

# Global Research Agenda for Preventing & Stopping Child Exploitation

Version 2 - September 2025

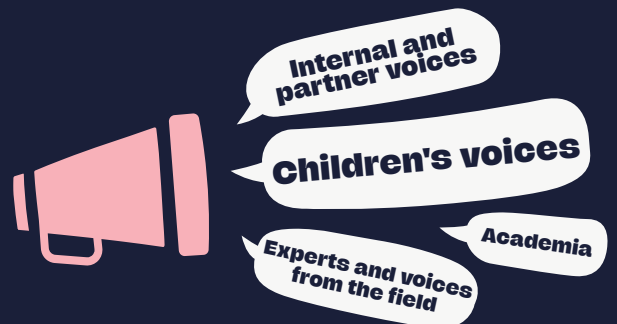
## Introduction

- Our **mission** at Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) 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.
- Our **core principles** are children at the centre, safety and well-being, intersectionality and power awareness, and sustainability.

This Global Research Agenda represents a pivotal moment at TdH NL: an opportunity to align research and programme interests and to continue to contribute to stopping child exploitation. Starting in 2024 all new projects will include a learning and evidence-generation component that is connected to this Global Research Agenda. Our research questions will then be the reference and frame for programmatic learning priorities.

## How was this agenda developed?

This Global Research Agenda was developed over one year, drawing on the collective expertise of children, as well as internal, partner and external experts and the existing evidence base. Throughout this process we encouraged participation from various global actors to ensure *all* types of expertise and knowledge were valued and included. Through this process we aimed to promote ownership and collaboration with other actors in the field, especially those whose voices are usually under-represented.



Systematic literature review  
MAY - DECEMBER 2023

National co-creation sessions  
AUGUST - OCTOBER 2023

Focus groups with children affiliated with a TdH NL programme  
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2023

Survey for adults and youth  
SEPTEMBER 2023

Kenya co-creation workshop  
OCTOBER 2023

Internal consultations  
NOVEMBER - JANUARY 2024

Global Research Agenda launch  
FEBRUARY 2024

Expert group review  
JANUARY 2024

Agenda Version 2  
MARCH - MAY 2025

# Method



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## Research questions

# Core Research Pillars

There are three core pillars that comprise this Global Research Agenda, under which the majority of questions fall:



## Context & Vulnerabilities

There was a call from many voices that we need to focus on the unique local contexts and nuanced circumstances where child exploitation occurs. Children called for interventions and a better understanding of child exploitation at the local level, and the opportunity to engage with local stakeholders. Through this pillar we also want to highlight the importance of considering under-represented geographical areas in future programming.



## Systems & Policies

Throughout the development of this Global Research Agenda the themes of consensus building, collaboration and avoiding duplication strongly emerged. In this pillar we will adopt a holistic approach to stopping child exploitation; engage key actors at the local, national, regional and global levels; include children, family members, community leaders, the private sector and governments, in working together to develop child-centred, inclusive policies to address child exploitation.



## Risk & Resilience

Two key debates which emerged during the development of this Global Research Agenda was how to balance agency and protection and further develop our understanding of risk and protective factors of child exploitation. In this pillar we seek to understand how we can focus on promoting holistic child development and well-being, so all children can thrive.



## Context & Vulnerabilities

1. In what ways do travel and tourism-related environments create circumstances that enable child sexual exploitation, and how can these be systematically addressed?
2. *To what extent can longitudinal studies inform our understanding of the consequences of child exploitation and inform our practice?*
3. *How can a socio-ecological model support our understanding of child exploitation amid emerging risks?*
4. What do we know about the roles of families, caregivers, home helps, and peers in enabling or facilitating the perpetuation of child exploitation?
5. How can we safely and effectively engage with children who do not or have not attended school, to be able to access or create safe work opportunities?
6. **What intervention models effectively prevent and respond to child exploitation among marginalised populations and how can these models be adapted and scaled across diverse contexts?**
7. Under what circumstances do children become involved in peer exploitation or harmful sexual behaviours, and what approaches can safely engage children at risk—either of victimisation or perpetration—in effective prevention and intervention strategies?
8. How can child labour in global supply chains—particularly within critical mineral extraction, energy transition, and e-waste sectors—be effectively measured and predicted, and how can multi-stakeholder collaborations strengthen the implementation of child rights-focused policies in these supply chains?
9. To what extent are climate adaption and mitigation strategies perpetuating child labour, especially in the context of extractive industries?
10. To what extent is child labour a concern in the e-waste sector?
11. How do the availability and quality of family livelihoods in high-risk regions influence the prevalence and severity of child labour and exploitation?
12. *How can lived experiences of working children be meaningfully integrated into global definitions and measurement systems of child labour to ensure more accurate, rights-based responses?*
13. **How can an improved understanding of the relationship between technology, well-being and risk of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) support interventions aimed at preventing and stopping OSEC, whilst also supporting children to engage with technology age-appropriately?**
14. What do we know about polyvictimisation and how can we use this knowledge to disrupt cycles of exploitation?
15. **To what extent can economic interventions prevent and stop child exploitation?**
16. **To what extent can education act as a protective factor against child exploitation, including perpetration? And in emergency or remote settings, how can mobile schools or digital literacy programmes fill the gap?**



To see which questions children prioritised most, look for this symbol.



## Systems & Policies

### Systems

17. *How can we ethically and meaningfully engage with children to develop reliable methods of collecting and analysing data on intersectionality, including in prohibitive political, social, religious or cultural contexts? And how can we use this evidence to advocate for children?*
18. **What can we learn from promising practices with regards to low-cost, sustainable, community-level interventions to prevent and respond to child exploitation?**
19. **What are examples of promising practices and learning moments that we can draw in from previous and existing TdH NL programmes?**
20. How can key community actors be engaged to protect all children - especially those with (multiple) marginalised identities - from child exploitation, and how can we support these actors to speak out?
21. How can we leverage existing frameworks and mechanisms to meaningfully engage with private sector actors (e.g., in extractive industries or technology) to hold them accountable and address child exploitation?
22. *What is required (and from whom) to build consensus across the field of child exploitation with regards to language, intersectional disaggregation, (e.g., disability, gender identity) prevalence measures and standard operating procedures?*
23. *How can we reimagine the research ecosystem involving children - locally to globally - so it dismantles extractive patterns, honours lived experience, and redistributes power among those generating, owning, and using the data?*
24. **What interventions focussing on behaviour change have been proven to be effective in preventing and responding to child exploitation?**
25. **What are the core/essential elements of parenting-focused interventions that enable and support families to protect their children from exploitation, and how can these insights inform broader systems change?**
26. How can we support families with diverse needs in their efforts to create loving environments, where their children can thrive, free from all forms of exploitation?

### Policies

27. **How can we use context-specific predictors of child exploitation to inform programme and policy interventions?**
28. How can international child protection laws be harmonised to address cross-border exploitation?
29. What are good examples of effective legal policy frameworks for protecting children from child exploitation, and how can these be adapted/improved to ensure we reach the most vulnerable children?
30. How can existing policies and legal frameworks evolve to better prevent and respond to rapidly changing forms of online child exploitation, including AI, grooming and live streaming abuse?
31. How do child protection laws address or fail to address the safety of youth-led advocacy?

### What do we mean by...

#### Systemic Change

We create systemic change by empowering children and their communities, connecting them with those who have power to enact change, and utilising our knowledge and expertise to co-create sustainable, evidence-based solutions.

#### Marginalised

We want to ensure that we reach all children, but particularly LGBTQIA+ children, children with disabilities, indigenous children, refugees, children with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), and younger children.





# Risk & Resilience

32. To what extent do direct and indirect effects of climate change—including displacement—impact risk factors and recruitment mechanisms for child exploitation across diverse contexts?
33. **How can we design, replicate, or adapt developmentally responsive interventions to combat child exploitation, particularly for younger children? What factors disrupt their risk, and how can existing interventions be modified to meaningfully include and support younger children in a developmentally appropriate way?**
34. **How can trauma-informed approaches be adapted to reflect the diverse ways of experiencing and responding to harm, ensuring they are not only effective but also culturally just and community-led?**
35. **How do children conceptualise safety and risk in different contexts (including online)? And how can this be used to develop interventions to prevent and respond to child exploitation?**
36. **How can interventions reconcile**
- cultural norms and rights-based approaches to reduce harmful practices perceived as survival strategies?**
37. **How can we ensure the balance of protection vs agency in discussions and interventions with children who have been, or are at risk of, exploitation?**
38. How can schools, families, and kinship care systems collaboratively create protective environments that foster children's sense of safety, value, belonging, and mental well-being, as foundational elements in comprehensive strategies to prevent exploitation?
39. What do we know about the risk factors for intergenerational exploitation and how can these be applied to programming?
40. How does the mental health of caregivers play a role in children's vulnerability to child exploitation?
41. **How can we further develop our understanding of social norms, to identify those which help protect against child exploitation and to inform interventions that address harmful practices?**
42. How is substance abuse used as a tool in child exploitation and how can we prevent and respond to this within policy and through accessible, appropriate substance abuse services?
43. How do humanitarian emergencies impact the nature and magnitude of child exploitation?
44. How can we identify communities who are vulnerable to shocks, and work with them to build resilience and prevent child exploitation?
45. What is the nature and magnitude of child exploitation among communities affected by the climate crisis, including those who have been displaced?
46. How can we co-develop strategies with marginalised Indigenous populations to address child exploitation, both as a direct and indirect result of broader socio-environmental factors, while acknowledging their rights?
47. **How do we best measure the effectiveness of interventions addressing child exploitation in humanitarian contexts?**

## Guidance on using this Global Research Agenda

- This Global Research Agenda is aspirational and will remain a **working document**. We will keep it up-to-date by identifying trends and promising practices, and highlighting new, innovative solutions through periodic reviews, monitoring and evaluation of existing projects and regularly updating our systematic literature review.
- All research projects must be focused on **inclusion** of all children, amplifying children's voices and promoting the effectiveness and **sustainability** of interventions.

If you have any questions, please contact Kimberley (TdH NL Research Lead) at [k.anderson@tdh.nl](mailto:k.anderson@tdh.nl).

"After research we can present findings and suggestions to problems to the Government or to the decision makers. It can be used for creating awareness and educating the community also."

– Quote from children and youth survey

"Utafiti ni kitendo cha kufanya uchunguzi wa tatizo na kulipatia ufumbuzi"  
[Research is an action of investigating the problem and come with solution]

– Quote from young person in Kenya

"We knew exploitation. However, we did not know how children get abused and exploited. After being involved with [a TdH NL programme], our knowledge widened. The children and friends are also aware now."

– Quote from young person in Nepal

"Dig kwa ground vitu zinasema aje"  
[Dig for information at the local level to understand what is really happening]

– Quote from young person in Kenya

**Suggested reference:** TdH NL (2025). Terre des Hommes Netherlands Research Agenda for Preventing and Stopping Child Exploitation. Terre des Hommes Netherlands, The Hague, The Netherlands.

This project was subject to a Research Ethics Review for Human Rights Research by The Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand.

The development of this Global Research Agenda was led by Amy R Riley Powell (PhD cand.), Dr Jean Elphick, TdH NL and Dr Kimberley Anderson, TdH NL. The 2025 update was undertaken by Sabrina Page (PhD cand.) and Dr Kimberley Anderson, TdH NL.

### Acknowledgements

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