

## **Sustainable tourism development and the protection of children from sexual exploitation**

*by Theo Noten (ECPAT Netherlands)*

### **Sustainable tourism opportunities**

Since the Brundlandt Report (Our Common future) in 1987 and the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, 'Sustainable Development' has been much debated by the UN and international forums, NGOs, academics, the public sector, and increasingly, by the private sector.

Although most of the emphasis has been on environmental aspects of sustainability, the concept of sustainable development has always been broader. It stresses the interdependence of the natural environment with economy and society, and includes issues like natural, economic, social and cultural diversity, equity and human rights, globalisation, localisation and corporate and individual citizenship and responsibility.

Tourism, perhaps more than any other economic activity, depends on the quality of human and natural environment and resources. Sustainable tourism refers to a type of tourism which optimises the benefits and limits the negative impacts.

Potential overconsumption of natural resources and environmental degradation, exploitation of cultures and labour, sexual exploitation of women and children, displacement of people from their land, poorly thought out tourism planning, lack of consultation with local communities, and a high rate of foreign exchange leakage will reduce local economic benefits.

If sustainable, however, tourism - as the world's largest industry - has enormous economic potential. To be considered sustainable, it is important that economic returns are distributed equitably. When equitable distribution is ensured, tourism can provide marginalised or poor communities with a vital route out of poverty and it can prevent exploitation, including the sexual exploitation of children.

The opportunities that sustainable tourism development provide, should not be missed by governments, NGOs, communities or the tourism industry, including both transnational companies and small or medium sized local entrepreneurs. To seize the opportunity, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed.

### **Campaigns to fight child sex tourism need sustainability**

Many international organisations related to tourism have issued declarations in which child prostitution is condemned. However, these global top-down declarations are not easily translated into concrete measures at ground level in either tourist sending or tourist receiving countries. Any impact that these declarations might have, is probably not seen by the individual tourist.

For governments of sending countries, outbound tourism is mostly a non-issue. From an economic perspective, no government department takes responsibility for outbound tourism. In some tourist receiving countries, national tourism organisations may warn tourists in their promotional material not to get involved in sexual exploitation of children. Most of these activities, however, lack continuity and occur only incidentally; collaboration with NGOs seems to be haphazard.

Since 1998, several multinational tourism companies have become involved in projects to end child sex tourism. These projects concentrate mainly on awareness-raising activities for employees and travellers, only a few actually create opportunities for children at risk.

In most campaigns, NGOs - particularly members of the ECPAT International network - are the driving force. Involvement of organisations is mostly based on the personal interest of a particular person. Lack of financial and human resources make most activities short lived; a long term perspective is lacking in most cases. Occasionally collaboration has led to very good campaigns, but generally campaigns are in need of a more sustainable approach.

## **Corporate social entrepreneurship and multi-stakeholder partnerships: the solution?**

In December 2001 at the Second World Congress in Yokohama, cooperation between governments, civil society and the business sector was announced as the way forward to create sustainable solutions to ending the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This multi-stakeholder partnership approach was also strongly advocated in the outcome of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in August 2002. Bringing about an end to the commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourism should be integrated into the sustainable tourism development framework at a global scale as well as at local level.

For true involvement of the business sector, corporate accountability, transparency, and social responsibility are keywords. More and more the business sector embraces the idea to address corporate social responsibility from a business perspective: customers want to buy a product with certain quality standards and consider social responsible entrepreneurship to be part of that. Indeed, the tourism experience is a product in need of a high quality standard. Products associated with child prostitution definitely do not fit in this category. To safeguard the quality of the tourism experience product for the future, the international tourism industry realizes it is in its own best interest to help protect women and children from sexual exploitation in tourism and to help create a safe environment for children to grow up in.

The commitment of multinational companies however is not enough; it is absolutely necessary to involve local communities and local small and medium entrepreneurs as well. Ownership at the local level is a prerogative to get effective and sustainable results locally. National and local government bodies have to take up their own role to promote a more sustainable tourism planning process in which all local, national and international stakeholders are involved. NGOs have the obligation to share their expertise, monitor the development process, evaluate the results and remind the private and public sector of their obligations, as set out in international conventions, treaties and declarations.

For ECPAT the aim is clear: the protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism as part of sustainable tourism development. What is needed are a clear set of goals, timeframes and budgets. If the multi-stakeholder collaboration is to work, everybody should know what their role is and what the common interest is. To advocate sustainability other stakeholders should be aware that investing in prevention now is less costly than solving problems in the future.

FRAME:

### **Tools for Change**

Several international conventions, protocols and conference declarations provide a framework that can be used to activate governments, and through them, the private sector. These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour. Participating governments at the 1st (1996) and 2nd (2001) World Congresses against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, and at UNGASS (2002) committed themselves to create National Action Plans which include the fight against child sex tourism. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002) calls for the strengthening of governments' roles to actively promote corporate responsibility and accountability and to support continuous improvement in corporate practises in all countries. In all cases, it is necessary that NGOs monitor the quality of initiatives and campaign to make sure that governments do not retreat from their legitimate responsibilities.

## **Child Sex Tourism Campaigns: the need for dialogue on indicators and evaluation strategies**

*by Chris Beddoe Child Wise (ECPAT in Australia)*

ECPAT should congratulate itself. No other human rights or environmental campaign has influenced the international tourism industry in the way that the campaign against child sex tourism has done. ECPAT groups have been at the forefront of campaigning and some of the first leaflets and posters ever produced 10 years ago were by PEACE in Sri Lanka and ECPAT Philippines, both still active in campaigning against child sex tourism.

So why does child sex tourism still exist? Does this mean that the international campaigns to prevent child sex tourism have failed to make an impact?

The answer to the last question is clearly no, there has definitely been an impact but how do we evaluate it? More importantly how can we learn from it so that future campaigns can become more successful?

Many ECPAT groups have developed creative campaign actions based on communicating a message through posters, leaflets, luggage labels, stickers and more recently through TV spots and in-flight videos. Most of these actions have been awareness-raising activities but once we have raised awareness in the community what do we do next? Raising awareness is only one part of the prevention cycle.

Other stages in the cycle include defining the problem through research and consultation, initiatives to reduce the root causes and program evaluation. All of these stages can include the active participation of stakeholders including those most affected.

As ECPAT grows, new partners look toward established campaigns for models that they can replicate. However, within the ECPAT movement we have been slow to analyse the collective impact of our campaign actions using a common set of indicators.

### **INDICATORS**

The most elusive yet most important question is what are we trying to achieve and what indicators can we use to measure it? Of course we are working toward a higher goal of eliminating commercial sexual exploitation of children - but a leaflet or a poster on it's own won't do that.

If successful campaigning is about achieving a change of behaviour or attitude then a campaign tool such as a leaflet, poster, sticker or in-flight video should have a clearly defined objective and a set of indicators to help measure its effectiveness and contribution to the overall success of the campaign.

The best way to develop indicators for monitoring and evaluation is by being as detailed as possible about the purpose and objective of the campaign tool and then develop a plan according to the specific needs of the audience (target market). The tool will be more successful if you match the right message to the right audience and distribute in the right location (segmenting the market).

Some indicators are easily defined but planning is still important. For example, a leaflet that's purpose is to encourage people to report child abuse to a police hotline and it's objective is increased reporting of child sex crimes - then one indicator would be the number of phone calls made to the police hotline. But have you planned thoroughly for other variables? Is the hotline open 24 hours? Can people call it from other locations without incurring long distance charges? Do the police service have the capacity to handle a large volume of calls? Will the police service give you statistical data to evaluate? What is the target audience that you want and how will you get the leaflet to them?

Alternatively, if the leaflet is about deterring the potential offender what planning have you done? Why have you made the assumption that an offender will be deterred by reading a leaflet? Have you asked offenders whether they would be deterred if they had seen a leaflet? If so, how will you get your leaflet to places that best targets the potential offender?

Once you have gone through these and other more specific questions it becomes easier to develop indicators for monitoring and evaluation strategies. The first example is straightforward: the number of calls to police. But in the second example the indicators become less clear. Measuring the prevention of a crime is a difficult concept especially when baseline data is not available.

## EVALUATION

Evaluation comes in four basic forms - process evaluation, content evaluation, impact evaluation and ethical evaluation. Most of us find it easiest to do process evaluations. For example: we produced 20,000 leaflets at x cost, distributed to y outlets between the months of June to December. Most donor agencies ask for this type of quantifiable evaluation.

However, in order to measure the overall contribution to the campaign we should attempt to follow through with the other three methods, especially impact evaluation. Unfortunately, donor agencies are not always sympathetic to extending funding for these purposes once the activity is completed. Lack of funds is a real barrier to effective planning and evaluation.

Impact evaluation should include a medium to long-term review process through methods such as focus group discussions, stakeholder consultations and surveys for feedback. For example, in the case of the leaflet encouraging people to report child abuse to police what impact has this had on the police as well as on child victims? Were the police adequately trained to handle an increase in the volume of calls? Were there adequate legal and welfare services for children who were rescued as a result of increased calls? Has the increase in calls resulted in increased convictions or additional resources for police and other services for protecting children?

With impact evaluation we also must face the possibility that there was no impact or negative impact. This is difficult to report especially when future funds are dependent on a successful outcome. However, by documenting and sharing lessons learned the implementing agency will help others to improve future campaigning activities.

Content evaluation includes things such as 'readability' or clarity of language and style, effectiveness of visual images, appropriate use of multiple languages to cater to different nationalities or ethnic groups. Does it give enough direction to the audience to help them do what they are being asked to do? Focus groups and surveys are a good way to evaluate content.

Ethical evaluation is rarely done but an important reflective tool. One outcome of child sex tourism campaigns has been the tendency for police authorities in some countries to do a 'sweep' of sex workers and lock-up both adult and children to get them off the streets. This would be considered an ethical issue and would have to be addressed as part of the overall campaign planning and evaluation.

Child Sex Tourism is a global phenomenon - it is a crime that knows no borders and offenders are using new, often sophisticated ways of avoiding detection.

Prevention requires international coordination in law enforcement, policy, programs and campaigning and we, as campaigners, should be keeping up with trends in campaigning techniques and methods, including evaluating our impact on a national, regional and global scale.

*In developing their 2001-2003 national campaign against the sexual exploitation of children in tourism, the Brazilian Tourist Board (EMBRATUR) in collaboration with various governmental and non-governmental organizations strategically decided that the campaign should be informative and direct, but the tone would not be aggressive or negative. The material would be kept simple, not cluttered with text, and images of children would not be used.*

*Its goal is to warn visitors about the severity of Brazilian laws against child sex tourism, and to invite conscientious citizens to help in the fight against this abuse by providing a toll free reporting hotline. An initial evaluation, strategically conducted during Carnival, are positive, and reveal optimistic numbers regarding its impact.*

*Respect, the Austrian Center for Tourism and Development, conducted an evaluation of the in-flight video screened on Austrian Airlines on their long haul flights to India and South Africa.*

*Quantitative data, based on a questionnaire, was compiled, and face-to-face interviews by a team of researchers working on the flight provided qualitative data. 87% of the interviewees received the video positively, and approved of this type of awareness action in-flight. The majority felt that the tourism industry has not been active enough in terms of passenger education. Prior to the video, nearly 50% of the interviewees were unaware of the*

*possibility of prosecution in their home country. Negative reactions, where they occurred, might have been provoked by the fact that the video was screened without preparing (i.e. informing) the passengers of the nature of the content.*