

## Violence against Children in Southeast Asia: the case of child sex tourism in Thailand, Lao PDR and Cambodia

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## Violence against Women in Southeast Asia



Violence against Children  
is prevalent  
**in all countries**

## Violence against Women in Southeast Asia



- A Regional Review and Synthesis of Findings on VAC (UNICEF 2014)
- Preliminary result on child sex tourism in Thailand, Cambodia, and Lao PDR (TIJ, Thai Police Force and Fight Against Child Exploitation (FACE), (2016))



## Violence against Women in Southeast Asia

17 – 35% Prevalence  
in Lower – Middle Income  
Countries



1 - 13% Prevalence  
in Upper Middle - High Income  
Countries



Violence against Children is  
more prevalent in  
lower income countries



## ASEAN Regional Plan of Action (RPA)

on the Elimination of Violence against Children

**Institutionalize policies** on elimination of violence against children among ASEAN member states

Promote the **establishment of prevention and protection services** supported by national legal framework and institutional mechanisms



## ASEAN Regional Plan of Action (RPA)

on the Elimination of Violence against Children



## ASEAN Regional Plan of Action (RPA)

### on the Elimination of Violence against Children

Lack of specific plan or designated agency to tackle sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism

Lack of specially trained personnel to facilitate implementation

Newly developed soft law, not fully implemented by countries

Each country has its own “context and reservations”

No systematic financial support and staffing

Difficulties in solving trans-national issues

No monitoring mechanisms

Key Challenges



## Child Sexual Abuse

“Child sexual abuse occurs when someone *involves a child in a sexual activity by using their power over them or taking advantage of their trust.* Child sexual abuse includes *all forms of unwanted sexual behaviour.* This can involve touching or even no contact at all.”

(World Vision 2014)

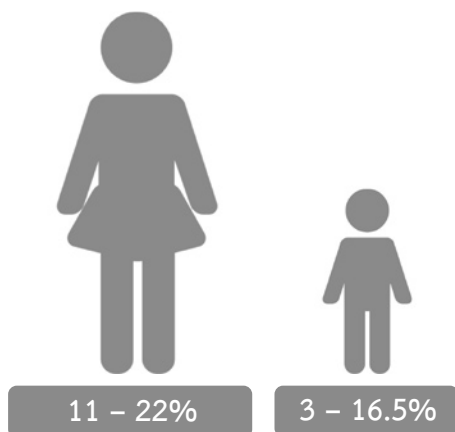


## Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse in travel and tourism denotes *child sexual abuse by tourists, travelers or foreign residents who commit child sexual abuse in the country or countries in which they are visiting or living*



## Child Sexual Abuse



Child sexual abuse is more prevalent for girls than boys in most areas

(UNICEF 2014)



## Child Sexual Abuse



For **low income countries**, child sexual abuse is slightly more prevalent for boys

(UNICEF 2014)

Needs more study to learn *why the prevalence and outcomes may be different for boys* and *address high prevalence of violence against girls* in the region



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Overview



In 2014, fastest growth in sexual exploitation of children by foreigners



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Overview



Traditional  
Destinations:  
**Thailand and  
The Philippines**



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Overview



Emerging Destinations:  
**Cambodia,  
Lao PDR, Myanmar  
and Vietnam**



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Overview

Male from another Southeast Asian country or East Asian countries (Japan, China, South Korea)

Offenders



Stateless children, refugees, indigenous children, ethnic minority groups, children working close to tourists

Children at Risk



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Overview

Emerging Pattern:  
Cheap Travel costs  
and new technology  
allow for expedient  
information sharing

*- A record of 96.6 million  
international visitors in 2014*

*- A rise of webcam-based child sex  
tourism due to the advancement of  
information technologies*





## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Causes



Offenders' preference for sexual activities with children

Demand



Take advantage of the demands and seek out children to create supply

Provider



Victims' need for financial security contributes in a small part

Supply



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Impacts and Consequences

Victims traumatized imposing negative impact on both physical and mental health

Many survivors have substance abuse problems as means to cope with their pain

Survivors have increased suicidal thoughts and tendencies



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Common Points of Access

**Establishment-based prostitution:** Bars, Karaoke Venues, Beer Gardens, Massage Parlors that operate as brothels

**Direct/facilitated solicitation of vulnerable children** living/working in public places popular among tourists such as beaches and market places

Access may even be **facilitated by those in child-contact roles such as schools and orphanages** who target children from broken homes



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Thailand



Thailand

- Infamously known as the “center of child sex tourism”
- High risk areas are Chiang Mai and Pattaya
- Travel agencies and hotel operators are the main facilitators
- Children are bought from their parents and forced into sex trade



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Thailand

- State justice systems often **inaccessible & inhospitable** to child victims of sexual violence
- **Corruption** in certain factions of the police leads to the tipping off of owners of brothels and sex clubs in exchange for bribes
- State judicial systems often fail to monitor and restrict the movements of accused exploiters in the pre-trial period
- More common to confine the child victims who are often confined for a long period of time following their rescue in highly restrictive and inadequate shelters for the duration of the criminal investigation and prosecution
- Inconsistent implementation of child-friendly procedures
- Prolonged and delayed prosecution of cases – leading to further **distrust in the justice system**

Flawed Justice Processes for Victims



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Cambodia



Cambodia

- Emerging as a growing target destination for child sex tourism
- Weak laws against prostitution and child sex tourism
- High risk areas are Siem Reap and Mondulkiri



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Cambodia



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Cambodia



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia – Lao PDR



Lao PDR

- Rapid growth in child pornography and emerging target for child sex tourism due to the development of information technology infrastructures
- Child prostitution activities commonly found in beer shops, where owners pay regular fees to the government, therefore reducing incentives for local officials to inspect or close down beer bars.



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Recommendations

1

Prevention interventions should take an all-inclusive approach

2

Prevention interventions should not only focus on child sexual abuse by travelers/tourists in tourist hubs, but also by locals and foreigners in remote and indigenous areas

3

Attitudes and practices must be observed from a holistic and dynamic perspective to fully address the risks and vulnerabilities of children to sexual abuse

4

More attention should be paid to the sexual abuse of boys



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Recommendations

5 Children should be targeted in prevention interventions and provided education to help them recognise signs of abuse and encourage them to disclose information to a trusted adult if they are being abused

6 Prevention interventions should reach out to both school-going and disadvantaged children

7 Prevention information and messaging should be conveyed to children via their favourite communications platforms

8 Parents should be targetted in preventative interventions and provided with the information and skills to protect and communicate effectively with their children



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Recommendations

9 Parents and duty bearers must be updated on children's tools and communication channels

10 Prevention interventions should reach out to both school-going and disadvantaged children

11 Interventions at community level should work in cooperation with, and in support of, existing local child protection mechanisms

12 Besides providing information and education, interventions should also include advocacy with relevant high-level jurisdictional entities to amend and enforce criminal justice responses to child sex offending



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia - Recommendations

13

Implementation of international and regional instruments and strengthening of cooperation

14

Developing database and evidence based research to inform policy and enhance understanding of patterns and evolutions of child sex tourism in the region

15

Improving and strengthening legal frameworks and law enforcement to combat child sex tourism through the adoption, revision and implementation of relevant legislation



## Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia

“It is much easier to place blame firmly on a sexually perverse foreign man abusing innocent children than it is to look at a situation where the sexual abuse of children is endemic and has become normalized, and indeed, institutionalised”



## Child Sex Tourism Catching the Predators

