



Report of the 31st meeting of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection

ITB Berlin, Germany, 10 March 2016

The UNWTO Children's Network held its 31st meeting in Berlin on 10 March 2016 with the special focus on responsible business strategies and child protection in tourism. This gathering highlighted the good practices championed by the tourism industry and also provided a platform for other stakeholders to share their examples and pressing challenges with regards to child protection in tourism.

Introductory remarks

Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, UNWTO, pointed out that the main problem in terms of sustainable development is not the ever-growing size of the tourism industry, but the greater responsibility that needs to come with the growth. He also stressed that the industry must admit that its infrastructure is being used to commit some of the most hideous crimes, namely child exploitation. The Secretary-General praised the work of ECPAT Int'l and partners in producing the Global Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism and added that its concrete findings should be instrumental in future awareness-raising actions.

Carol Bellamy, Chair of the World Tourism Network on Child Protection, welcomed the speakers and expressed her delight in seeing the Tourism Minister of Sudan, the Vice-Minister of Colombia, as well as the government representatives of Austria, Bahamas, Cambodia, Germany, Mali and Uruguay in the audience. The Chair recalled that the Network's meeting is a multi-stakeholder gathering which serves as a platform for sharing best practices and research. Ms. Bellamy reiterated that data-driven awareness-raising and decisions are needed to really confront the challenges of child protection in travel and tourism.

Results of the Global Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism

Najat Maalla M'jid, Chair of the High-Level Global Task Force to End Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism, shared the **key findings of the Global Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children** in the sector and the most pressing obstacles for its prevention.

First of all, the lack of reporting, given the increased social tolerance to child abuse and the absence of child-sensitive reporting mechanisms. Considering that no country is immune to this problem in light of the global technological connectivity, the current definition of country of origin, destination or transit is therefore outdated and should be replaced with terms of demand, supply and exploitation, instead. Another challenge is the evolving and complex profile of offenders, as there are nowadays more national and regional offenders. Moreover, not only the affluent Western men commit this crime, but also many men and women from other

regions, or even travellers with no original intention of abusing children who find themselves in situations where this is encouraged or easily accessible.

Furthermore, the continued impunity as a result of the lack of reporting, weak legislation and increased social acceptance remains one of the biggest concerns. In addition, the growing vulnerability of children due to unfavourable socio-economic factors, conflict displacement and migration cannot be forgotten. Lastly, the Internet and social norms among children should be taken into account. The Internet nowadays offers an easy access to and for children, which can be noticed by the emerging challenges like grooming, sexting and even sexual extortion. Social norms among children, on the other hand, can pressure peers into having sexual relations with adults or into exchanging sexual services for money or luxurious products. Based on these challenges, the Global Study aims to address the chronic lack of evidence and comparable data. It calls for better coordination among the different national, regional and international stakeholders and urges for more awareness raising.

Ms. M'jid concluded that the sector should be more preventive when implementing tourism strategies and that children should be empowered to become actors in their own protection. The Chair of the High-Level Global Task Force emphasised the need for a collective and comprehensive approach in child protection and a more efficient collaboration between the private and public sectors. She called upon all stakeholders to use the Global Study as a tool for promotion, information sharing and new joint efforts towards a positive change. Ms. M'jid also announced that the Study would be published in May 2016 to mark the 20th anniversary of the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in 1996 in Stockholm, Sweden.

Special session: Responsible Business Strategies and Child Protection in Tourism

Nikki White, Head of Destinations and Sustainability of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) presented four best practices the Association had implemented to raise awareness of their members regarding their role in child protection and to provide them with guidance in different areas *vis a vis* human rights.

1. **'Every child, everywhere'** is a project ABTA launched in cooperation with ECPAT aimed at frontline agents to understand the crucial issues of child protection and encourage them to stay vigilant to potential threats. The campaign intends to make the agents aware of the potential signs and trouble spots, and teach them how to recognise and properly report on suspicious cases.
2. Another ABTA initiative is **'Travelife'**, a sustainability certification system which consists of 7 core questions that directly relate to the protection of children in the travel and tourism industries. These questions tackle the issues such as exploitation, awareness raising within the sector's supply chain, reporting to authorities and labour conditions. One of the major challenges in defining these criteria has been the choice of a suitable language as there has been a serious barrier for the industry professionals to admit the issue of child exploitation in some countries.
3. In 2015 ABTA launched the **'Modern Slavery Act'** in cooperation with the UK government, targeting the sector's supply chain. It requires businesses with a certain level of financial turnover to publish an annual slavery and human trafficking statement and is also used as a device to raise awareness within a greater audience.
4. The Association has also developed **Volunteer Tourism Guidelines** aimed at assisting tour operators to ask the right questions targeting exploitation of children when putting together new volunteer

programmes. One of the main ambitions of the project is to unveil dubious intentions when it comes to volunteering in orphanages. The guidelines shall be launched shortly.

[Click here for the presentation of Nikki White.](#)

Elise Allart, Manager of Sustainable Development, representing TUI Benelux and TUI Group reported on the different child protection initiatives the group has undertaken.

In 2015 TUI launched their 5-year sustainability strategy called '**Better holidays, better world**', focusing on possible improvements within the company's supply chain. The objective was to include sustainability and child protection in every step of the customer's journey, starting with the choice of a vacation destination.

A second initiative is the four-and-a-half year multi-stakeholder project TUI Netherlands launched in 2002 in North East Brazil to reduce commercial sexual exploitation of boys and girls in the tourism industry. The main partners were the NGO Plan, TUI Netherlands, ECPAT, local Brazilian partners, the Dutch Travel Association and the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. The focus was primarily orientated at the supply side, so that no more youngsters would slide into the informal sector and that the demand of the source markets for sexual exploitation of children in Brazil would decrease. The initiative called '**A Collective NO to Sexual Exploitation of Children in Holiday destinations**' was built upon 6 main pillars, as follows:

1. **Strengthen the self-protection of children** and young adolescents. Through the training of 150 youth mobilizers on how to avoid exploitation and how to speak up for their rights, the project reached 27.000 people;
2. **Increase opportunities in the local formal labour market.** Research showed the lack of local qualified personnel in the tourism industry. TUI and its partners created vocational training programmes for adolescents at risk by providing both theoretical and practical know-how. 500 students were trained and over 50% of them found employment in the local tourism industry;
3. **Support and strengthen local child protection bodies** in order to make them more effective in attending victims of sexual abuse. 16.000 child protection professionals in 8 municipalities were trained to make their reporting and support systems more efficient;
4. **Promote the awareness and commitment of the Brazilian tourism industry.** 348 companies signed the ECPAT Code of Conduct during the project;
5. **Promote awareness and commitment of the Dutch tourism industry.** The Dutch tourism industry which joined forces with the Ministry of Security and Justice designed three "Don't look away" campaigns. They partners are committed to repeat awareness raising campaigns every year;
6. **Achieve the adoption of a zero tolerance policy** by the Dutch government, which resulted in the establishment of a specialized police unit combatting child pornography and sexual exploitation of children in tourism. The unit designed an action plan which includes biannual progress reporting to the Government.

Given the positive results of the project conducted in Brazil, the TUI Group will start implementing the same methodology in Punta Cana area in the Dominican Republic.

[Click here for the presentation of Elise Allart.](#)

Miguel Santos Neves, Project Coordinator, Network of Strategic and International Studies (NSIS) presented the findings of a project aimed at analyzing the impacts of human trafficking on the tourism industry in Portugal and the approaches to tackle this issue. The hotel industry formed the main focus area, as accommodation establishments are unfortunately known to be misused for sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Other reasons for selecting this industry were labour exploitation, trafficking in the supply chain of hotels and the fact that traffickers increasingly invest in the industry by buying hotel properties. Moreover, the tourism sector is used at times as an inducer by traffickers to recruit new people. Some of the main risk factors include hiring seasonal workers through temporary employment agencies, the high incidence of immigrant workers among the hotel staff, regions internationally known as so called 'sex tourism destinations', major sport or music events and the absence of a prevention strategy to control and minimize external risks.

The industry should design first of all a prevention strategy through a holistic approach. Due to the fact that it is not only a question of fighting human trafficking but also of protecting the industry, the project prescribes seven main dimensions to be included into prevention policies. These include **training, procedures, regulation, risk assessment, cooperation, communication and research**. The NSIS initiative developed a triple-fold focus in this regard targeting the industry: 1) **Research and collection of good practices**; NSIS produced a handbook composed of 5 modules on good practices. 2) **Training delivered to the hotel sector**; 20 training sessions were provided to tourism schools and hotels and participants were made aware of their active role as prevention agents; 3) **Awareness raising** through a campaign orientated at the private sector as well as the general public. This campaign was intended to make the Portuguese private sector more willing to adhere to the ECPAT Code and the UNWTO Global Code of Ethics and raise awareness on the importance of an effective prevention policy. By the end of the project the issue of human trafficking was incorporated in the curriculum of tourism schools in Portugal and the campaign reached hundreds of hotels. Although primarily large hotels joined, they took responsibility to raise awareness within their supply chain and to mobilize smaller hotels.

[Click here for the presentation of Miguel Santos Neves.](#)

Sandy Dhuyvetter, Executive Producer/Host of TravelTalkRADIO & BusinessTravelRADIO and Member of Board of Directors of Airline Ambassadors International, USA, described the three main interests of this non-profit organization.

- 1) Medical escorts, for which flight attendants use their own miles to escort children from all around the world to the USA for surgeries. Through this initiative, they gave 322 children a second chance in 2015.
- 2) Humanitarian missions in cooperation with orphanages, i.e. in Haiti, Philippines and Nepal. Child protection measures are of great importance in these orphanages and Airline Ambassadors Int'l helps them by delivering supplies and setting up education programmes for children.
- 3) **Raising human trafficking awareness**. After the trial awareness-raising and a series of detentions of perpetrators, previously identified by airline staff in 2010, Airline Ambassadors Int'l developed training for airports. They now train crews, pilots, flight attendants, ground crew and ticket agents, reaching around 12.000 people a year.

Other initiatives of the organization include building seven safe houses for child protection; promoting and encouraging companies to sign ECPAT's Code; putting child exploitation indicators on the flight attendants' flash lights; handing out 'Recognize it, report it' cards and collecting frequent flyer United Airlines miles for medical and humanitarian actions. The latest is the development of an App, called TIP, which is a new platform to share valuable information and report on child exploitation.

Reporting from the audience

Rosa Martha Brown, Founder and Director of Infancia Foundation, presented the achievements of the Foundation in Latin America. As part of a new hotel classification system in Mexico, hotels can increase their star rating by signing the national Code of Conduct, sponsored by the Mexican Ministry of Tourism. In 2015, an awareness raising campaign was launched by the Foundation in Paraguay in cooperation with *Asociación Femenil de Ejecutivas de Empresas Turísticas* (AFEET) and the Ministry of Tourism of Paraguay. The initiative is carried out by taxi drivers who are raising awareness about child exploitation among their customers. Furthermore, a promotional video was shown in the airports, emphasising that children are not for sale. In Peru, the Foundation annually holds a national race promoting child protection.

Angelika Liedler, Head of International Tourism Affairs, Federal Ministry of Economy, Research and Science, Austria, explained that this Ministry has been working on the issue of child exploitation in tourism for more than 20 years. They set up a round table concept where key players from different sectors can exchange best practices and engage in new activities together. Since 2009, Austria, Germany and Switzerland have joined forces to have a greater impact on child protection and to make use of the initiatives that are already in place. Within this framework, the three countries launched an awareness raising campaign on reporting mechanisms, which enjoyed a strong political support. New campaigns under the EU umbrella are currently being developed, which now also include countries such as France, Netherlands, Portugal and Luxemburg. However, the main challenge is still to make available to the general public as much as comparable and clear information as possible in order to have a real impact on the prevention side.

Emmanuelle Werner, Director of Friends-International, Switzerland, reported on The ChildSafe Movement's 7 Tips for Travellers, aimed at raising awareness on child abuse practices and providing tourists with practical advice on how to protect children. The tips are available in 14 languages and are currently distributed in 4 departure countries (Switzerland, France, Germany and the USA) and 6 arrival countries in South East Asia (Cambodia, Thailand, Lao, Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar). A range of issues are covered therein, i.e. thinking twice before giving money or food to begging children in order to avoid luring them into a poverty cycle, or reflecting before visiting schools and orphanages as this behaviour may support a system that intentionally separates parents from their children. Furthermore, Ms. Werner explained the importance of the travel and tourism industries promoting the tips to their customers, which prompted a close cooperation between Friends Int'l, airlines, travel agencies and other industry actors. Additionally, the tourism sector can become an active player in child protection by making sure it doesn't sell products that harm children and that their CSR policies respect children's rights. In 2015, the messages of The ChildSafe Movement reached about 16 million people.

Anita Dodds, International Child Protection Adviser, announced that in June 2016 she would be coordinating the first Asian regional police training program for law enforcement officials working to combat child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism. The program will include police forces from 26 countries in Asia (including South East and North East Asia) and will be held in Vietnam. The purpose is to build trans-national cooperation network amongst police forces and to offer a platform for sharing relevant data. She invited the tourism industry representatives to contribute with good practices in order to strengthen child protection collaboration between police, law enforcement agencies and the tourism sector.

Shiromi Masakorala, Executive Director, Hemas Outreach Foundation, Head of Group Sustainability & Corporate Communications from Sri Lanka, informed on the Piyawara project launched in 2002 in cooperation with the Children's Secretariat of the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs. The project demonstrates a successful public – private partnership by focusing on creating parental awareness, engaging in teacher training, improving recreational facilities, empowering children with special needs, working towards eradicating child abuse, and improving infrastructure and emergency intervention during national disasters. The initiative currently runs in 41 schools and so far more than 3.000 children have been educated. Furthermore, they trained police officials in 42 districts on how to identify and tackle child abuse. Also a 24/7 available hotline was created to report child exploitation issues, and the number has been displayed in all airports in Sri Lanka. Besides this, Hemas has initiated a pilot project in cooperation with ECPAT to train front office and housekeeping staff in hotels. Likewise, they went to local communities to educate “beach boys” and tuk tuk drivers on how to protect children from any form of exploitation. As the training was well received, the Foundation is now disseminating this message to other communities and hotels in the country.

Yoshihisa Togo, Honorary Chair of the UNICEF Japan Committee, reported on the outcome of UNICEF Japan's effort in producing a national law to protect children from sexual abuse. After more than 10 years, with a few allies in the Parliament, the ultimate goal of prohibiting the “simple possession” of the child pornography has been attained. The new law became effective at the end of 2014 and penalty clauses as of July 2015. Mr. Togo emphasised that in taking on the endeavour of protecting children the airline and the IT industries should be more involved.

Joanna Rubinstein, President and CEO of World Childhood Foundation USA, spoke about the new global framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which for the first time mention the elimination of violence against children, including in travel and tourism. Ms. Rubinstein was convinced that while sharing information and producing new studies is important, no change will take place unless the general public knows how to deal with the issue of child exploitation and unless its scale is really articulated and solutions implemented. The World Childhood Foundation engages in awareness building and encourages cooperation with the tourism industry in identifying the target audiences given that they are the ones to implement the campaigns on the ground.

Dorothea Busche, Manager, DRV Annual Congress and Child Protection, DRV German Travel Association, explained that association's partnership in the ECPAT's “Don't look away” campaign. Additionally, DRV set up a working group on child protection which, together with ECPAT, designed an awareness raising flyer. This flyer provides information to travellers whom to report any form of child sexual abuse and what to do about it. It also serves as a promotional tool of the reporting website <http://www.reportchildsextourism.eu/>. The campaign's website is currently available in 18 European countries and the USA, while the contacts for reporting, local authorities and child protection organisations can be found there.

Simon Steyne, Senior Adviser of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch from ILO-IPEC, said that while children still remain very vulnerable, the international legal framework in this regard is being strengthened since 2014 by the adoption of a new international protocol on contemporary forms of forced labour, particularly the protection of modern forms of trafficking of both adults and children. In this regard, ILO launched a programme with teachers and young workers in developing education modules to make children familiar with their fundamental rights. The next step in this project is to come together with partners to create new modules around child trafficking and keeping children safe from harm. Furthermore, Mr. Steyne wondered about the profile of the European and North American hotel enterprises wherein child sexual exploitation is

supposedly increasing according to the Global Study. **Dorine van der Keur**, Director of the Global Study, informed that during the research for the Study the team realized that the issue had been previously looked at with a very narrow focus on emerging and developing countries and that this approach is no longer applicable. It always happened in Europe and North America, not only in lower category hotels, but it was never properly identified as child sex exploitation in travel and tourism. There is a series of new findings in this field, she added.

Dorothy Rozga, Executive Director of ECPAT International, informed that 16 int'l agencies have come together during 2015/16 to analyse the terminology related to child sexual exploitation and concluded that the new term should be "sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism or in/through travel and tourism" or "sexual exploitation of children by travellers and tourists", as opposed to "child sex tourism". By using the latter, the key actors unintentionally project the thought that it is an acceptable form of tourism and the term itself does not explicitly underline that the child is being exploited. Furthermore, there are reasons to believe that more children nowadays are being abused by travellers than tourists.

Juergen Steinmetz, Publisher and President of eTurboNews, inquired whether there is a study that gives an overview per country and per company on the amount they spend on child protection in proportion to their GDP or overall turnover. In his opinion, this type of data could potentially encourage others to invest more in their child protection mechanisms. The Chair replied that she had no knowledge of such a document, but invited the meeting attendees to share such information with Mr. Steinmetz in case they knew about it.

Closing

Márcio Favilla, Executive Director for Operational Programmes and Institutional Relations at UNWTO, pointed out that 2017 will be the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. He took this opportunity to invite all the meeting's participants to provide the Network with their ideas on how the issue of child exploitation can be part of that theme. As this is a chance for all relevant stakeholders to contribute to the cause, Mr. Favilla highlighted that UNWTO would much appreciate receiving information on relevant best practices.

In the same vein, the Chair announced that the topic of the 32nd meeting of the Network due in March 2017 will be chosen within the context of the UN Int'l Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, and focus on policy making with regards to child protection in tourism. Ms. Bellamy concluded the event by thanking all the speakers and participants for their valuable contributions.