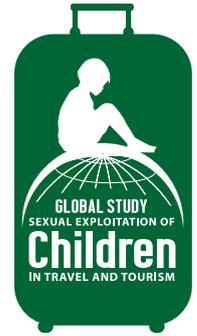


IN BRIEF

SOUTH EAST ASIA



THE REGION

The Southeast Asia region includes 11 countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam) with a combined population of 625.9 million and a combined gross domestic product of US\$235 trillion. The region is characterised by diverse forms of governance (monarchist, socialist, military and democratic) and countries at very different stages of development.

TRAVEL AND TOURISM

In 2014 Southeast Asia welcomed a record 96.6 million international visitors and was the fastest-growing region for tourism in the world. It is also the region where sexual exploitation of children by tourists was first identified, leading to global efforts to stop SECTT in destinations such as Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Today Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam are also believed to have become major destinations for offenders. Lao PDR, Myanmar and Timor-Leste are becoming increasingly popular for tourism and, whilst little

data exists, available evidence suggests that SECTT has taken root, on a smaller scale, in these countries. For example, a 2010 survey of 58 sex workers under age 25 in three cities of Myanmar found that 12% of respondents were just 10-to-14 years old and another one-third were aged 15-19. Investigations in 2013 by Tourism Transparency found that at least one Japanese website was promoting travel to Myanmar for the purposes of sex tourism and offering a list of hotels that would willingly facilitate such arrangements.

Throughout the region, **domestic travellers far outnumber foreign tourists**; about two-thirds of visitors were either from East Asia (mainly China and Japan) or another Southeast Asian country.

With ever-increasing numbers of tourists visiting the region, **new forms of tourism** have emerged (ecotourism, homestays, volun-tourism) that allow travellers to access places previously off the tourism radar, representing a grave risk of SECTT for vulnerable children who, along with their parents, remain uninformed about the threat from travelling child sex offenders.

CURRENT AND EMERGING TRENDS

Street children, children who migrate alone or with their families or who remain at home when their parents migrate, refugee and internally displaced children and stateless children are at significant risk of SECTT in Southeast Asia. **Children from ethnic minorities**, such as hill tribe communities in Northern Thailand, are especially vulnerable. Both boys and girls are targets.

The vast majority of child sex offenders in Southeast Asian countries are **male nationals**. The focus of anti-SECTT efforts has long been on foreigners, but in the Philippines law enforcement authorities believe that **foreign men are responsible for only 10-to-15% of sex crimes against children**. Similarly, it is estimated that Cambodian nationals commit three-quarters of all cases of sexual exploitation of Cambodian children.

Tourists and domestic offenders gain access to vulnerable boys and girls through several channels: via establishment-based prostitution (bars, karaoke venues, beer gardens, massage parlours and brothels); direct or facilitated solicitation of children living and/or working in public places, such as beaches or markets; or voluntary or professional engagement at schools, orphanages or humanitarian aid sites.

Grooming of children by foreign child sex offenders is widespread. In addition, offenders regularly gather **child abuse imagery** in the course of their exploitation. Such imagery is often shared with other offenders and used to groom children for or threaten them into ongoing exploitation. The Philippines is believed to be a key location in Southeast Asia for **'webcam child sex tourism'**, which involves children performing sexual acts in front of a camera controlled by the abuser through an intermediary.

In the pursuit of economic development, several Southeast Asian countries are encouraging large-scale foreign investment in tourism and other sectors, and creating **'special economic zones'**. These profitable venues — usually involving casinos, bars, clubs and brothels — represent a high-risk locale for SECTT, and often coincide with locations already known for SECTT.

Another emerging area of grave concern is the infiltration by **transnational child sex offenders** of pseudo-care professions, particularly at orphanages. Orphanages have been found to employ unethical tactics and to put children at risk by exposing them to contact with un-vetted "volunteers".

RESPONSE

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has acknowledged SECTT in numerous regional declarations and initiatives against trafficking, violence and cybercrime. Public education campaigns have been carried out, sometime funded by Australia's aid agency, since Australian offenders are active in the region.

However, the commitment and capacity of national governments to combat SECTT varies across the region. **Not one of the 11 countries has a specific NPA to address SECTT** or a designated agency to oversee and coordinate anti-SECTT initiatives. Several countries, however, have revised laws, implemented prevention programmes, established a coordination mechanism or taken other steps to address SECTT. Civil society groups, NGOs and development partners play a key role in activities to counteract SECTT in the region.

International contributions to anti-SECTT actions in the region have mainly taken the form of establishing and/or tightening **extraterritorial legislation**; support for developing sex offender registration and notification systems; and building cooperative relationships between regional, national and international law enforcement agencies.

No country fully complies with the recommendations of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Only **the Philippines** has specific, robust national legislation describing and prohibiting SECTT. In many countries, legislation that could be applied to cases of SECTT fails to define, criminalise or penalise sexual offences against children, and to define and treat children as victims.

RECOMMENDATIONS (SAMPLE ONLY)

1. Include SECTT in national action plans related to child protection, in particular in Sustainable Development Goals implementation plans.
2. Prioritise actions that address the root causes of child vulnerability.
3. Ensure that laws recognise and protect child victims of and witnesses to SECTT.
4. Adopt and implement extraterritorial legislation; enhance cooperation among law enforcement agencies.
5. Address corruption at all levels.
6. Advocate for consistent, comprehensive data collection on SECTT.