

**The sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Morocco:
Some preliminary reflections**

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NEED GLOSSARY

NEED ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

Comparison of Thailand/Asia – faulty comparison

Child sex in Thailand and other parts of Asia in the 80s and 90s took two main forms:

- Extension of the significant, developed adult sex market that was largely a result of demand from foreign troops on ‘R & R’ from the Vietnam war and later conflict in the region;
- Small paedophile sex tourism phenomenon with long history but easily masked given the thriving adult sex market.

The commercial sexual exploitation of both children and women flourished because of significant tourist/local demand that was not regulated or sanctioned; and

Total lack of legislative framework, especially relating to commercial sex sector and child protection.

This is NOT the case in Morocco.

There is no developed adult sex market;

There is a strong national legislative framework that, inter alia, prohibits the adult commercial sex market (so that the adult market is small and generally clandestine/informal);

There is a robust child protection framework;

There is significant government commitment to child protection and for organizations working in this area.

There is a clear vision for responsible tourism that provides an opportunity for the impact of increased tourist arrivals to be mitigated.

SO:

The ‘noise’ being made by some ‘renegade’ NGOs, especially in the French and to some extent broader European press, is not based on:

- Reliable data;
- Accurate analysis or profound understanding.

It is based on the identification of a relatively small but important number of cases of children who have been victims of sexual violence (although with no differentiated analysis of these); and

On the undoubted presence of a small number of foreign paedophiles visiting or resident in Morocco whose activities are known but who continue to be active.

There is a concern that this ‘noise’ will:

Hamper full, accurate understanding of the problem of sexual violence as it exists today in Morocco;

Divert attention and resources away from the priority areas of intervention into knee-jerk actions not based on data and analysis of the problem;

Harden resistance to addressing the very fact of sexual violence in some sectors (eg conservative leaders and families, tourism promoters understandably concerned about negative publicity);

Effectively create 'publicity' around sexual violence in some overseas markets, encouraging abusers to turn to Morocco as a likely destination and thus putting Moroccan children at increased risk.

So, what to do?

Paint a clear, detailed picture of sexual violence towards children as it exists in Morocco today;

On the basis of this, consolidate and step up actions to protect children (including by supporting those who have already fallen victim so that they are not at risk); prevent sexual violence (including by pursuing and sanctioning those who perpetrate it);

Take a proactive approach to the misinformation being spread by:

1. Making a louder noise!
2. Basing this on accurate, reliable data and analysis;
3. Challenging misinformation by questioning sources of information and data'

This report, therefore provides preliminary input to an operational strategy by:

- Bringing together existing information – from a desk review of printed sources and interviews with organizations working in this area (see list of correspondents in annex) and providing analysis of these data taking into account extant knowledge of the phenomenon of sexual violence; also makes recommendations on gaps and priority actions;
- Reviewing existing frameworks and initiatives in Morocco relating to child protection and the prevention of sexual violence, and suggesting consolidation/reinforcement/expansion of these actions; suggests gaps in these as well as any good or bad practices, and recommends priorities;
- Outlining actions that might be taken to address the misinformed 'noise' discussed above;
- Addressing the potential to interface with Vision 2010, the initiative to develop responsible tourism in Morocco.

Conclusion:

Reiterate recommendations

Suggested priority actions

Conclude that Morocco is ideally placed to act proactively and nip this emerging issue in the bud.

Note:

Cybercrime – pornography/stalking;

Role of cybercafes?

Filter mechanisms

Which ISPs operate in Morocco?