

Global Research Agenda for Preventing & Stopping Child Exploitation

Launched 1 February 2024

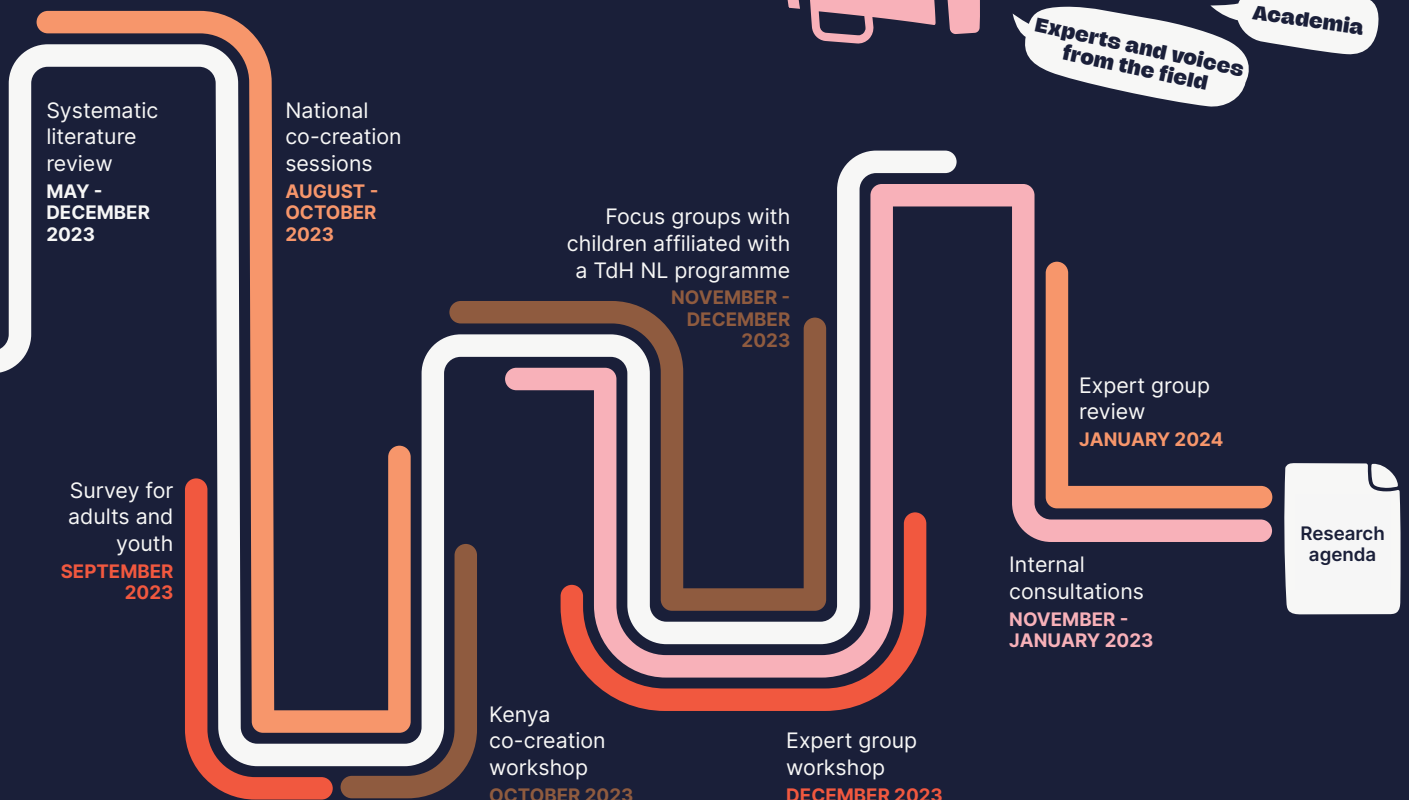
Introduction

- 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.



Method

- 1 National Co-creation Sessions**
AUGUST - OCTOBER 2023
 - To hear from children, staff and partners in TdH NL programme countries, we conducted 24 co-creation sessions in 13 countries to understand what is known about exploitation.
- 2 Systematic Literature Review**
MAY - DECEMBER 2023
 - To better understand what is published about child exploitation aetiology, magnitude and existing interventions we conducted literature reviews.
- 3 Kenya Co-creation Workshop**
OCTOBER 2023
 - In drafting the global Problem Analysis and Theory of Change for each thematic programme area, we were able to identify gaps in knowledge and programming.
- 4 Survey for adults and youth**
SEPTEMBER 2023
 - To ask for suggestions on what questions should be included in our Global Research Agenda
 - The adults survey received 66 responses (116 questions) and the child and youth survey received 32 responses (51 questions).
- 5 Focus groups with children affiliated with a TdH NL programme**
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2023
 - To discuss suggested research questions in more depth, two focus groups were conducted among children and youth - 8 from Nepal (aged 14-21) and 11 from Kenya (aged 16-19).
- 6 Expert group workshop**
DECEMBER 2023
 - To consult a wide range of external experts a group discussion was held to refine our research focus.
 - 14 participants from 6 global regions participated. The majority were from Eastern and Southern Africa. Most participants had an NGO background but civil society organisations, civil service, academia and practitioners were also represented.
- 7 Internal consultations**
NOVEMBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024
 - To validate the draft Global Research Agenda, workshops were conducted with Heads of Programmes, country teams in East Africa and Asia regions and the Research, Expertise and Influencing team.
- 8 Expert group review**
JANUARY 2024
 - To review and validate the final version of the Global Research Agenda.

47 Research questions

“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

Core Research Pillars

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



Circumstances & contexts

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.



People & 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 & protective factors

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.

Circumstances & Contexts

- ### Scope and analysis


 - How can we use context-specific predictors of child exploitation to inform programme and policy interventions?
 - How can analysis of media and other communication mediums (aside from written form) further develop our understanding of social norms around child exploitation in diverse contexts? And to what extent can these contribute to robust prevalence data?
 - To what extent do the (in)direct effects of climate change impact risk factors for child exploitation in different contexts?
 - To what extent can longitudinal studies inform our understanding of the consequences of child exploitation and inform our practice?
 - How can a socio-ecological model support our understanding of child exploitation in the face of emerging risks?

Marginalised communities and closed spaces

 - 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?
 - What do we know about families, caregivers, home helps and peers who contribute to the perpetuation of child exploitation? And how can we use this knowledge to prevent and respond to child exploitation?
 - 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?

Embracing promising practices

 - What can we learn from promising practices with regards to low-cost, sustainable, community-level interventions to prevent and respond to child exploitation?
 - What are examples of promising practices and learning moments that we can draw in from previous and existing TdH NL programmes?
 - What are effective models of intervention to prevent and respond to child exploitation while working with children with marginalised identities, younger children and children in refugee settings? And how can we adapt these for different contexts and to scale-up interventions?

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

People & Policies

- ### Key actors

 - In what circumstances are children being exploited by their peers; where children become perpetrators of exploitation? How can we meaningfully and safely engage children who are at risk of exploitation and those who are at risk of, or have engaged in, perpetration to learn more about how to address this issue?
 - How can key community actors (including faith leaders) 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?
 - How can we meaningfully engage with private sector actors (e.g. in extractive industries or technology), to address child exploitation?
 - How can we effectively engage with governments and other key actors to further understand and address the safe migration - child trafficking continuum?

Building consensus

 - What is required (and from whom) to build consensus across the field of child exploitation with regards to common language, prevalence measures and standard operating procedures?
 - At global, national, regional and local levels, how can we work effectively with partners to prevent duplication of research data, overburdening child participants and creating a space where promising practices and insights are shared?

Solutions

 - 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?
 - What interventions focussing on behaviour change have been proven to be effective in preventing and responding to child exploitation?
 - What are the essential elements of interventions which effectively support positive deviance of families who prevent child exploitation?
 - How can we support families in their efforts to create loving environments, where their children can thrive, free from all forms of exploitation?
 - How can we create safe, ethical peer support interventions which include all children, especially those with disabilities, those with marginalised identities and younger children?

Risk & Protective Factors

- ### Child development

 - How can we design, replicate or adapt effective, interventions that account for developmental milestones, in combating child exploitation?
 - How can we ensure that we are drawing on promising practices and adopting a decolonisation approach with regards to trauma-informed methodologies across all our programmes?
 - 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?

Agency vs protection

 - How can we best protect and support child activists?
 - What is the impact of child participation in research and advocacy on mental health?
 - How can we be sure we are not overburdening children with research?

Child's immediate surroundings

 - How can a sense of belonging be integrated into interventions to prevent and respond to child exploitation, especially through the development of safe spaces and vocational and skills training?
 - What do we know about the risk factors for intergenerational exploitation and how can these be applied to programming?
 - How does the mental health of caregivers play a role in children's vulnerability to child exploitation?
 - How can we further develop our understanding of social norms, to both identify those which help protect against child exploitation and to inform interventions that address harmful practices?
 - 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?

Questions for our Thematic Programmes

CHILD LABOUR

CL

34. How can we measure and predict child labour in emerging spaces? Including (but not limited to) digital markets, critical minerals, energy transition and e-waste?
35. To what extent are climate adaptation and mitigation strategies perpetuating child labour, especially in the context of extractive industries?
36. What factors facilitate or hinder the elimination of child labour in cross-border dynamics?
37. What livelihood options are available for families in regions where child labour is common? How do these affect the risk and magnitude of exploitation?
38. How can experiences of working children be (better) integrated in global measurements of child labour?

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

SEC

39. 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?
40. What do we know about polyvictimization and how can we use this knowledge to disrupt cycles of SEC?
41. To what extent can economic interventions prevent and stop SEC?
42. 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?

CHILD EXPLOITATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

HA

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 marginalised people and communities affected by the climate crisis, including those who have been displaced?
46. How can we meaningfully engage with indigenous populations in addressing child exploitation as a direct and indirect result of climate change?
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 activities addressing questions in this Global Research Agenda must include **child participation**, and reflect influencing and advocacy efforts.
- All research projects must be focused on **inclusion** of all children, amplifying children's voices and promoting the effectiveness and **sustainability** of interventions.
- The questions may reflect a tendency towards research, expertise, influencing or programmes - this is purposeful given the approach and infrastructure at Terre des Hommes NL.
- **Next steps** include developing both a Global Learning Agenda and Global Influencing Agenda to complement and support this Global Research Agenda; mapping our existing research projects with this agenda and planning and implementing projects in line with this Global Research Agenda.
- If you have any questions, please contact Kimberley (TdH NL Research Lead) at 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

"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 (2024). 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.

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