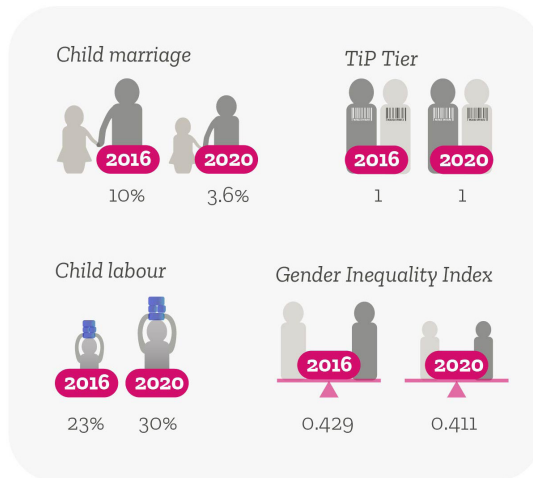


Colombia

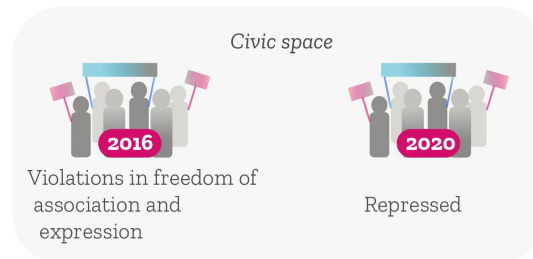
KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS IN 2016-2020



Reports from the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) and the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Science (IMLCF) show that sexual exploitation of children in Colombia has recently increased. Other sources state that the number of reported cases has tripled over the last five years.

Venezuelan child migrants in Colombia are particularly vulnerable. They are exposed to sexual exploitation by criminal gangs due to the need to economically support their families in Colombia and Venezuela. Also children and young people that have been recruited by (illegal) armed groups are at great risk of being exploited through sex trafficking.

Colombia's civic space is currently rated as 'repressed' by Civicus, a global alliance of Civil Society Organisations dedicated to strengthening civil society. Authorities made disproportionate use of force to end massive anti-government protests over issues such as inequality and the killings of indigenous and social leaders. Since the introduction of Covid-19-induced quarantine, human rights organisations have been reporting an increase of violence against human rights defenders, social leaders and indigenous and ethnic communities.



FOCUS OF OUR WORK

Down to Zero (DtZ) has seen a dramatic increase of migration from Venezuela since 2018, and large numbers of abandoned and vulnerable children, many of the victims of sexual exploitation. Since the local government does not have effective interventions to prevent or mitigate risks, the health system is overwhelmed and the security agencies lack resources to handle the crimes, the DtZ Alliance works towards bringing together companies,

UN and state entities to provide technical assistance for coordinated action against human trafficking.

Budget 2016-2020

€ 449,038

MAIN RESULTS ON CHILDREN/YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

From 2016 onwards children and young people have been empowered by the programme. From July 2017 onwards, boys and girls from educational institutions in Bogotá and Guajira were more and more outspoken about their rights and identified SEC risks and mechanisms to report cases. In 2018, the ECPAT International Children and Youth Advisory Committee - Colombia (EICYAC) was formed to organize children and young people. By 2019 EICYAC engaged in advocacy at the national level. Awareness-raising processes were developed to continue reinforcing SRHR messages including SEC prevention messages among peers, as well as addressing online risks and violence throughout Colombia during the Covid-19 pandemic. EICYAC has also worked with the private sector. In 2019, they worked on different visibility and advocacy strategies to influence public and private actors. Children and young people connected to EICYAC took up opportunities to speak to community groups, gaining a reputation of being an active and reliable actor advocating against SEC.

Colombia

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

Following the programme's awareness-raising activities with 150 community members with children at risk of SEC, the University of Guajira started a partnership with the DtZ Alliance to give training to civil servants for an integrated approach to SEC. After 22 Wayuu women and 2 male leaders recognised SEC as a risk factor for their community and proposed prevention actions, more community actions followed. A group of Wayuu women organised themselves to construct protective environments for children. Leaders from the community proposed strategies and an action plan for spreading messages on the risks of sexual exploitation to indigenous communities nearby. And Wayuu leaders linked up with the business community by participating in a dialogue with hotels, making visible the risks of SEC in the indigenous territory.

GOVERNMENTS

The DtZ Alliance raised the awareness on SEC among government officials, which resulted in a commitment letter for the fight against SEC signed by the governments of Peru, Brazil, and Colombia in March 2017. At the national level, the Colombian government has opened the discussion to the incorporation of SEC in the national business and human rights plan. The district and local government entities articulated actions to make SEC and human trafficking visible in commemoration of the International Day against Human Trafficking.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (LEAS)

LEAs in Colombia have been increasing their efforts to capture and prosecute persons suspected of trafficking. They created a specialised unit to carry out the judicial investigation on SEC and human trafficking. DtZ Colombia trained staff of this unit and advocated towards better reporting of SEC cases and the broader recognition of SEC as a crime. Moreover, the DtZ Alliance made progress in signaling migration as a major risk for SEC. The Centre for Integral Assistance of Victims of Sexual Abuse (CAIVAS) in Riohacha was set up to guarantee support to child victims of sexual violence, with a focus on SEC. LEA officials have subsequently indicated that the number of reports has increased because victims recognise the institutional support and security measures that are available to them during the investigation process. DtZ Colombia continued to strengthen institutions and services to improve the effective application of laws and policies.

PRIVATE SECTOR

Since 2016, major progress has been made in the hotel sector with regard to SEC. La Candelaria town received certification as a sustainable tourist destination, the private sector, government and civil society mobilised themselves to support prevention of SEC. At the same time awareness creation and training processes in the formal and informal sectors took place. The continuous sensitisation of companies paid off. In 2020, tour

operators received a positive evaluation as part of their annual audit concerning the implementation of child protection. For instance, by participating in a joined communications and advocacy strategy. In August 2020, the private sector (40 sensitised staff members from 20 companies) together with the Riohacha Tourism Directorate developed a situational diagnosis of tour operators' work during Covid-19. This study guides a joint action plan to technically support SEC prevention. In August 2020, the association Calle 85, Amigos Parque de la 93 and other private sector companies in Bogotá and Guajira continued online training, despite the Covid-19 situation and the detrimental economic impact, prioritising strategies for SEC protection and prevention in the context of travel and tourism for a post-Covid-19.