



Violence against children remains a deeply rooted and widespread issue in Kenya. According to the 2019 National Violence Against Children Survey, 45.9% of girls and 56.1% of boys reported experiencing some form of violence during childhood¹. Alarming, one in six girls was subjected to sexual violence before the age of 18, and among those, 62.6% experienced multiple incidents. Although the prevalence is lower among boys, the impact is no less significant. This is not only a violation of children's rights, but also a critical public health and social issue. The effects of violence can be long-lasting, severely undermining a child's physical and mental health, education, future opportunities, and overall well-being.

Kenya continues to serve as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. Children make up approximately one-third of trafficking victims, with many exploited for sexual purposes. This grim reality underscores the urgency of targeted interventions and robust protective systems. Kenyan children are exposed to a range of push and pull factors that increase their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. These include:

- **Poverty and social disadvantage:** Children from economically strained or marginalised communities are more likely to be exposed to abuse, neglect, and harmful coping mechanisms.
- **Parental neglect and weak caregiving structures:** A lack of parental guidance, emotional support, and responsible caregiving often leaves children unprotected and exposed to harm.
- **Cultural practices:** Harmful traditions such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage continue to affect many children, particularly girls, violating their rights and endangering their health.
- **Underreporting and inadequate support:** The majority of violence cases, particularly online exploitation, remain unreported. Fewer than 5% of victims report such incidents to the authorities. Survivors often face limited access to quality psychosocial care, legal aid, or rehabilitation services.
- **Gaps in legislation and enforcement:** Inadequate legal definitions and weak enforcement mean that some forms of online child sexual exploitation are not classified as criminal offences. At the same time, law enforcement and child protection services often lack the training, resources, and capacity to respond effectively.

At Terre des Hommes Netherlands in Kenya, our work is grounded in one core mission: to protect children from sexual exploitation and child labour both in development and emergency settings. We believe lasting change happens when children and their communities are empowered. That is why we work hand in hand with families, local communities, government institutions, civil society, and the private sector placing children at the heart of everything we do. Together, we tackle the deeper social and economic issues that make children vulnerable to exploitation. We also advocate for stronger laws, policies, and systems to ensure that every child in Kenya can grow up in safety, with their rights respected and their potential fully supported.

CHILDREN IN KENYA



Despite its strong economic growth, Kenya continues to face major challenges, particularly in meeting the needs of its growing population. Many families struggle with poverty, and access to essentials like quality healthcare, education, nutritious food, and safe housing remains out of reach for many.

For children living in poverty, this reality puts them at even greater risk. They are more likely to experience sexual exploitation, child labour, trafficking, early and forced marriage, abuse, and other serious forms of harm. These vulnerabilities rob them not only of their safety, but also of their right to a childhood filled with dignity, opportunity, and hope.



DEMOGRAPHICS



Population

Approx. 52.4 million



Children (up to 18 years)

Approx. 24.6 million



Urban - rural ratio

32% - 68%

Social-economic data



\$ 2,470

Per capita income (GNI per capita)



38%

Living below the poverty line (of \$1.90 per day)



88%

Literacy rate



5.5%

Annual growth (GDP growth)

Net attendance of children in primary school age

90-93%

Net attendance of children in lower secondary age

42%

Net attendance of children in upper secondary age

36%

OUR WORK IN KENYA

We work with communities, government, private sector, civil society organisations and children themselves, at the centre, to address systemic and structural drivers that expose children to exploitation.

Our work focuses on preventing and stopping sexual exploitation of children, child labour and child exploitation in humanitarian settings.

References

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/reports/The-2019-Violence-Against-Children-Survey>

² [https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/1516/file/2019%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20Survey%20\(VACS\)%20.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/kenya/media/1516/file/2019%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20Survey%20(VACS)%20.pdf)

³ https://safeonline.global/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/DH-Kenya-Report_Revised30Nov2022.pdf

⁴ <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/media/kenya-statistics-package-28-february-2025-pdf>

♦ Sexual Exploitation of Children

Sexual exploitation of children in Kenya remains a significant national concern, with 62.6% of females experiencing multiple instances of sexual violence in their childhood. Additionally, 5-13% of internet-using children aged 12-17 report experiencing online sexual exploitation and abuse. Most perpetrators of sexual exploitation are known to the child and many victims do not disclose their experiences due to stigma. When cases are formally reported, victims often receive insufficient support from law enforcement, the justice system, and social services. Contributing factors include poverty, limited awareness, inadequate legislation, poor enforcement, and cultural norms that tolerate abuse.

Kenya serves as a source, transit, and destination country for both human and child trafficking. Children, particularly girls, are primarily trafficked for sexual exploitation, both domestically and internationally. Many are coerced into prostitution at a young age, often in bars, hotels, brothels, and on the streets.

Child sexual exploitation occurs not only in physical settings but is increasingly prevalent online. Globally, technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse (TFCSEA) has surged in recent years. In Kenya, TFCSEA continues to be a serious and growing concern.

According to key findings from the Disrupting Harm research in Kenya :

- Between 5% and 13% of internet-using children aged 12-17 reported experiencing some form of online sexual exploitation or abuse. However, the true figure is likely higher due to underreporting.
- 7% of children said they had been offered money or gifts in exchange for sexual images or videos of themselves.
- 4% reported being threatened or blackmailed online to engage in sexual activities.

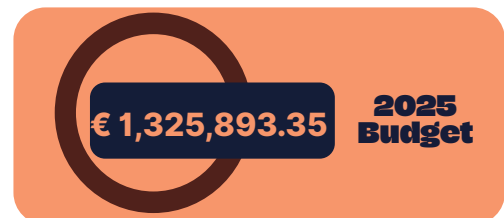
- Another 7% had their sexual images shared without their consent—an estimated 350,000 children annually in Kenya.

♦ Child Labour

In Kenya, three out of ten children are engaged in work as a means of survival. Living in extreme poverty, many are compelled to take on physically demanding and hazardous jobs. These children often work long hours in conditions that are unsuitable for their age and pose serious risks to their health and safety such as exposure to toxic substances, chemicals, pesticides, or dangerous tools. Common forms of child labour include working as motorcycle taxi drivers, in hotels and food stalls, marketplaces, construction sites, in agriculture and domestic service.

♦ Humanitarian Action

Kenya hosts a significant population of refugees and asylum seekers, with approximately 87% originating from neighboring countries such as Somalia and South Sudan. Most of these individuals reside in the Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps in the northern region. Children living in these settlements face heightened risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Strengthening child protection systems in both refugee and host communities is essential. Kenya is also highly vulnerable to severe droughts, which threaten livelihoods and food security. In such conditions, children face increased risks of trafficking, both for labor and sexual exploitation. Our drought response efforts prioritize food security, the protection of livelihoods, and safeguarding children from harm.



OUR APPROACH

♦ Child empowerment and meaningful participation

We work with partners in mobilising and organising children in spaces where they can develop their agency and at the same time learn about the risks of exploitation (in an age appropriate way); where existing child engagement structures are in place we collaborate with them; work with partners to build resilience of children, families and communities, support children's safe engagement with media and support child-led advocacy systemic change.

♦ Research & learning

We conduct research to identify child exploitation issues, and generate and document evidence about where and how exploitation is happening. The research helps in developing evidence-based solutions for stopping child exploitation.

♦ Raise awareness & provide information

We believe in improving knowledge, changing attitudes and transforming practice. As such, we disseminate information about child exploitation and its harms to the general public using different approaches and media, work with our partners to address harmful social and cultural norms by providing information and awareness about their detrimental impact on children, raise awareness among children, families, communities and duty bearers about the harms of child exploitation.

◆ Lobby, advocacy & influence for change

We organise targeted campaigns that share child-informed messaging on key topics of interest in order to influence decision-makers and other key stakeholders, build social movements through advocacy, join forces with like-minded actors, link local influencing initiatives to global lobby and advocacy efforts. We lobby with duty bearers and engage in dialogues with different actors to influence them, change attitudes and prompt action.

◆ Building partnerships and strengthening coordination

We partner with local and global actors to foster capacity exchanges and catalyse systems change, build strategic partnerships that contribute to increasing the visibility of child exploitation issues and advocating for more resources to stop child exploitation. In Kenya, we actively contribute to and participate in efforts to coordinate among actors working to stop child exploitation and we offer technical support to various networks.

◆ Co-creating solutions for community-based child protection

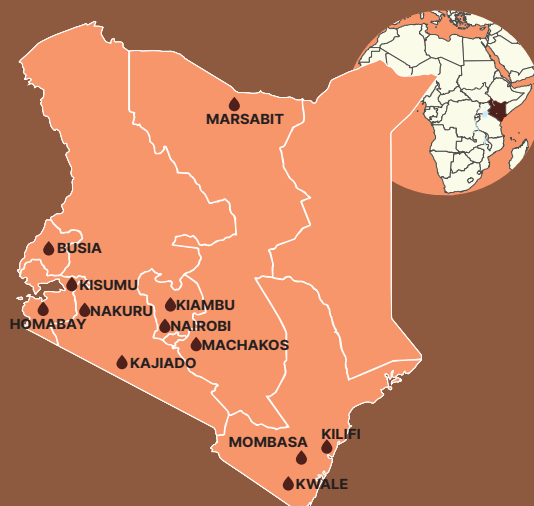
We work with partners, communities, with like-minded organisations, to develop and test models for effectively protecting children from exploitation and to ensure victims of child exploitation in all contexts have access to sustainable services that meet their needs (education, shelter, livelihood, legal services, medical care including mental health, etc).

In all the above strategies we employ an intersectionality approach. In a world of structural injustice and inequality, we proactively and continually assess and analyse power dynamics to ensure we pay special attention to the compounding disempowerment of children because of their gender, disability and/or placement in alternative care.

OUR PROJECTS

Project locations

- ◆ Currently, we are implementing 10 projects across various regions in Kenya, including Nairobi; Central (Kiambu); Rift Valley (Nakuru, Kajiado); Eastern (Machakos); Coastal (Kilifi, Mombasa, and Kwale); Western (Busia); Nyanza (Kisumu, Homa Bay); and Northern Kenya (Marsabit).
- ◆ At the national level, we engage in policy and legislative advocacy to influence systems and structures that create lasting change for children. Our advocacy efforts, both local and national, are connected to regional and international platforms, strengthening accountability among government and other duty bearers in the fight to protect children from child exploitation.



2024 REACH

- ◆ 15,974 survivors and children at risk of exploitation are supported with direct services (rescue, psychosocial support, education support, among others) by our implementing partners.
- ◆ 870 government officials across 12 counties have been trained; being at the forefront in supporting the government to ensure timely, quality child protection services, Terre des Hommes Netherlands has actively participated in key technical working groups.
- ◆ 1608 Civil Society Representatives, Private Sector staff, and law enforcement agencies have been strengthened in technical and organisational capacity to ensure quality delivery of child protection services to children.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ Establishment of the Child online safety forum, this brings together CSOs and tech companies to discuss online safety for children. TdH NL is the chair of this forum.
- ◆ Establishment and launching of the Children's Network. In 2024, TdH NL launched the Global Children's Network, reaffirming its commitment to

meaningful child participation, as outlined in the 2022 Theory of Change under the outcome "I feel safe and my voice is heard." This initiative is designed to empower children by fostering safe, inclusive spaces where they can express themselves freely.

- ◆ Participation in global spaces to share our work such as ISPCAN and SVRI.

- Contributed to capacity building of the justice system and social workforce for an effective response to exploitation cases. As part of this effort, a formative assessment was conducted to evaluate the knowledge levels of justice system actors regarding their response to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA). The assessment revealed significant knowledge gaps and a lack of coordination among relevant agencies. In response, a practical checklist was developed as a reference tool for police officers and distributed to selected police stations. This tool aims to enhance the investigation and prosecution of OCSEA cases in Kenya.
- Contributed to knowledge building through research under the thematic programmes of sexual exploitation of children and Child labour
- The Joining Forces Alliance in Kenya (JFA-K) participated in developing the Rules and Regulations for the Children Act (2022), which
 - provide the framework and guidelines for implementing the Act. This process was coordinated by the National Council for Children's Services and the Judiciary Rules Committee, in collaboration with the National Council for the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) Standing Committee on the Administration of Justice for Children in Kenya.
 - JFA-Kenya, in partnership with other CSOs coordinated the drafting of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) 4th cycle Child Rights Cluster report by mobilising and building the capacity of state officers and child rights CSOs to understand treaty reporting mechanisms for the UNCRC, ACRWC, and UPR, and facilitated the development of a data collection tool aligned with recommendations from the 3rd cycle UPR State Party report.
 - In April 2025, Terre des Hommes Netherlands was recognised in the Warrior for Good Awards in the category of Children's Welfare Promotion and Youth Advocacy.



"I'm grateful for the exposure and knowledge my son has gained on online safety through the child rights club. It makes me proud to see how he's using that knowledge to positively impact other children."

Project participant's parents, Kenya



"SCROL has helped me feel empowered and motivated to support other children. I want to educate more and more children about OCSE and how to be safe online."

Project participant, Kenya



"I feel good. The materials have helped me study. I can now read and write well. I feel happy now that I am back in school."

Project participant, Kenya



"The project helped me start my life. Now I am in a salon and the start-up kits have helped me a lot."

Project participant, Kenya



"I believe in protecting children by empowering them and amplifying their voices in decisions that affect them. This can only be achieved through deliberate planning and budgeting for child protection. Thus at Terre des Hommes Netherlands, we maintain our commitment to children and youth, addressing child exploitation, and advocating for bold, inclusive planning and budgeting that prioritizes their rights, protection, and future."

**Magdalene Wanza
Country Director, Kenya,
Terre des Hommes Netherlands**

PARTNERSHIPS

Terre des Hommes Netherlands is part of the She Leads alliance, a five-year strategic partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and four consortium organisations- Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Plan Netherlands, DCI-ECPAT Netherlands and the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET). The alliance is focused on amplifying the voices of girls and Young Women to take active roles in decision making processes at all levels.

♦ **Joining Forces Alliance(JFA)**

Under the Terre des Hommes International Federation, TdH NL is part of the JFA- with five other leading child focused agencies: ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, and World Vision International. Together, we unite to harness our collective strength and accelerate progress in securing children's rights and ending violence against them in the country. We offer technical and financial support, and engage the Kenyan government on different child protection matters including legislation and budgeting for children. Additionally, Terre des Hommes Netherlands holds observer status with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), and is actively contributing to the technical working group developing a Child Online Protection Policy.

♦ **Better Migration Management- BMM**

Terre des Hommes Netherlands is a member of the Better Migration Management (BMM) Programme, which is funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In Kenya, the initiative is coordinated by GIZ (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), with the goal of strengthening migration management across the region and tackling both migrant

smuggling and human trafficking within and from the Horn of Africa. As part of this work, we collaborate closely with key government ministries and departments in Kenya, as well as with UN agencies and fellow civil society organisations. Children remain at the heart of our interventions. Aligned with our Listen Up Strategy, we are committed to building children's agency and voice. To support this, we have established and launched a Children's Network, a safe and inclusive platform where children meaningfully engage and participate in shaping conversations that affect them.

We collaborate closely with local organisations across the 10 counties to deliver our programmes namely;

- ♦ African Gender and Media Initiative Trust (GEM Trust)
- ♦ Action for Children in Conflict (AfCiC)
- ♦ Childline Kenya
- ♦ Investing in Children and their Societies (ICS-SP)
- ♦ Kenya National Outreach, Counselling and Training Program (K-NOTE)
- ♦ Jitegemee Children Programme.
- ♦ Network for Adolescent and Youth of Africa (NAYA)
- ♦ Strategies for Northern Development (SND)

FUNDING PARTNERS

Our work in Kenya is made possible through the financial support of:

- ♦ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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- ♦ Dutch Postcode Lottery (NPL)
- ♦ German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
- ♦ Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- ♦ Impact Amplifier/Google
- ♦ Individual donors(well-wishers)

About Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international child rights organisation committed to stopping child exploitation. Our mission is to protect children by preventing and stopping child exploitation and by empowering children to make their voices count. Our vision is that 'children can flourish in a world free of all forms of exploitation.

CONTACT US

Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Kenya Country Office, P.O. Box 76340-00508,
Riverside Lane West, Nairobi, Kenya

☎ +254 722 209 581 ✉ kenya@tdh.nl 🌐 int.terredeshommes.nl

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