

Chapter 3

Achieving SDG Target 8.7 Adolescent Skills Training to Prevent Sexual Exploitation: Evaluation and Effectiveness of Capacity Building and Sensitization Programs in Vulnerable Communities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines sustainable tourism's poverty-alleviating potential and cultural tourism's socio-economic role. It discusses four prevention initiatives in Vietnam emphasizing vocational training's importance in empowering at-risk youth. Recommendations include legislative strengthening, victim-inclusive policies, and coordinated efforts to combat sexual exploitation. The chapter stresses international partnerships and calls for education-centered policymaking supported by various stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, and human sex trafficking, are escalating globally (UNODC, 2020). Despite historical efforts like the 'Slavery Convention 1926' and subsequent legal frameworks culminating in the 'Palermo Protocol 2000', human trafficking persists as a major criminal industry, ensnaring nearly 25 million victims and yielding \$150 billion annually for traffickers (Human Rights First, 2017). Sex tourism, often intertwining with human trafficking and legal prostitution, predominantly victimizes individuals in impoverished regions where historical and socioeconomic vulnerabilities prevail, particularly in former colonized countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

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Achieving SDG Target 8.7 Adolescent Skills Training

Europe, while being a destination for trafficking, is also the origin for much of the demand for sex tourism, thereby obligating the EU to lead in forming partnerships and policies that foster tourism development and provide vocational alternatives to at-risk communities. This chapter will assess the EU's role in positive contributions to economic opportunities to mitigate the factors leading to sexual exploitation.

This chapter will review capacity building initiatives designed to prevent adolescents and young adults, defined as 'youth' - individuals aged 15 to 25-, from being lured into the sex tourism industry, whether by coercion or perceived necessity. The effectiveness of four specific initiatives will be discussed: two capacity building programs in Vietnam's hospitality sector, an awareness program in partnership with ECPAT International, and the UNODC's collaboration with Australian Aid's "Project Childhood" focused on Vietnam. While global prevention efforts have predominantly concentrated on awareness and advocacy (UNICEF, 2016), evidence suggests that poverty significantly contributes to exploitation in tourism (Mekinc, 2022). Therefore, this research will explore the effectiveness of vocational training in providing sustainable income alternatives, aiming to prevent sexual exploitation of youth in tourism.

Ultimately, the goal is to discern how collaborations between the Vietnamese government, the EU, the UN, and other organizations can develop targeted policies and programs to protect at-risk communities in Vietnam from sexual exploitation, culminating in strategic policy recommendations. The review will involve evaluating multilateral policies and the potential of these four programs in Vietnam to foster economic development and prevent sexual exploitation.

- 1) TUI Care Foundation – TUI Academy and Plan International in Vietnam; Starting in 2018 and ongoing, the TUI Academy provides vocational training to 350 disadvantaged young women and men to provide them with an opportunity to be lifted out of poverty. 180 have enrolled in tourism related training. Students gain practical experience through a training program at a social enterprise training restaurant to get their hospitality careers underway. With the TUI Academy at the core of the initiative, the project also builds on various other tools to bolster the potential of the local community. For example, by strengthening household economic security and raising awareness on child protection for disadvantaged children, youth, and their families.
- 2) International Tourism Partnership Youth Career Initiative and the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) is a public-private partnership that aims to make modern slavery economically unprofitable. GFEMS is investing \$490,000 to support survivors of human trafficking through the International Tourism Partnership's employability program, the Youth Career Initiative (YCI). Survivors of human trafficking will be able to build a safe and secure economic future for themselves thanks to a new partnership in Vietnam.
- 3) ECPAT International Vietnam and the social enterprise 'La Boulangerie Française' in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam (La Boulangerie Française is a social enterprise by Institut Européen de Coopération de Développement) and the Association of Southeast Asian Social Enterprises for Training in Hospitality & Catering (ASSET-H&C), a network of hospitality and catering vocational schools for vulnerable youths, have partnered to take the lead and inspire others to protect children from sexual exploitation in the domestic and foreign travel industries. The organizations are providing high-quality French bakery training for hundreds of vulnerable youth of which 85% were able to acquire sustainable jobs in hotels, resorts, supermarkets and renowned bakeries after completion of the training.
- 4) Australian AID (AusAID), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Vision Australia and INTERPOL worked together on Project Childhood, an Australian AID (AusAID)-funded initia-

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