

## Impact of government programs on reducing child sex tourism in Sri Lanka: with reference to Hikkaduwa area

HM Nawarathna Banda<sup>1</sup>

The term **child** (plural: **children**) varies according to time and place, as well as to the discourse (legal, psychological, biological, religious) in which the term is used. It typically refers to one's state or age. The commercial sexual exploitation of children and young women has paralleled the growth of tourism in many parts of the world. Though tourism is not the cause of sexual exploitation, it provides easy access to it. Tourism also brings consumerism to many parts of the world previously denied access to luxury commodities and services. The lure of this easy money has caused many young people, including children, to trade their bodies in exchange for T-shirts, personal stereos, bikes and even air tickets out of the country. In other situations children are trafficked into the brothels on the margins of the tourist areas and sold into sex slavery, very rarely earning enough money to escape.

The United Nations has defined child sex tourism as "tourism organized with the primary purpose of facilitating the effecting of a commercial sexual relationship with a child". Certain tourism destinations have become centers for this illegal trade, frequented by pedophiles and supported by networks of pimps, taxi drivers, hotel staff, brothel owners, entertainment establishments, and tour operators who organize package sex tours. At the international level, there are agents who provide information about particular resorts where such practices are commonplace. The problem of this study is there any impact of government programs to reduce the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Sri Lanka. The objectives of this study are to identify the reasons for sexual exploitation of children, identify the impact of government programs to reduce sexual exploitation of children and to identify the solutions to overcome or at least mitigate sexual exploitation of children in Sri Lanka. It has been used both primary and secondary data for this study. Primary data was collected from hundred respondents in Hikkaduwa coastal area using interview schedule and observation method in Sri Lanka. Data was analyzed by using tables, graphs and percentages. This study was limited to hundred respondents and to only Hikkaduwa area.

Sri Lanka: 100,000 children between the ages of 6 and 14 are kept in brothels and an additional 5,000 children between 10 and 18 are working in tourist areas. The government of Sri Lanka has taken various steps to combat child sex tourism with the help of UNICEF and it has been mitigated the child sex tourism in Sri Lanka. Therefore it can be proposed to take following actions to combat it. Awareness programs can be implemented among people, taxi drivers, tourists, people who work in tourist trade and educate children not to go to that kind of behavior and schools teachers can be used to educate the children to protect from sex tourism.

**Key words:** Tourism, Sexual exploitation, Children, Sri Lanka, Child sex tourism

<sup>1</sup> Department of Economics, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka