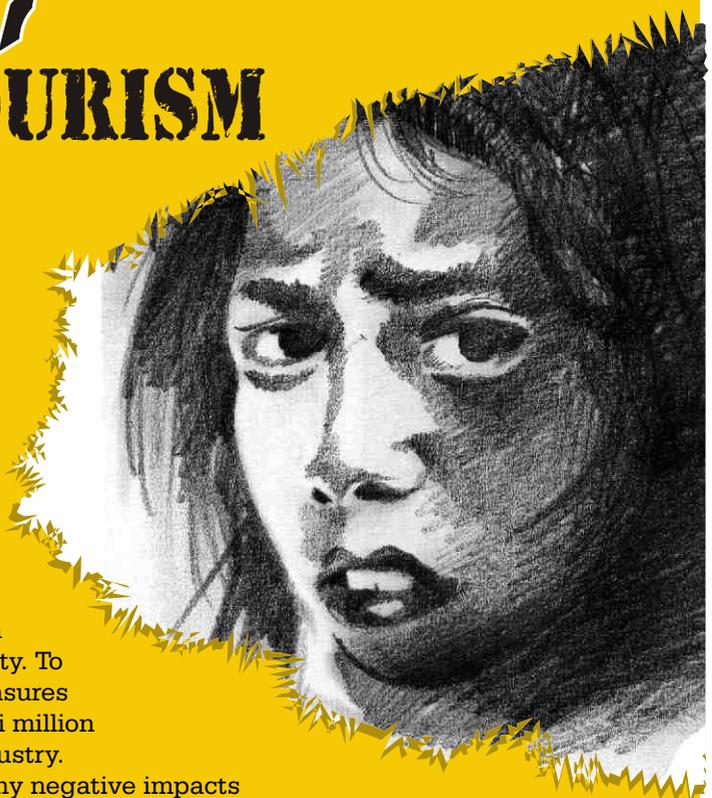


THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN

AN ugly face OF TOURISM

TOURISM ENRICHES? !

Tourism is undoubtedly one of the largest and fastest growing industries, promoted by governments as a major economic activity. To help proclaim its pleasures and benefits is a multi million dollar advertising industry. Unfortunately the many negative impacts of tourism - economic, social, cultural, environmental and on human rights, are not proclaimed as loudly.



A particularly ugly and alarming face of tourism is the growing nexus between tourism, trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Though tourism alone cannot be held responsible for the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, it provides an environment for easy access to children and thus increases the risk of trafficking and child sexual abuse.

Poor tourism planning leads to displacement of communities and loss of traditional livelihoods. This pushes children into tourism linked “work” like selling trinkets and services and working in small eateries. The gap between tourists and local communities and the celebration of consumerism that tourism is mostly about, defines these gaps more sharply. The erosion of traditional socio cultural values, the increased demand for sex services by both domestic and foreign tourists and the cultural permissiveness that tourism brings in are other factors that contribute to the sexual exploitation of children.

WHAT IS CHILD SEX TOURISM ?

“The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of children's rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and contemporary form of slavery”

A statement from The Declaration and the Agenda for Action from the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, held in Stockholm, 1996. The Stockholm Agenda for Action was adopted by 122 countries (including India) at the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden in 1996. A Second World Congress

Child trafficking is the movement of children from place to place - through force, coercion or deception - into situations of economic and sexual exploitation. Child trafficking is one of the worst forms of human rights violations. It affects millions of children worldwide. United Nations estimates suggest that globally trafficking in women and children is an operation worth \$10 billion annually. Children are the easiest targets for trafficking - most victims of trafficking in human beings are children and young persons below the age of 18 years. The younger the child, the more money she/he will fetch. The

question of willingness or consent just does not arise in the case of a trafficked child, particularly when a child is trafficked for illegal activities, including prostitution.

Child sexual abuse in general, and commercial sexual exploitation of children in particular, is a widespread but invisibilised problem. Sex tourists are either paedophiles who seek out children to satisfy their sexual urges or situational abusers. The mobility inherent in tourism and the anonymity and unaccountability of the tourist, makes the link between tourism and child sex abuse particularly pernicious. Those children most at risk of abuse include children with low/no education, homeless children, trafficked children, children from broken families, children affected by drug and alcohol abuse, children who have already been abused within their family and children forced to work in oppressive and exploitative conditions. Children in these circumstances often do not have the confidence, power or opportunity to speak out and they become invisible victims. Not all victims are from the poorest of poor communities - there is some evidence to suggest that school going children become involved in the sex trade for material gain and increased status and glamour by being associated with tourists.



HOW CAN WE COMBAT THIS CRIME ?

One of the biggest hurdles in child trafficking and child sexual abuse remains lack of public awareness and acceptance of

this growing crime. Prevention becomes difficult without international and inter-state cooperation, and the likelihood that abusers are booked or brought to justice remains low. Inadequate legislation and weak implementation and law enforcement make it easier for the traffickers and sexual offenders to operate with ease. Also legislations have many loopholes and lacunae that often allow traffickers and middlemen go scot-free, even after they are apprehended.

Globally tourism and travel trade organisations have indicated their willingness to come out against child sex tourism, and are developing policy documents or codes of conduct for their members. This is unfortunately not the case in India where a coordinated effort and the political will both seem lacking.

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism

Suppliers of tourism services adopting the code commit themselves to implement the following six criteria:

1. To establish an ethical policy regarding commercial sexual exploitation of children.
2. To train the personnel in the country of origin and travel destinations.
3. To introduce a clause in contracts with suppliers, stating a common repudiation of commercial sexual exploitation of children.
4. To provide information to travellers by means of catalogues, brochures, in-flight films, ticket-slips, home pages, etc.
5. To provide information to local "key persons" at the destinations.
6. To report annually

ECPAT began as a campaign in 1990 against child prostitution in Asian tourism and is now an NGO focusing on sexual exploitation of children world wide, not just in the context of tourism.. ECPAT International www.ecpat.net and ECPAT groups around the world have worked with the tourism and travel industry to raise awareness and to take practical measures against children being sexually abused.

Are you interested in knowing more about the impacts of tourism particularly on the child ?

Write to us at info@equitabletourism.org

Who we are

Established in 1985, EQUATIONS is an advocacy and campaigning organization working with the vision of tourism that is non-exploitative, that benefits local communities, is sustainable and ecologically sensitive

EQUATIONS programme on the Child and Tourism: Alarmed at the growing links between tourism and the abuse of children - in the forms of child labour, commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking, we actively work with local communities, concerned groups, government agencies, the tourism industry and other players to devise strategies to ensure that tourism is not based on the exploitation of children.



Equations

Equitable Tourism Options

#415,2C-Cross, 4th Main,OMBR layout, Banaswadi, Bangalore-560043

Ph:+91-80-25457607/25457659 Fax:+91-80-25457665 info@equitabletourism.org

Url:www.equitabletourism.org