

Risks of violence against children in travel and tourism

A child-friendly version of:

2023 report to the UN General Assembly

By the Special Representative to the
UN Secretary-General on Violence
Against Children



**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON**

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



United Nations

The 'United Nations' or the UN, is an organization of almost all the countries in the world, created to promote development, peace and security, and human rights.

The UN is a place where Member States (countries that are members of the UN) discuss common challenges and find solutions TOGETHER, for all humanity, including CHILDREN. The head of the UN is called the 'Secretary-General'. The UN Secretary-General selects people to work with him on specific issues.



The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (or SRSV-VAC), Najat Maalla M'jid
is one of them.

Najat and her team help countries end all forms of **violence against children**, in all settings, everywhere, always putting children first!

WHO IS BEHIND TRAVEL AND TOURISM?

The world is more interconnected than ever before. More and more people are travelling, within and between countries.

People travel in lots of different ways, and for different reasons. And for this to happen, lots of people need to be involved.

And more!

Travel agencies

Hotels

Bus drivers and people working for bus companies

Customs and border patrol

Truck drivers

Taxi drivers

People working in:

Airports

Trains

Planes

Boats

Tech companies

People running or working in restaurants

People renting their homes

Companies that work on travel and tourism

Tour guides

Tour companies

Travel and tourism is one of the largest industries in the world.

A colorful illustration featuring a pink airplane flying in the sky, a yellow sailboat on the water, and a large blue and white cruise ship. The background is a light blue sky with stylized white clouds. The water is represented by a blue area with white horizontal lines. The entire scene is set against a white background.

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An illustration of a slum environment. In the foreground, a woman with long dark hair wearing an orange and white polka-dot dress stands on a wooden platform, looking down at a young child with dark curly hair wearing a blue shirt. They are positioned in front of a dark wooden door with a white window frame. Above them, a clothesline with various items hanging on it is visible. To the right, a man in a blue shirt and dark pants is pushing a metal cart filled with boxes or bricks across a dirt path. The background shows more of the slum, including a building with a chimney and a small red brick oven on the ground. The overall color palette is warm, with oranges, browns, and blues.

For example, this could be because children are working in dangerous or unsafe jobs related to travel and tourism.

LET'S EXPLORE SOME OF THE RISKS CHILDREN FACE

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is when someone takes advantage of a child with sexual purposes, whether in-person or online.

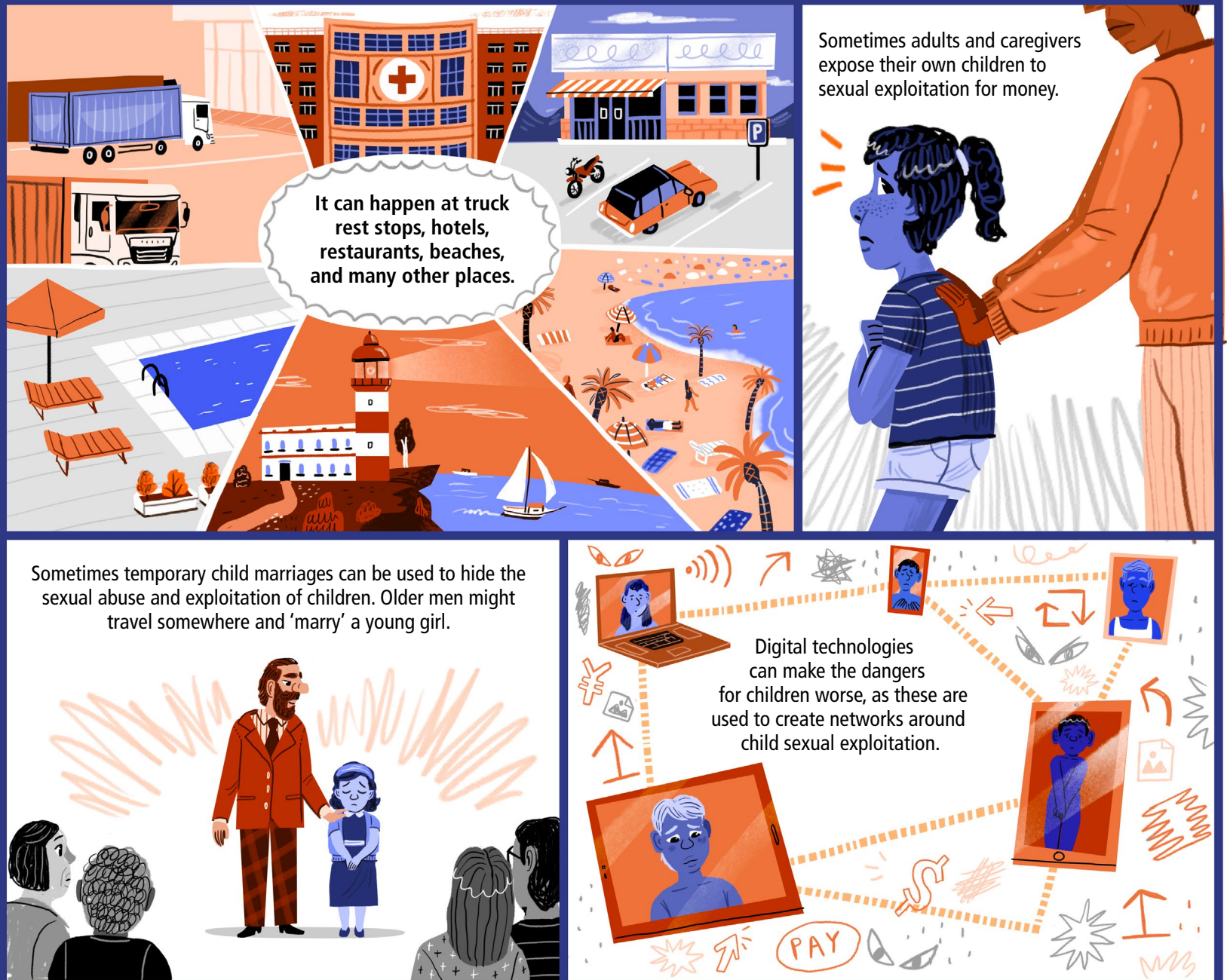
It is called sexual exploitation when somebody encourages or forces a child into sexual activities, and makes money or receives something in exchange.

It can happen at truck rest stops, hotels, restaurants, beaches, and many other places.

Sometimes adults and caregivers expose their own children to sexual exploitation for money.

Sometimes temporary child marriages can be used to hide the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Older men might travel somewhere and 'marry' a young girl.

Digital technologies can make the dangers for children worse, as these are used to create networks around child sexual exploitation.



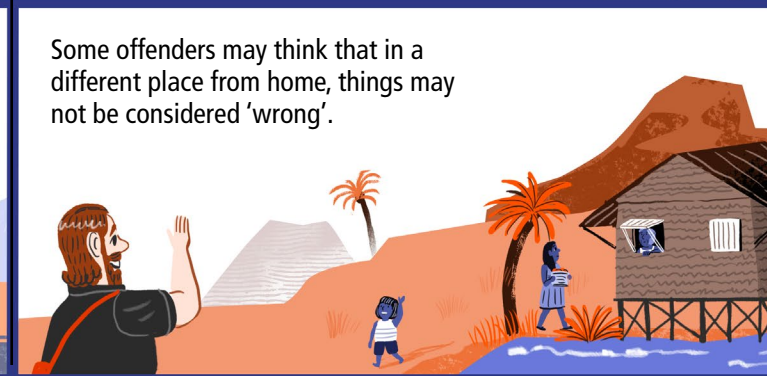
**MANY DIFFERENT TYPES OF
CHILDREN AND OFFENDERS CAN BE
INVOLVED WHEN IT COMES TO CHILD
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE.**
There is no such thing as a
'typical offender'.



Offenders may think they are less likely to be caught because they are traveling.



Some offenders may think that in a different place from home, things may not be considered 'wrong'.



Some offenders may think they can get away with abusing children because the laws are not being applied.



They may also seek out children who are less likely or unable to report violence they experience.



Sometimes there is more than one adult involved, such as when criminal gangs are involved in organizing the exploitation of children.



Through the Internet offenders can hide their identity to pretend to be somebody else, and they connect with children online before they travel.

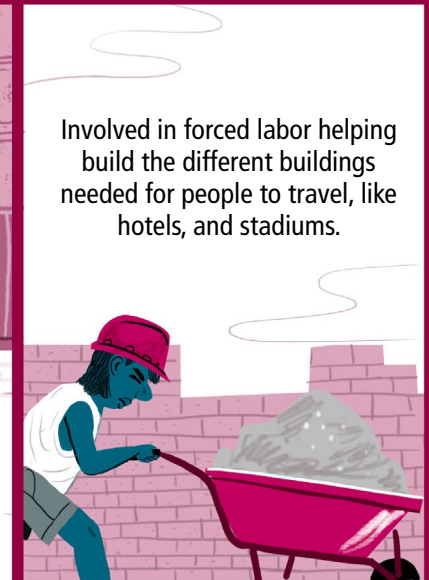
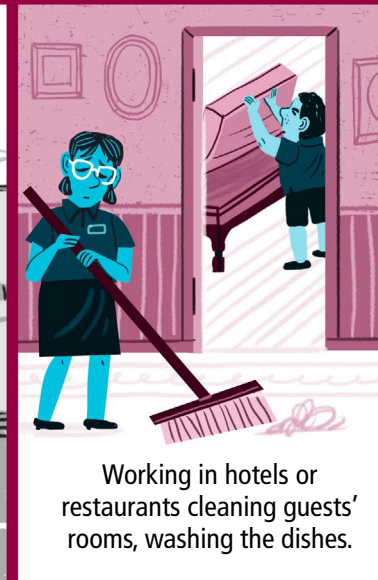
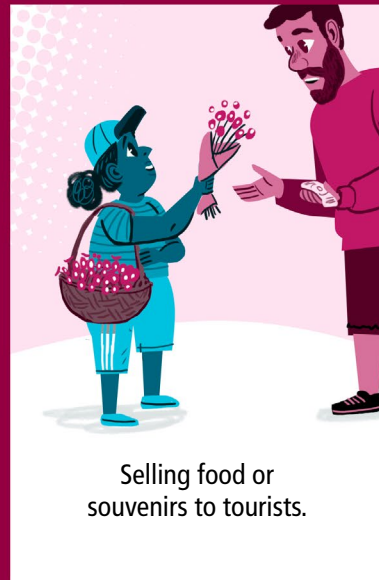


All these crimes are a violation of children's rights.

CHILD LABOR & WORKING CHILDREN

In travel and tourism, child labor has many faces, some visible and some hidden.

FOR EXAMPLE, CHILDREN COULD BE:



CHILDREN WHO ARE FORCED TO WORK:



All these are a violation of children's rights.

CHILD TRAFFICKING

Child trafficking is when children are tricked, forced or convinced to leave their homes and are moved or transported to be exploited in different ways.

This could involve children being exploited for sexual purposes and/or to be married.



They could also be forced to work in factories, construction sites, or even in people's homes.



Digital technologies are sometimes used to facilitate the trafficking of children.



OTHER WAYS IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM WHERE CHILDREN CAN BE AT RISK

Sometimes very large or 'mega' sporting or cultural event happen, and many people travel from different places to come to these.



Some people may take advantage of being a visitor and abuse or exploit children.



And sometimes children work cleaning the streets after these events happen, being at risk of experiencing other forms of violence, or even of being taken to detention centers.



Sometimes people travel to volunteer and help children.



Some of these volunteers might travel with the intention of accessing and taking advantage of vulnerable children.

MOVING FORWARD:

Why is it important to act **NOW**?



When COVID-19 came, travel and tourism was one of the industries to be most impacted. People went into lockdown, countries closed their borders, and people could not travel.



After COVID, people have gradually started to travel again. And the more people travel, the more children are at risk of being victims of violence.



The chances of children being victims of violence are also going up for other reasons.

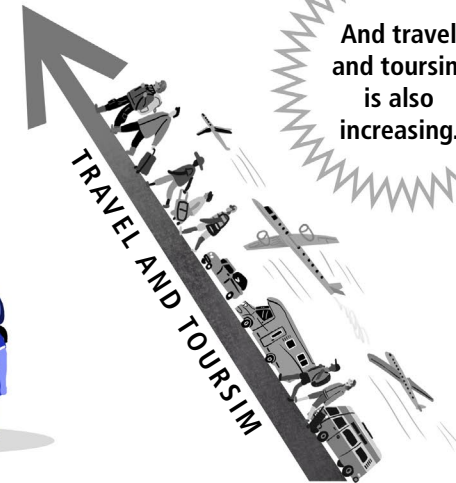
Many things that put children in dangerous situations are increasing, like:



As vulnerabilities and travel increase, children are often in the middle.



And travel and tourism is also increasing.



As the travel and tourism industry continues to grow, it is important to make it **better and safer.**

In this way, we can make it more 'sustainable', which means how tourism can positively affect communities, culture, the environment, children, and more. And for tourism to be sustainable for children, **EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY.**





Companies working in the travel and tourism sector:

Must ensure they check all the different ways their business affects children.

Should prevent any harm they identify.

Must respond quickly if any harm occurs.

Should adopt and implement policies looking to protect children in travel and tourism’.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY!



Governments:

Can make sure they have good laws in place to protect children and control that they are implemented.

Should have dedicated bodies with the power and responsibilities to protect children in travel and tourism.

‘Must also make sure that all children without discrimination have equal access to all the services they need.



Tech companies:

Can help improve detecting and reporting of violence, and making their platforms safer so perpetrators cannot commit their crimes.



Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):

Civil society organizations and networks continue to play a key role in raising awareness, generating evidence, providing guidance and support to States and to industry, monitoring progress, and providing services for victims and survivors.



The financial sector:

Can also help law enforcement to ‘follow the money’ and catch offenders based on how they’re paying.



Law enforcement agencies:

Must ensure that laws are implemented.

They also must catch offenders inside the country and across national borders.

AND CHILDREN LIKE YOU ARE TAKING ACTIONS!

Tell us
about your
actions too! You
can do so in
[our website](#)

In **Kenya**, working children who want to help improve their working conditions – and the ones of their peers – led a walk in the community of Homabay. This walk was a way of creating awareness about the importance of living in a community free of child labor, where working children can exercise their rights. These rights included being able to rest when sick, to work according to their age and for an appropriate amount of time, and their right to seek legal representation to protect themselves from abuse.

(Source: Dialogue works)

In **Lebanon**, working children are helping protect their peers and improve their working conditions, by advocating for better protection. Children have worked with local authorities to stop all forms of child labor, and to establish and implement a 'Code of Conduct' to protect working children from abuse and exploitation in the country.

(Source: 'Dialogue Works')

In **Thailand** children and youth participate in peer-to-peer learning and support groups, as part of the project "Together to End Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel & Tourism in Phang-Nga". They organize awareness-raising activities with their peers to help them avoid sexual exploitation, report cases, and access services they can turn to. They specifically look to empower children who are living in poverty, in the streets, out of school, or have been forced to leave their country and settled in Thailand.

(Source: ECPAT)

In **Canada, Cambodia** and the **Philippines**, children and youth have been training their peers and partnering with adults on how to address harms that occur to children because of travel and tourism, like the trafficking and sale of children, and child sexual abuse and exploitation. Through many actions, they have reached over 81000 children, and trained airlines, hotels and airport staff. They have also raised enough money to open a shelter for child victims of these forms of violence.

(Source: 'Onechild')

In **Costa Rica** and **Ecuador**, children and youth work with governments and companies to promote children's participation in addressing problems that happen because of travel and tourism. For example, they share their stories, discuss how to be more sustainable, and help identify touristic places in their communities that could pose risks to children. By jointly discussing the positive and negative impacts of travel and tourism, children are achieving positive change in their communities.

(Source: ECPAT)

CHILDREN EVERYWHERE HAVE SO MUCH TO SAY!



Before presenting her report to the **UN General Assembly**, Najat connected with hundreds of **children from almost 50 countries**. Many of them, active on addressing issues related to **violence against children in travel and tourism**.

They asked questions, but most importantly, they shared suggestions including possible solutions that could help prevent and end the different forms of violence related to this issue.



They want to see more **campaigns educating and raising awareness** on how travel and tourism impacts violence against children. **They want to be informed and empowered** to face the risks of violence.



Children want more support to their local communities and local governments to ensure sustainable and safe tourism.



They want **better laws**, but they also want to see them **implemented properly**. They want to ensure **action and accountability so Member States, institutions and the industry can be trusted**.



Children want adults to take their participation seriously. They want to see **more children playing a meaningful role** in addressing and preventing different forms of violence.



Children know that poverty and vulnerabilities put them at risk of experiencing violence, and they want to see **decision makers solving the root problems of violence**.



Children want to see both adults and children be educated on their rights and raise awareness about risks where their rights could be in danger.

ONE WORD TO DECISION MAKERS

In ONE WORD, what is the most important ingredient to protect children from violence in travel and tourism?

Communication
Collaboration
Trust
Contribution
Kindness
Education
Attention
Justice
Awareness
Safety
Progress
Effort
Awesome
Proper planning and proper protection
Protection
Legislation & implementation
Monitoring
Strong laws
Parents to understand children
Equip children for them to protect themselves
Cooperation
Strong child protection systems
Respect
Empowering
Resilience
Listen to children
Data
Care
Participation
Forgive
Long-term solutions
Understanding
& Union
Power
Motivation
Social inclusion
Community

"My word is 2 letters PP: proper planning and proper protection"

Today

"Prioritize meeting the special needs of children such as accessibility and medical care. Remember that child protection is a global task."

Sabrina

"In my country most of the tourism happens in the rural areas, so girls and women are the most vulnerable"

Vanessa

"Provide a better training in the companies on the prevention handling and how to report sexual violence"

Luftan

"I hope that the private sector such as hotel and resorts owners would have a good programme for children who are exposed to the tourism industry"

Jamaica

"We can raise awareness amongst travelers and communities, and involve businesses also"

Regita





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Check
out other
child-friendly
reports and
resources
[here](#)

Let's
continue the
conversation



violenceagainstchildren.un.org



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Illustrations by [@oyemathias](#)