

World Tourism Day 2017 – an IBVM Response

Many people around celebrate the United Nations' (UN) World Tourism Day, which is on September 27 each year. The day aims to foster awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic values. The United Nations' World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) invites people worldwide to participate in World Tourism Day on September 27 every year.

At the last meeting of our Network on Human Trafficking we noted that, while we are aware of the enjoyment, cultural and spiritual advantages of tourism, a specific aspect is causing increasing concern. That is the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

A Global study on Sexual Exploitation of children in Travel and Tourism, published in 2016 gives appalling and heart-breaking information. The study, entitled "[Offenders on the Move](#)", states that "despite 20 years of efforts, the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT) has expanded across the globe and out-paced every attempt to respond at the international and national level. " No region is untouched by this crime and no country is immune.



Twenty years ago, it might have been possible to sketch a rough global map showing where international travelling sex offenders were from, and where they were going. Today, the distinctions between countries of origin and countries of destination are blurring. Terms such as country of 'origin', 'destination' or 'transit' are rapidly becoming outdated – countries can be any of these, or even all three, at different times.

The risks of child sexual exploitation are increasing. The impact on each individual child cannot be over-stated. They suffer severe and life-long physical, emotional and psychological damage. The Human dignity of each exploited child is trampled on by adults whose vicious behavior so often goes unimpeded. The crime has serious human, social and economic consequences given that by its very nature it is secretive and hidden. Little is known about what is happening and where, about the victims and perpetrators, and, very importantly, about what actually works to stop the abuse. Sadly travel and tourism can leave children vulnerable.

On world Tourism Day, we call for ethical tourism, free from the sexual exploitation of children. The Network on Human Trafficking invites us to raise our level of awareness – Keep our eyes Open and contact our national hotline if we have any suspicion or concern.

EYES WIDE OPEN! STAY ALERT! CALL HOTLINE.....