

Child Sex Tourism

An estimated two million children are enslaved in the global commercial sex trade. Many of these children are either sold into prostitution to pay off family debts or forcibly recruited on the street to work in brothels, where they are required to have sex with as many as 30 men each day. Some prostituted children are just 5 years old.

United States citizens are among those from several wealthy countries who exploit children trapped in the commercial sex trade and fuel a demand for younger children.

Some Americans take advantage of prostituted children while traveling to impoverished countries for business, tourism and other legitimate reasons. Others travel abroad specifically for a "sex tour."

U.S. citizens account for an estimated 25 percent of child sex tourists worldwide.

Sex tourists travel to countries such as **Cambodia, Thailand, Costa Rica, Mexico and Brazil**, expecting anonymity, low-cost prostitution, easily accessible children and impunity from prosecution.

Notably, it is estimated that one-third of the prostitutes in Cambodia are children.

The United States has laws that prohibit sex with minors in other countries and has greatly increased government efforts to combat this problem. Under the Protect Act of 2003, United States citizens or residents who engage in sexual activity abroad with a child under 18 can face **30 years in a U.S. prison**. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is now actively investigating American sex tourists abroad and making arrests.

Sexually exploited children are severely wounded physically and emotionally. Many acquire diseases such as HIV and AIDS, and almost all experience rejection by their families and communities in addition to fear, shame and despair.

Combating child sex tourism

As part of World Vision's commitment to **protecting children**, we have joined forces with national governments, law enforcement agencies and other organizations to combat child sex tourism through the Child Sex Tourism Prevention Project.

World Vision has implemented this project in Cambodia, Thailand, Costa Rica, Mexico, Brazil and the United States.

With backing from the U.S. Department of State and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, World Vision has tackled this problem with a **three-pronged strategy**:

>> **Deterrent messages**

World Vision developed a **targeted media campaign** to deter would-be sex tourist in Cambodia, Costa Rica, Thailand, Mexico, Brazil and the United States.

In an effort to dissuade child sex tourists at each step of their activity, deterrence messages have been placed in locations such as:

- U.S. airports
- Television



World Vision developed a targeted media campaign, to deter would-be sex tourists.

- Billboards and street signs overseas
- Hotels
- Airline in-flight videos
- Magazines
- The Internet
- Taxi

>> Law enforcement assistance

World Vision works with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to **help identify child sex tourists** and provide information that could lead to their prosecution and conviction. Our extensive staff (23,000 employees in 100 countries), community networks and our work with children enables World Vision to lend valuable assistance to local and U.S. law enforcement agencies. World Vision has held workshops in Cambodia, Thailand, Mexico and Brazil to help increase law enforcement assistance.

>> Prevention programs

World Vision works to prevent children from being drawn into the commercial sex trade through interventions like **education, advocacy and the creation of other means to make a living**. World Vision operates at local and national levels to specifically prevent child sex tourism in Cambodia, Costa Rica, Thailand, Mexico and Brazil with efforts soon to expand to other sex-tour destination countries.