

Statement in Response to the BBC Documentary: "Exposing Kenya's Child Sex Trade"

Terre des Hommes Netherlands is deeply shocked and gravely concerned by the child sexual exploitation exposed in the recent BBC documentary "Exposing Kenya's Child Sex Trade."

What the world witnessed in the documentary is a tragic, yet painfully real reflection of the exploitation many children continue to endure, especially along high-risk transport corridors in Kenya. As a child rights organisation actively working in this specific project location, Terre des Hommes Netherlands recognises the realities shown in the documentary. We have seen firsthand the profound impact of sexual exploitation on the social, physical, and emotional well-being of children and youth. **Sexual exploitation of children and youth must be stopped in this country and in the entire world.**

The children who have been exploited urgently need protection, psychosocial support, and reintegration services. They should be rescued and referred to safe, child-friendly services. This calls for immediate collaboration among child protection actors, including government, civil society, and law enforcement.

Sexual exploitation of children and youth along the Mombasa-Malaba transport corridor remains a major protection concern. [Research](#) by Terre des Hommes Netherlands (2023) identified hotspots in Maai Mahiu, Longonot, Naivasha, Kikopey, and Mlolongo areas frequented by truck drivers who solicit sexual services from children. Mlolongo alone sees around 2,400¹ trucks nightly, with the town's entertainment venues turning it into a high-risk zone for sexual exploitation. 'Madharau Street' as locally named within Mlolongo is a clear indication of the presence of sexual exploitative activities, with children and youth being victims. Sexual exploitation of children in Mlolongo is not hidden; many people know where these acts are taking place and are aware of the locations where children are exploited. This reality calls for bold and committed individuals, working within and supported by a responsive child protection system.

Poverty and unemployment are cited as key drivers, pushing some families to exploit their own children for income. Our research also highlights a growing number of boys being exploited and identifies various actors, including caregivers, family members,

¹ Duke Global Health Institute <https://globalhealth.duke.edu/news/mlolongo-truck-point-sex-work-and-now-healthcare>



community members, truck drivers, and business owners, as power players who propagate sexual exploitation of children directly or indirectly.

This must end.

Our Key Asks

While the reaction of Kenyan law enforcement authorities is coming in too little, too late for those whose heart-wrenching stories were aired by the BBC investigative piece, their reaction and swift actions can prevent other children from living similar realities.

Magdalene Wanza, Country Director, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Kenya: *As a mother and advocate for children's rights, I was heartbroken as I watched the documentary. The innocent vulnerable children have been exploited by adults who have the duty to protect children. The children are in an endless cycle of exploitation with no one to turn to. I urge the relevant government departments to rescue and protect all the children and ensure all perpetrators involved, directly and indirectly, are brought to book. We cannot sit and let this continue.*

As Terre des Hommes Netherlands, we will continue to implement our projects along the transport corridor, specifically in Mlolongo, Naivasha, and Gilgil, with a plan to expand to other hotspots in the future.

We recognise that addressing sexual exploitation of children is complex and therefore requires a multi-sectoral approach. We continue to partner with like-minded actors, communities, the Government, and the private sector including transport operators to create more awareness about children's rights, empower children to speak up, strengthen the capacity of duty bearers, including local leaders, and support vulnerable youth and families to improve their economic situation so that they can support their children.

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CHILD
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