



TRAILS OF INDOCHINA

*Artisans of bespoke journeys to
Southeast Asia & beyond*

Child Protection Policy





Child Protection Policy

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INTRODUCTION

We endorse the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) which is set out to ensure the growth and development in a spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality, and solidarity of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

Trails of Indochina as a DMC, we recognize our responsibility to contribute to the sustainability development of the destinations where we operate in general and the children in destinations particularly. First of all, we strive that all children, where we operate, have the right to be protected from exploitation and abuse.

To face many controversial situations such as children begging or tours visiting orphanages, as well as to promote responsible tourism, Trails of Indochina has developed a Child Protection Policy that prioritizes children's welfare and rights. **The purposes of this policy are:**

- To define internal guidelines and clear assigned responsibilities;
- To ensure meaningful customer experiences;
- To contribute to the overall sustainability of tourism in destinations;
- To raise awareness of child protection from exploitation and abuse, especially child-sex tourism;
- To avoid the risk;
- To protect strongly established commercial relationships.

DEFINITIONS

What is a CHILD? (*in Vietnamese: trẻ em*)

A child is a person who is under 18 years of age except if the national law of the concerned country states otherwise. In these guidelines, we refer to “children and young people” to make sure adolescents and young adults (persons aged between 12 and 17 years of age) are clearly covered by the guidelines. This aims to maximize security and reduce risk for the implementers. When we are talking about children, they are our

own children, the children of our employees and suppliers, the children who are travelling through our services, and the children in the communities where we work and visit.

**Remark: Employment of youth, as defined by the UN, is from ages 15-24 years, and can be accepted if not harmful or interfering with schooling, and if in accordance with national regulations, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the ILO convention 138.*

What is CHILD WELFARE? *(in Vietnamese: phúc lợi trẻ em)*

Child welfare refers to ensuring the protection, safety and well-being of children with the broad term “child welfare.” By linking the term child welfare to include child abuse and child exploitation, we go one step further and show our ambition to not only ensure children are safe from abuse, but also contribute to building environments where children can develop emotionally, physically, cognitively, and socially.

What is CHILD SAFETY? *(in Vietnamese: an toàn trẻ em)*

Child Safety is making sure that children are safe from abuse and harm

What is CHILD ABUSE? *(in Vietnamese: lạm dụng trẻ em)*

Child abuse is a general term describing any situation when someone, or an event, intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the healthy development of children and negatively affects their well-being. Child abuse can be one or a combination of physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse.

What is CHILD EXPLOITATION? *(in Vietnamese: bóc lột trẻ em)*

Child exploitation is a specific type of child abuse that refers to the deliberate maltreatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child for personal gain. Child labour, for instance, is both a form of child abuse and exploitation as it prevents a child from accessing quality education, poses a threat to his/her physical development, and is driven by the intent of personal or commercial gain.

What is CHILD SEX TOURISM? *(in Vietnamese: du lịch tình dục trẻ em)*

The commercial sexual exploitation of children consists of criminal practices that degrade and threaten the physical and psychosocial integrity of children. Sexual exploitation of children is the sexual abuse of a minor by an adult for commercial purposes, therefore against payment in the form of money or another form of compensation.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a grave violation of children's rights.

The sexual exploitation of children is a global problem. Estimated is that worldwide more than 1.8 million children are sexually exploited every year (UNICEF, 2010). Sexual exploitation has life-lasting effects on children. They are emotionally damaged and often have physical problems. Unfortunately, some of these cases are linked to the tourism industry.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child below the age of eighteen is entitled to protection from sexual exploitation.

** Child sexual abuse: (in Vietnamese: lạm dụng tình dục trẻ em)*

* *Child prostitution: (in Vietnamese: mại dâm trẻ em)*

OUR POLICY

As a DMC, we acknowledge that the utmost importance is that our staffs, our suppliers, as well as our clients are aware of the existence of children abuse and exploitation at travel destinations, they will better recognize suspicious behavior and know what they can battle it. Therefore, we create a policy and guidance of how to interact with children and report procedure if faced with suspicious situations.

Trails of Indochina actively disagree with all forms of child abuse and exploitation. We try to responsibly interacting with children across all destinations where we operate.

- We commit to the UN's International Convention of Children's RIGHTS (UNCRC) and National Laws about Child protection of all destinations where we operate;
- We do not employ children;
- We create incidents responding and report protocol for child abuse and exploitation suspicious cases;
- Our guides and staff receive training in children's rights, child protection issues and how to report;
- We set standards to ensure children are portrayed with dignity in all marketing, media, and communications collateral;
- Include a clause in contracts with suppliers, stating a common repudiation and zero tolerance policy against child abuse and exploitation. Suppliers where there is any evidence of possible exploitation are not contracted or visited. We encourage our suppliers to join us in child-protection actions;
- Provide information to clients on children's rights, the prevention of child abuse and exploitation when interacting with local children, and how to report when witness or suspect any forms of abuse or exploitation;
- We support vocational training program, community-based initiatives or child protection campaigns that contribute to community educational and social development, instead of orphanage, school, children center or hospital visiting which do not offer any positive long-term or meaningful impact;
- Particular measures are in place before creating new products and during actual operations, to avoid inappropriate interaction with children and improve the current situations.

SUPPORT VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM AND END ORPHANAGE VISIT

We do not promote visits to child orphanages and schools and avoid taking our clients to such places as they may cause more harm than good.

- The primary objective of any school, orphanage, or children's center should be to educate and provide for the children's well-being. These facilities should not be utilized for commercial tourism. Children living or studying in schools and orphanages should not be exposed to tourist visits!
- The short-term visits affect the children's safety, privacy and stability. Proper organizations always implement child protection policies which include visitor background checks before allowing them

to have contact with children. Put simply, we wouldn't be allowed to visit orphanages without proper procedures.

- We believe that any action to support children should be carried out by local experts or proper organizations that have established relationships with the local community. Therefore, instead of visiting orphanages directly, we support vocational training programs or community-based initiatives, which will support vulnerable children and their families' livelihood in long term.

SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES FOR SUPPLIERS

We encourage and support the suppliers providing children-related experience meet our Child Protection Policy as mentioned above, and have these best practices:

- Ask contract signed partners to highlight their commitment not to employ children under the age of employment as defined national law or International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention.
- Encourage them to endorse the Global Good Practice Guidelines to ensure child welfare and consequently adapt their policies and core contractual tools.

TIPS FOR CHILD SAFE TRAVELLERS

While traveling, you may come across children who are in situations that are different from what you are used to seeing at home. For instance, you may see children begging on the streets, selling various products at tourist destinations, or living in potentially hazardous conditions. Although you may feel the urge to help these children, you may not know how to do it safely and responsibly. Here are some DOs and DON'Ts tips in interactions with children that can guide you on how to protect these children and travel responsibly:

Respect and privacy:

Do treat and communicate with children and young people with respect.

DON'T put photos of children online with details about their identity. Avoid names, location, personal history, etc.

DON'T disrupt their education with classroom or orphanage visits. Children are not tourist attractions.

Take photos:

Do ask permission before taking photos. Do not take photos if they are uncomfortable or if it violates their rights and privacy.

DON'T ask children to pose for photos in exchange for money, food, or gifts.

DON'T take photos of naked or partially naked children or children in distress under any circumstances.

Avoid touching and being 1-1:

Do adhere to the “Two Adults” rule, whenever possible or practicable: spending time alone with a child, away from others, in closed rooms or separate locations.

DON'T give assistance in aspects of personal care or hygiene to children you may encounter, as it may put you at risk of accusations of abuse.

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Begging, help and donation:

Do ensure that the support to children and youth is given sustainably and followed up with authorities, NGOs, or the village head.

Do donate to reputable, child-friendly organizations instead of donating directly to children, their families, or children centers.

DON'T give money or offer gifts to children. If offering a gift is appropriate, it should be given to parents/caregivers in a public setting or through a reputable organization with prior agreement about what is needed. “Gifts” such as candy, other wasteful items, or items brought from home, are not encouraged.

DON'T directly work with children if you are not skilled and experienced experts, to make sure your travel experience has a possible impact. Children deserve more than good intentions; instead, you can share your professional skills and knowledge with local staff who interact with children as a trained job.

DON'T buy goods or use services offered by children. Some children sell goods at tourist sites or offer their services as guides. Others are hired in tourism businesses like hotels or restaurants, and this is a problem when it hurts their education.

Report:

Do ask yourself: “Would I be allowed to do this in my own country?” or “Would I allow this if it would be my child?” in case of suspicion.

Do raise concerns or suspicions you have regarding child welfare, child labor, child sex, or any forms of child abuse and exploitation.

Do call local child welfare or child protection organization hotlines, or police. Don't risk yourself. They will take immediate action to protect the child and check the situation - many children are just helping out their parents after school, but some may be exploited.

GUIDELINES FOR HR

Make sure Child Protection is integrated into company hiring processes.

- Include a Child Welfare Statement on all job announcements. Inform applicants during job interviews that Trails of Indochina has a Child Welfare Policy in place and successful applicants will be expected to comply with it.
- Ensure any persons working with communities or directly with children meet national laws for working with children. In some countries, a specialized permit or license may be required.

Do not accept child labor and provide decent working conditions for all staff to be able to look after their own children.

- Ensure no children below the minimum working age, as defined by national law, are engaged to work at your company.
- Ensure that young workers above the minimum working age are protected from work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.
- In instances where national legislation permits children to participate in light work, such as in family businesses or homestays, ensure the company is protective of the safety, rights, and freedoms of those children.

As a minimum, the company should meet laws relating to fair wages, maternity, and paternity leave and offer flexible working hours to accommodate for pregnancy and childcare needs. This may include breastfeeding, attending pre-natal care appointments or being at home with their children after school or at night.

Provide internships and training programs to local youth, potentially leading to career opportunities.

GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCTS & CONTRACTING

- Take courses on Child Protection to well understand about this field;
- Products Department uses the TOI Child protection Policy to communicate with suppliers: sending them a letter links to TOI published policy on website and let them know the wish that they join us in our approach to ensuring that child protection approaches are in place. As such, Products & Contracting invite suppliers to respond with details of the approaches they take to ensure child protection standards within their businesses (supplier self-assessment);
- Ensure a clause in contracts with suppliers to child protection from abuse and exploitation;
- Evaluate accommodations and excursions to have continuous improvement and update recommendations to Sales Department;
- Follow Child Protection Policy in creating new products, including a risk assessment;
- Avoid “red light district” in creating new products.

GUIDELINES FOR SALES

- Training to be provided on Child Protection policy, and how to handle requests.
- Travel Consultant will be supplied with TOI products;
- When a new product request comes through, Travel consultant should check with Products Department;
- Actively share to clients TOI Child Protection Policy which includes in Pre-departure information together with Service voucher before their trip;

GUIDELINES FOR GUIDES, OPERATIONS AND CARES

- The client survey needs to include Child Protection;
- Collect the feedback from guides and clients about children-related suppliers and actively report to Products Department in case of signs of child exploitation. This can be a useful way to effect positive changes;
- Training to follow Child protection policy, including report protocol.

GUIDELINES FOR MARKETING

- **Ensure all company communication and marketing respects the rights of children:** It's essential that the fundamental rights of the child — to privacy, safety and protection — are recognized in all the incoming and outgoing communications between your company and its stakeholders. Your company should not use imagery of children without informed consent from a parent or guardian, including product promotion. Imagery should not depict children in vulnerable or abusive situations, situations that insinuate sadness, poverty, hunger, or any situations with sexualized references. Similarly, any messaging accompanying an image must present children in a dignified manner to prevent sensationalism and secondary exploitation. Individual children should not be the focus of a photograph or readily identifiable, unless they are in a safe situation with their parent/ guardian, where the photo is depicting typical residents of a destination that travellers may encounter in a positive manner and with informed consent;
- **Create and follow Marketing, media and communication SOP;**
- **Design marketing documents** related to Child Protection for Sales to provide the clients;
- **Increase community awareness** by marketing child protection via media channels.

INTERNAL INCIDENTS RESPONDING AND REPORT PROTOCOL

Information, even the smallest clues, may be the missing piece of an ongoing investigation by the police. Not reporting can enable the creation of more victims. Your common sense will guide you to recognize abuse of children when traveling abroad. Not every situation is wrong, but if you see something that you feel is not right, please report it.

To TOI staff (including office and destination staff):

- If you have witnessed or suspicions of child abuse or exploitation, report to your manager directly so the issue can be addressed
- Based on information available, TOI Operation manager or Country Manager will be the person who is responsible and decide if report to authorities and/or childcare organizations

Situations that must be reported to authorities and/or childcare organizations.

- **A tourist who withdraws with a local child, for instance into a hotel room.**
- **A tourist sexually abusing a child:** This includes an adult touching a child in an inappropriate manner or forcing the child to touch the tourist inappropriately. It can also be a tourist engaging in non-contact sexual abuse, such as exposing him or herself to a child, asking a child to undress, forcing children to touch one another or photographing a child in some of the above situations.
- **A person selling/offering a child:** This may be someone in a bar, hotel, club or even in a brothel who is asking tourists if they are interested in having sex with a minor. Often, it is the go-betweens working in the tourism industry (taxi drivers, waiters, etc.) that offer sex with children to tourists. Such a person may suggest tourists visit a red-light district to meet young girls or boys.
- **A tourist trying to buy/look for a child or young people for sexual exploitation:** A tourist who approaches locals, hotel staff, other tourism professionals, or even other tourists asking where he or she can pay for sex with children or young people should be reported to authorities. Such a tourist may be seen walking into a brothel, club or massage parlour known for selling sex with minors.
- **A hotel or travel company allowing exploitation of children:** If hotel staff do not check the age of boys and girls who enter a hotel with a guest and who are clearly not family relations, the hotel may be facilitating child sex tourism and should be reported. Similarly, if hotel staff approach guests with offers of sex with minors, they and the hotel should be reported.

What kind of information should be reported?

If possible, provide:

- Name of perpetrator and victim
- Personal information of offender (country of origin, travel details, date and time of flight, airline name, etc.)
- Physical description of offender
- Date and time of exploitation
- Location of exploitation (country, name of the city, hotel or other type of accommodation, bar)
- Offense committed, act, reason
- Photo (take a photo of the suspect without being noticed)

Most important!

Tourists or tourism professionals should not take the job of the police and investigator. If anyone has information (not evidence), it should be reported to the authorities. The most important thing is to ensure everyone's safety.

Who to report?

Any child sexual exploitation or other child related crimes should be reported directly to the national police or through internet/call to local childcare organization:

- In any case of child sexual exploitation, anyone can report anonymously to ECPAT: <https://www.ecpat.org.nz/report-child-sex-tourism>
- Vietnam: National Hotline for Child Protection: Call 111
- Cambodia: [Child Helpline Cambodia](#): Call 1280;
- Laos: ChildSafe: Call 2077877555
- Thailand: [Childline Thailand Foundation \(CTF\)](#): Call 1387
- Indonesia: [GBV and CHILD PROTECTION HOTLINE](#): Call 0811 9670 250

Moreover, if you have any additional concerns on Child Protection, please contact for further guidance at responsibletravel@trailsofindochina.com

RELATED INFORMATION

- 7 tips for ChildSafe Traveler - <https://thinkchildsafe.org/travelers/>
- Clients best practice: Responsible Shopping and Souvenirs - <https://nextcloud.tntoadcorporation.com/index.php/s/Kx3jFsAyy3t87Hk>
- SOP for Marketing, media and communications - <https://nextcloud.tntoadcorporation.com/index.php/s/Ns65tj4F5DcCwkt>

REFERENCES

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>
- International Labour Organization (ILO) <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>
- Be A ChildSafe Traveler <https://thinkchildsafe.org/travelers/>
- Child Welfare and the Travel Industry – Global Good Practice Guidelines by Friends International, Child Safe Movement, G Adventures, Planeterra Foundation
- End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) <https://ecpat.org/>

