

# **In the Heart of incredible India**

## **Consultation on the Status of Child and Tourism in Madhya Pradesh**

Organised by CARITAS, Centre for Responsible Tourism, Children's Rights in Goa, EQUATIONS, Jan Ugahi and Vikas Samvad  
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### **Madhya Pradesh**

Madhya Pradesh is one of the most popular tourism destinations in the country known for a range of attractions spanning religious, nature-based and cultural tourism, attracting lakhs of foreign and domestic tourists. In 2014 6.31 crore tourists visited Madhya Pradesh. Tourism is considered to be one of the major sector generating employment opportunity for the people but tens of thousands of people continue to remain unemployed in Madhya Pradesh. More over only recently has there been some acknowledgement by the tourism industry and the government of the socio-economic, environmental and cultural impacts of tourism on the communities, especially women and children. However this is very peripheral and a more pro-active role and engagement is needed.

Madhya Pradesh projects a grim picture of status indicators of children. A recent study conducted by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has revealed that Madhya Pradesh tops the list of highest number of child labourers in the country. While the highest number of children are in Beedi industry, they are also in areas such as hotels and eateries children. A report indicates that in 2009-10, 1.32 lakh were out of school children in Madhya Pradesh<sup>1</sup>. An increase of 122.2% in importation of girls in 2010-11 and 56% of these cases reported in 2011. Highest number of child rape cases -1262, (17% ) are reported from the state of Madhya Pradesh.

National Crime Records Bureau, reports that, over 23,000 children had gone missing in Madhya Pradesh since 2011. Of these, over 11,000 children went missing in 2013 alone<sup>2</sup>. The status of and situation of children in Madhya Pradesh not only indicates the vulnerable situation of children, failure of prevention and protection mechanisms and negligence of state towards protecting the children from exploitation.

The study conducted by Vikas Samvad and EQUATIONS with the support of Child Rights & You on the situation of children in tourism in Khajuraho and Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh provides a grim picture of exploitation of children in tourism. Most of the information related to the situation of children in tourism destinations, is widely accepted, observed and acknowledged by one and all - both civil society and the government. This knowledge however has not provided any impetus for serious action. So much so that the tourism department does not recognise or even acknowledge that they have a role in prevention and protection of children in tourism destinations.

The Singhasht, one of the major religious event happens once in 12 years in Ujjain, there are potential threat to safety and security of children. During the last Singhasht, cases such as missing children, child labour, begging children, child trafficking and sexual abuse, illegal adoption of children by wealthy people have been identified.

While the Labour, Home, Women and Child, Education and Tourism – all have a vital role to play – nobody is willing to take onus for what is happening and are happy to shift the responsibility to another. The departments have failed in addressing the realities of the children and it has been resulted in increase of vulnerability of children.

There is little information or knowledge in the tourism destinations among stakeholders about mechanisms such as the existence of the Safe and honourable code of conduct. Also while there are tourist polices in a majority of the destinations, their role needs to be revisited since as of now it is limited to only providing information and safeguarding the interest of tourist.

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1(<http://www.ssa.mp.gov.in/educationalprofile.htm>)

2 <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/sc-summons-mp-chief-secy-over-missing-kids/>

In the above context a one day state level consultation is being jointly organised by the like minded organizations come together to work on issues related to Children and Tourism in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh to discuss the possible intervention strategies to reduce violence against children, especially in the context of child sex tourism.

**Objectives:**

1. Develop an understanding on issues related to child and tourism in Madhya Pradesh
2. Review the status of implementation of the preventive and protection systems related to children and its application to tourism
3. Identify possible interventions and strategies to address the child rights violations in the context of tourism in Madhya Pradesh

**Participants:** Representatives of CSO's and tourism industry in Madhya Pradesh

**Expected outcome:**

- Bringing the CSO's together to develop common understanding on child rights issues in tourism
- Strengthening existing platform on related to child rights violations in tourism.
- Sharing the present status of protection mechanisms related to children in tourism and to discuss possible next steps to strengthen the protection mechanisms.

Keywords: Children, protection mechanisms, child right violations, Tourism, Madhaya Pradesh,

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