



CONCEPT NOTE

Building on the findings and recommendations from the UN Special Rapporteur's report - *A study on the exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the context of travel and tourism; a closer look at the phenomena of voluntourism*



10 October 2023 | 9.00 am - 11.00 am New York Time

Registration and coffee break: from 8.30 am

Registration: to attend the event online or in-person, register [here](#).

Conveners: ECPAT International, PACT – Protect All Children from Trafficking, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

Format: A panel discussion building on the findings and recommendations from the UN Special Rapporteur's report – *A study on the exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the context of travel and tourism; a closer look at the phenomena of voluntourism*.¹ Together with Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh, the UN Special Rapporteur, and esteemed leaders from governments, private sector, and civil society organisations, we will dive into the report's findings and recommendations.

Background: Professional and regulated volunteering should be distinguished from **voluntourism**² which evolves around products offered through the travel market usually for unskilled volunteers that pay companies or other entities to travel and work in distant communities, as an attractive alternative to

¹ The Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh available [here](#).

² Voluntourism or volunteer tourism is organized and packaged tourist trips with a duration of a few hours to a year in which the main purpose is to volunteer. It revolves around products offered through travel and tourism markets usually for unskilled volunteers, with no supervision and no criminal background checks required as an alternative to mass tourism. [The Code Voluntourism Policy](#).



mass tourism. Although volunteers may have good intentions, such trips may negatively affect the well-being of children, with certain forms of voluntourism posing additional risks to their safety by providing unregulated avenues for offenders to groom, access, and sexually exploit children.

The issue of sexual abuse and exploitation of children in voluntourism is a complex issue which requires extensive and wide-ranging intervention at local, national, regional and international levels by all actors and stakeholders working together. Laws regulating the activities of the public and private sectors in this sector must be strengthened to ensure adequate monitoring, early detection, investigation and penalization of wrongdoing. More can be done in the effective application of existing guidelines, tools and good practices on voluntourism through efficient data-collection systems and effective screening and vetting of volunteers, as well as the introduction and strengthening of measures that ensure the prevention and protection of children within this sector as well as the provision of rehabilitative services and support for children at risk or victims of exploitation and/or abuse.³

Objectives of the panel discussion:

- **Unpack the report** following its presentation by the UN SR to the UN General Assembly.
- **Discuss the findings and the recommendations** from the report.
- **Step-up collective action** by intergovernmental bodies, governments, businesses, and civil society organisations to regulate the issue of voluntourism by sending and receiving countries based on the recommendations from the report, evidence from the ground, existing practices, and experience.

Speakers and contributors: Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh, the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, representatives of governments, businesses, and civil society organisations including DCI - ECPAT Netherlands as part of the Down to Zero Alliance⁴, Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE), ECPAT Cambodia, PEaCE, ECPAT Sri Lanka, ECPAT Philippines, Tourism Watch, Brot für die Welt, board member of ECPAT Germany, Comhlámh, the Irish association of development workers and volunteers, ReThink Orphanages Network, Better Volunteering Better Care Initiative.

Speakers will cover key thematic topics through knowledge, experience and idea-sharing. The online moderator will involve those attending online to ensure an effective hybrid experience.

³ The Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, Mama Fatima Singhateh available [here](#).

⁴ ECPAT International, as a technical partner of DCI-Netherlands and as part of the Down to Zero Alliance (Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children – ECPAT, Free a Girl, CRC Asia, and Conexión) is working alongside civil society organisations in the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic to empower children and communities in the fight against child sexual exploitation. The project “Stepping up the Fight Against Sexual Exploitation of Children – Empowering Children and Communities” is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Dutch development/foreign policy with Defence for Children- ECPAT Netherlands.



Resource materials available at the event page: www.ecpat.org/global-events-in-new-york

- [Thematic Brief on Orphanage Tourism, Voluntourism and Trafficking](#)
- Issues Paper, ECPAT International. [How voluntourism may facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. What can be done to protect children?](#)
- The Code's [Voluntourism Policy](#) launched at the [Destination Mekong Summit](#)
- Legal Checklist: [Key Legal Interventions to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, country](#) and [regional overviews](#)
- [Report from the International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism](#)
- Better Care Network, [Implementing the Legal Framework for the Prosecution of Orphanage Trafficking: A Cambodia Case Study](#)
- The International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum), [The Global Volunteering Standard](#), more at forum-ids.org
- [A case study of Ireland](#) - regulating voluntourism as part of child protection standards for the travel and tourism industry.
- [A case of The Netherlands](#) - regulating voluntourism as part of child protection standards for the travel and tourism industry.

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For more information about the event, please reach out to the Head of Programme, Child Protection in Travel and Tourism at gabrielak@ecpat.org