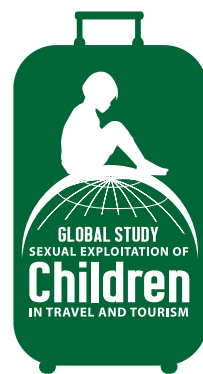


# OFFENDERS ON THE MOVE

GLOBAL STUDY ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION  
OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



The Executive Summary and Recommendations from the Global Study Report on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism was written by Angela Hawke and Alison Raphael.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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. The results of the first comprehensive global study on SECTT confirm that no region is untouched by this crime and no country is 'immune'. In an increasingly interconnected world, more people are on the move and even the most remote parts of the planet are now within reach, thanks to cheaper travel and the spread of the Internet. As a result, the risks of child sexual exploitation are increasing.

The impact on each individual child cannot be overstated. For survivors, the legacy can include severe and life-long physical, emotional and psychological damage. As well as consuming its child victims, SECTT also fractures families and local cultures, and undermines the future prospects of entire communities. On the one hand, inaction on this crime can have serious social and economic consequences. On the other hand, effective action must be informed by hard evidence.

SECTT is, by its very nature, 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. To date, the lack of solid information about this crime, coupled with silence or even tolerance, has kept SECTT far too low on the policy agenda.

The Global Study on SECTT aims to bring this gross violation of children's rights into the light, and marks the 20th anniversary of the 1st World Congress on the Sexual Exploitation of Children. Guided by a High-Level Taskforce and informed by detailed studies from every region and many countries, as well as contributions from experts and children, the Global Study is the first (and, to date, the only) research initiative on SECTT to explore emerging trends and possible solutions.

## KEY FINDINGS BY REGION

A range of findings have emerged from the nine regional reports carried out for the Global Study. The reports revealed some similarities, such as increasing diversification of travel and tourism infrastructure, increased use by offenders of mobile technologies and the preponderance of domestic or intra-regional travelling offenders. However, each region faces its own particular challenges in relation to SECTT.

### East Asia

Most tourists across East Asia are from within the region; domestic travellers far outnumber foreign tourists and SECTT appears to be dominated by Asian men. Business travel is increasingly accompanied by the rise of a corporate culture involving participation in after-hours 'meetings' characterised by alcohol and sex. Inconsistent laws, definitions of children and interpretations of 'consent' in different countries of the region undermine the coordination and collaboration necessary to find and convict offenders. Many responses focus on trafficking and countries have low rates of prosecution for the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

### Europe

Europe remains the number one tourist destination, welcoming more than half of the world's tourists in 2013, and there are suggestions that children's vulnerability to SECTT is on the rise. Western European countries have long been sources of travelling child sex offenders (TCSOs), but some are now destinations. Countries in Central and Eastern Europe are emerging as source and destination countries – often lacking the laws to protect children that exist elsewhere in the region. Regional institutions have adopted measures to enhance protection against child sexual exploitation, especially trafficking, but few address SECTT, which is sometimes addressed only within broader frameworks on violence or child protection.

### Latin America

Tourist arrivals have quadrupled since 1980. While around three-quarters of all international visitors come from the USA and Canada, one study of four countries showed that the number of domestic travellers was double that of foreign tourists. Several countries and many households depend on revenue from tourism and travel, which increases the risk of SECTT for children and discourages reporting of the crime and the enforcement of relevant laws. Travel and tourism hotspots are often developed near poor and excluded communities, which can intensify disparities that expose children to SECTT: from income inequality to power imbalances.

### Middle East and North Africa

The region faces specific challenges that heighten the risk of SECTT: conflict, wealth disparities that fuel migration, the low status of women and girls, harmful traditions such as child or 'temporary' marriages and

a lack of opportunities for youth. Some countries have been chastised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child for lacking information and awareness about SECTT and services to assist child victims. While countries have laws against child sexual exploitation, some still criminalise victims and the region lacks laws that are harmonised, allowing offenders to escape from one jurisdiction to another.

### North America

Canada and the USA are source countries for offenders and, increasingly, destinations. Neither country maintains reliable data on SECTT, but there are signs that children are becoming involved at a younger age and that some engage in commercial sex for survival, with indigenous children at a higher risk. A vast travel and tourism infrastructure is exploited by offenders. While traffickers supply child victims to meet the demand of business travellers attending conferences, and transient workers, The Internet and other technologies are widely used by offenders to plan crimes and by traffickers to advertise victims.

### The Pacific

The Pacific region, with its thousands of islands, has very limited data on SECTT. While Australia and New Zealand have well-established tourism and travel sectors and laws on child sexual exploitation, the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are emerging destinations where awareness of the risks of SECTT and laws to address the crime are largely lacking. Children from indigenous communities seem particularly affected in Australia and New Zealand, SECTT appears tied to specific activities in the PICs: mining, logging and fishing. Social norms fuel the risks, including child marriage, tolerance of violence and commercial sex, children's low social status and taboos around sexual matters.

### South Asia

South Asia is home to around half the world's poor, and tourism is a major source of income for some countries and communities. Domestic and regional travellers outnumber international visitors and social norms (such as gender discrimination) allow SECTT to flourish. Vulnerable boys tend to be involved in street-based sexual exploitation, while girls tend to be victimized in brothels and other sex venues. Booming access to mobile technology and the massive expansion of travel and tourism infrastructure, alongside a continuing lack of social safety nets, consistent definitions and effective legislation and enforcement, means that few offenders fear punishment and few victims receive the support they need.

### Southeast Asia

In 2014, Southeast Asia had the fastest growth in tourism worldwide. SECTT by foreigners was first highlighted here, sparking global efforts to combat the crime. Traditional destinations such as Thailand and the Philippines still attract TCSOs, while Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam are becoming key destinations and Myanmar is at risk as it opens up to tourists. While the focus has long been on foreign tourists, male nationals account for the vast majority of offenders. Special Economic and Free Trade Zones in some countries have been identified as locations for SECTT and the region is seeing more webcam-based child sex tourism. No country has a specific plan or designated agency to tackle SECTT.

### Sub-Saharan Africa

According to data from UNWTO, tourism in Africa has more than tripled in the last 20 years, and SECTT may be increasing, although empirical data are lacking. Increasingly diverse modes of travel and tourism attract visitors to once remote locations, and foreign direct investment is bringing in unaccompanied male workers. The region is seeing a surge in mobile data use, with mobile internet traffic expected to rise 20-fold by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, traditional norms continue to pose risks for children, particularly their low social status and child marriage. Most countries have ratified relevant international conventions, but commitments have not translated into meaningful action for children and only a small percentage of child victims receive the help they need.

## KEY GLOBAL FINDINGS

A number of global findings and conclusions emerge from the mass of evidence gathered for the Global Study.

### The spread of SECTT reveals the need for a broader view

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. SECTT is now mainly a domestic and intra-regional crime, and can be found in both the world's most developed and least developed countries. What matters is where children are victimised and the Global Study finds that they are victimised everywhere.

Given that two decades of efforts have failed to put a dent in SECTT, that more children than ever before are being affected and that no country is immune, the Global Study highlights the need to re-frame this issue – looking beyond what was once referred to as ‘child sex tourism’. This means broadening the scope of policies, programmes and research to include tourism and travel (whether international or domestic), and identifying and addressing what it is, exactly, about travel and tourism, that leaves children so vulnerable to exploitation.

**Conclusion:** The absence of a clear yet broad definition of SECTT has been an obstacle to effective responses. A proposed definition has emerged from the mass of research carried out for the Global Study over the past two years and should guide future efforts to combat SECTT:

### Tourism is soaring, while child protection lags behind

Tourism has seen extraordinary growth over the past 20 years, with the number of international tourist arrivals soaring from 527 million in 1995 to 1135 million in 2014. While tourism development can bring enormous financial gains to countries, and the private sector and local communities, evidence gathered for the Global Study suggests that the rush for tourist dollars poses a threat to children in the absence of measures to ensure their protection.

**Conclusion:** Tourism development plans must be informed by child-rights impact assessments and include measures to protect local children (based on consultations with local stakeholders, including children).

### The growth of travel and tourism carries specific risks for children

The worldwide growth of travel and tourism has been accompanied by increasingly diverse *forms* of travel and tourism. New forms of travel have proliferated, such as tourism tied to volunteering (volun-tourism) and peer-to-peer arrangements for accommodation. These have multiplied the opportunities and venues available to offenders and thus the risk to children. Put simply: more people are on the move and more countries are competing for travel and tourism dollars, creating more opportunities for offenders to exploit children. At the same time, advances in Internet and mobile technology have contributed heavily to SECTT, allowing anonymity and hidden pathways for direct contact between offenders and victims. The private sector has a pivotal role to play in the solutions to SECTT - from prevention to awareness-raising, and

from reporting to blocking the pathways exploited by offenders.

**Conclusions:** Efforts to involve the private sector in combating SECTT need to be stepped up and should include not only multi-national companies but small and medium-size businesses and individuals involved in tourism - such as guest houses, online marketplaces, zero-star hotels and taxi drivers. Collaboration is needed among information communication technology (ICT) companies and law enforcement agencies to block the use of new technologies for child sexual exploitation and disrupt financial gains for offenders, criminal networks and intermediaries, in collaboration with the financial industry.

### There is no typical victim

The research suggests that children from minority groups, boys and young children are far more vulnerable than previously understood, along with girls and children living in poverty. While stressing that child victims have no single story and come from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances, the Global Study finds that they all have one thing in common: their vulnerability. Sadly, child victims cannot assume that society will offer them the support they need: services for their rescue, rehabilitation and recovery are inadequate the world over. These often hidden child victims need urgent help and real alternatives to build their future.

**Conclusions:** ‘One size fits all’ approaches cannot hope to protect children against SECTT. Given that there is no ‘typical’ victim, prevention and response measures must be tailored to the specific situation if they are to be effective. There must also be adequate resources to provide skilled care for child victims of SECTT.

### There is no typical offender

SECTT has become far more complex, involving not only tourists but business travellers, migrant/transient workers and ‘volun-tourists’ intent on exploiting children, as well as large numbers of domestic travellers. The Global Study confirms that offenders can come from any background and that they do not all fit the stereotypical profile: a white, Western, wealthy, middle-aged male paedophile. Some may be paedophiles, but most are not. Offenders may be foreign or domestic, young or old. Some are women, and a few may be other children. Research for the Global Study indicates that the majority are ‘situational’ offenders – who may have never dreamed of sexually exploiting a child until given the opportunity



to do so – rather than preferential offenders. The one thing both types of offenders have in common is ever-greater opportunities to exploit children, especially in environments where corruption is rife and impunity is the rule.

**Conclusions:** While not neglecting the need to pursue and prosecute the international preferential offenders who pose an ongoing threat to children, greater efforts are needed to tackle the situational, domestic and business travellers responsible for the vast majority of SECTT offences. The focus of SECTT research, policy and action must, therefore, be expanded to include a much broader spectrum of travellers.

### Power imbalances fuel SECTT

Offenders often use their comparative wealth and power to exploit children and evade justice. The Study finds that power imbalances between offenders and their victims play a critical role in SECTT; stereotyped attitudes toward children, gender and local cultures help to perpetuate the crime. At the same time, social tolerance of child sexual abuse and harmful cultural practices (such as child marriage and rigid definitions of masculinity) allow SECTT to thrive.

**Conclusions:** Reversing the power imbalances between offenders and their victims is beyond the scope of any single law, policy, institution or country, rooted as they are in hard-wired attitudes around wealth, gender, childhood and sexual dynamics. However, it is possible to tip the scales in favour of vulnerable children by, for example, raising community awareness about the dangers of SECTT, empowering children to enhance their resilience to sexual harm and ensuring that effective reporting mechanisms are in place and reports of SECTT are followed up. Strong stakeholder collaboration is needed as a matter of urgency for a global effort to inform the public about SECTT and turn tolerance into intolerance – a crucial step in ending this shameful crime.

### Legislation is not enough

Law enforcement efforts are undermined by weak laws to prohibit SECTT and lack of coordination among law enforcement agencies across the national jurisdictions. Most, if not all, countries have laws in place that should – at least in theory – protect children against sexual exploitation. Their enforcement, however, is hampered by the lack of a clear global definition of SECTT that is mirrored in national legislation, leaving police forces unsure about whether or how to prosecute. Enforcement is also hampered by chronic under-reporting, poor coordination across law enforcement agencies in different jurisdictions, and by a lack of understanding or urgency among some law enforcement officers.

**Conclusions:** Legal reforms that clearly define and prohibit SECTT are needed in all countries, along with increased resources for enforcement and greater (or improved) use of channels of information exchange, such as INTERPOL's Green Notices and national offender registries. Strenuous efforts are required to end impunity for offenders, build capacity in the justice sector and address corruption.

### Data gaps and dilemmas undermine the response

The Global Study points to a number of serious data gaps and dilemmas, from the sheer difficulties of gathering data on such a scale and scope, to the absence of a clear definition of the crime and, therefore, a lack of clarity on what is to be measured. This lack of hard data matters immensely, as it makes it difficult to prioritise scarce resources or identify what works, and allows governments and societies to continue to ignore the problem. The absence of clear baselines and effective ways to monitor progress also undermines efforts to evaluate the impact of anti-SECTT programmes, posing a risk of donor disillusion and fatigue.

**Conclusions:** Data collection by national governments is essential to gauge the scale of SECTT and reveal the urgent need for domestic responses. The establishment of national systems capable of providing robust data and indicators on SECTT is the first step. Best practices should be identified and disseminated, alongside clear indicators and criteria to show what success looks like.

### What works: effective responses need to be replicated and scaled up

The Study has demonstrated that efforts are underway to tackle SECTT and the approaches that are having some success. What seems to work is a comprehensive approach that mobilises a wide range of stakeholders – from government ministries to the general public – backed by good data. Countries that have addressed SECTT as part of a broader response to child sexual exploitation, focusing on prevention as well as response, seem to have had the greatest success. Efforts supported by bilateral and multilateral organisations and networks have been crucial, and international and regional cooperation has helped to overcome reluctance to acknowledge the problem. But it is impossible to overstate the importance of local prevention, local reporting and local responses.

Another important contribution of the Global Study is its increased focus on situational and domestic offenders, who account for most cases of SECTT, and on business travellers as well as tourists – a welcome shift from traditional approaches focusing solely on international preferential offenders.

## NEXT STEPS

The Global Study has revealed a set of specific tasks to be carried out by those with responsibility for the well-being of children, from international and regional organisations and national governments to the grass-roots groups working to protect children in local communities. There are also recommendations for the private sector, including not only companies directly involved in travel, tourism and transportation, but also those working in information communication technology and those whose staff members travel for business. Cross-sectoral recommendations point to the importance of coordinated approaches for effective SECTT prevention and intervention.

International and regional organisations, for example, are urged to place the commercial sexual exploitation of children higher on their political agendas, and meet their international commitments to protect children. National governments should, as a minimum, ratify and implement all international child rights instruments and, wherever necessary, revise their national laws and strengthen law enforcement and international cooperation to ensure that SECTT can be addressed. Non-governmental organisations can monitor SECTT and bridge gaps left by national governments by, for example, monitoring and researching local SECTT, empowering citizens to play a role in prevention, identifying best practices, supporting the recovery and rehabilitation of SECTT victims and exposing those involved in this crime.

Private companies can be key players in the fight against SECTT through their active involvement in the protection of children's rights. Travel, tourism and transportation firms, for example, could sign up to child protection codes such as the *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism* or – at a minimum – adopt and enforce explicit corporate policies against SECTT. All companies in the travel, tourism and transportation sphere could also sign the UNWTO Code of Ethics. Larger companies can help to bring small- and medium-size firms on board by sharing their knowledge and expertise. Measures are also needed to ensure that volun-tourism organisations have strong child protection systems and codes of conduct in place.

The wider ICT industry needs to adopt and enforce explicit corporate policies against SECTT and ensure compliance with *Human Rights and Business Principles* and *Children's Rights and Business Principles*. ICT companies can take a lead on the development of technology-based solutions to combat SECTT, such as blocking payment for SECTT-related offences and new techniques to 'follow the money' and undermine the business model of SECTT offenders and their intermediaries.

Looking still wider, every company that sends its employees on business travel could arrange travel via child safe travel and tourism businesses and educate its employees on acceptable conduct and the need to protect children against SECTT. This could include the adoption and implementation of codes of conduct for travelling employees and background checks and police clearances for staff members who will have contact with children during their business trip.

One major finding of the Global Study is that ad-hoc and siloed approaches cannot hope to tackle a crime that is so complex – with no typical victims or perpetrators – that is found everywhere and is so multi-faceted. Cross-sectoral partnerships and aligned approaches are essential to expanding the impact of SECTT prevention and interventions, and creating interventions that are coordinated and comprehensive rather than piecemeal. Partners across sectors should, as a first step, come together for a high-visibility global campaign to push for effective laws, strong enforcement, better protection of child victims and the end of impunity for offenders.

Finally, the Global Study has generated its own research agenda, which confirms that we need to know far more about every aspect of SECTT – its scale and scope (starting with baseline information), its victims, its perpetrators, its drivers and effective responses – if we are to stop it from spreading still further.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recommendations for international and regional intergovernmental bodies

*Regional and international bodies must position the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism on their political agendas, to ensure that international and regional commitments can be met.*

- for the UNWTO to advocate for the conversion of the Code of Ethics for Tourism into an international convention and its ratification by member states
- for UN and regional Human Rights Monitoring Mechanisms to systematically review the situation of SECTT in member states and measures taken to protect children from SECTT and ensure access to justice of victims
- for the issue of SECTT to be specifically recognised and monitored as part of the scope of action of international and regional human rights mechanisms including the Human Rights Council, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Lanzarote Committee, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, etc.
- for the issue of SECTT to be explicitly acknowledged and addressed by regional entities such as the European Union, the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the African Union, the Council of Baltic Sea States, the Organisation of America States (OAS), the Pacific Islands Forum, etc.
- for SECTT to be included in the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the UN Sustainable Development Goals targets that address the sexual exploitation of children, i.e. Targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2.

- for the UN General Assembly to ensure

implementation of the recommendations and to strengthen the UN's response to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations Personnel in the areas of prevention, enforcement and remedial action, as presented in the Report to the UN Secretary General of 16 February 2016.

## Recommendations for non-governmental organisations

*NGOs can play a key role by monitoring SECTT and bridging gaps left by national governments in the areas described below.*

- Expose companies that advertise commercial sex with minors with a particular focus on online advertisement
- Raise public awareness about SECTT and the role of citizens, including children can play in its prevention
- Identify and document best practice models in SECTT prevention and care
- Provide high-quality recovery and rehabilitation services for SECTT victims where governments do not provide such services
- Build partnerships and capacity within the tourism industry to recognise and address incidents of SECTT
- Develop codes of conduct and child protection policies for (national and international) employees and volunteers who come into contact with children and ensure police clearances
- Undertake more research on SECTT to inform policy and action

## Recommendations for national governments

*National governments have a direct responsibility to protect children from SECTT, whether they are countries of demand, supply or victimisation.*



- Develop and promote reporting systems that allow children and citizens to report incidents without fear
- Ensure that child-sensitive services are available and regulated by quality standards, implemented by knowledgeable, well-trained staff with adequate resources and easily accessible to all children
- Ratify and implement all relevant international child rights instruments and revise national laws accordingly:
  - Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 2000, and the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, 2002
  - Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC), 2014
  - Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, 2000
  - ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour No.182
  - The following Council of Europe Conventions:
    - a. Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, CETS No.201, 2007
    - b. Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, CETS No. 197, 2005
    - c. Convention on Cybercrime, CETS No. 185, 2001.
- Ensure that national legal frameworks address SECTT adequately by:
  - formulating SECTT as a separately identifiable crime in national laws
  - enacting progressive extraterritorial legislation and unconditional extradition laws and defining reoffending as an aggravating circumstance, regardless of whether the crimes were perpetrated abroad or in-country
  - ensuring that statutory limitations do not apply to child victims of CSEC
  - adopting an age of consent of 18 years, or ensuring that offences committed against children aged 15 to 18 years old are criminalised when the sexual acts are exploitative (such as prostitution or pornography) or where there has been abuse of a relationship of trust, authority or dependency
    - criminalising grooming and attempts to procure sex with a minor
    - excluding SECTT crimes from bail
    - regulating the obligations of employers to obtain police clearances and implement codes of conduct for national and international employees and volunteers who have direct contact with children
    - increasing maximum penalties for SECTT-related offences, given their serious impact on child victims
    - imposing more severe sentences for recidivists who commit sexual offences against children
    - providing criteria to determine sexual consent between peers, to avoid misunderstanding and clarify non-exploitative situations
    - making it obligatory to report any suspected sexual exploitation of a child, with strong sanctions for non-compliance; developing protection mechanisms for those who report the crime; accepting reasonable anonymous complaints as sufficient evidence to open an investigation
- Strengthen law enforcement and international cooperation to combat SECTT by:
  - ensuring that law enforcement agencies have the resources and skills to identify, investigate and respond to SECTT and are able to use child-friendly methods when dealing with child victims and witnesses, and that enforcement is not undermined by corruption or social tolerance for SECTT
  - enhancing the regular exchange of up to date information about travelling child sex offenders among law enforcement agencies across jurisdictions of countries of demand, supply and victimisation, including greater use of the following tools:
    - INTERPOL 'Green Notice' for convicted sex offenders who are likely to reoffend in other countries
    - denying entry to convicted child sex offenders who are likely to reoffend
    - the development of sex offender registries that comply with international standards on confidentiality and privacy
    - INTERPOL's planned international police clearance system (under development)



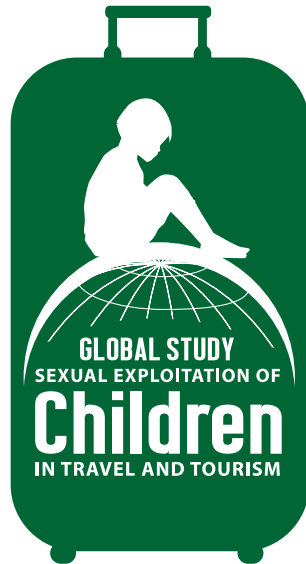
## ICT industry

- Engage and mobilise industry leaders to develop technology-based solutions to combat SECTT such as blocking payment for SECTT-related offences and developing new techniques to 'follow the money' and undermine the business model of SECTT offenders and their intermediaries
- Collaborate with other ICT companies and law enforcement agencies to disrupt financial gains for offenders, criminal networks and intermediaries and to develop analytical tools and new investigative techniques to enable law enforcement to identify perpetrators and rescue victims
- Ensure compliance with *Human Rights and Business Principles and Children's Rights and Business Principles*
- Adopt and enforce explicit corporate policies against SECTT

## Companies whose staff members travel for business

All companies sending employees on business travel have a role to play in educating their employees on conduct that is acceptable or unacceptable and the importance of protecting children against SECTT.

- Undertake travel with child safe travel and tourism businesses, preferably members of the *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism* or - at a minimum - with business that have adopted and enforce explicit corporate policies against SECTT and prioritise training on SECTT prevention and response for travel and tourism professionals
- Ensure compliance with *Human Rights and Business Principles and Children's Rights and Business Principles*
- Adopt and implement a code of conduct for travelling employees
- Ensure police clearances if staff are going to be in contact with children during their business travel



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