

Core Principles



Created in 2022



Terre des
Hommes

Terre des Hommes NL Core Principles

The principles apply equally within our organisation as to the work that we do. Every plan we make and action we take should uphold our core principles.

The five core principles are equally important and interdependent.

“I think any organisation or network that works with children should be friendly and warm because this gives children confidence and courage”

(Cambodian teenage boy, Your Views on the Future Survey 2022)

1 CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE

Children have the right to be heard and are important change agents in the fight against exploitation. **Child participation** is a cross-cutting issue (CCI)¹ that has been especially promoted internally in TdH NL, and informs our Theory of Change.

Child participation is a human right which is stipulated in international and regional human rights instruments, and importantly, is one of the four principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) and The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990).

This was also a top priority among children when surveyed in 2022 as part of the TdH NL strategy development process. Two in three children in TdH NL countries said that ‘listening to children’ was the most important quality of children’s organisations (Beerda & Larsson, 2022).

We recognise children as experts in issues related to their own lives, and want to ensure they play a key role in developing solutions. To ensure the full exercise of the right to be heard, we ensure that the

child receives all necessary information in accordance to their evolving capacities and that their views are expressed freely without pressure or obligation. Additionally, we will make sure that the participation activities that we engage in are beneficial for the child and that the outcomes of these activities are genuinely used to improve our work. To do so, we engage with children across the spectrum of our work and in the entire organisation, whilst also ensuring their well-being is prioritised throughout. We recognise that we are ultimately accountable to children for everything that we do. Engaging and empowering children is the core responsibility of adults, society and duty bearers.

Child safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone in our organisation. Thinking about safeguarding and reducing risk is embedded in everything we do; from recruiting a staff member or volunteer, to selecting a partner; in designing and implementing programmes, and during other activities such as monitoring, evaluation, research, communication, advocacy and fundraising. And most importantly, the best interests of children are at the heart of every decision we make.

¹ In 2016, TdH NL launched four cross-cutting issues that are paid special attention to in the implementation of TdH NL projects and programmes together with our partners: 1) child participation 2) gender mainstreaming 3) inclusion of children with disabilities 4) minimum standards of alternative care. The CCIs are part of our Core Principles.



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In our programmes: We come from a place where we believe in listening to children and basing our actions on their best interests. We make sure that people who engage with children directly are subject to safe recruitment practices, and are able to provide consistent, fair and positive adult roles in children's lives. We want to work with partners who have the capability to care for and protect the children they are working with beyond the involvement of TdH NL.

Child participation is a cross-cutting issue prioritised by TdH NL. We invest in building knowledge and skills in child participation. We recognise children as experts in their own experiences, and we empower them to participate in research, advocacy and learning on child exploitation issues. We do this by developing and promoting

child-friendly, trauma-informed approaches that give children multiple, inclusive means of exercising agency and participating. These range from representation in planning and decision-making spaces, to acting on children's advisory panels, to taking part in advocacy campaigns, and other means of engagement and self-expression.

In our organisation: We create safe spaces that give children opportunities to give feedback and we actively seek children's input. We are also committed to providing a system for generating feedback from children and openly discussing the relationship of TdH NL with them in order to strengthen trust and collaboration, and promote accountability. We provide a Speak Up mechanism for children to raise concerns and complaints as part of our Integrity Framework.

2 SAFETY & WELLBEING

We take a **trauma-informed approach** to our work, recognising that many of those we work with, may at some point have experienced trauma that continues to impact their lives. Similarly, our own staff may have experienced past trauma, or may be subject to secondary trauma through their work. This also applies to our partners. In order to best serve the children we work for, the safety and wellbeing of our own staff and the people we work with and for, is important. We recognise that our field of work is challenging, and that many who choose to work for us sometimes give too much of themselves or put themselves at risk of harming their physical or mental wellbeing in their efforts to stop child exploitation.

TdH NL attaches great importance to **integrity**. We set core values and behavioural codes, and have functioning integrity systems in case concerns arise from either children, staff, partners, or members of the public.

In some contexts, the nature of our work may be contentious and our actions may pose risks. Before engaging in our work, and through our programmes and projects, we make explicit consideration of the risks that may arise from the work that we do, and we take precautions to mitigate and manage these risks. We will also develop guidelines for this and protocols for programmatic interventions and follow-ups.

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In our programmes: We promote trauma-informed care as an organisation-wide approach. We routinely carry out a risk assessment and create risk management plans that include the safety and well-being of everyone involved (both inside and outside the organisation) before initiating new activities, projects or programmes. We support budgeting for activities such as debriefing and providing safety and security training for staff who work in insecure environments.

In our organisation: We foster an organisational culture that promotes trusting and collaborative relationships. We support staff to look after their physical and mental wellbeing using fair employment practices and deliberately discussing topics like workloads and mental health. We support managers to build and grow thriving and fulfilled teams and keep an eye on employee engagement. This is done consistently and with the same standards across our whole organisation and in all offices.

“Be fair and inclusive because sometimes I feel like I do not belong, but I do not know if that is just me”

(Filipino teenage boy, Your Views on the Future Survey 2022)

3 INTERSECTIONALITY & POWER AWARENESS

We recognise that in a world of structural injustice and inequality, we need to proactively maintain awareness of power relations and address organisational processes and structures that contribute to power imbalances. We therefore need to be aware of and consider the overlapping or intersecting factors that can be empowering or oppressive.

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that helps us think about overlapping or intersecting factors that can be empowering or oppressive. Over the past three decades the concept of intersectionality has broadened from considering the compounded oppression of being both a woman (gender) and black (race) to a limitless set of factors. In a world of structural injustice and inequality, we proactively and continuously assess and analyse how our organisational processes and structures contribute to power imbalances.

With regards to child exploitation, research and our experience highlight some specific intersecting factors that put children especially at risk. For example, gender shapes the manifestation of child exploitation because of gender inequality and social norms that support child exploitation. That is why in the same context, for example, boys might be exploited in child labour of farms, while their sisters are more likely to be married early into a life of domestic servitude. Children in some ethnic,

religious or cultural groups affected by low socio-economic status children are at compound risk of sexual exploitation or forced early marriage. An example is the systematic exploitation of girls of lower castes in the Devadasi system. Social exclusion is also experienced by children with disabilities, who are more likely to be placed in alternative care. Both children with disabilities and those who do not grow up in family care, are especially at risk of being exploited. In all these cases combinations of disadvantageous factors make some groups of children extremely vulnerable to exploitation. These are the types of children that we seek to work with.

Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy aiming at achieving gender equality through ensuring that the interests, needs, concerns and experiences of children with their various gender identities are systematically integrated into legislation, public policies, internal processes, programmes and projects. As a result, all policies, programmes, and organisational and management processes must be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in a gender-responsive manner (i.e. having clear gender-responsive policies, procedures, processes, methodologies and tools such as gender analysis and gender budgeting as well as gender-responsive accountability mechanisms).

Inclusion of children with disabilities

Inclusion of children with disabilities means accepting and recognising children with disabilities as people beyond their disabilities with the right to be protected and meaningfully participate. Inclusion presupposes that children with disabilities are not excluded, but rather that children are welcomed to participate and benefit from programming across a continuum of ability. This requires structural and attitude barriers to be addressed, since children with disabilities are at increased risk of experiencing abuse and child exploitation and experience more barriers than non-disabled children in accessing prevention or child protection services.

Minimum standards on alternative care

Alternative care is, in short, the care for children who are not with their biological parents. Large numbers of children who are victims of abuse and exploitation are placed in alternative care, mostly institutional care. Similarly, many children in care experience exploitation. Given entering or continuing in alternative care is a common reality for children who have been victim of child abuse or exploitation, it is important to understand how different forms of alternative care meet the needs of this particular group.

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In our programmes: Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of children with disabilities are cross-cutting issues prioritised by TdH NL. We take proactive steps to include children from different backgrounds in our projects, prioritising those who are most marginalised. We are committed to establishing a global child participation mechanism that explicitly includes diverse voices and those often not heard (such as children with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ children, and children in alternative care). We seek to understand the different intersecting factors and how they impact children and their communities and carry out the necessary adjustments on a regular basis.

In our organisation: We are committed to ensuring our partnership policy includes an accountability framework and a feedback mechanism for the partners and communities we work with. In our

interaction with community-based organisations in the areas where we work we recognise our position of power as a European-based international NGO, and we take action to address this power imbalance.

As an organisation, we actively promote a culture of equality, accountability, clarity, care, commitment and collaboration. We proactively address bias, stereotypes and power imbalances in our attitudes and behaviour, as well as in our organisational structure and practices. We are committed to ensuring that our workforce is reflective of diversity, and that qualified persons from marginalised groups are actively recruited, hired, promoted, including to management positions, and supported. The performance of persons in positions of power, like managers, is evaluated in relation to how they contribute to making TdH NL a safe environment.



4 MEANINGFUL AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

We recognise that achieving our ultimate vision of seeing a world free of all forms of child exploitation is not something we can achieve on our own. We bring a unique value to our field of work through our expertise, knowledge and experience. But, to achieve lasting change it is essential that we engage in meaningful partnerships with other organisations, companies and institutions that can both support and complement us. We emphasise *meaningful* partnerships because we want to engage in partnerships where each partner brings their

own unique value, and where that value is recognised by all. TdH NL takes a broad view on partnerships, remaining open to opportunities to engage with any actor that can add value to our work and goals while sharing our core principles.

Whereas we seek to remain accountable to our partners, it is also important that our partners assume accountability towards the children and communities that we together will work with and for.

“For me, the most important feature of an organisation is making a lasting impact. It is important for me to have a hold in the future. It provides change not only to the current generation but also to the next generation”
(Filipina teenage girl, Your Views on the Future Survey 2022)

EXAMPLES

In our programmes: All our work is based on partnerships - whether with local community-based organisations, governments, private sector or others. We promote co-creation of interventions with partners in our primary process. This means partners are part of our programme design from the beginning, and we see ourselves as jointly accountable for outcomes.

In our organisation: Our organisation was built on the foundation of support from thousands of individual volunteers in The Netherlands. We are

committed to ensuring that those who raise funds and awareness for our work, including through more than 40 TdH NL shops, remain meaningfully connected to our mission as an organisation.

We believe it is important that those with the power to enact systemic change to protect children from exploitation, need to come together to do so. We can do this by building on our track-record of successful multi-sectoral partnerships, coalition and network engagement.

5 SUSTAINABILITY

We strive to be an organisation that promotes and achieves sustainability - socially, environmentally and financially. Our work contributes to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals**, in particular Goals 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

It is a key priority in our work that we seek evidence-based solutions to child exploitation issues that are or can be made sustainable in terms of their positive effect and impact. This involves engaging with national governments to ensure the implementation of long-term solutions, as they are ultimately responsible for upholding the rights of children. Our role is to hold them accountable for this, help find solutions that prevent and stop child exploitation, and influence governments to enact changes that uphold children's rights and protect them from exploitation.

We also seek to partner with like-minded actors whose principles are in line with our own. Where we encounter actors whose ethical approaches we do not align with, we try to find opportunities to apply our strategies for influence and to enter into dialogue about ethical and sustainable practices.

We are aware of our footprint on this planet, and where possible we take measures to reduce our negative environmental impact and make choices that benefit the environment.

We make sure that our organisation remains financially viable, and that the programmes we implement can be financially sustained through their programme cycle.

“Organisations should work with many different children and provide ways for every child to participate”

(Cambodian teenage girl, *Your Views on the Future Survey 2022*)

EXAMPLES

In our programmes: We are committed to ensuring that new projects are designed with a clear sustainability strategy from the outset. In each programme, we seek partnership with individuals, communities, organisations, government institutions and others who are likely to continue maintaining, improving and scaling up the solutions we find even without TdH's involvement in the future.

In our organisation: We are committed to generating systemic change through long-term collaborative efforts, and plan to move towards a global programmes model where global research, advocacy and learning is focused on a specific issue of child exploitation.

We choose suppliers that are committed to child labour free supply chains and environmentally sustainable solutions.

**CHILDREN
ARE THE
FUTURE**



www.terredeshommes.nl

