

SEX TOURISM

THE ISSUE

Each year, thousands of individuals travel across international borders for sex tourism. Sex tourism is defined as: travel undertaken primarily or exclusively by men from developed countries, usually to developing countries, for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity, often of an extreme, forbidden, or illegal nature.⁸ Sex tourists often travel to countries with weak internal economic structures that leave children and women extremely vulnerable to the snare of sexual exploitation. Many of those being purchased for sex are victims of human trafficking or individuals with extremely limited life options. Sex tourists disproportionately target children and inflict life-long physical and emotional scars onto them.

DEMAND CHANGE

Everyday Actions

- 1.** Support tourism-related industries both in the United States and abroad that have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism (www.thecode.org). Companies in the United States include: Amazon Tours, Carlson Companies, and ElaBrasil.
- 2.** Purchase a Tassa Tag (luggage tag) from tassatag.org. The funds from these tags train tourism industry employees how to take an active role against sex tourism and conduct community outreach about the problem.
- 3.** Read the Trafficking in Persons Report issued annually by the U.S. Department of State. Find out which countries are offenders and write a letter to their travel bureau and tell them you will not visit until they improve their efforts around human trafficking (<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt>).
- 4.** Before traveling, identify how to report an instance of sex tourism. Examples include when you see someone purchasing sex from a minor or a tour company organizing sex tours. Find out more at: http://www.unwto.org/protect_children/ or report at www.businesstravelers.org.

Raise Awareness

- 5.** Host a film screening of Bangkok Girl. It is accessible on YouTube or for purchase on Amazon.com.
- 6.** Raise awareness about the incidence and impact of sex tourism. Approximately 25% of sex tourists are from the United States. Change needs to begin at home.

Volunteer

- 7.** Homeless youth are one of the most vulnerable populations trafficked into the sex trade to meet the demand of sex tourism. Identify an organization working with this population to support with monetary funds or supplies.

Advocate for Change

- 8.** Ask travel agencies, hotels, and tour operators to sign the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism. Applaud and patronize those who have signed the code. (www.thecode.org)
- 9.** If you suspect a U.S. business is organizing sex tours, or someone you know is purchasing such a tour, report it to your local police department and/or attorney general's office.

Keep Learning

- 10.** The ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) Website lists great resources including training manuals, global monitoring reports, information booklets, and child-friendly publications. Educate yourself more about the issue and ways to take action and educate others (www.ecpat.net).

⁸. www.hometravelagency.com