

Throughout the continent, children are trafficked for slavery and forced labour and hazardous work; are forced to participate in armed conflict, and are used for prostitution, pornography or in illicit activities. Children are often exploited and abused by both domestic and external actors including family members, community leaders, state and non-state actors, foreign tourists, and international criminal gangs who are engaged in the production of child pornography, sex trafficking, and the illegal harvesting and sale of organs.

Significant efforts have been made to end the exploitation of children in Africa. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, for example, has contributed to advancing efforts to end violence against children through its General Comments and its Days of General Discussion which have focused on ending child marriage, sexual exploitation, and child labour, among other issues. African governments have been investing more in policy reforms, social services that benefit children and are increasingly taking steps to prevent and respond to violence and exploitation.

Terre des Hommes Netherlands works with various stakeholders to accelerate actions against child exploitation. We work directly with the children affected, their families and communities, government institutions and structures including legislators, law enforcement officials, ministry officials, CSOs, NGOs and INGOs, media agencies, private sector companies and individuals to address systemic drivers of child exploitation, strengthening child protection systems and advocating for children's rights.

CHILDREN IN AFRICA



Poverty is a widespread issue across Africa. The number of people suffering from hunger continues to rise. The worsening state of food security and nutrition in Africa is driven mainly by conflicts, climate change and economic slowdowns.

In sub-Saharan Africa, children between the ages of 5 to 17 years are involved in child labour instead of playing and going to school. They fight poverty for their families and are robbed of their childhoods.



DEMOGRAPHICS



Population
Approx. 1.55 Billion



Children
(up to 18 years)
580 million



Urban - rural
ratio
45%-55%

Social-economic data



\$ 11,645

Per capita income (GNI per capita)



37%

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

OUR WORK IN AFRICA

◆ Sexual Exploitation of Children

Poverty, inequality and socio-economic shocks related to climate change, resource extraction, natural disasters, conflict and complex humanitarian emergencies render many children vulnerable to sexual exploitation at the hands of those with power and resources, including smugglers, recruiters, traffickers or even humanitarian workers. Terre des Hommes Netherlands has developed the Sexual Exploitation of Children Thematic Programme, which envisions a world where “children, in all their diversity, are safe from all forms of sexual exploitation, enjoy their rights, and have influence”. Using a comprehensive co-creation process that included input from children, this programme is designed to prevent and respond to online and offline sexual exploitation through ecological, holistic and whole-of-society approaches that address risk and protective factors at multiple levels and in multiple protective environments, tailored for children most likely to be left behind with gender, intersectionality and evolving capacities in mind.

◆ Child Labour

Nearly 138 million children were engaged in child labour in 2024, including around 54 million in hazardous work likely to jeopardise their health, safety, or development, according to new estimates by the ILO and UNICEF. Factors contributing to the rise in child labour include poverty, harmful social norms, weak governance and failing protection systems. Terre des Hommes Netherlands has developed the Child Labour Thematic Programme to address the multifaceted issue of child exploitation in child labour. This programme leverages expertise and evidence-based solutions and is shaped by the views and lived experiences of children themselves.

◆ Humanitarian Action

Children make up around half of the population needing humanitarian assistance. In 2022, more than two-thirds of the world's children were living in conflict-affected countries. In the same year,

approximately 468 million children (18.8% or more than one in six) were living in a conflict zone where the risk of child labour is three times the global average. Terre des Hommes Netherlands has developed the Humanitarian Action Thematic Programme with the overall goal of promoting the healthy development and well-being of children affected by humanitarian crises. Using a comprehensive co-creation process that included input from children, this programme is designed to protect children from exploitation in the context of humanitarian emergencies.

◆ Gender Equality

Gender Equality (GE) is a cross-cutting theme in our organisation. Through the She Leads and other programmes, we have championed the course of Girls and Young Women (GYW) in Africa. Their agency and capacity have been strengthened, and they are now able to participate in and influence decisions. Furthermore, harmful socio-cultural norms, including rigid patriarchal systems that have long perpetuated different forms of gender-based violence, have been challenged, while the positive practices have been promoted. The role of the media in setting the agenda and amplifying voices is key. We have engaged and collaborated with the media to create positive narratives about GYW in Africa. TdH NL is also a member of the International Gender Champions. Intersectionality is a core approach in our work, where we pay keen attention to marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and minority communities. We embrace gender, inclusion and diversity in all our interventions.

2025 Budget

€ 320,701

References

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OUR APPROACH

♦ Children at the centre

Children are at the centre of everything we do. We support them to get access to education and other skills development so that they can eventually find jobs to earn better incomes to enhance their opportunities to live a decent and dignified life. We build their resilience and facilitate their empowerment. We help them amplify their voice, opening opportunities to speak up to those with the power to realise systemic change.

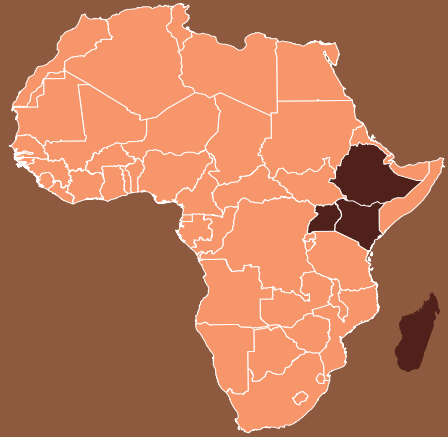
♦ Strengthening child protection

We educate parents and communities. We build the capacity of local structures to effectively prevent, detect, report and respond to child exploitation. We collaborate with other actors to influence strengthening of the legal and policy environment for better promotion and protection of children's rights.

OUR PROJECTS

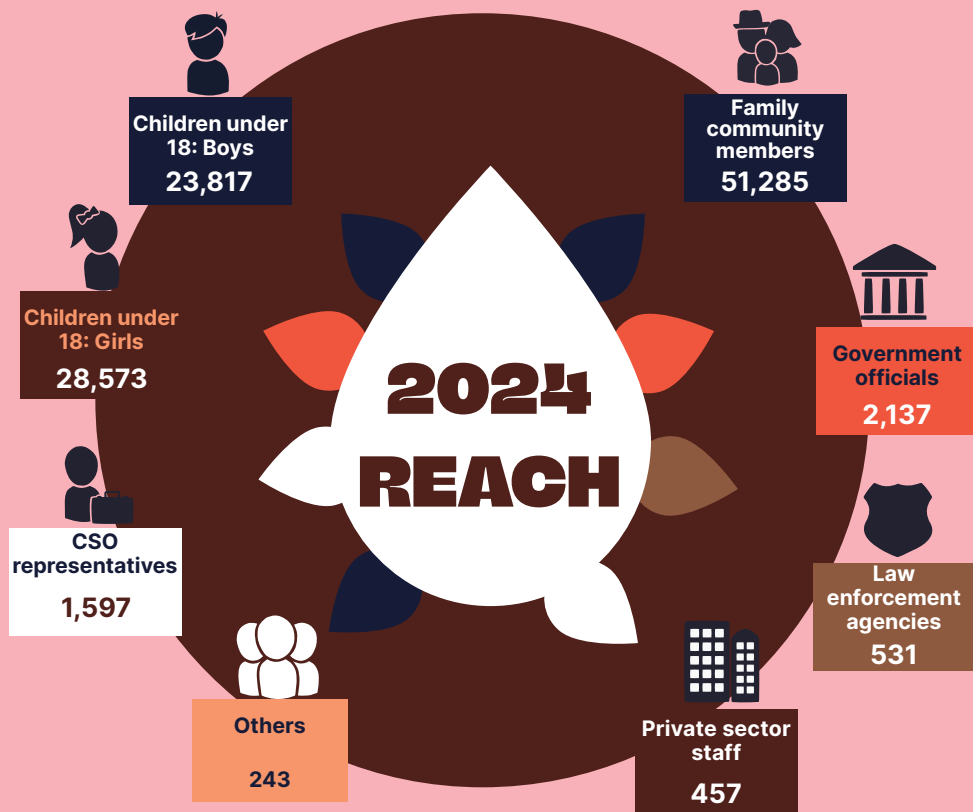
Project locations

For over 50 years, Terre des Hommes Netherlands has worked in Africa, both in structural aid and humanitarian assistance. We provide emergency support in humanitarian crises such as drought, floods and disease outbreaks across the continent. Our development work is concentrated in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda.



Current projects

- ♦ Sexual Exploitation of Children- 14 projects
- ♦ Child Labour- 2 projects



ACHIEVEMENTS

Media Engagement

Terre des Hommes Netherlands engaged with various media agencies to set the agenda on child protection. The media engagements have provided platforms to highlight the rising cases of Child Exploitation across the region, discuss socio-cultural and systemic challenges that hinder progress, and call for stronger institutional responses and legal enforcement.

Influencing Policy

- Terre des Hommes Netherlands contributed to the call for ratification of the AU Commission on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU CEVAWG), by member states. The specific calls included; ratifying the AU CEVAWG to ensure a strong legal commitment to ending GBV; implement concrete measures to hold perpetrators accountable and protect survivors; Allocate sufficient funding and resources for GBV prevention and response programs; strengthen legal and policy frameworks to enhance enforcement of GBV laws; and integrate survivor-centered approaches to ensure accessible and effective support services.
- Terre des Hommes Netherlands also contributed to the review of the East African Community (EAC) Youth Policy. Discussions centered on the harmonization of youth policies across EAC member states, strengthening youth participation in decision-making processes, and ensuring sustainable budget allocations for youth programs. Some of the recommendations included; the need for gender-responsive provisions, mechanisms to track youth policy implementation and accountability frameworks that prioritize the voices and rights of girls and young women; and more youth representation in regional bodies like the East African Legislative Assembly to ensure their voices are heard and their interests represented.

Representation and Child participation in decision - making spaces

- Terre des Hommes Netherlands supported girls and young women to participate in the 40th GIMAC Pre-Summit CSOs Consultative Meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2024. We also participated in the 6th GIMAC Strategic Engagement Meeting in July 2024, Accra, Ghana.

- Terre des Hommes Netherlands supported the participation of GYW in the 1st ever Pan African Conference on Girls and Women's Education, organized by the African Union Commission's Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation (ESTI) Department, in July in Addis Ababa.
- Terre des Hommes Netherlands participated in the 25th session of the Civil Society Organisations Forum (CSO Forum) on the Charter and Welfare of the Child, and the 44th Ordinary Session of the ACERWC in Maseru, Lesotho.
- We participated in the CSO Regional Consultations on Development of African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa (AU CEVAWG) in November 2024 (online).
- Participation in the development of the Guidelines on the establishment of National Youth Councils (NYCS) in the Region: COMESA in partnership with Save the Children, IGAD and the Horn of Africa Youth Network commissioned the development of the Regional Guidelines for the Establishment of National Youth Councils in the region, in June 2024, in Zambia.
- Participation in the Summit of the Future/ Pact of the Future: The Horn of Africa Youth Network (HoAYN) actively participated in the civil society consultation titled "Bringing the Pact Home," held at the UN Office in Nairobi in August 2024.

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- Volkswagen Works Council
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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.

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