

Down to Zero

FIGHTING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
OF CHILDREN

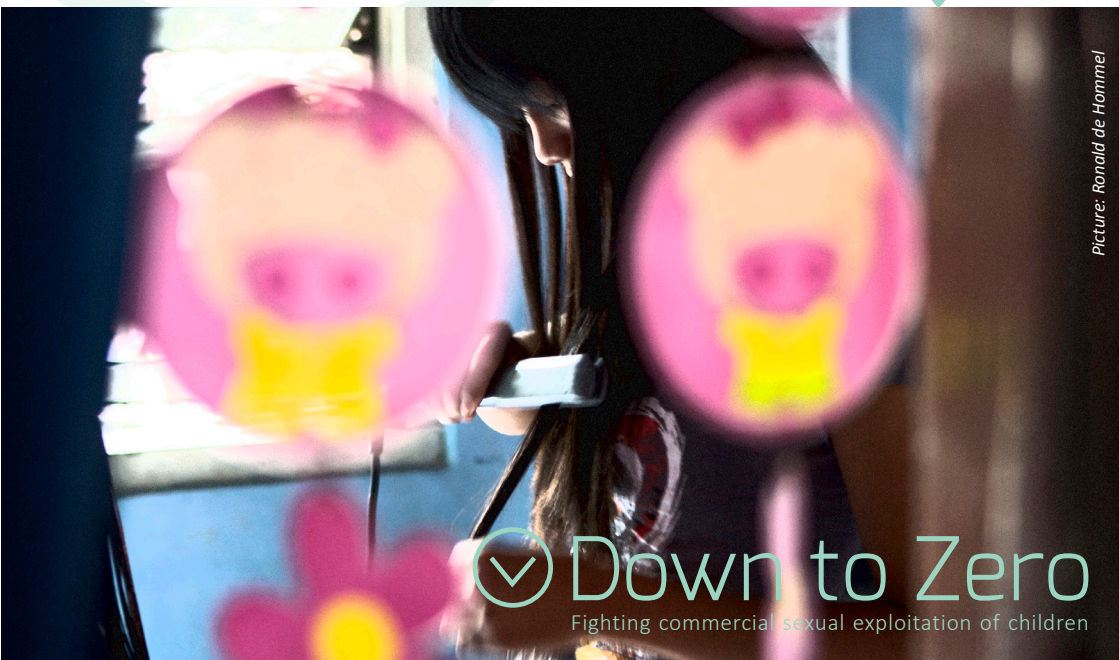
terre des hommes 
stops child exploitation

 **PLAN**
INTERNATIONAL

**FREE
A
GIRL**

**DEFENCE for
CHILDREN**  

 **COOPERATION** >



Picture: Ronald de Hommel

 **Down to Zero**
Fighting commercial sexual exploitation of children

THE COUNTDOWN HAS BEGUN

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is a pressing issue worldwide that needs to be tackled. The Down to Zero Alliance aims to put a stop to it in eleven countries. The Alliance is a collaboration between Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Defence for Children-ECPAT, Free a Girl, ICCO and Plan Netherlands, with sponsorship from our strategic partner, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

OUR CHALLENGE

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is a phenomenon that affects 2 million children worldwide. Children are sexually exploited in return for money or goods, paid either directly to them or, more often, to a third party. This is not just illegal, it's humiliating and a threat to the physical and psychological well-being of the child. In many cases, the victims are vulnerable girls. They are girls from broken families, girls who have experienced domestic violence or abuse, or girls who have dropped out of school and are left pressured by their peers or relatives. The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a complex issue with multiple drivers; poverty, armed conflicts, cultural norms, modern communication technology, increased freedom of movement, a lack of education, a lack of political will and corruption. These are some of the many circumstances that make

children vulnerable to exploitation, and make the perpetrators of exploitative crimes so hard to pin down and prosecute.

WHAT WE DO TOGETHER

The Down to Zero Alliance aims to end commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Alliance is actively pursuing this goal in both Asia (India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand) and Latin America (Brazil, Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Colombia, Nicaragua and Perú). Down to Zero has a budget of fifteen million euros in these eleven countries. The programme has a duration of five years; from January, 2016 to December, 2020.

The five Alliance partners, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and more than twentyfive local partner organisations are closely involved, working together intensely to contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals:

“End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children”

“Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation”.

We do this by building on each others’ experiences, learning from each others’ best practises and developing innovative approaches that we can implement effectively to tackle the issue at hand. Our collaboration allows us to act and react to a problem that takes various forms and exists in constantly changing environments.

OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Down to Zero works with four stakeholder groups in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children. The Alliance believes that by working with all four of these groups, it’s possible to create a sustainable solution to eradicate the issue.

- Children who have been sexually exploited or are at risk of becoming so
- Families and communities in the selected geographic areas
- Governments, police forces and justice departments in the selected countries

- Business industries active in these countries (tourist, ICT, transport and extractive industries)

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

- Children who are vulnerable to being sexually exploited are able to stand up for themselves and their rights. They can protect themselves because they are able to identify potentially exploitative situations and report them. They are educated, engaged in campaigns to raise awareness of the issue and involved in decision-making in their communities.
- The environments that children grow up in are safer, offering better protection to potential victims and preventing children from being (re) victimised.
- Governments, judiciary systems and law enforcement organisations have adapted their policies, plans and protocols to better fight the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- Both market leaders and smaller companies from the business industries (such as the tourism, information and communication technologies, transport and extractives industries) are actively involved in the protection of children against commercial sexual exploitation.

WHAT WE DO

What we're doing in order to achieve our goals:

- Down to Zero is enabling children and youth to protect themselves and stand up for their rights. Local child protection systems are reinforced or set up where they don't yet exist. We're making sure children are aware of these systems and have access to them. We're also educating children on their rights and the risks of commercial sexual exploitation. We're empowering children by giving them the tools they need to bring about changes in their environment themselves.
- Down to Zero is supporting communities and bolstering them to better protect their children, through educational campaigns, discussions with key figures in the community and the establishment of local child protection systems. The general public is being educated on the consequences of commercial sexual exploitation of children. We're speaking to families about the issue, and challenging the taboos and shame. We're also offering assistance extricating children from exploitative situations and arranging appropriate shelter and care for victims.
- Down to Zero is lobbying local authorities, building capacity and championing the prosecution of perpetrators, so that local governments, police forces and judiciary systems are moved to improve their policies, laws and regulations. Dutch embassies are actively maintaining conversations with these authorities, so that the issue continues to receive the attention it needs. Local rules are being improved so that new plans can be implemented and, where necessary, assistance with budgeting is being provided.
- Down to Zero is establishing or strengthening cooperation from the business sector. This is being achieved through lobbying and the development of codes of conduct in collaboration with relevant organisations. We are working together with a number of industries, like the tourism sector, by developing a code of conduct that local and international tourism companies must implement to offer children the protection they are entitled to. We are also assisting companies with providing job opportunities and education for families.

CONTACT

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs