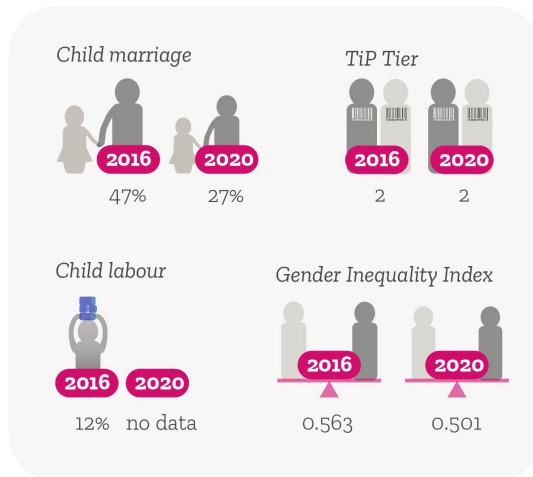


India

KEY NATIONAL INDICATORS IN 2016-2020



While poverty was gradually declining in India, the Covid-19 related lockdown for India's 1.3 billion inhabitants in March 2020, negatively influenced this trend. By May 2020 over 122 million people – around 75% of them small traders and daily wage labourers – had already lost their jobs. The economic instability of parents has directly affected children, making them more vulnerable.

Before Covid-19, the Indian government had demonstrated increasing efforts in combatting human trafficking. This made the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TiP) Report 2020 to maintain India's ranking at Tier 2 (ranking from highest 1 to lowest 3). Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC) remains an acute problem, and the lockdown has worsened the situation. Between April and September 2020, 1,127 children suspected of being trafficked

were rescued across India and 86 alleged traffickers were arrested. Most of them came from rural areas of poorer states such as Jharkhand and Bihar.

FOCUS OF OUR WORK

The programme has been working in the areas with the highest needs: in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, and West Bengal, including Kidderpore and Shobhabazar (Sonagachi) red light areas. In 2019, the programme has increased its reach to address the growing needs of people related to migration.

Budget 2016-2020

€ 1,069,975

MAIN RESULTS ON CHILDREN/YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Due to the programme work, especially the training of children on raising the issue of SEC among their peers – Down to Zero (DtZ) partners saw early signs towards children organising themselves as from 2017. Early on in the programme, girls at risk from Bodh Gaya, Bihar started discussions with their peers on SEC and sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT), while girl survivors in Sneha shelter home in West Bengal informed the local administration about places where children are at risk of SEC. With support from the programme, children have also been learning about available services, including reporting cases of abuse and Sexual Exploitation (SE). They reported cases to partner organisations and the community police and asked for help to get out of SE from the West Bengal shelter home run by the DtZ Alliance.

The programme has also been training children in advocating for child rights and against SEC. As a result, children raised their voices: in Bodh Gaya, in 2018, a children's club for boys was initiated and started regular discussions on preventing child abuse. The same year, in Madhya Pradesh children requested action against tourists taking individual photos of them in school and started complaining against eve teasing (sexual harassment) to the police. In Bodh Gaya, prior to elections, they presented inputs for the political party manifestos to members of parliament. At the same time, in West Bengal, young people formed groups to raise awareness in the neighbouring villages on (preventing) trafficking, child marriage and child labour.

In 2019, increasingly more organised children continued reporting and advocating. Groups of boys and girls shared their views on empowerment, consent and confidentiality from a child protection perspective with the local government (in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar). Children also submitted a letter to the local government and electricity board (Madra Pradesh) arguing how lack of street lighting makes street children vulnerable. The advocacy continued despite the Covid-19 lockdown: youth from Madhya Pradesh and Bihar for instance, held online meetings with district administrators on the need for access to quality support services (such as counselling and legal and medical aid). Children in Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka came up with guidelines to secure child safety during Covid-19 and negotiated its implementation at the district level.