National Response to Child Sex Tourism and CSEC in the Gambia
Child Protection Alliance

Gambia Tourism Authority

“To make The Gambia a world-class destination and a business centre”

The Official Representative of ECPAT International in The Gambia

Child Sex Tourism and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in The Gambia

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I Am
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Child Sex Tourism and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in The Gambia
CPA and Terre Des Hommes conducted research on Child Sex Tourism and the involvement of Dutch tourist.

“Gambia The Smiling Coast!”

Visit: http://www.cpagambia.gm for a copy
Purpose of Research

- Reports of possible sexual abuse of children by tourists came to CPA and Terre des Hommes

- CPA and Terre des Hommes wanted to instigate joint research to assess the validity of the reports
Objectives of Research (1+2)

1. To gather **qualitative information** through one to one interviews with individuals, organisations and institutions involved with tourism or services to children, who have been abused or exploited, in order to determine if child sex tourism is happening in The Gambia and to determine if Dutch tourists are involved.

2. To base **recommendations** on suggestions made by interviewees, as well as on international legally binding instruments, and Agenda for Action as agreed at the 1996 Stockholm and the 2001 Yokohoma Conferences on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.
Objectives of Research (3, 4 +5)

3. To present a comprehensive report in which the problem is illustrated and pathways are identified to protect children from sexual exploitation;

4. To complement the UNICEF/Gambia Government Study on the sexual exploitation of children in the Senegambia Region (just completed)

5. To use the information gathered during the research to inform presentations in Workshops and in the development of training manuals or information materials
Is Child Sex Tourism really happening? (1)

Those interviewed who lived and worked in The Gambia were of the opinion that Child Sex Tourism is happening!

- “Yes, it is happening, but it is difficult to prove. There is no evidence, just indicators, because the actual act is hidden and the perpetrators are clever and well educated” (Hotel Owner TDA)

- “It is rampant and not hidden but very open (...) Some young girls are brought to the hotel and stay for a few hours, or overnight. Some tourists come for one girl only, others you see with many girls during their stay” (Local Tour Guide)
Is CST really happening? (2)

“...You have to understand; Gambia is known for its friendliness and its hospitality to everyone. Some tourists use this. They are not good tourists!” (Beach Vendor)
How Child Sex Tourism takes place;

1. Direct Contact

- Tourists meeting with children who are selling peanuts or fruit on the beach
- Meeting with children on the street (e.g. Bakau; Crocodile Pool Area)
- By making contact with a family and offering financial support for buying food and then offering school sponsorship to children
- Abusers will go to school and choose children to offer sponsorship
- Acquiring children’s mobile numbers; then calling them offering free educational materials and sponsorship
2. Indirect Contact

- Hotel Workers or Security Guards bringing girls/boys to tourist’s rooms for money
- “Bumsters” who act as go-betweens between tourists and the child
- Taxi-drivers who will also act as go-betweens at a price
- Young Gambian men who can be seen driving around tourist areas in four-wheel drives and who appear to provide illegal services to tourists
Where Child Sex Tourism takes place

- In the Tourism Development Area; confined to the areas around the major hotels and beaches restaurants and nightclubs
- In hotel rooms
- In the water at the beach and in sand-dunes (several mentioned)
- In home-countries of tourists
Conditions that make Child Sex Exploitation easy (1)

- The open, trusting and friendly nature of the Gambian people who will invite tourists into their homes and compounds, thereby giving them free access to their children.

- Religious and Cultural beliefs that add to a Culture of Silence in regard to the abuse of children and their rights, and that keep sex as a taboo topic between the generations.
Conditions that make child sex exploitation easy (2)

- The culture of bribes which exists, where money or gifts are used to get a person (especially white people) out of difficult circumstances

- The expectations that young people have about sex, love and marriage, mean that they are more likely not to see sexual exploitation as an issue
Actions that can be taken to stop CST

- Awareness of the issue should be raised
- Legislation should be reformed
- A central place to report cases should be present
- Law enforcement officials of different countries should cooperate
- Resources should be directed towards preventing Child Sex Tourism
National Activities to Eradicate Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism (1)

- CPA played an important role in lobbying Government through the Department of Social Welfare for the drafting of a National Plan of Action on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

- A brochure and position paper has been developed on Child Sex Tourism
National Activities to eradicate Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism (2)

- CPA and GTA facilitated the setting up of a National Task Force on Child Sex Tourism (CST)

- CPA together with the National Taskforce and a consultant funded by ECPAT-Netherlands/DCI assisted in laying the foundation for the implementation of the Code of Conduct against CSEC in Travel and Tourism
National Activities to eradicate Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism (3)

- National Tourism Offences Act 2002
- A draft Children Bill has been developed to harmonise Domestic Laws with the International Instrument (e.g., UNCRC and the African Chartered on the Rights and Welfare of Children).
National Activities to Eradicate the Sexual Exploitation of children in Tourism

- A media training workshop entitle ‘Ethics in Reporting Child Abuse Cases in The Gambia’ was held in February.
- National Training Manual on Child Protection has been developed
- Quarterly Child Protection Newsletter Produced by CPA.
National Activities to Eradicate the Sexual Exploitation of children in Tourism

- A training has been conducted with professionals working in the Tourism Development Area (police, taxi-drivers, hotel-owners etc.) to raise awareness on the issue of Child Sex Tourism and come up with ways to combat it.

- Radio and Television Programmes
National Activities to Eradicate the Sexual Exploitation of children in Tourism cont’d

- Promoting Children’s Participation in combating Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism (Voice of the Young)
Future Outlook or way forward

Development; directed towards the Government of The Gambia

- Poverty eradication programmes should be strengthened and extended
- Free and compulsory primary education especially for girls should be extended
- Birth registration should be established as a priority
Future Outlook or way forward

**Prevention;** directed towards the Government of the Gambia, the Tourist Industry, NGOs, Media and Parents

- Nationwide awareness and education campaigns on commercial sexual exploitation
- Establish a hotline for reporting cases
- All tour operators working in The Gambia should adopt “The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism”
Future Outlook or way forward

**Law Reform; Directed towards the Gambian Government and Justice authorities:**

- The Gambian criminal code should be reviewed, revised and harmonised with the UNCRC, the ACRWC and other relevant international documents
Future Outlook or way forward

Law Enforcement; directed towards the Gambian Police and Justice authorities, the tourist industry and NGOs

- Special units within the Security Force for monitoring and reporting child sex abuse by tourists should be established
- Training of law enforcement officials in recognizing and dealing with child sex tourism should be provided
- Cooperation on combating child sex tourism on different levels could be improved
- All efforts should be made to enforce the Tourism Offences Act 2002
Future Outlook or way forward

Rehabilitation; directed towards the Gambian Governments, NGOs and donors

- Rehabilitation and social integration programmes should be developed focusing in the first instance on the development of counseling services.
Future Outlook or way forward

Research: directed towards the Gambian Government and NGOs and donors:

- Further quantitative research into child sex tourism is necessary to know the magnitude of the phenomenon
Quotation

We realised that the challenges are formidable. We in The Gambia understand that this is becoming a problem in our country, eradicating it totally is our ultimate aim and we have no time to waste. We are trying to make everybody to understand that a child been abuse can be their own daughter or son.