

## 4

**SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION ENSURING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION (A STUDY BASED ON CHILD SEX TOURISM IN NEGOMBO, HIKKADUWA AND WELIGAMA COASTAL BELTS)****C.M. Munasinghearachchi***BSW (Hons) National Institute of Social Development  
Lecturer, School of Social Work, National Institute of Social Development*

**Abstract:** Child sex tourism refers to particular kind of tourism organized to satisfy the need among certain customers segments for establishing commercial sexual relationships with the children. It is an obscure industry where the tourist's primary purpose is to engage in a sexual experience with a child. Mostly coastal areas can be identified as hubs of children engage in sex tourism in Sri Lanka. Exclusion from the education and school dropouts has become a major obstacle to develop their life skills. The study focuses on educational challenges face by children who engage in child sex tourism. While Person in Environment theory was giving an insight in theoretical frame work, this qualitative study examined the associated push and pull factors of educational challenges as well as the social work intervention. Focused group discussions were identified as the main method of data collection apart from in depth interviews from male children (age 12-18) and key informant

interviews from Hikkaduwa, Negombo and Weligama coastal areas which can identify as hubs in child sex tourism. Findings of the study revealed that the motivation from the living background and socio-economic condition have directly affected children to find financial assistance mainly by engaging in sex tourism avoiding school attendance. In addition to that the acceptance and the identity received for their body image in the tourism trade and devious assumption on education divert them from schools. Therefore, it is recommended to promote social work practice in controlling adverse effects of child sex tourism in all micro, mezzo and macro levels by endowing the professionals in child protection.

**Key words:** Educational Challenges, Child Sex Tourism, Child Protection, Social Work intervention

## INTRODUCTION

Child sex tourism (CST) is a subtle industry where the tourist's primary purpose is to engage in a sexual experience with a child and this is a hidden factor in the society. Under international legislation, tourism with the intent of having sexual relations with a minor is in violation of the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child. The intent and act is a crime and in violation of human rights. Moreover the child sex tourism in the Sri Lanka is one of the major destination countries for the purposes of child prostitution. The purpose is to bring attention to the guise of tourism. It offers a definition of the crisis, a description of the victims and perpetrators, and a discussion of the social and cultural factors that perpetuate the problem. The study focuses on the education barriers faced by children who engaging sex tourism as well as the social work intervention in abating these challenges. Though there are several factors that need to focus on child sex tourism such as their economy, lives style, psycho-social factors; this research is focused on to find the barriers which made them to acquire education, how it affect their future and for the development of lives skills.

In Addition, through the history of CST, Since the 1980s sexual exploitation of children by tourists in developing countries has grown exponentially. During this time, in Southeast Asia, child sex tourism (CST) and child pornography was exposed and received widespread media attention around the world. The authorities investigated 22 foreign male tourists suspected of the production of child pornography, drug abuse, and the sexual abuse of children (Protection Project, 2007; Trinidad, 2005). Throughout the 1990s the Philippines, in addition to other international interests, were concerned with the extent that European, North American, Australian, Japanese, and Korean men were traveling to the country (and other developing nations) to engage in sex with children. The Sri Lankan history occurring CST due to colonization, open economic system where it opens up to the globe. Although Sri Lanka has extended concern and developed legislation targeting CST, it is the work of advocacy groups around the globe that have brought attention to this disparaging subject and it is the responsibility of government, non-government and international Organizations like ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children) and UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). Although these organizations have made efforts to extend CST research, investigating CST is problematic and the awareness of the problem remains abstruse. When discussed within the context of human trafficking and the sex trade, CST generally receives causal mention and little in-depth analysis.

### **Purpose of the study**

The child sex tourism is an unseen part in the societies of many developing countries. Numerous Sri Lankan children have been used as sex labors and they used by the Western pedophiles sex tourists. Most of the tourists travel to other countries to seek sex, and this has led to the formation of sex tourism (Cossins, A. 2000). Children who engage in child sex tourism are school dropouts and they are excluded from education. They are becoming child prostitutes. Statistics revealed that, Sri Lanka has nearly 40,000 child prostitutes in the country while 5,000 to 30,000 Sri Lankan boys are used by Western pedophiles sex tourists (The National Child Protection Authority, 2006). This statistic reveals that over, 5,000 to 30,000 children have been used in tourist industry. Although it is legally prohibited in Sri Lanka still is exist in some coastal arrears and there are lack of legal actions and

professional intervention have been taken place to dwindling this situation, due to the inconspicuousness of the CST taking place. The scope of this study is to find out the real factors that motivated them for sex tourism and the factors that determine their education with educational opportunities.

This issue of child sex tourism have become more considerable for the all the responsible stake holders in county. Further, it negatively results, for the children to end up with different physical and psychological damages. Moreover, it tends them to live in the society as child prostitutes. In the Sri Lankan context it is hidden aspect in the tourism. Most of the children who are living in coastal belt and who have broken families are more vulnerable to sex tourism. These children are school dropouts and they are excluded from the education, family and society. Furthermore these children are addicted to drug as a result of engage in sex tourism. Therefore it is needed to have a study on educational challenges faced by children and to develop appropriate prevention strategies against CTS in abating this issue, education and sensitization of the general public and the training of tourism professionals, with appropriate social work intervention.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to identify the educational challenges faced by children in the selected areas, while the sub objectives focus on examining the push and pull factors for children to engage in sex tourism, scrutinizing the perception of children that they have on the education. This will focus on the negative and positive perception on education as two major components. The last objective will aim to find out the appropriate social work intervention in abating these challenges. Basically social work intervention (micro, mezzo, and macro) will find out mechanism which can minimize the number of children who expose to child sex trade and to guarantee the right to education.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher adopted the qualitative research design where it demonstrates the quality of the findings. Focused group discussion (FGD) was used as the main method of data collection while case studies, key informant interviews and observation were also used. The research used qualitative method with intend of revealing the complex phenomena like life style, life experience and to gain an understanding of CST. Additionally, finding underlining reasons, opinion, and motives with providing insight into the problems which are inconspicuous in the field of Child Sex Tourism.

The sample population was selected as male children Age 12-18, more than selecting the sample as beach boys, the researcher have focused on the invisible fragment of sex tourism, as male children who engage in sex tourism. Moreover statistic verified that the most of Sri Lankan boys are engage in sex tourism. "Sri Lanka has nearly 40,000 child prostitutes in the country while 5,000 to 30,000 Sri Lankan boys are used by Western pedophiles sex tourists" (The National Child Protection Authority,2006).

It is quite difficult to find the respondents directly through the direct data collection tools and its ethical consideration. To gather information from the respondents, six in- depth interviews were used to verify the accurate and validity of data which are more related to children and their lives. Five Key informant interviews conducted with surfing community leader, field officer, three wheeler

chauffeur, probation officer and Rev. Father to find out some relevant information which could not be observed. Observation in the field helped the researcher to identify the respondent's physical appearance, dress patterns, behaviors, environment and the living condition.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Push and pull factors

#### *Push factors*

---

*Family separation and Single parent families*

*Mother's passive neglect*

*Loneliness and attention seeking*

*Female headed families*

*Low family income*

*Peer influence*

*Gender*

#### *Pull factors*

---

*Peer influence*

*Loneliness and attention seeking*

*Physical appearance*

*Money worth than education*

*Unattainable goal*

*Gender*

### Love and Affection

#### Family separation and Single parent families

The family is playing a major role in the society as a social institution, where the children shape up their personality through the support of family. Findings revealed most of children, who engage in child sex tourism, are children who come from broken families and who have been grown up with single parent.

According to social learning theory, people learn through observing others' behavior, attitudes, and outcomes of those behaviors. The individuals learned behavior through the society and they shape up their personality and behaviors based on experience which they have undergone. In CST children are learned behaviors through their society and parent, in some cases mother engage in prostitution and earn money for the family, father separated from the family and living with another woman in the same community where the child grew up. Some parents are living together but they are having extramarital affairs. Altogether these reasons have made child exclusive from values and norms in the society. What child experienced is always broken relationships in family live. This has made them to live the life that is more distractive for them.

As findings revealed most of the children with single parent are vulnerable to CST, where the parent does not have time to look after their children, while engage in other (occupational) activities.

*“Most of the children casers that I have been experienced are from the children who come from the broken families. Some children even don’t have parents and some are separated from the family. Whole the day these children are staying alone in the home. They do whatever they want and no one will there for to secure them at even in the day time”.*

## **Poverty**

### **Low family income**

Low family income is another push factor with courses for poverty. Most of the children who recognize as children who engage child sex tourism are coming from low income families. The income of these families is Rs.15, 000 for a month. This amount is not enough to look after all the children within the family. If Father is the breadwinner of the family, there are no any other options. He has to provide all the facilities for the family. In addition most of people have been adopted for the daily wage they don’t receive monthly payment as the government officers. This daily wage is insufficient to survival where, only it enough for their daily consume. They only focus on to consume and not for any savings. Furthermore, this situation leads to generational poverty, where these children also live below the poverty line.

*“I engage in this to get some money, I have fed-up with receiving money from my parents. How much they earn they don’t have money for me” ( Podda, 16 y)*

Social and economic deprivation during childhood and adolescence can have a lasting effect on individuals, making it difficult for children who grow up in low-income families to escape poverty when they become adults. Because the negative effects of deprivation on human development tend to cumulate, individuals with greater exposure to poverty during childhood are likely to have more difficulty escaping poverty as adults.

Low Income → Low Saving → Low Investment → Low Production → Low Income

## **Peer influence**

The age 12-18 is most curious age where the children try to find new things and try to imitate other as the role model. Imitation of friend is another factor where the children imitate the friend and try to do as what their friends do. Most of children who engage in child sex tourism, used to imitate their friends and they have friends who have the relationship with tourist. This has inspired them to get engage in sex tourism for a long time and to impose other friends in to this field.

*“From my childhood I grew up with my aunt and uncle. Only my friends were there for me to talk everything. All the things I discussed with my friends and I do everything with them. I don’t know about my mother and father. I really like this field because I get enough money for me”.*

*“My friends are always there for me. They are my guilders in this field” (Buda, 17 yrs.)*

## Acceptances and Recognition

### Physical Appearance

The physical appearance of the child influence as pulls factor for motivate children to engage in child sex tourism. Mostly boys who have the “V” shape of body and the tan skin color, curly hair and wearing one earring are common among the children which made them a figure of the CST community. As one of respondent receive that they receive well recognition for their skin color. Though they don’t have well build body, the have good recognition and acceptance for the appearance which been a factor for tourist to get the attraction.

*“This is the value we receive for our shell” (Sanddy,13 yrs.)*

Accordingly as the child reveals beauty or good looks is another factor where it enacts these children to engage in child sex tourism. This fact can identified as a pull factor for children to motivate for the CST. Curly hair, tan skin and tattoos are the focal appearance that they obligate as the demand on the sex tourism field. The dress code is differing from the situations. In addition to that, they receive well recognition and acceptance in the field of CST if they have all this appearance.

### Negative perception on education

#### Money worth than education

Most of the children who live in coastal belt are used to earn money from their small age. This is one factor with related with their income and the family background. Increasing of number of family members and lack of money to afford for the education can identify as a causes for this children to engage in occupation in their small age. Average of ages 12-13 they have engage in different activities associated with the tourism. Meanwhile child sex tourism is easy way to earn money without any struggling in the tourist designations. This availability has tended them to engage in child sex tourism and to get some amount of money.

*“People who live in this area always prefer to do occupations connected to coastal belt, though there are several opportunities.”*

*“These children are so matured than we think when it comes to this field” (KII-Surfing community leader (Weligama coastal area)*

As the surfing community leader sited, these children are so matured in the field of CST. They have more life experience which we expected from a normal child. Money made big gap in their between education it direct them away from the schooling life.

*“These children even don’t know the word education; they know only money and fun.” (KII-Field officer– Negombo area)*

## Remodeling

The Respondents who are engage in child sex tourism are more probable to identify as the children who comes from the uneducated parents. Some parents were never gone to school or any academic institute. These children also don't show any preference to studies. They takes parent as the example nor role model in their life, Further this parent don't support the children go to the school and they are not involved in children's school activities. There is no any positive effects of parental involvement have made to involve children in the studies. Through the FGC the discussion with the religious lenders revealed that, Even in the church based learning programme also conducted by making parents enthusiasm by force. They revealed that there is no involvement of parents in the learning process and there need to give greater attention to those children, and the important of parental involvement in school, and positive parent-child interactions, which can positively affect children's self-perception.

*"I don't like to study. Even my father didn't do to school. But he earned enough money for us. After mother left and went us our step mother locking after me. I have full freedom to do whatever I want. As I working in the beach I earn enough money for me. I don't have any idea for go to school again. Since; I'm boy, no need to study for a job."* (Sudda, 15 yrs.)

According above case, Sudda is working in the fisheries community and he earns money for him. This tends him to carry away from the education. He imitates what his father did and takes him as role model in his live. Father's character has great influence on Sudda's life with the exclusion from schooling education.

## Unattainable Goal

The children's perception is that the education is not an achievable goal at all. The mindset was developed related with some facts where it made them to exclude from the education. These children have been grown up in a condition where the parents support is less in the educational activities. All the time children used to live with their friends and to find some amount of money for their daily expenditures. This made inspiration and motivation among them, that they need to earn money other than wasting time for the education. Some of their friends who engage in CST have made their own house and living a luxury life. These reasons were highly impact them to give more priority for the money other than the education.

*"I like this tourist industry; I came to this field when I was small. Now I'm mature than I was before 4 years ago. I am full independent person and no need anyone's help .Truly; I don't prefer to study as I see the age is not a matter to do a job in the shore"* (Gray, 16 old)

As gray expressed, he has no willingness to education. Money made him matured and he thinks that the he is stable money. It needs to consider most of the children are away from education because of the money. Most of coastal area in Sri Lanka people engages in daily wagers activities. The amount of money they receive is not enough to afford for their children education. This has made children to find money for their survival and for their daily expenditure. It is clear that the perception of education is unattainable goal for them is stand as a negative perception which have leads them to engage in CST.



## **Improvement of English language**

### **Tourist Language**

The children who engage in child sex tourism are more fluent in English language. The researcher has evidenced that throughout the interview with the respondents. 83 percent of respondents are talking in English in clever manner. They used most of the jargons which are related to the field of tourism. The reason for this can be found as the close relationship with tourist and always deal with the tourist. In addition to that the use of new technology is common among these children. Internet and other social media have been used by them to get a global recognition for them. This electronic assistance have provided by the tourist with the purpose of easy access to contact with the children. The use of social media also has been contributing them to improve the English knowledge.

### **Religious support for education**

In coastal belts the catholic/Christian faith and institutions have been established to support the people who live in the beach sides. This institution plays a major role in providing education, spiritual assistance, helping the poor family and providing counseling. Catholic/Christian religious leaders are the main figure of this process where they find children who engage in CST and provided the rehabilitation in terms of accessing the counseling, technical training, and family awareness which can help these children to get rid of the CST. Without any religious influence most of the religious leaders are willing to provide educational facilities from CST children.

*"I would like to teach these children, to take for the right part which god has shown us"* (Rev.father, the FGC)

## **SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION IN ABATING THESE CHALLENGES.**

### **Micro level intervention**

The micro level of social work practice such as case work and group work are recognized as important guiding interventions with children who engage in CST. Moreover, push and pull factors of this study rooted in poverty, family sedation, and single parent families were describe in the first objective. In such situations the rights-based approach will use by the social workers involves active participation of children in advocating for their rights and aims at drafting intervention strategies that are in consonance with the felt needs of the children. Further social worker intervenes to ensure the 'child rights' will not discriminate in any circumstance. They work with the right holders to guarantee that they are accountable for the right of the child. It includes the social institutions Such as the school, religious and community based organizations.

### **Mezzo level intervention**

In mezzo practice social worker works with Families and Communities. The work with families and communities is preventive in nature. The effort is to prevent children live in the coastal belt becoming CST. The intervention strategy involves the following activities such as working with community leaders, predominantly those communities which are of low socio-economic backgrounds to generate self-effort for upgrading the quality of life by getting more civic amenities,



generating awareness with respect to the importance of education and, if possible, offering educational sponsorships to keep children in school and within the family, provision of day-foster-care facilities for the children of working mothers, and provision of foster care for families in crisis situations, especially for children with single-parents.

### **Macro level intervention**

At the micro-level of social work intervention focus on to policy making, social action, advocacy, lobbying, social administration and social research. Thus, one intervention strategy that has been adopted by social workers is training and sensitization of the tourist with the support of government and NGO bodies. Again, the stigmatization of children who engage in CST is a major hurdle to their growth and development. Thus, another intervention strategy involves sensitization of the people in general. This can be done by the awareness campaigns with regard to the problems that CST children face and the reasons behind getting pushed into tourism trade are initiated with the help of community based child protection organization. In addition to that, social workers advocate people for building a mass movement for fighting against the sexual exploitation of children and taking up issues of juvenile justice collectively. Additionally, in macro level it needs to arrange forum with the requirement of collectively voice the needs and rights of the children.

In policy making and analyzing it important make people familiar convention and policies with the priority mobilization of people for this is UNCRC. With the knowledge of rights of children such as right to identity, right to shelter, right to dignity and respect, right to security, right to protection, right to leisure and recreation, and right to participation. There need to be the social work intervention in advocate for them involving more participation from the central and the state governments. Administration and empowerment at the micro-level helps the child to realize her/his rights and responsibilities to protect him and to gain the protection from the society.

Also the role of social workers in developing such an understanding through research on different aspects of the issue becomes significant. Also, it highlights the importance of drawing connections between different causative factors to develop a holistic understanding of the issue. Through the practical experiences of social workers will bring the change within the society.

### **CONCLUSION**

Child is defined as every human being below the age of 18 years. They recognizes as a vulnerable group in the society who need special care and protection from the society. They are exposed to abuse and to violate their right at any time. Child Sex tourism is where the tourist's primary purpose is to engage in a sexual experience with a child. They can be domestic travelers or international. Further it identifies as sexual exploitation of children by a person or persons who travel from their home district, home geographical region, or home country in order to have sexual contact with children where it link with the sexual exploitation of children. This has influence the result socio-economic background of the people and their life style. The major issue is most of the children have engage in CST and they are excluded from the education as researcher found some are school drop outs and some children engages CST as part time while going to the school This have negatively impact of them to develop their educational and life skills. As it is a violation of the UN Convention of CRC, the right to education. Further it is the violation of the Educational policy in Sri Lanka which have legalized the compulsory education up to the age 16. In addition to that most of the children

have working in other actives to gain money. This condition has increasing in the costal belt and there are lack of expertise dialogue related to this area and no enough information to reveal this situation. The important of to ascertain the vacuums in the law implementation and to find their perception on education is becoming researchable where it proved that in the future more children will be uneducated as there will be enormous violation of child right and sexual exploitation of children, who lives in the in the coastal belt of Sri Lanka.

It is recommended to establish child protection committees in village level to identify the children who engage in CST .Especially in Hikkaduwa, Negombo and Weligama. The committee should form with the support of the Grama Niladari, Child right promote officer, School teachers, Religious leaders and the participation of community member. The committee should have the authority to report CST cases and they need to have the knowledge in working with the children. They need to have action plan includes; identification of children who engage in CST, refer to rehabilitation and community awareness.

Based on the information given by the field officer in Negombo area, there was an informal rehabilitation center, which was actively functioned for rehabilitate the children who engage in CST. Due to the monitoring and evaluation issues it had closed. It is recommended to re-activate the rehabilitation center with the participation of well experienced field officers and the participation of religious leaders. It needs to be registered in the divisional secretariat office to acquire the legal assistance with appropriate evaluation, monitoring and follow-up system. Therefore, recommended to conduct awareness programme for the parents, neighbors and guardians in the costal belts in order to understand them about who is child, needs of child and rights of the child( Right to education) .Further make them understand what happens around child, especially in the tourist industry. It need to provide the knowledge on role and responsibilities of the parent, how to look after child and the legal back ground to protect children from CST.

“Turn a sex tourist into an ex-tourist”. The tourists who travel for the CST have the knowledge bout CST and they learn about the places through internet, forum chat or word of mouth. They also have specialized websites where they could post on the updates of information, advices and experiences of different destinations. In the websites they have chat room where they can discuss and suggest each other. Once they are in the destination, they could get more information through taxis drivers, advertisements, hotels or bars to gain the access to CST.

## REFERENCES

- Cossins, A. 2000. *Masculinities, Sexualities and Child Sexual Abuse*. Cambridge. MA: Kluwer Law International.
- *ECPAT International*. 2008. Combating Child Sex Tourism. [pdf] Bangkok: Saladaeng, page (12). Available at: [http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/cst\\_faq\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/cst_faq_eng.pdf) [12 Aug.2017].
- *Ministry of Higher Education & Highways*. 2012.*Overview*. [online] Available at: <http://www.mohe.gov.lk/index.php/about-ministry/overview> [27 Nov. 2017].
- *National Association of Social Workers (NASW)*. 2008. Code of ethics. [online] Available at: <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English> [22 Aug.2017].

- *United Nations General Assembly*. 1989. Convention on the Rights of the Child.[pdf] United Nations, p(9). Available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf> [12 Oct.2017].
- Weerakoon, G. 2006. *UNICEF statistics: Sri Lanka has 40,000 child prostitutes, twnewsfeatures* [online] Available at: <http://tamilweek.com/news-features/archives/420> [25 Nov. 2017].
- World Tourism Organization -Ethics and Social Responsibility. 1995. Statements & Policy Documents on Child Protection. [online] Available at: <http://ethics.unwto.org/content/staements-policy-documents-child-protection> [16 Sep.2017].