

Sex Tourism

What is Sex Tourism?

It is national and international travel of men and women where the main objective is sex with local men/women/children at the destination. The two elements are defined as 1) the people involved and 2) 'payment'.

Apart from the actual sex tourist, other tourists (romance, 'regular', business or conference tourist) can become sex tourists at the destination. Payment can be by money or in-kind (e.g., gifts, tickets, medical bills, family support, school books and fees).

Concerns about Sex Tourism are based on **Human Rights Abuses** and the exploitation of existing **inequalities** (political/economic, gender, race and age) for sexual gratification.

Sex Tourism is not only harmful to a tourist's sex partner but his or her family and community.

Web links

- *Protection of women:*
www.equalitynow.org/Coalition
- *Coalition Against Trafficking Women*
www.catwinternational.org/ProjectsCampaigns/Preventing

Child Sexual Exploitation – legal issues

Apart from the devastating impact on the children, there are serious legal issues. Offenders can be prosecuted not only in the country of offence but also in their home country, in many cases even if they do not return to their own country.

For example, in Australia:

- Australians who sexually abuse children overseas can be imprisoned for up to twenty years.
- Australians who exploit a position of trust or authority or take advantage of a child's mental impairment to engage in sexual abuse can be imprisoned for up to twenty-five years.
- Australians who engage in a sexual relationship with a child over a period of time can be imprisoned for up to twenty-five years.
- Australians who groom or procure a child for sexual activity overseas (for example, by using the internet to befriend a child and then trying to turn the relationship into a sexual relationship) can be imprisoned for up to fifteen years.
- Australians who prepare for or plan to commit child sex tourism offences can be imprisoned for up to ten years.

Web links Child sex tourism

- www.ag.gov.au/CrimeAndCorruption/CrimePrevention/Pages/Childsextourism.aspx
- www.ecpat.net
- www.avert.org/age-of-consent.htm
- www.thecode.org

The Role of the Travel Health Professional

It is important for travel health professionals to be aware of this global industry (e.g. over 250,000 sex tourists travel to Asia each year) and to participate in the fight against sexual exploitation of local residents, especially when it involves children.

The Responsible Travel Group of the ISTM provides a document on sex tourism which includes a section on what travel health professionals can and should do if they suspect a traveller's trip to be for sexual gratification. ISTM teaching slides are also available.

References

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