



## Responsible tourism in Sihanoukville



Many visitors to Sihanoukville are unsure how to respond when they are faced with situations involving prostitution, street kids, child sex exploitation, drug-addicted children and poverty. The following information provides some guidance for tourists who wish to enjoy their holiday while at the same time act responsibly and helpfully.

- Children who are on the streets and beaches at night are either unable to live at home, afraid to live at home, forced to work begging or selling goods, or do not have a home. Rather than buying them food and drinks, please support the organizations that exist to help these children. Do not encourage them to stay on the beach or streets late at night.
- Don't give cash gifts to children or adults. This creates dependence and encourages begging. For many, cash provides the means to buy harmful substances like glue for inhaling, or will be spent on alcohol and gambling. By giving to street kids, you make their street life more attractive, thus unintentionally encouraging them to stay homeless and helpless. This works against the efforts of Cambodian social workers to integrate children into education, housing and safer forms of income generation.
- There is almost always an adult waiting to collect the earnings of a child selling goods on the beach. These children are sent out to sell as an easy means of obtaining income for the adult who controls them. These children need to be at school, studying and learning for a brighter future. By buying from them you are keeping them away from school, and putting them in the dangerous situation of working late at night.
- Support these people instead by supporting the organizations which exist to assist them. Money you donate to these organizations is used to provide, amongst other things, education, food assistance, legal help, medical care and business and housing assistance.

- Unfortunately many Cambodian children, especially street kids and those with drug addictions are victims of sexual abuse. If you see a child in a situation of suspected abuse, please do not ignore it. Concerns can be raised with any of the organizations listed below, who will ensure that action is taken.
- Prostitutes are easily accessible in Sihanoukville. Be aware that many prostitutes are under-age or have been forced to work in the sex industry against their will. HIV/AIDS is rife in Cambodia, particularly among sex workers. By using a prostitute in Sihanoukville, you are exploiting the poverty and poor living conditions of Cambodian women and supporting human trafficking and child sex exploitation.



M'Lop Tapang is a Cambodian NGO that has been working with street children since January 2003. M'Lop Tapang works with over 500 street-living and street-working children and their families in Sihanoukville, reintegrating them back into education, family life and the community.

M'Lop Tapang is committed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and works to implement Child Rights in all aspects of its work. M'lop Tapang social workers and teachers work in centers, on the streets and on the beach 7 days a week to help street kids re-enter society in a productive and healthy way.

For child referrals please visit the M'lop Tapang education center, open 7 am - 5:30 pm Monday to Saturday, or telephone on 034 934072 to speak to a staff member. Please try to call before arriving at center. For more information please visit [www.mloptapang.org](http://www.mloptapang.org)



APLE's child rights project operates to provide physical, moral and legal protection to Cambodian child victims of street-based sexual exploitation. APLE monitors and investigates suspected sexual exploitation of children, provides legal protection and support to child-victims, offers them counselling and social rehabilitation, and engages in advocacy and research work.

APLE aims to reduce the incidence of child sexual abuse in Cambodia by increasing the number of successful prosecutions of offenders; raising the level of access to legal protection afforded to victims of child sexual abuse; reducing the effects of trauma caused by sexual exploitation and lessening the likelihood of children becoming recurring victims; and improving current conditions of impunity and legal accountability in Cambodia.

To report suspected child sexual exploitation or for further information please call 092 215 146 or email [reportabuse@aplecambodia.org](mailto:reportabuse@aplecambodia.org)



The Starfish Project was founded in 2000 as a community-based humanitarian initiative providing medical, housing and business assistance for poor Cambodian people living in Sihanoukville and its surrounding areas.

Starfish's objective is to provide "a hand up not a hand out" to its clients. Starfish meets this objective by providing its clients and their families with the means to gain self-sufficiency and independence through humanitarian assistance.

Starfish's activities now also include the management and operation of 'The Starfish Bakery/Cafe', a not-for-profit business devoted to providing employment to Cambodian people with disabilities; the management and operation of 'Starfish Massage', a not-for-profit business devoted to providing employment to Cambodian people with vision impairment; and the coordination of projects which facilitate the supply of clean water to remote villages.

For more information, please visit [www.starfishcambodia.org](http://www.starfishcambodia.org), telephone on 012952011 or pop into the Starfish Bakery/Cafe (behind Samudera supermarket).