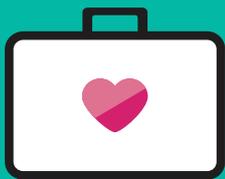


Executive summary



The Child Safe Traveller

A report produced by Project Childhood Prevention Pillar



Executive summary

This report presents the main findings of research with tourists in Bangkok, Thailand, between April and May 2013. Building on *Child Safe Tourism: The Tourist Perspective* (World Vision, 2012), this study looked deeper into tourist perceptions of child exploitation in connection with tourism in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. It also assessed tourist reactions to child safe tourism communications. A total of 268 tourists from across the globe, representing different traveller types, ages, genders and socio-cultural backgrounds, completed surveys and interviews. Participating tourists had been in Thailand for varying lengths of time and many had travelled (or were travelling) elsewhere in South East Asia and beyond.

The key findings that emerged from the research show:

- 1. The majority of tourists (76%) were aware of the issue of child exploitation in connection with tourism in the region.** Many tourists pointed to extremely negative destination images as they discussed the problem. Tourists explained they gained this knowledge via the media, popular culture and/or word of mouth prior to their arrival in the destination. The majority of tourists cited more publicised and extreme forms of child exploitation, such as 'child trafficking' and 'child sex tourism'. Some tourists also linked child exploitation to a particular type of tourist, such as a 'paedophile' or 'sex tourist'. Fewer tourists were aware of the multi-faceted nature of abuse and the fact that different tourist behaviours (such as giving money to begging children or 'orphanage tourism') could also leave children and young people vulnerable to exploitation.
- 2. Almost all tourists (95% of those surveyed) encountered local children and many interactions left tourists feeling sad, guilty, concerned and disappointed.** In some cases, tourists expressed a desire to be able to do more to help, in others they expressed frustration that more was not being done locally to combat child exploitation. A number of tourists were particularly impacted seeing children working on the streets or begging. Some tourists even stated that their visit to the region would be improved were children seen to be better protected from risk of harm.
- 3. Tourists' previous travel experiences and/or socio-cultural backgrounds influenced their reactions to child exploitation in tourism.** Some tourists were less shocked witnessing these problems because of their previous exposure via prior travels in the region or in other developing countries. Some tourists from Asia were also less likely to express alarm, particularly if their own countries experienced similar problems.

- 4. Tourists wanted to help children they believed were at risk, but many were confused about what action to take.** Tourist responses to situations where they thought a child was being exploited, or at risk of exploitation, were rarely straightforward. Tourists tended to make conscious internal assessments about how to best respond. Their assessments were based on situational factors and their emotional response, as well as principle. A number of tourists were confused about what actions they could take to assist and queried how effective they would be.
- 5. A large proportion of tourists believed the tourism industry and/or governments in the region should take more action to tackle child exploitation, including by educating tourists on how they could help.** Tourists wanted to make a positive contribution and wanted more information on how they could do so. Some expressed a keen interest to have information made available not just in the destination but also at home, so that they would know more about the issue and how to respond on arrival. Many tourists said they would be likely to support tourism businesses that implemented child safe practices (particularly if those establishments were reasonably priced and well vetted by an external organisation).
- 6. Tourists responded favourably to child safe tourism communications and the message positively impacted tourist behaviour.** The majority of interviewees felt better informed after viewing campaign materials as part of the interview. They said the materials would have some influence on their future touristic behaviour. Those tourists who reported previously being exposed to such messages had much lower rates of involvement in interactions with children that could perpetuate or leave them vulnerable to exploitation (such as 'orphanage tourism', giving to children begging, or buying from children on the street).

Four important recommendations arise from the findings:

1. To provide tourists with more information about how children are vulnerable to child abuse and exploitation in tourism.
2. To provide tourists with clear information on how to be a child safe traveller.
3. To provide tourists with more consumer choices and options that align with child safe tourism principles.
4. To publicly acknowledge and foster the understanding that child safe tourism is a responsibility that is shared between governments, industry and travellers.

Key phrases explained

'Child abuse and exploitation' includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

'Children and young people' means any person under 18 years of age.

'Child safe tourism' is tourism that recognises its impact on children (both direct or indirect) and takes an active role in contributing to a safer tourism environment for children.

'Orphanage tourism' is where 'residential care' facilities allow tourists to come and visit, and sometimes volunteer, with children who live there. 'Orphanage tourism' is detrimental to children's social, physical and psychological well-being.





Child Safe Tourism

Take action against abuse

www.childsafetourism.org

The Child Safe Traveller

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The full report is downloadable from the Child Safe Tourism website.

