

New Research to Examine Child Sex Tourism

The Gambia, a mere five-hour flight from most major European cities, has become a popular tourist destination. Last year, nearly 120,000 visitors enjoyed the quiet beaches and luxurious hotels. Their contribution to the national economy is significant, accounting for 10% of the GNP. There is little wonder, then, why tourism is seen as a means of relieving the high poverty level.

Visitors are made welcome and asked to become special friends by contributing money or food to families, as well as books or pens to schools. For some, this is a way to make a difference and not just be tourists. For others - tourists who come for sex - The Gambia is a haven. Sexual abuse of children is rarely reported or discussed. Authorities lack training to recognise and deal with child sexual abuse.

The absence of hard data makes it difficult to tackle

this issue effectively. As a new member of the ECPAT network, the CPA recognised that to open dialogue on the issue and raise awareness among the general public it would need to undertake research. The CPA, in collaboration with Terres Des Hommes - Netherlands, is launching a research project specifically focused at looking at the extent of sexual abuse by Dutch tourists.

UNICEF and the Department of Social Welfare, both members of CPA, have combined their resources and have also initiated research. The survey examines child sexual abuse in Senegal and The Gambia, and the findings are due out by the end of 2002.

Many organisations have come forward with anecdotal stories of tourists taking children to hotel rooms. One such organisation, the Association of Small Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET), comprised of

responsible providers of services to tourists such as taxi drivers, fruit juice vendors and small hotel owners, has reported cases to the Child Protection Alliance, but feel helpless because they are unsure of what can be done to stop this abuse.

Both research projects will, for the first time, shed some light onto this unacceptable side of tourism, providing evidence and some quantification of the incidence of child sexual abuse in the region. It is believed that West Africa and The Gambia have become destinations for men and women who would have previously gone to Asia for sex with children. It is hoped that this research will provide CPA with the information needed to tackle this problem.

(CPA also provided this article for the October 2002 issue of the ECPAT newsletter.)



Micheal Montgomery is working on a research project with TdH.

"States Parties ...shall undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and shall in particular take measures to prevent...the use of children in prostitution or other sexual practices."

- African Charter Article 27

A Fond Farewell

UNICEF Representative Departs The Gambia

Madam Maria Teresa Hevia, who has worked with UNICEF in The Gambia since 1998, has departed the country after serving as Representative for the Country Programme for 4 years.

Ms. Hevia has devoted her career to advancing the causes of children across the globe and has been a solid supporter of the CPA since its very beginning.

Thanks to her the children and young people of this country are now being taken seriously and are participating more than ever before in national

decisions and issues affecting their lives, said Bintou Sanko in a presentation honouring Madam Hevia.

As the UNICEF Representative, Ms. Hevia was the overseer of the Gambian Government's Country Programme involving the CPA, Department of Social Welfare, NAYCO and other children's organizations. No matter how busy her schedule was during her time in this country, Madam always found time to keep up with CPA's developing agenda. She has been a very kind, gen-

erous and supportive lady, said Jalamang Camara, CPA National Coordinator. She inculcated in me knowledge of how to handle issues in a diplomatic manner, and she taught me how to come overcome any frustrations and look for alternatives. She regarded me as her son, and I think of her as my mother.

The entire team at CPA would like to express its gratitude to Ms. Hevia for all the work she has done for this organisation. We wish her the best of luck in all her upcoming endeavours.

