



# Extent and Effect of Sex Tourism and Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Kenyan Coast



## Executive Summary

The commercial sexual exploitation of children in coastal areas exposed in this report is a shocking violation of their rights, and a reflection of the profound risk potentially faced by all children in Kenya. Some ten to fifteen thousand girls living in coastal areas of Malindi, Mombasa, Kalifi and Diani are involved in casual sex work – up to 30% of all 12-18 year olds living in those areas. A further two to three thousand girls and boys are involved in full-time year round commercial activity. Many full-time child sex workers have migrated to the coast from other parts of the country, and have often been inaugurated into sex work before they arrive. The sexual exploitation of children is not limited to coastal areas or to tourists, but can be found in communities across Kenya. About one in ten children involved in sex work are initiated before they are 12 years old.

The level and acceptance of sexual exploitation of children in coastal areas puts all children in Kenya at risk. It reflects a fundamental breakdown and corruption of families and communities, and a failure of the authorities to provide protection to children and to prosecute those responsible for promoting and profiting from child sex work. Tourists that exploit children are at the centre of a ring of corruption that involves many from the local community. Child sex workers are often compelled to deliver sexual services to Kenyans – beach boys, bar staff, waiters, and others – in order to access tourists. During the low tourist season, the local market for child sex workers keeps the system going.

The sexual exploitation of children therefore thrives because of the complicity of a broad section of the local community. While some children are driven into transactional sex because of poverty, the high level of acceptance of child sex work in coastal communities makes it relatively easy for children to drift into casual sex in exchange for no more than extra pocket money. Many younger girls reported that they begin in local bars to gain experience and money to allow them to buy clothes, accessories and hairstyles that will enable access to the tourist market.

Overall, 38% of the clients of child sex workers consulted for the survey were Kenyan. Tourists exploiting children for sex came from many countries, with the most common offenders coming from Italy (18%), Germany (14%) and Switzerland (12%).

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Coastal communities are among the poorest in Kenya. The lucrative tourism industry has failed to deliver significant benefits and employment for host communities, and this has exacerbated and increased the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation.

Child sex workers are not criminals. They are the victims of sexual exploitation. It is vital that the adult perpetrators and not the victims themselves are prosecuted for these crimes. At the same time, it must be recognized that the use of raids or the exclusion of children from certain public areas as the central plank of a reduction programme risks driving the activity underground, leading to greater marginalisation, increased risk of exploitation and even less protection.

The Kenyan government, civil society, the tourist industry, the broader private sector must urgently come together to prevent and end the sexual exploitation of children. The countries whose nationals are exploiting Kenyan children also have a key role to play in preventing these heinous crimes.

The study presents the following key findings:

### **1. Magnitude**

- The study identified two distinct groups of children engaged in sex work: those who work as informal sex workers on a casual and ad hoc basis and those who engage in sex work as a full-time income generating activity.
- Children involved in sex work and sex tourism are not a homogeneous group. As many as 45% of children engaged in sex work with tourists are from outside coast province with large numbers coming from Eastern, Central and Western provinces.
- Sex workers include children whose basic needs cannot be met by family for reasons of unemployment, under-employment and loss of one or both parents. However, over 50% of child sex workers have parents in employment and are still attending school in the resort areas but would like to earn additional pocket money. However, as they operate within their own home communities they are usually discreet and careful not to be seen by older members of their communities.
- The population of children between 12 and 18 years of age in the districts under study, from education and KDHS survey data, is estimated to be approximately 100 -120,000 of which 60-65,000 are girls. Of that number, it is estimated that 40 – 50,000 live in and around the resort areas. From the various sources of data and triangulation, a conservative assessment of the involvement of girls in sex work and sex tourism is between 25% - 30%. In numerical terms that represents a figure of 10,000-15,000. However, the number of children engaging in sex tourism as a full-time year round commercial activity is much lower at a figure of 2,000 – 3,000.

### **2. Vulnerability of children involved in Child Sex Tourism (CST)**

- More than half the girls engaged in full-time commercial sex work are living apart from family, parents and guardians.
- Of that group, the majority are living in communities of sex workers and sharing the rental of rooms between 4-6 girls.
- Of child sex workers from resort areas, 40% had lost one or both parents.

### **3. Widespread acceptance and approval of the practice of CST**

- More than 75% of key informants<sup>1</sup> either accepted the practice of CST as normal and tolerable or actively approved of it. Only 20% saw the behaviour as immoral. Approval of the practice was associated with it bringing wealth and advantage to individual girls and their families and generating income that would benefit various sectors of the community.
- 59% of key informants thought boys involvement in sex tourism as beach boys, procurers and middlemen or engaging in sex work with tourists was acceptable.

### **3. Early initiation into transactional sex**

- All data sources indicated that more than 45% of girls involved in prostitution and child sex tourism began transactional sex for cash or for goods and favours between the ages of 12 and 13 years.
- More than 10% of girls begin transactional sex below 12 years of age.

### **4. Child sex tourism is intricately and closely linked to child prostitution**

- 39% of the clients of child sex workers in the study were Kenyan men.
- Child sex workers provide sexual services to Kenyan hotel workers and beach boys in order to gain access to tourists.
- The existence of a local demand for child sex workers sustains the sex tourist market during low seasons or tourist market fluctuations.

### **5. Economics of child sex tourism**

- Child sex tourism is highly lucrative and drives the informal and the commercial sex trade. The disparity between a family's capacity to generate goods and income and what can be earned in sex work feeds the domestic culture which encourages children to seek out tourists
- Average prices paid by tourists in each age category:  
    <12 - 1,000 -2000KSH  
    12-16 - 1,000 -2000KSH  
    16-18 - 2000 – 5,000KSH
- Price paid for anal intercourse ranges between 5,000 – 10,000KSH
- The daily rate of casual labour for a child is between 80 -120 KSh and for an adult 300-500 KSh

### **6. Clients and risk behaviour**

- In the study sites, Italians, Germans and Swiss men rank as the top three clients of under-age female sex workers at 18%, 14% and 12% respectively. These three nationalities were significantly more active with under age girls than other nationalities. Ugandans and Tanzanians ranked fifth and sixth in the client group. British and Saudi Arabian men ranked seventh and eighth.
- Anal sex represented 12% of all sex acts but 30% of all sex acts with Italian men
- No condom was used during 32% of all penetrative sex acts and 42% of all acts of anal sex.
- Kenyans, Italians and Germans ranked as having the lowest condom use.

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<sup>1</sup> **Key informants** were drawn mostly from the tourism industry (hair/massage salon keepers, curio sellers, waiters, bar staff, beach boys etc.) but also including government staff, members of NGOs, parents, students, community leaders, and representatives of faith based organizations.



## Recommendations

- The Kenyan government, civil society, the tourist industry and communities themselves must recognize that child prostitution is a widespread in Kenya. Swift, effective action backed by financial and human resources is urgently needed to ensure the protection of children and prosecution of adult perpetrators. Combating child sex tourism requires commitment of the community and overt condemnation and disapproval of the behaviour itself and not merely of the actors.
- There must be a major shift in thinking and values away from punishing the child and his or her family and instead holding the people who engage in transactional sex with minors as accountable and responsible. This needs to be the starting point for developing a plan of action and for all communication campaigns.
- Because of the large number of children coming to the coast from other parts of the country to engage in sex work with tourists, Child Sex Tourism needs to be understood as a national and not just a local problem confined to the Coast province.
- Legal instruments must be reviewed to ensure third parties to the sexual exploitation of minors can be held responsible and accountable and the courts be given the power to enact costly penalties e.g. closing establishments, increased monitoring of long-term foreign tourists etc..
- The active involvement and commitment from Treasury, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries of Education and Health are required for any reduction measures to carry weight and be sustainable. Particular efforts need to be addressed to training and accountability of police officers.
- The Government and its partners need to consider how and in what ways poverty reduction programmes can be stepped up in the areas which surround the key tourist strips. eg. target children and youth, creation of vocational training opportunities, greater role for youth in economic planning, increase availability of secondary school places, shifting training institutions such as Utalii and certain Government of Kenya offices from Nairobi to Coast Province, long-term funded school feeding programmes, etc.
- The Government needs to be clear about its own priorities and to recognise the inherent conflicts between the stated objective to substantially increase the numbers of tourists coming to Kenya and its commitment to assuring child rights and child protection.
- The Government should play a more active role in the global tourism arena including participating in global conferences on child sex tourism and paedophilia reviewing policies and strategic plans for tourism in Kenya to encourage the kinds of tourists and tourism that respects and supports local customs and values, and marketing Kenya to that specific market