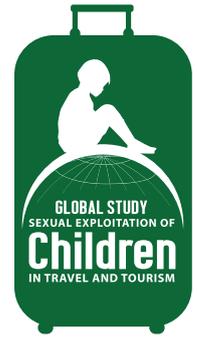


EXPERT PAPER

# CONNECTING POLICE AND NGOS FOR THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN



MICK MORAN

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## INTRODUCTION



INTERPOL

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INTERPOL is the world's largest international police organization with 190 member countries. Our role is to enable police to work together to make the world a safer place. Our combination of technical and operational support helps meet the growing challenges of fighting crime in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thanks to our network of 190 National Central Bureaus (NCB) and our secure communication system, INTERPOL can assist in the dissemination and the coordination of international operations targeting child exploitation offenders, even where diplomatic relations do not exist between particular countries.

Child exploitation tends to be a local crime to be dealt with on a national level and INTERPOL can assist through networking, capacity building and sharing best practices. There are however a number of areas where child exploitation takes on a clear international dimension. The internet, transnational sex offenders and missing children are good examples of this and INTERPOL has been working in these areas for many years to ensure the intelligence flows, contacts and information are made available to disrupt and interdict those who exploit children.

## Online child sexual exploitation

Due to the borderless nature of the internet, INTERPOL has been involved in the fight against online child sexual exploitation for many years. For example, INTERPOL has been a pioneer in the child victim identification discipline, which is a victim-centric investigative technique used to identify children and perpetrators depicted in Child (sexual) Abuse Material (CAM).

The International Child Sexual Exploitation image database (ICSE) is developed and hosted at INTERPOL. This powerful intelligence and investigation tool offers specialized investigators worldwide instant access to data and tools for the upload and analysis of seized CAM. Investigators in 47 countries plus EUROPOL, a European Union law enforcement agency, are currently connected to the ICSE database. It has been operational since 2001 and is accessible via the INTERPOL secure communications system (I24/7) for investigators who have been trained and accredited by the INTERPOL and authorized by their National Central Bureau (NCB). Every Interpol member country has a NCB, which links national police with the global network. Once connected, investigators can upload and investigate child sexual abuse material in real time by comparing it to material uploaded by other investigators from across the globe.

In August 2015, the ICSE database held information on 7,272 identified victims. Every day, as a result of the international network of victim identification specialists connected through ICSE, unidentified material is shared and investigated collaboratively as part of the global victim identification effort. For countries where no specialized unit yet exists, the INTERPOL Crimes against Children team acts as an intermediary for disseminating cases where the abuse appears to have been perpetrated in their countries. INTERPOL also collects the material seized by these countries and

assists in its analysis, dissemination and upload to ICSE.

Transnational sex offenders also use information and communications technology (ICT) to facilitate their crimes through travel, transferring of CAM and actual abuse. Online forums are used to inform about the best locations, the best way to avoid detection and serve as meeting points for likeminded individuals.

Another emerging trend where ICT is used to facilitate child violence is 'remote child sexual abuse'. In return for payment by an offender, children are abused, based on specifications of the offender, live on webcam. This has the potential to become a significant problem in developing countries in the near future.

## The use of green notices for sex offenders

INTERPOL notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts allowing police in member countries to share critical crime-related information. Notices are published by INTERPOL's General Secretariat at the request of National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and authorized entities and can be published in any of the Organization's official languages: Arabic, English, French, and Spanish.

In combatting child sexual abuse, especially that committed by transnational sex offenders, the green notice is a relevant tool. Member countries can submit a request to issue a green notice to provide warnings and intelligence about persons who have committed child sexual abuse in the past and are likely to reoffend. It is an effective way to share key police intelligence on a global scale and to prevent offenders from crossing borders unnoticed. The notices are also linked to the Travel Documents Associated with Notices (TDAWN) database ensuring they can be integrated into the INTERPOL member countries' suite of border tools.

INTERPOL statistics show that only a limited number of member countries (57) use the INTERPOL green notice for sex offenders. There is an identified need to improve sharing of information at the international level on the movement of convicted sex offenders with a risk of reoffending. INTERPOL is actively developing a campaign to raise awareness within member countries on the use of Green notices.

### **Training for police liaison officers**

A supporting activity for the Green Notice project is the development of a training curriculum for police liaison officers. These officers often work in high-risk countries and regions but are expected to cover many other crime types such as terrorism and drugs. This curriculum aims to address the lack of awareness and investigative capacity in the area of Transnational Child Sex Offenses (TCSO).

### **'International Police Certificate'**

INTERPOL is in the process of developing an 'International Police Certificate'. The main objective of this project is to ensure that no one with a criminal conviction for child sexual abuse can work with children without the prior knowledge of an employer. A convicted sex offender applying for a job abroad, especially in developing countries, poses an increased risk to children. Currently, many countries have 'police certificates' of one sort or another, but there is no globally applicable procedure whereby institutions can gain insight into the criminal background of job applicants.

The development of this international certificate is currently in a feasibility phase, and there is keen interest from the NGO and government sectors.

This project aims to simplify the process of application in multiple countries, which will have obvious advantages for countries, applicants and employers.

Ideally, every NGO in a vulnerable sector or region should promote the use of the certificate as an instrument to reduce the risk of convicted sex offenders gaining access to children.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The complex and ever-changing behavior of travelling sex offenders is an issue for everyone concerned with the safety of children. The key to successfully combatting child sexual abuse in tourism and travel is, therefore, to be found in close cooperation between all concerned.

INTERPOL's vision is: 'Connecting Police for a Safer World'. This vision can be easily attained by ensuring that police, NGOs, and government actors work together for the safety of children and the protection of their rights.

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