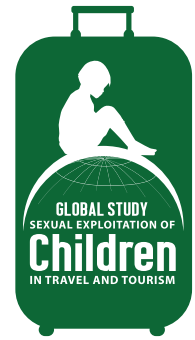


EXPERT PAPER

# LEADING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN COMBATING SECTT



KUONI GROUP

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## INTRODUCTION



With acts of children exploited in prostitution occurring in tourist facilities and countless numbers of children being abused by tourists at a global level, Kuoni sees itself as duty-bound to take action against this problem. During the last nine years, Kuoni has taken a leading role by engaging with different stakeholders in building awareness regarding the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation due to tourism. As part of this commitment, Kuoni informs its customers about the issue of sexual exploitation of children, contractually obliges its partners to adopt the same ethical approach and shows its partner hotels and their employees what they should do if they come across any cases of sexual exploitation of children in the course of their work. Moreover, Kuoni has been an active member of The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism since 2006, is represented on its board and is committed to adhere and implement its six criteria.

### **Stakeholder engagement in Kuoni's operations and its value chain to fight sexual exploitation of children in tourism**

Supported by senior management, Kuoni pursues a strategy of further integrating child protection into its business processes according to its values and the Kuoni Code of Conduct. The protection of children from sexual exploitation has been identified as relevant and significant for Kuoni's business according to the following criteria: (1) the impact of the issue on Kuoni's business and (2) the perceived degree of stakeholder interest in the issue. In 2015, material sustainability issues for the Kuoni Group were assessed together with external stakeholders. Results of the survey have shown that sexual exploitation of children is amongst the most material issue for Kuoni.

Kuoni's commitment towards sensitising and engaging its stakeholders within its operations and along its value chain on child protection is detailed as follows.

## Customers

Kuoni provides its customers with an informational flyer explaining how they should respond if they suspect a case of sexual exploitation of a child during their holiday. The message of the flyer is "Never turn a blind eye. Child abuse can never be tolerated, and can never be excused or explained away as local custom or culture. It is a crime all over the world and must be punished as such." The Kuoni informational flyer is intended to raise knowledge and awareness of the problem amongst customers and local service providers, and to show them how they should respond if they suspect such activities. Three options for action are communicated on the flyer ranging from reporting the suspected case to local representatives, to hotel management or directly to the Federal Office of Police in collaboration with Interpol.

## Suppliers

The prohibition of child labour, as well as the protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism, is at the basis of any business relationships between Kuoni and its hotel partners, other suppliers and service providers as specified in the Kuoni Supplier Code of Conduct. The Supplier Code of Conduct is part of all contracts with our suppliers.

Kuoni has been conducting a series of workshops with partner hotels on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children since 2006. The programme is intended to help these partners abide by the terms of their contractual agreements with Kuoni and motivate them to play their own active part in preventing such criminal activity. Workshops have already been held with numerous hotels in Thailand, the Dominican Republic, Bulgaria, India and Kenya, and the programme is being steadily extended to further destinations. Overall, more than 500 hotel partners have been trained in child protection.

## Employees

Kuoni regularly trains its employees on the issue of the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, and how to best contribute to its prevention. In the Swiss branch offices, staff is regularly trained on child protection through onsite workshops and the ECPAT E-Learning that provides tools on how to act in suspicious cases of sexual exploitation of children.

As part of a new E-learning programme for Kuoni's procurement staff, the sexual exploitation of children is one of four focus areas next to working conditions, environmental protection and benefitting local communities. Kuoni's product managers and contractors are trained on child protection and The Code, and recommendations for action are provided.

At GTD, employees have been discussing the issue during an annual staff conference in Asia. Representatives from CEFACOM, ECPAT International's local partner in Vietnam, presented to 220 colleagues from GTD in Ho Chi Minh City in February 2015 to highlight the extent of the problems being faced by children and young people in the country. Colleagues then took to the streets to source items including rice, cooking oil, toiletries, fans and mystery gifts to create care packages for the victims of sexual exploitation staying at one of CEFACOM's shelters.

In 2015, Kuoni set itself the target of training 50% of its worldwide employees through The Code E-learning.

## Partners

During the last nine years, Kuoni has continuously been engaging with local non-governmental organisations and business partners on child protection.

Kuoni financially supports its partner organisation Children's Rights in Goa (CRG), an advocacy organisation dedicated to improving the awareness of children regarding their rights and protecting them from all forms of exploitation. Kuoni has

supported CRG in establishing a Child Resource Centre which has become a refuge for children working in local markets, offering them literacy courses, counselling and livelihood training in bicycle repair, jewelry making and tailoring.

In Mombasa, a destination where the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is an acknowledged problem, Kuoni is involved in the 'Children at Risk' project of the Child Welfare Society in Kenya, which is intended to expand the knowledge and the range of options available to people in the local villages and ensure that children in the region are better protected against sexual exploitation. The Child Welfare Society of Kenya is building a counselling centre for children and adolescents with Kuoni's financial support.

Kuoni Destination Management India has been actively cooperating with the non-profit organisation Literacy India. The organisation provides education support to children from underprivileged communities breaking the cycle of poverty by building trust and awareness, teaching personal grooming, producing street plays and identifying local social problems. Amongst other projects, Literacy India supports an independent paper unit where paper is recycled by trained women to help them earn a living. They have created handmade bags with the Kuoni Destination Management, Sita and Distant Frontiers' logos. These bags carry the travel kit and are given to clients on arrival.

Moreover, in the context of the human rights impact assessments conducted in Kenya and India, Kuoni consulted local children from communities on their perspectives on tourism and how it is affecting their lives. Based on this experience, Kuoni has

provided practical input to the development of the Children's Rights and Business Tools launched by UNICEF in December 2014, which supports companies in the integration of Children's Rights into their business.

In collaboration with ITB Berlin, Tui Travel, Accor Group, GIZ and The Code, Kuoni launched a project to combat the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism aiming to ensure and inspire action on the issue through testing and optimisation of the tools put in place in Thailand as pilot country. In 2013, the new e-learning system was tested and further optimised, and at least 60% of The Code members in Thailand have been trained with the new system.

At GTS and GTD, a global giving programme was launched in 2014 to raise funds for ECPAT International. ECPAT was chosen as a global charity partner for a three-year period, following a worldwide staff vote. As a result of employee fundraising and matched funding, GTS and GTD were able to provide ECPAT with EUR 23,364 at the end of 2014. ECPAT International used the funds raised to publish ten country monitoring reports that provide information on the emerging trends related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, as well as progress in the implementation of national commitments to address the situation.

## **Business units**

In 2014, Kuoni Destination Management Asian Trails have signed up to the child protection initiative in Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia and Vietnam. They join SITA (Kuoni Destination Management India) and GTS as signatories to The Code.

## CONCLUSION

Eliminating the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is vital for ensuring sustainable tourism development. In order for business endeavours in this field to be effective, it is of utmost importance that the different stakeholders work together and coordinate efforts. For a tour operator, which is operating in a very complex global environment, continued efforts are needed to make sure action reaches out to as many children as possible. This can only be achieved through collaboration with the industry and by training relevant stakeholders, such as hoteliers and transport providers, on a constant basis, while acknowledging that awareness raising can only get you so far. We must do better, we must do more. All actors in society must acknowledge that this problem exists – it is a systemic, societal issue which requires putting aside any differences, to stop pointing fingers and let go of “well, it’s not in my backyard” mentalities. If you

have engaged and successfully banished the problem from “your backyard”, ask yourself where the problem was pushed to. Think systemically: involve your customers, your staff, your supply chain, local governments, both at the source and destination countries, and learn from NGOs and local experts wherever exploitation is taking place. Reach out by working with local law enforcement to stop stigmatising the victims of this crime and by providing said victims with the means to empower themselves through education and gainful employment. This requires collaboration with NGOs that reach out to children in the most desperate need and accompany them with the proper tools on a new path.

The strategic integration of children's rights into business and engagement with local players to offer new perspectives, such as initiatives in the destinations, should be strengthened.

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# ABOUT THE KUONI GROUP

Kuoni Group is a leading service provider to the global travel industry and governments with leading positions in its areas of activity and sustainable growth prospects, with a strong focus on Asia. Kuoni Group generated turnover of CHF 5.5 billion in the 2014 financial year and employed 11,934 people (Full time equivalent FTE) at the end of 2014. Kuoni Group focuses on three core activities:

Global Travel Distribution (GTD) is an industry pioneer and a highly experienced, leading global Business to Business wholesaler and provider of hotel accommodation and land services. It sells approximately 38,000 rooms per day online. Around 43% of its turnover is sourced from fast-growing Asian/Pacific, the Middle Eastern and African markets.

Global Travel Services (GTS; comprised of Group Travel Experts and Destination Management Specialists, [DMS]) sources and coordinates destination services - from accommodation, transportation, tours and activities, to venues and event management. GTS is the number one player in the growing group travel market and handles 50,000 leisure tours per year. GTS generates 60% of its turnover from Asian/Pacific source markets.

Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global, the industry pioneer and world's leading visa services provider, works for 45 governments, operates 1,486 application centres in 120 countries and holds an estimated 50% market share of the global outsourced applications market. It generates almost 70% of its turnover from applicants from the Asia/Pacific region.

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