



BRAZIL

Hotspot report

September 2024



*Front cover: March in front of National Congress, National Campaign Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children.
Photo credit: © The Freedom Fund*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Brazil hotspot aims to tackle the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) through our *Com.Direitos* ('With Rights') program. The hotspot program works with our partners to promote legislative changes at national, state and municipal levels; challenge social norms that tend to permit abuse of children; support civil society networks addressing CSEC; and provide services and support to survivors and children at risk.

In 2023, the *Com.Direitos* program has been at the heart of significant advances in policy and practice to more effectively combat CSEC. Advocacy from our program partners, drawing on the findings of three Freedom Fund research studies into CSEC in Brazil, influenced the new national anti-trafficking plan, while during the 18 May campaign against the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents, the federal government announced a new set of measures to tackle CSEC around the country, and President Lula committed to a country free of CSEC. The Freedom Fund's leading role was recognised in the signing of an MOU with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, and the Brazilian Parliament to collaborate to tackle CSEC and trafficking in girls nationwide.

The hotspot works primarily in the Recife Metropolitan Region of Pernambuco State, where there is a high prevalence of CSEC. During the year, the Pernambuco state and Recife municipal governments agreed an emergency action plan to focus anti-CSEC efforts, and initiated emergency action in two critical areas of the city, with integrated efforts to prevent CSEC, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators. The Freedom Fund continues to provide technical advice and support to city and state teams, especially regarding prioritising care and referrals for children and adolescents.

During the year, our seven frontline partners provided support and assistance to 5,290 survivors and children and adolescents at risk of CSEC. This included counselling and psychosocial support, access to education, and life skills and vocational training. We also reached nearly 14,000 children and adolescents through school-based training on CSEC risk awareness, protection and prevention. In addition, 1,600 family and community members received support to strengthen their ability to protect children from the risk of CSEC.

Support for practitioners in 2023 saw 1,838 health workers, educators, social workers, law enforcement and justice officials receive training, improving their ability to identify, report and assist with cases of CSEC. Our partner provided key support in implementing the Protected Listening Law, which provides for comprehensive care for children and adolescents affected by CSEC while preventing revictimising. The law also increases the possibility of holding perpetrators to account. Our partner helped develop the referral pathways, protocols and guidelines for professionals working on the frontlines in Recife to tackle CSEC and support survivors and children at risk.

Ceremony of certification of adolescents and professionals participating in the Com.Direitos program.

Photo credit: © Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund



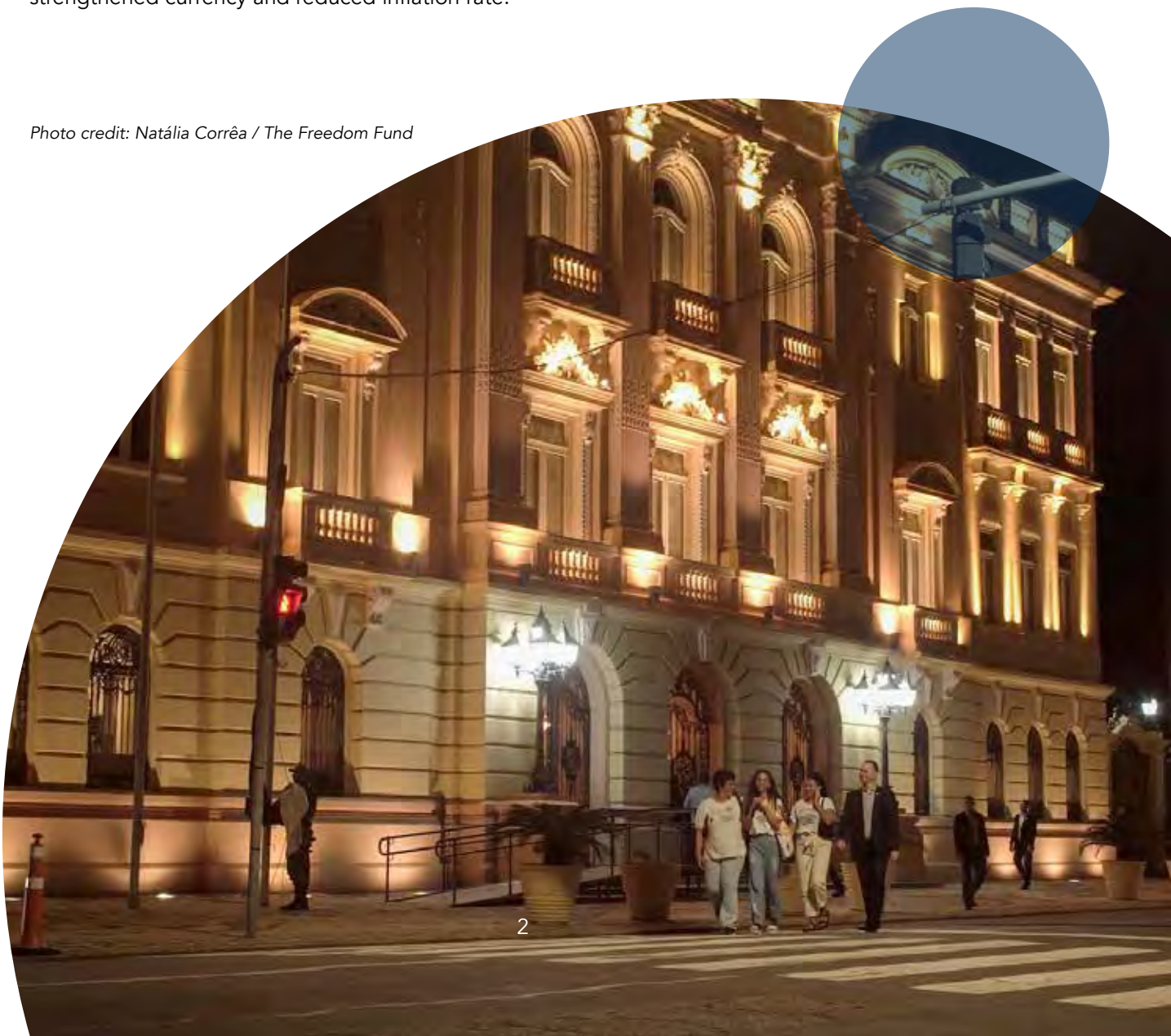
OPERATING CONTEXT

Improved action by the federal government to tackle the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). During 2023 – the first year of the new administration following the 2022 elections – the federal government announced 12 initiatives to address CSEC. These included, among others: setting up an Intersectoral Commission to Confront CSEC; issuing guidelines for the Integrated Centres for Protected Listening; improving national hotlines; and launching an epidemiological bulletin of CSEC cases. On 18 May, Brazil’s National Day to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, the national anti-CSEC movement showed a strong resurgence, which contributed to state and municipal governments also demonstrating commitments to tackle CSEC. In December 2023, the federal government launched the National Pact for the Productive Inclusion of Youth, together with the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the ILO and UNICEF.

The dangerous situation faced by human rights defenders in Brazil. A study conducted by Terra dos Homens and Justiça Global presented disturbing data on human rights violations against people who defend human rights. Between 2019 and 2022, 1,171 cases were recorded, among them 169 murders. The North and Northeast regions are the areas where most violations occurred. Brazil remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for people who defend human rights.

Improved economic context. Across Brazil, there was a 3.1% increase in household consumption due to the federal government implementing improvements to the income transfer program (which provides financial assistance to vulnerable families) and increasing the minimum wage, alongside a strengthened currency and reduced inflation rate.

Photo credit: Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund



PROGRESS TOWARDS SYSTEMS CHANGE

Policy/legislative

Advocacy efforts by the *Com.Direitos* program contributed to changes in government performance and led to important government commitments at national, state and municipal level.

National level:

Influencing the national anti-trafficking plan. The Brazilian government started consultations to develop the 4th National Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The Freedom Fund convened a webinar with our partners, other organisations, and leaders from our Freedom Rising and Survivor Leadership Fund initiatives, to develop joint proposals. The proposals were submitted to the Ministry of Justice.

MOU with national government to tackle CSEC and trafficking of girls. The Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, the Brazilian Parliament and the Freedom Fund signed an MOU to collaborate to tackle CSEC and trafficking of girls.

State level:

Commission set up to revise the 10-year Pernambuco state action plan to combat CSEC. In 2022, the interinstitutional commission responsible for drawing up the state's Plan to Combat Sexual Violence was created, including government bodies and civil society. Our NGO and research partners were designated as members of the commission. The commission has drafted the main proposals for the state plan.

Pernambuco state government signed a commitment to develop new state and municipal actions against CSEC. Pernambuco state government, Recife City Hall and the Freedom Fund are continuing to implement the work agreed in the 2022 MOU. In monthly meetings, the Freedom Fund team monitors and provides technical advice to the City Hall and state teams, especially regarding prioritising care and referrals for children and adolescents. Following on from the Freedom Fund's prevalence study (for details see under Objective 2 below), a pilot project was developed to monitor the policies operating in one of the administrative regions in Recife. The project will draw together learning from practices developed in the area which are proving successful in assisting adolescents to leave CSEC. The project results are now being finalised by the City Hall and state government teams.

The state Parliament sent an appeal to the Governor of the State of Pernambuco and the Secretary of Social Defence, to reactivate the Committee to Combat Human Trafficking. The Freedom Fund's prevalence research and partners' outreach strongly contributed to this appeal.

Pernambuco state government published a decree for joint working between departments and civil society, reinforcing policies against human trafficking. As a result of effective collaboration within the Working Group to Combat Trafficking in Persons (set up by the Freedom Fund in 2022, with 16 public institutions and civil society organisations), the state government published a decree to restructure the Interinstitutional Committee to Combat Human Trafficking and the Office for Combating Human Trafficking in the state. This is a fundamental step towards effective action to combat human trafficking in the state.



Photo credit: Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund

Municipal level:

The Pernambuco state and Recife municipal government agreed an emergency action plan to focus anti-CSEC efforts. As a result of outreach with our prevalence study, emergency action was initiated in two critical areas of the city, with integrated efforts to prevent CSEC, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators.

Recife City Hall started the design of an Integrated Assistance Centre for Child Victims or Witnesses of Violence, with technical input from our partner, Childhood.

The Recife Child Rights Council launched the implementation guidance for the Protected Listening Law. The Protected Listening Law provides for comprehensive care for children and adolescents affected by CSEC, while preventing revictimising. It increases the possibility of holding perpetrators to account. Our partner Childhood helped develop the referral pathways as well as protocols and guidelines for frontline professionals.

Political will/public awareness/attitude change

Study of social norms affecting perpetrators. Instituto Promundo was commissioned to carry out a study on social norms and behaviours of perpetrators of CSEC, specific to the local context. Focus group interviews were conducted with experts, sex workers, tourists, potential facilitators of CSEC such as taxi drivers and bar and hotel staff, and convicted offenders. The report's recommendations will be important for our hotspot partners in liaising with public authorities to mobilise campaigns to reduce acceptance of CSEC and promote other actions that contribute to changing social norms.

Commitment to end CSEC. During the 18 May campaign, the federal government announced a new set of measures to tackle sexual abuse and exploitation of children around the country, and President Lula committed to a country free of CSEC.

Government performance

Generating evidence to improve the quality of services. Children and adolescents at risk as well as survivors and frontline professionals were interviewed in a UFPE/Nottingham University survey on the effectiveness of policies. The research identified important gaps in care, including revealing that services are often also places where rights are violated. Another important finding was that comprehensive and integrated care for children and adolescents, necessary for their full recovery, is not in place. The data and recommendations of this research continue to be fundamental for informing action by public authorities.

Improving the effectiveness of the child rights system in municipalities. With our partner Childhood's support, the municipality of Olinda set up a management committee for the Protected Listening Law, completed an assessment of bottlenecks in the protection of children, and developed the referral pathways that its care, health, justice, and law enforcement professionals can follow to assist children and adolescents who are victims or witnesses of sexual violence. In Cabo de Santo Agostinho, Childhood started a new collaboration with the municipality to implement the Protected Listening Law and has successfully engaged stakeholders in preparatory activities.

Business performance

Survivors' inclusion as apprentices. Our partner Instituto Aliança met with 26 businesses and institutions to sensitise them to include CSEC survivors as apprentices. This initiative, in partnership with the Regional Labour Court, training institutions and Recife City Hall, resulted in the hiring of 38 CSEC survivors, who had graduated from the life skills program, to work in private companies and public institutions.

Community organisation

The Network to Combat the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. This is a key coalition in the fight against CSEC, bringing together more than 30 government agencies and NGOs working on the frontline to prevent CSEC and protect victims. Through our support for the secretariat, the effective participation of our partners, and the advocacy training offered, the network has enhanced its actions, particularly for the drafting of the state plan to combat CSEC. The network also leads local efforts for the 18 May campaign.

*The march to the State Palace (Palácio das Princesas)
Photo credit: Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund*



HOTSPOT OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Headline results

70 slavery victims/survivors were provided with support for recovery, such as life skills training and referral to other services, including apprenticeship programs.

533 adolescent survivors or those at risk were given comprehensive care to exit or avoid CSEC situations, through psychosocial support, therapeutic support, and training and support for inclusion in schools or work.

5,290 individuals were provided with social or legal services through our seven frontline partners, including counselling, life skills training, and vocational training.

13,946 children and adolescents have increased their knowledge of sexual abuse and exploitation through school-based training, including on how to identify situations of risk and how to protect themselves.

1,600 family and community members have been reached by services to strengthen their ability to protect children from the risk of CSEC.

1,838 health workers, educators, social workers, law enforcement and justice officials have been trained and are now better able to identify, assist and report cases of CSEC.

Three research studies into CSEC in Brazil, alongside a range of advocacy actions, have helped inform government plans to tackle CSEC at national, state and municipal levels.

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PROGRESS TOWARDS HOTSPOT OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Improved policies to confront CSEC and greater coordination among stakeholders to hold the government accountable for their implementation

Outcome 1.1: Government and civil society are more coordinated in tackling CSEC, set guidelines and goals for their actions and monitor their results

The Freedom Fund worked collaboratively with Recife City Hall, the Pernambuco state government and the federal government, providing relevant evidence to support the creation of plans of action, committees, public policy and national research.

Output 1.1.1: Multi-institutional network strengthened for the development and implementation of coordinated responses and monitoring of public policies and plans to tackle CSEC

As a result of the technical support and advocacy actions carried out by the *Com.Direitos* program, at the end of 2023 the Pernambuco state government sanctioned Decree No. 55.903, which reformed the anti-trafficking policy and main state government structures: the Office for Combating Human Trafficking and the Interinstitutional Committee to Combat Human Trafficking. Prior to the program, the committee was not established, and the office was understaffed. The new structure is expected to improve coordination of anti-trafficking policies and survivor support.

The Working Group to Combat Trafficking in Persons has developed a six-episode podcast on human trafficking.¹ In addition, the working group carried out mobilisation activities for the Blue Heart Campaign which was based around the world and national Day to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

At national level, the government launched a consultation for the 4th National Plan to Combat Trafficking. The Freedom Fund organised a webinar with our partners, survivor advocates, and other organisations to submit proposals for the plan to the Ministry of Justice.

¹ The podcast is available on Spotify's digital platforms at <https://open.spotify.com/intl-pt-evamos> as well as in Istoe Mulher magazine at <https://mulher.istoe.com.br/>

Photo credit: © Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund





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Output 1.1.2: Civil society organisations implement an advocacy strategy to advance efforts to tackle CSEC

The Network to Combat the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents is a key player in the fight against CSEC in Pernambuco. The network brings together more than 30 governmental and non-governmental organisations working on the frontline to prevent and protect victims of CSEC. With our support, the network has been strongly influencing the Pernambuco government to develop a state plan to combat CSEC. This plan will establish the guidelines for an anti-CSEC policy and will benefit thousands of girls and boys.

On 18 May, the network participated with the Human Rights, Citizenship and Popular Participation Commission of the Legislative Assembly of Pernambuco in a public hearing. The hearing discussed the importance of knowledge and awareness of CSEC. Following the public hearing, there was a demonstration by teenagers from various civil society organisations and participants in the *Com.Direitos* program. At the end of the walk, a letter was delivered to the Governor, demanding that young people's rights be guaranteed.

With input from program partners, the City of Recife Municipal Plan for Combating Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents as well as the Municipal Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour were developed.

At national level, our partner Childhood, in collaboration with the National Committee to Combat Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents and the federal government, supported important events as part of the 18 May campaign, including: a national seminar on 'The context of sexual violence on the Internet', with around 100 participants; a public hearing at the House of Representatives with 150 participants; an official ceremony with the Vice-President of Brazil and the Minister of Human Rights, with an estimated audience of 800 people; and a formal session in the Chamber of Deputies with the signing of a protocol and presentation of the Neide Castanha Award, with an estimated audience of 400 people. Several Freedom Fund partners received national awards in recognition of their work. During the ceremony, the federal government announced new measures to tackle sexual exploitation of children, and President Lula committed to a country free of CSEC.

Objective 2: Evidence-based knowledge about CSEC and survivors' voices inform policies and programmatic responses

Outcome 2.1: Local decision-makers and frontline organisations use the latest available evidence to guide responses to tackle CSEC

Three research studies and one program evaluation were delivered to inform the development of policies and programs to combat CSEC.

Output 2.1.1: Rigorous evidence and locally relevant recommendations are generated from research and shared with policy-makers and frontline organisations

The Freedom Fund has supported three important research studies.

The *Prevalence Study of CSEC in Recife and the Metropolitan Region*, carried out by GESTOS/FIOCRUZ with funding from the US Department of State, provided a profile of survivors and estimated that more than 20,000 girls living in Recife had experienced CSEC between the ages of 14 - 17. Just over 21% were under 15 years old when they were first involved in CSEC. Nearly 20% reported that their first sexual experience corresponded to CSEC. More than 78% were still enrolled in school when they were first involved in CSEC. Partners report that the data has been useful in informing their work and advocacy.

The research *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Brazil*, carried out by UFPE/University of Nottingham, interviewed at-risk adolescents and CSEC survivors who shared their experiences of being cared for in protection services. It also interviewed experts and analysed data on services, policies and laws. The study identified important gaps, revealing that these services are often also environments where rights are violated. It found that referral systems for the comprehensive and integrated care of children and adolescents, necessary for their full recovery, are not in place. The children and adolescents surveyed identified factors that are essential, including: having adequate services at their disposal and being able to access them; having information about their condition and options; feeling comfortable interacting with service providers and being attended to by trained staff; having access to the basics, including food, and being physically well; being accepted by service staff and not judged for their experiences.

Promundo carried out a study into *Social norms and behaviour of perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Recife*, with funding from the US Department of State. The results of this study will guide more effective campaigns to reduce the demand for, and social acceptance of, CSEC. The main preliminary findings reveal the typical profile of exploiters to be males aged between 40 and 50 (mostly Brazilian but also foreigners in tourist areas), with 50% having a clear preference for people under 18. In terms of facilitators, the data pointed to a pattern of mothers either arranging or condoning access to their children, with the economic situation of families directly linked to the occurrence of CSEC. Tour guides are also intermediaries in exploitation situations.

The main results of the three research studies above were launched at a seminar on 11 May 2023, with the participation of government, civil society, researchers and universities. Around 200 people attended the seminar in person and 450 watched via YouTube. The recommendations were widely publicised and influenced the public debate around CSEC. The recommendations were also presented at a public hearing in the Pernambuco Chamber of Deputies on 18 May.

Following the launch of the research findings, significant developments included:

- The Brazilian Parliament showed interest in carrying out a national prevalence survey of CSEC, based on the methodology of our study in Recife, to generate evidence for policies. The Freedom Fund has signed an MOU with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, and the Brazilian Parliament that includes collaboration on this initiative.
- The state of Pernambuco and the municipal government of Recife agreed on an emergency action plan to concentrate efforts to combat CSEC in two critical neighbourhoods of the city, with integrated actions to prevent CSEC, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators.
- The state Parliament sent an appeal to the Governor of the State of Pernambuco and the State Secretary of Social Defence, to reactivate the Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.

Published reports:

- Commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and experiences of care in support services
- Research on confronting commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Brazil: Recommendations for action
- CSEC perpetrators: Profiles of participants in the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents
- A spotlight on invisible victims: Children and adolescents in situations of commercial sexual exploitation in Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil

A mid-term evaluation of the hotspot program was carried out in 2023, with funding from the US Department of State, and a study report was developed. Findings will be used to inform a review of the program strategy in 2024.

Objective 3: Vulnerable children and survivors have more support, information, and skills to protect themselves from and safely exit from CSEC

Outcome 3.1: Vulnerable children and survivors have greater access to information, comprehensive care, education and productive inclusion opportunities

In 2023, **1,838 health workers, educators, social workers, law enforcement and justice officials** have been trained and are now better able to identify, assist and report cases of CSEC; **13,946 adolescents** have increased their knowledge of sexual abuse and exploitation, including how to identify situations of risk and how to protect themselves; and **533 children who are at-risk or survivors of CSEC** have received professional training services and psychosocial and socio-educational assistance.

Output 3.1.1: Frontline services and professionals – including social assistance, health, education, law enforcement, and judicial system – are better equipped to identify, support and advocate for vulnerable children and survivors of CSEC

Instituto Aliança trained **146 frontline professionals** in comprehensive care for victims of CSEC. Teams from multiple departments took part in the training. **36 organisations received ongoing technical assistance** from Instituto Aliança to improve their services. Coletivo Mulher Vida trained **1,310 professionals**, including health workers and educators. They also trained **47 participants** from the Network to Combat Human Trafficking. Fundação Roberto Marinho trained **82 professionals** to promote prevention actions in schools, based on the *Growing Without Violence* curricula. Our partner Childhood engaged **57 professionals** to draw up care plans in Olinda.

Output 3.1.2: Vulnerable children have more resources to prevent CSEC and a more protective family and community environment

Grupo Adolescer mobilised and selected **126 adolescents** and trained them as peer educators in three communities. The peer educators carried out training activities in schools, **reaching 718 adolescents**. Coletivo Mulher Vida has **20 teenagers** working directly in its communication centre, who inform other teenagers about risks and care. Grupo Ruas e Praças has **35 teenagers and young people** working as multipliers in CSEC prevention.

There was a drive by partners to **teach self-protection skills to children** at risk of CSEC, reaching around **13,946 children and adolescents**. For example, Coletivo Mulher Vida provided **training to 3,624 students in six schools** about how to protect themselves. They also informed the adolescents which institutions in the protection network they can turn to for support. During the training, participants can also make confidential reports. As a result, two cases of bullying and six cases of sexual violence were received and referred to the protection network.

Fundação Roberto Marinho, through its training using the *Growing Without Violence* methodology, provided information on self-protection to **9,380 students at public schools** in Olinda.

Services to support and strengthen families and communities to protect children from the risk of CSEC reached **1,600 family and community members**.

Output 3.1.3: Children at risk and survivors of CSEC have access to specialised services for their rehabilitation and reintegration

Coletivo Mulher Vida **trained 193 teachers and 185 health workers** in identifying, assisting, and reporting cases of violence against children and adolescents. The main challenge identified during the teacher training was the difficulty professionals have in recognising and intervening in cases of violence. The daily presence of violence in many spaces has led to these situations being perceived as natural, contributing to their invisibility. Health professionals said they were unaware of the tools for reporting cases of violence. Coletivo Mulher Vida has signed an agreement with Olinda Municipal Health Department to reinforce the notification procedure so that health professionals can properly report cases.

533 adolescent survivors or those at risk were given comprehensive care to exit or avoid CSEC situations, through psychosocial support, therapeutic support, and training and support for inclusion in schools or work. Instituto Aliança mobilised adolescents to participate in life skills training classes in its pre-apprenticeship training program. Most of the adolescents enrolled in the program are CSEC survivors as well as homeless people and transgender people. The program is now recognised by various services that are expecting referrals of adolescents. The federal government's Ministry of Labour and Employment recognised the Instituto Aliança survivor inclusion program as a successful model to inspire the new National Pact for Productive Inclusion of Youth.

Photo credit: © Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund





Photo credit: © Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund

Objective 4: Social acceptance and demand for commercial sexual exploitation of children is decreased

Outcome 4.1: Businesses in sectors with high prevalence of CSEC improve their anti-CSEC practices and policies

26 businesses and public institutions have been encouraged to take on CSEC survivors and have engaged 38 new apprentices in their organisations.

Output 4.1.1: Businesses engaged in the program make commitments and take action against CSEC

During 2023, systematic contact with companies with the potential to hire teenagers was intensified, with awareness-raising meetings and visits to explore vacancies. New partnerships expanded the number of apprenticeship-certifying bodies and organisations that provide apprenticeships, demonstrating greater commitment to employability for children and young people in situations of CSEC.

Outcome 4.2: CSEC is seen as unacceptable violence and society is more vigilant and protective of children

Output 4.2.1: Increased awareness of the reality and harms of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls

The Pernambuco Network to Combat the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents implemented the **Faça Bonito campaign** to mark the **18th of May** in several cities, encouraging society to protect children and adolescents. Various actions were carried out, including training for professionals, seminars, awareness-raising actions, and a public hearing in the state Parliament to propose recommendations to the government. Several organisations that are part of the *Com.Direitos* program report that the **campaign mobilised more than 88,199 people** to protect children. In addition, several actions were widely publicised in the media, including the findings of the prevalence study on CSEC in Recife which revealed the scale of the problem and which were discussed live in a major Brazilian TV morning news show with an **estimated audience of over 1 million people**.

On 16 May 2023, **the Freedom Fund received the medal of merit awarded by the Regional Labour Court** to entities that stand out for their performance or for providing services to the Labour Court.

Outcome 4.3: Law enforcement officials are better prepared to conduct investigations of CSEC-related cases and prosecute perpetrators

The cities of Olinda and Recife are in the process of **implementing the Protected Listening Law**, increasing the municipalities' capacity to offer comprehensive care to children and adolescents who are victims or witnesses of violence without re-victimising them, while at the same time increasing the possibility of prosecuting perpetrators.

Output 4.3.1: Municipalities are able to implement the Protected Listening Law (Law 13.431/17) to increase child protection and accountability of perpetrators

Our partner Childhood implements this process by: establishing a management committee; mapping the functioning of the Child Protection Network in the locality; developing care workflows; and developing a protocol for integrated care for victimised children and adolescents.

In **Recife**, the Recife Children's Rights Council launched the agreed procedures. In June, frontline professionals were trained to ensure that child victims or witnesses of violence receive comprehensive care and protected listening. In **Olinda**, Childhood carried out similar work, including an assessment of the functioning of the Child Protection Network, revealing the gaps in services for CSEC victims. This creates pressure on the municipality to improve services. Seven workshops were held to outline the flows of care for victims by sector, involving 57 frontline professionals from Guardianship councils, NGOs, and government services. A new agreement has been signed with Childhood to expand this initiative to **Cabo de Santo Agostinho**.

*Seminar: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:
What are commitments are needed to eradicate it?
Photo credit: © Agência Mova.*



Objective 5: Frontline organisations and survivor groups are strengthened to work together and improve their responses to CSEC

Outcome 5.1: Civil society organisations in the hotspot are strengthened in their financial and programmatic capacities

Nine NGOs are improving their capacity to lead the anti-CSEC movement in Recife, based on institutional development and networking.

Output 5.1.1: Implementing partners attend training and receive technical and finance advice offered by the Freedom Fund and technical assistance partners

In 2023 the Freedom Fund supported the institutional development of partner organisations with actions such as: the Organisational Capacity Analysis Tool; Freedom Rising (a leadership transformation program); We Speak For Us (an advocacy training program); financial and anti-fraud training; and training in monitoring, evaluation and learning. Partners have taken greater ownership of the processes of the *Com.Direitos* program. In addition, support visits and Community of Practice meetings were held to exchange learning.

Outcome 5.2: Voices of children and survivors are included at the centre of the anti-trafficking movement

Output 5.2.1: Children and survivors are supported to be leaders and advocate for their rights

During the 18 May campaign, there was significant participation of children and teenagers in awareness and advocacy actions at local and national level, with young leaders sharing their views with wider audiences. At state level, a panel organised by the state Network to Combat the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Adolescents brought together children and young people to discuss their demands with policy-makers. They emphasised the need for educators to trust what children say. At local and national level, the program supported the participation of children in street walks with authorities.

As part of the mid-term evaluation of the *Com.Direitos* program, which began in 2023, a Children and Adolescents Advisory Group was set up. Under the leadership of the evaluators, children and adolescents engaged in collecting data with their peers for the evaluation, and findings will be discussed with them in 2024.

Faça Bonito campaign, Recife, Pernambuco.
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SUPPORTING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

During the year, four Community of Practice meetings were held, bringing together all the *Com.Direitos* partners for collective learning. Discussion and learning points included:

- joint action enhances results and brings greater visibility to CSEC
- ways to improve methodologies for engaging different audiences
- how to increase the participation and agency of children and adolescents in tackling CSEC
- greater understanding of the relevance of data and evidence to support collective pressure for change
- the importance of knowing how the public budget is allocated, in order to better influence the political agendas and operational plans of states and municipalities.

Graduation life skills training - Instituto Aliança
Photo credit: © Natália Corrêa / The Freedom Fund



CASE STUDY

For the 14th year in a row, more trans people were killed in Brazil than in any other country: according to Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais, 131 trans people were murdered in Brazil in 2023, with Pernambuco being the state that recorded the most murders. Due to the high levels of transphobia and social exclusion, trans children and youth are also among the most vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.

MK, age 16, a trans teenager living on the streets, had repeated experiences of violence and CSEC when our partner Ruas e Praças made contact with her through its outreach program. Supported by our partner's 'Voices from the Periphery' project, she then had access to workshops and information to help teenagers like her to self-protect from the risks they face in the streets. In the workshops, she stood out and demonstrated empowerment among the group of teenagers. She eventually returned to her family.

She was later referred to the work inclusion program run by our partner Instituto Aliança, taking part in the pre-apprenticeship educational training and other socio-emotional care services, where she was also very participatory and engaged.

MK has demonstrated strong resilience in the face of the life challenges and obstacles she has been overcoming throughout her life and she is an emerging survivor leader, reaching out to other trans girls and fighting for their rights.

The Freedom Fund / Manu Ferrão



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

From September to December 2023, an external mid-term evaluation of the program activities funded by the US Department of State's Program to End Modern Slavery (PEMS) was carried out by TT Factory. Important outcomes were identified by the evaluators:

- The program effectively strengthened a multi-institutional network for more coordination among key stakeholders.
- The network has made great progress in reviving the anti-CSEC agenda and in institutionalising government spaces dedicated to the issue. There has been some progress in including the perspective of survivors.
- The research studies carried out were evaluated as filling crucial gaps in knowledge about CSEC.
- There is evidence of studies being used to inform debates on policy and program measures.
- There was also evidence of change in behaviours of professionals working in frontline services, who feel more able to respond to CSEC and are willing to take part in capacity-building to improve their skills.

The evaluation also provided suggestions for the program, which will be considered in the strategy review in 2024. Key recommendations include:

- increasing the leading role of survivors and NGO partners in advocacy spaces
- expanding and monitoring the use of research evidence with relevant audiences
- adjusting some training methodologies and content
- wider dissemination of self-protection knowledge among children in the region
- addressing social norms that allow the normalisation of CSEC and social prejudice against survivors.

VISION

Our vision is a world free of slavery.

MISSION



Our mission is to mobilise the knowledge, capital and will needed to end slavery.

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