



Down to Zero  
Fighting sexual exploitation of children

APRIL 2025

# GLOBAL REPORT

THE ROLE OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR  
AND THE SHARING ECONOMY WITHIN  
TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN THE  
PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO THE  
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

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**The Down to Zero Alliance partners** from all the participating countries in Latin America: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala; and Asia: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand.

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# KEY DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

**The informal economy encompasses all economic activities carried out by workers and economic units that are not adequately covered by formal regulations, either legally or practically.**<sup>1</sup> Illegal activities such as drug trafficking or human trafficking are not part of the definition of informal economy.<sup>2</sup>

**The sharing economy involves individuals using digital platforms to offer their assets or services to others.** It spans various sectors, from selling art to offering home accommodation or maintenance services and shared transport and is driven by a growing number of independent “gig workers” or micro-entrepreneurs.<sup>3</sup>

**A tourism supply chain encompasses all steps required to deliver a tourism product or service from the ideation phase to the end consumer.** It consists of the group of people, vendors, materials, and activities involved in creating, producing, and distributing a product or service.

The informal sub-sectors within the tourism and travel industry explored in this report are:

- o **Accommodation:** Includes private accommodation, lodging in community settings, informal hostels or rooms.
- o **Transport:** Includes various informal means and services such as trucks, buses, taxis, moto-taxis, boats, and private transportation.
- o **Food and beverage:** Includes street-food vendors, informal restaurants, bars, and similar establishments.
- o **Travel and tour services:** This includes informal agencies and operators that offer tour packages and visitations or individuals who organise personalised experiences for travellers and tourists. The services also include community tourism, when informal arrangements are in place between the communities and tourists, which can also include informal offers of voluntourism activities with children in local communities.<sup>4</sup>
- o **Entertainment:** Includes informal businesses in the adult entertainment sector, such as clubs, nightclubs, discos, music theatres, circuses, and services provided by spas and massage parlours.

## AT A GLANCE

The role of the travel and tourism industry in child protection is well recognised, especially within formal businesses. However, less has been done globally to address the sexual exploitation of children within the informal travel and tourism sector, and consequently, there is less information about the role that this sector can play in preventing exploitation and/or reducing risks for children. This analysis looks at the risks children may face within the informal tourism sector and how informal services can be misused by those who sexually exploit children. It also documents existing practices to engage the informal travel and tourism sector to protect children. Additionally, this report provides an overview of the role that the sharing economy within the travel and tourism sector may play with regard to the prevention of the sexual exploitation of children happening in or facilitated through misuse of their services.

### Key Findings

- **Risks of sexual exploitation of children across the informal travel and tourism sector and through the sharing economy platforms:**

This report highlights the risks of child sexual exploitation throughout the informal travel and tourism sector, with heightened risks identified in informal and sharing economy businesses within the accommodation and transport sectors.

### Informal travel and tourism sector

- **Challenges and opportunities in engaging informal travel and tourism businesses to protect children from sexual exploitation:**

- **Limited opportunities for dialogue with informal businesses:** Engaging informal businesses in child protection presents challenges due to difficulties in identifying

and reaching them. One key issue is the blurred distinction between formal and informal economies across supply chains. Additionally, the dynamic and unstable nature of informal work—where workers frequently change locations or roles — further complicates sustained engagement. In some contexts, informal businesses operate within community-led organisations, which creates a perception of formality despite their lack of legal recognition. This can make it challenging to design targeted outreach strategies, as these workers may not perceive themselves as part of the informal sector.

However, **this overlap between the formal and informal sectors also presents opportunities for engagement. Leveraging the synergy between these sectors can help create shared learning spaces** and facilitate dialogue between workers, businesses, and civil society organisations. Additionally, **community-based organisational structures offer centralised and coordinated networks that can be used to strengthen engagement efforts**, providing an entry point to reach informal businesses and involve them in child protection initiatives.

- **Civil society organisations and informal businesses face security risks and fears of repercussions from perpetrators when engaging in initiatives to protect children from sexual exploitation, as organised crime takes advantage of the lack of regulation in informal businesses to facilitate child exploitation, including through drug and human trafficking networks.** Other risks for those working within informal businesses include instability of income and lack of social security, which make it difficult for informal sector workers to dedicate time to child protection training

sessions and awareness-raising activities.

**A key opportunity lies in creating safe spaces where those involved in informal businesses can voice their concerns, fostering trust and collaboration while encouraging their active participation in child protection efforts.**

- o **Suggested strategies for engaging informal travel and tourism businesses in protecting children from sexual exploitation:**
  - o Focus on **addressing social and gender norms** that condone child sexual exploitation. While essential, this effort can be particularly challenging in communities with deeply ingrained harmful social and gender norms and limited opportunities for open reflection.
  - o Design tailored interventions that **integrate child protection topics with business-related approaches**, such as professional training or formalisation processes, to encourage engagement with informal workers.
  - o **Collaborate with community organisations** formed by workers within this sector (e.g., unions, social groups) to facilitate access and align efforts with the local groups' dynamics and operational practices.
  - o Implement public **campaigns aiming at behavioural change** and provide tailored training on child protection for informal workers.
  - o **Build trust** through consistent, localised engagement and create platforms that allow those working in informal businesses to voice their concerns, feel supported, empowered, and participate actively.
  - o **Partner with formal businesses** to influence informal businesses through the promotion/requirement of upholding ethical standards within supply chains.

## **Sharing economy in the travel and tourism sector**

- o **Challenges and opportunities to engage sharing economy businesses in the travel and tourism sector:**
  - o Limited understanding within civil society organisations on how the sharing economy in travel and tourism operates in terms of internal structures, approaches and possibilities of their engagement to address and mitigate the risks of the sexual exploitation of children.
  - o Limited or lack of understanding within the sharing economy industry of the risks and impacts on children resulting from their specific operational models.
  - o Traditional approaches to involve businesses in the travel and tourism sector require adjustments to protect children in the shared economy sector.
  - o Few interventions engage sharing economy businesses in child protection, though some platforms have begun implementing commitments and self-regulated policies.
  - o Strengthening regulations, raising awareness, and enhancing cross-sector collaboration are essential to mitigating the risks of child sexual exploitation within these evolving digital platforms.

**Conclusion:** Informal businesses and the sharing economy in the travel and tourism sector hold significant potential as partners in identifying, preventing and responding to the sexual exploitation of children. Child protection efforts can be strengthened at global, regional, and local levels by addressing the barriers and challenges to their engagement and leveraging opportunities for collaboration. This approach requires comprehensive, context-sensitive strategies integrating informal businesses and workers into broader child protection frameworks. Limited initiatives on child protection within the sharing economy highlight the urgency for improving regulations and collaborative efforts.

## INTRODUCTION

Informality is a significant feature of labour markets globally, with hundreds of millions of workers sustaining their livelihoods under informal conditions.<sup>5</sup> According to the International Labour Organization, more than half of the global labour force is engaged in informal work.<sup>6</sup> Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa have the highest levels of informality.<sup>7</sup> While informality supports workers' livelihoods and contributes to communities' well-being by providing essential services and resources, it presents significant challenges concerning workers' rights, sustainable enterprises, social protection, and decent working conditions.<sup>8</sup> These challenges can, in turn, contribute to child protection issues, including the sexual exploitation of children.

In recent years, digital developments in travel and tourism, especially sharing economy platforms, have reshaped the industry, changing how travellers search for and book trips.<sup>9</sup> While some platforms operate formally, many follow a hybrid model, mixing formal and informal practices, and some remain unregulated in certain countries. Unregulated areas of the sharing economy—characterised by flexibility, peer-to-peer transactions, and limited oversight—can create vulnerabilities, increasing the risk of sexual exploitation of children.

The risks of the sexual exploitation of children within formal businesses in the travel and tourism sector have been widely discussed and increasingly recognized by the industry. However, there is limited understanding of the role of informal businesses and the sharing economy within this sector in addressing the sexual exploitation of children. While the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights<sup>10</sup> apply to tens of thousands of transnational corporations and millions of other businesses, the informal sector and sharing economy remain largely out of reach. One reason is the lack of knowledge



regarding approaches and models to engage them. Nevertheless, given the informal businesses' unique position in local communities to prevent and respond to the sexual exploitation of children, the importance of involving them in prevention and response actions has been highlighted since the First International Summit on Child Protection in Travel and Tourism in 2018.<sup>11</sup>

Considering these existing gaps, ECPAT International, as part of the Down to Zero Alliance,<sup>12</sup> conducted an analysis to understand the dual role that informal and sharing economy businesses in the travel and tourism sector can have regarding child protection. Either turning a blind eye, tolerating or facilitating the sexual exploitation of children, or quite the opposing – capitalising on their unique position in local communities to prevent, disrupt or respond to this crime. This analysis also aimed to spotlight existing practices and models to encourage the positive involvement of informal workers and sharing economy businesses in the travel and tourism sector in preventive and responsive actions to protect children.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

- o **Global review:** The global review explored the dynamics of informal service providers and sharing economy businesses across the travel and tourism supply chain, including accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, travel and tour services, and the adult entertainment sector. It also intended to identify existing promising practices, led by non-governmental organisations, on engaging with the informal sector and sharing economy businesses.<sup>13</sup>
- o **Documentation of existing practices:** The analysis documented six practices involving informal workers in the travel and tourism sector in protecting children in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and the Philippines (See Annex A).

The global review included:

- o Review of academic and grey literature published between 2015 and 2024.
- o Online survey targeting organisations, members of the ECPAT network, representatives of non-governmental organisations, academics, and other key workers working in child protection.<sup>14,15</sup>
- o Interviews with key informants.<sup>16</sup>

This report also incorporates insights from discussions and webinars dedicated to sharing the project's findings with the Down to Zero Alliance partnering organisations in Asia and Latin America.<sup>17,18</sup> It also includes contributions from other partners involved in the Down to Zero project, reflecting on the challenges and risks observed in their communities in all the project countries. This report presents an overview of the key study findings aimed at informing strategies at global, regional and national levels to better engage with the private sector across supply chains – including informal workers- in protecting children from sexual exploitation.



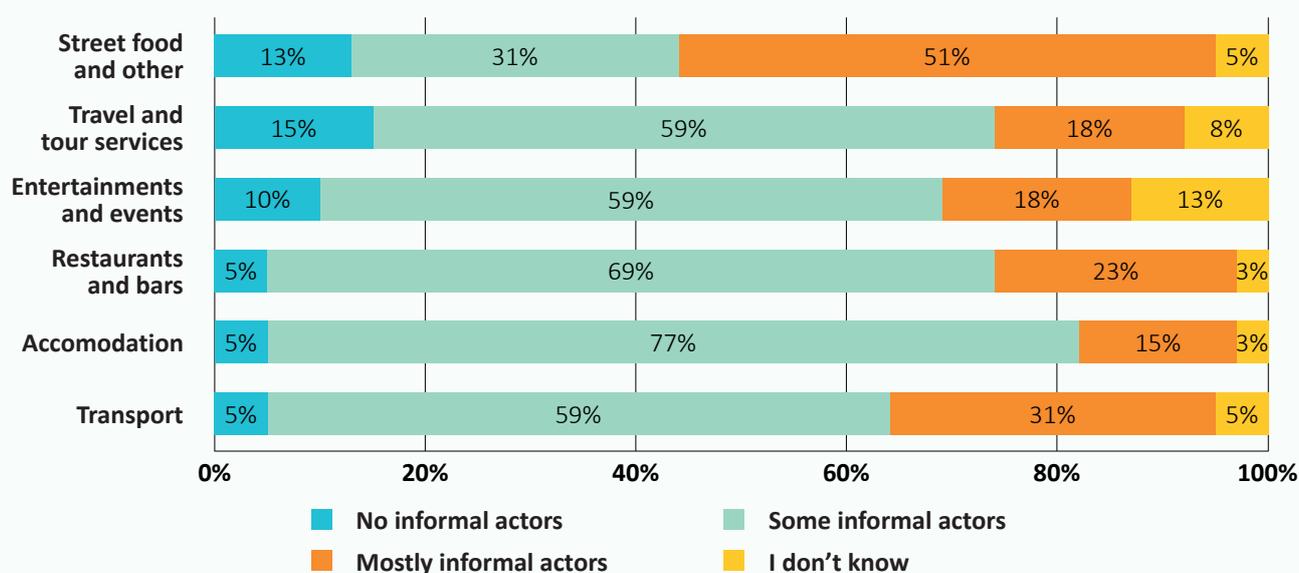
## CONTEXT: THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

Informal businesses play a significant role in the tourism sector by creating jobs and filling the product and service gaps in the formal tourism sector, although they do not contribute to taxpayer systems nor operate under official regulations.<sup>19</sup> The informal economy is highly prevalent in the main tourist destinations. For instance, a study estimating the scale of the informal economy in Thailand prior to the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated that the informal tourism sector was growing at a faster rate than the formal

sector, engaging particularly youth, women, and individuals on the move.<sup>20</sup>

The online survey conducted for the purpose of this analysis asked the participants about their perceptions of the level of informality of the travel and tourism sector in their countries. The street food sector, followed by the transport sector, was identified by respondents as predominantly informal (51% and 31% respectively), as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 How common do you think informal businesses are in these sectors in your country? (N=39)



While informality offers opportunities for communities and flexibility particularly for populations who face barriers to accessing the formal job market, informal employment in the travel and tourism sector poses significant challenges to many economies. It affects earnings, occupational safety, social insurance, and working conditions, impacting people and children living in vulnerable conditions.<sup>21</sup>

*“Existing evidence in Guatemala indicates that indigenous girls are taken to cities from their communities to work in the informal sector, where they are subjected to labour exploitation and are highly vulnerable to the precarious conditions of informal work.”<sup>22</sup>*

In many regions, including Latin America, the informal sector often intersects with eco-tourism or community-based tourism, which is frequently led by indigenous communities. This usually emerges as a response to economic needs, providing a vital source of income for local and indigenous groups.<sup>23</sup> While there are instances of formal community tourism, in many situations, tourists interact informally and directly with communities, often facilitated by online platforms of the shared economy. These unregulated

engagements can create risks by providing opportunities for perpetrators to access children. Community tourism is typically concentrated in indigenous areas marked by extreme inequality and vulnerability. Limited state interventions, potentially harmful social norms, and weak law enforcement may contribute to impunity for perpetrators, further creating conditions that place children in vulnerable situations and perpetuate risks of sexual exploitation.



# THE ROLE OF INFORMAL BUSINESSES WITHIN TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

The findings from the online survey show the perceived risks of sexual exploitation of children in the informal sectors in travel and tourism businesses. **The informal accommodation sector stands out, with over half (56%) of respondents perceiving it as a significant contributor to the sexual exploitation of children** (See Figure 2). This perception aligns with existing evidence which indicates that perpetrators use both formal and informal accommodations, such as unregistered guesthouses, hostels, and private homes, particularly those located near tourist destinations.<sup>24,25,26</sup>

**The transport sector is the second most frequently identified sub-sector (46% of respondents), significantly contributing to the sexual exploitation of children.** As an example, interviews with key informants described cases in Indonesia of tricycle drivers collaborating with facilitators of child sexual exploitation.<sup>27</sup>

**Other informal businesses perceived as significantly contributing to the sexual exploitation of children are informal restaurants and bars (44% of respondents).** Interestingly, street food businesses were the informal businesses perceived as those significantly contributing to the sexual exploitation of children by the lowest percentage of respondents (28%). However, previous studies show that businesses in the broader informal food and beverage sectors – including both informal restaurants and street food- can be misused by perpetrators to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children. For example, owners of *khaja ghars* (small, family-run street restaurants) interviewed in Nepal in the context of the Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia (CLARISSA) programme pointed out that young waitresses

are targeted and lured by perpetrators of sexual crimes, highlighting the vulnerability of this sector.<sup>28</sup>

**About 40% of respondents believe that the informal entertainment sector plays a significant role in the sexual exploitation of children.** The existing literature evidences the challenges for children in the entertainment sector. In Nepal, Indonesia and other countries in Asia, many children work in informal sectors like spas, guesthouses, restaurants, souvenir shops, and entertainment venues, where they are exposed to the risks of sexual exploitation.<sup>29,30</sup> These examples highlight a strong connection between child labour and the risks of sexual exploitation.

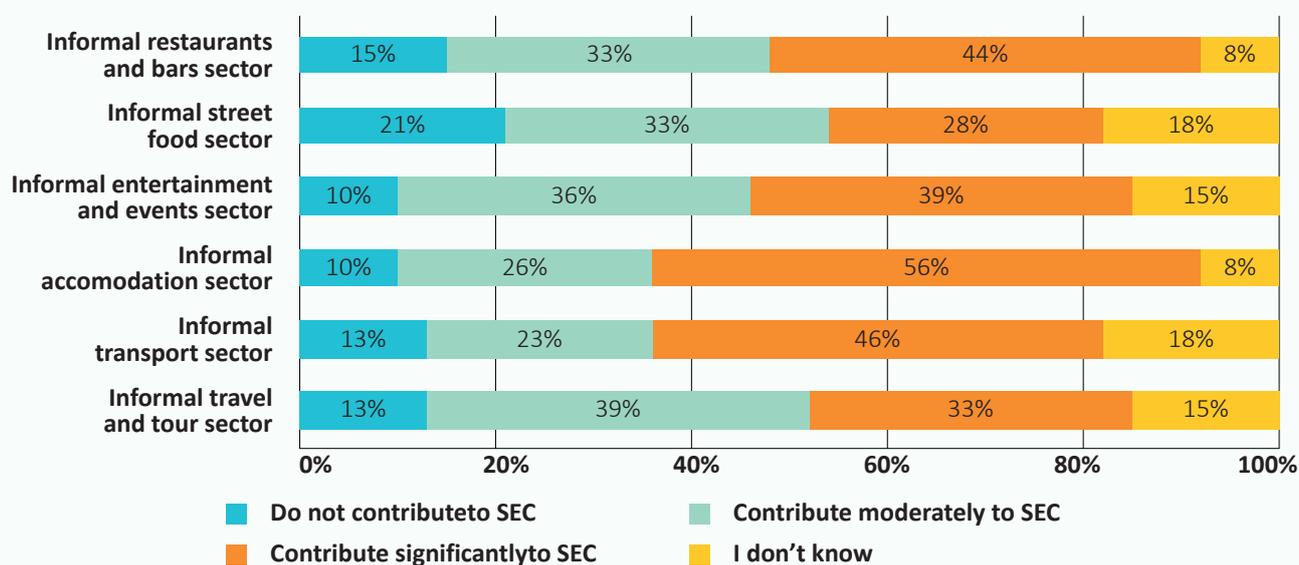
*“The informal sector is contributing [to the economy in Bangladesh], but in the informal sector, child labour is huge. We got about 1.7 million children involved in child labour, and out of that 1.2 million are working in the worst forms of child labour, and this is the hub for all kinds of exploitation of children (including) sexual exploitation of children.”<sup>31</sup>*

**Although only 33% of respondents indicated that informal travel and tour services play a major role in contributing to the sexual exploitation of children,** experiences from civil society organisations show that informal travel and tour services can directly contribute to or facilitate the sexual exploitation of children or provide information to travellers related to such activities. In particular, concerns have been raised

about the risks to young tour guides, with some being below 18 years old, often called “beach boys” in South Asia.<sup>32</sup> These young men and boys, working in tourist areas, can be vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to poor socio-economic conditions, limited education, and reliance on tourism for their livelihoods. Perpetrators of sexual crimes and labour exploitation may manipulate or coerce them into situations of sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Informal travel and tour services can also present risks for the sexual exploitation of children in voluntourism<sup>33</sup> and community tourism. These activities, which can be organised informally and formally, often lack safeguarding measures, enabling perpetrators to access children, for example through schools or orphanages in case of unregulated voluntourism activities with children or interactions with indigenous communities through community tourism, as reported, among other countries in Bolivia.<sup>34,35</sup>

Figure 2 How much do you think the following businesses in the travel sector have an impact on the sexual exploitation of children in your country? N=39



Multiple risk factors that may lead to child sexual exploitation exist within the informal travel and tourism sector, especially in popular tourist destinations. For instance, the analysis conducted for this report, highlighted the intricate dynamics among informal sectors and between informal and formal businesses that create conditions perpetrators misuse to access children. For instance, offenders misusing informal accommodation services to sexually exploit children sometimes rely on intermediaries within the travel and tourism supply chain, such as the

adult entertainment industry and the transport sector, to establish contact with children.<sup>36</sup> The lack of structured policies, training, and accountability within informal businesses creates significant gaps that perpetrators can exploit to facilitate the sexual exploitation of children.<sup>37,38</sup> Many informal workers lack awareness and knowledge of the sexual exploitation of children as a crime and its consequences for children. Social norms that tolerate this crime among workers in informal businesses, families, and communities in general further increase the risks of the sexual exploitation of children.

Discussions with non-governmental organisations also highlighted that many cases of sexual exploitation of children within the informal travel and tourism sector remain unreported. An interviewee in Brazil explained, for instance, how certain informal workers, although aware of the impact on children and possible legal consequences, facilitate the sexual exploitation of children or do not report it because of the fear of confrontation with the tourists and losing income.<sup>39</sup> The interviewee said: *“People are very afraid to face these tourists, whether from abroad or from here, because they bring money”*. This shows how workers within the travel and tourism industry are intertwined in the perpetuation of this crime, in particular in environments where everyday survival is a struggle, as it can be in informal contexts.

Although economic concerns about survival can dictate tolerance for the sexual exploitation of children, it very much results from social norms and attitudes such as the limited recognition of sexual exploitation of children as a crime with long-lasting consequences and the existence of harmful social and gender norms that tolerate the sexual exploitation of children. The informal travel and tourism sector also lacks knowledge about the formal mechanisms for reporting and addressing abuses, further perpetuating a culture of silence and impunity. Additionally, workers in this sector often face exploitation and are themselves vulnerable to manipulation, with limited access to legal protection, support services, or awareness of their rights.



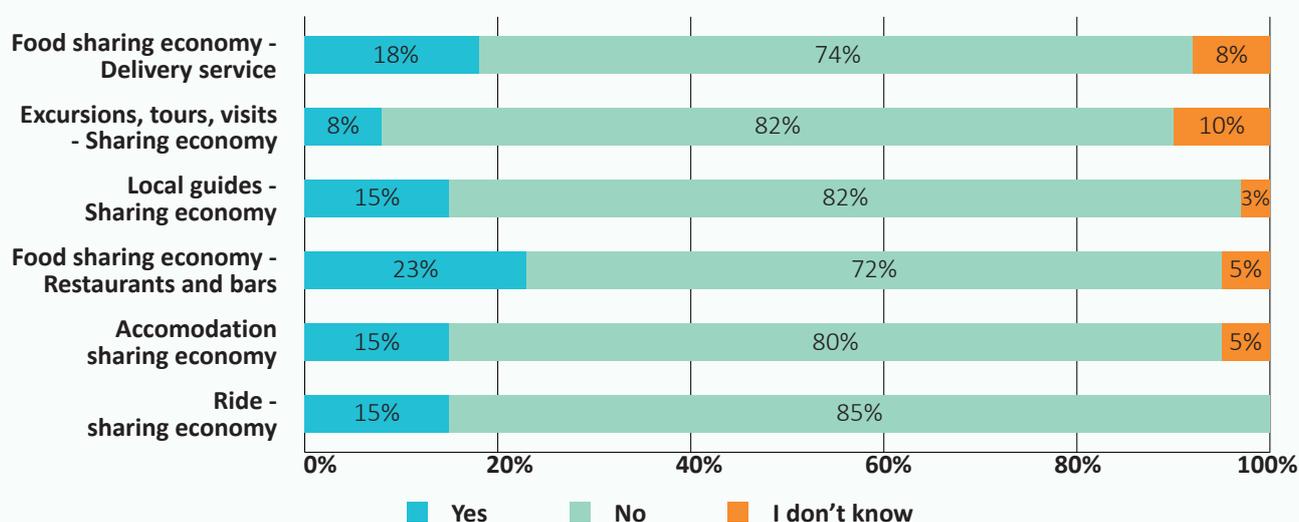
# THE ROLE OF SHARING ECONOMY PLATFORMS WITHIN TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Alongside informal businesses, the sharing economy with online booking platforms has exponentially increased in recent years, including marketplaces where services are offered on a peer-to-peer usage basis.<sup>40</sup> A growing number of individuals are willing to temporarily share with tourists what they own (e.g., a house or a car) or what they do (e.g., cooking or other tourism-related activities), publicising the offers through online platforms.<sup>41</sup> As a significant example, Booking.com offering a comprehensive platform for booking accommodations, flights, car rentals, and attractions worldwide, from 2010 until 2023 welcomed over 1 billion guest arrivals in the alternative accommodations segment (i.e., homes and apartments).<sup>42</sup> Uber, a global (70 countries as of 2024) online platform offering various services, including transportation, counted 7.8 million drivers and 161 million customers in 2023.<sup>43</sup>

These and other online sharing economy platforms are examples of a mix of a formal and informal economy that is very popular in travel and tourism contexts. Such online booking platforms can inadvertently create more opportunities and avenues for individual perpetrators and criminal networks to sexually exploit children. For example, platforms that facilitate peer-to-peer exchanges, such as short-term accommodation or transport services, may be misused by perpetrators as less regulated places to sexually exploit children.

Findings from this analysis provide further insights into how the sharing economy operates in the travel and tourism sector, as well as the perceived risks associated with the facilitation or misuse of services by perpetrators to sexually exploit children. The global review highlighted a lack of existing studies on this issue, and discussions with civil society organisations also indicated limited knowledge and engagement with these entities in this area (See Figure 3).

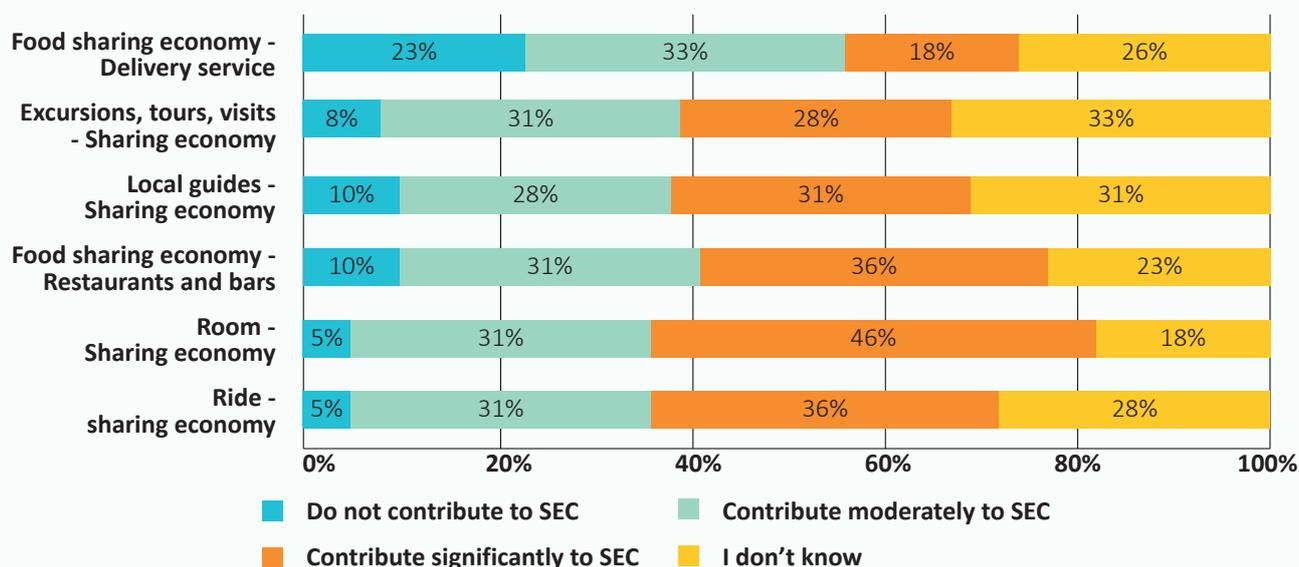
Figure 3 Are you currently working with any sharing economy businesses in the following sectors? (N=39)



Despite such limited engagement, survey respondents indicated that most sub-sectors within the sharing economy contribute to some extent

to the sexual exploitation of children, as further detailed in Figure 4.

Figure 4 How much do you think workers in the following sectors have an impact on the sexual exploitation of children in your country? (N=39)



## The role of the room-sharing economy in the prevention and response to the sexual exploitation of children

Research, booking, and payment of private accommodation for tourism have become more user-friendly over the last years, particularly since the rise of online platforms such as Airbnb, CouchSurfing, HomeAway, and Bookabach. The regulation of private accommodations arranged through online platforms varies widely across countries. Some cities, mainly in Europe, such as Barcelona and Paris, have started implementing specific measures to regulate short-term rentals on Airbnb<sup>44</sup> also, countries like Thailand have made short-term rentals without a hotel licence illegal.<sup>45</sup> In Latin America, although some countries have some level of regulations, there are still many challenges to ensuring effective enforcement.<sup>46</sup>

Among the different sectors of the sharing economy, the room-sharing sector had the highest percentage of respondents (46%) perceiving it as

contributing significantly to the sexual exploitation of children. (See Figure 4) Focus group discussion's participants in Brazil highlighted how easily perpetrators of sexual crimes against children can gain access to accommodations offered through online platforms, which often lack adequate control and possibility of oversight.<sup>47</sup> To quote one participant, "if they [perpetrators] want to, they can stay overnight in an establishment that is not supervised, or they can look for a holiday rental, and there's a problem there: Airbnb has no control".

Although a high number of respondents believe that the room-sharing economy contributes significantly to the sexual exploitation of children, the survey showed that only 15% of respondents are working with businesses in this sector (see Figure 3). This low percentage of engagement with businesses in the room-sharing economy may be attributed to the challenges in implementing strategies that target these businesses. Insights from the documentation of existing practices highlight the following challenges:

- o **There is a lack of knowledge about how the room-sharing economy operates**, as highlighted by informal workers participating in focus group discussions in Bolivia.<sup>48</sup> They noted that while these platforms seem to provide safe services, their reliability remains uncertain due to the absence of direct personal interaction with managers or service providers.
- o **The inadequate regulation of sharing economy platforms, including room-sharing platforms, hinders those working in child protection from collaborating effectively.** In Brazil, an interviewee from a civil society organisation said “platforms “feel armoured (...) hidden behind the virtual world”, the interviewee pointed out that the lack of control is frustrating for those who want to intervene.<sup>49</sup>

This analysis identified existing practices involving PACT US- the ECPAT member organisation in the United States- in collaboration with Airbnb.

- o **PACT US, as the Local Code Representative of the Code Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism<sup>50</sup> (The Code), engaged with Airbnb** to become a member of The Code.<sup>51</sup> Adhering to The Code includes conducting a risk analysis, developing child protection policies and procedures, cooperating with stakeholders and training employees on the prevention of sexual exploitation and how to report cases.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, information about child protection is shared with hosts and travellers, providing guidance on identifying and reporting concerning behaviour, protecting children from sexual exploitation, and combating human trafficking.
- o **PACT US, Safe Kids Worldwide, and Polaris Fund, among other organisations, are part of the Airbnb Trust and Safety Advisory Council** set up in 2022. The Council has a specific working group human trafficking.<sup>53</sup> The initiatives included providing employee training and educational resources for the communities to help combat the sexual exploitation of children.<sup>54</sup>

- o ECPAT International joined PACT US to explore avenues of cooperation with Airbnb and the role that reservation and online booking platforms play in shaping the travel and tourism industry’s capacities to prevent child sexual exploitation through their businesses.



### The role of the food-sharing economy, including restaurants, bars and delivery services in the prevention and response to the sexual exploitation of children.

The sharing economy has gained popularity in numerous countries within the food and beverage services and travel industry as well. However, this has also raised concerns about the involvement of children and youth in delivery services. For example, in Brazil, school closures and job losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic drove many children to work in the informal economy, particularly in food delivery.<sup>55</sup> Given the lack of regulation, children often used identity documents from elder friends and relatives to sign up to work on the platforms.<sup>56</sup> Thirty-six percent of survey respondents indicated that the sharing economy in restaurants and bars contributes significantly to the sexual exploitation of children. Similarly, 18% of respondents viewed food delivery services as a notable contributor to the occurrence of the sexual

exploitation of children. (See Figure 4). A child protection researcher interviewed<sup>57</sup> explained: *“Children delivering food for informal and family businesses are in a vulnerable position. The business is very fluctuating, and sexual favours are often done to secure a stable income”*.

However, only approximately one-third of survey respondents indicated that they are working with businesses in the food sector’s sharing economy (See Figure 3). Evidence from Brazil and Bolivia shows that the unregulated and decentralised nature of the sharing economy makes it difficult to identify, reach, and engage with providers in the food-sharing economy. The global review did not identify existing interventions actively engaging businesses in this sector.

### The role of the ride-sharing economy in the prevention and response to the sexual exploitation of children

The ride-sharing economy has grown significantly in recent years, becoming a key part of the travel and tourism industry. This sector offers convenience and accessibility for travellers while creating new economic opportunities for drivers.<sup>58</sup> Many drivers are usually recruited from an economically pressured sector; they primarily drive for these platforms, representing a form of “semi-formalisation” while occasionally participating in other informal work.<sup>59</sup>

A third of survey respondents (36%) agreed that the ride-sharing economy significantly contributes to the sexual exploitation of children (see Figure 4). While there is a lack of evidence explicitly examining the risks of sexual exploitation within the ride-sharing economy, some news reports and existing literature indicate that these risks do exist.<sup>60</sup> For example, in Norway, severe cases of sexual violence against young people have been reported within the taxi industry, including incidents linked to digital platforms.<sup>61</sup>

The ride-sharing economy has the lowest level of survey respondents’ engagement (only 15%) with this sector on child protection measures

(See Figure 3). **However, some platforms have started to make commitments and adopt voluntary policies.** This analysis found existing strategies undertaken by Uber and Grab, two online platforms offering various services, including transportation.

- o Uber, one of the world’s largest rideshare platforms available in 70 countries,<sup>62</sup> recorded 11,273 million trips in 2024.<sup>63</sup> PACT US has been collaborating with Uber in elaborating internal company policies for the safety of passengers, considering specific aspects of internal procedures that are needed to protect children from sexual exploitation.
- o Grab is the leading rideshare platform in Southeast Asia.<sup>64</sup> Grab has partnered with civil society organisations in several countries where it operates to train its drivers in the prevention of human trafficking. In 2019, it collaborated with the anti-trafficking group Liberty Shared to offer training in Cambodia and the Philippines through its app.<sup>65</sup> In 2020, Grab enlisted a plan to train tuk-tuk drivers in Cambodia. The training provided tools for identifying suspicious activities inside vehicles, focusing on preventing and responding to labour and child sexual exploitation. It emphasised also the need to pay particular attention to potential cases occurring in the streets, construction sites, adult entertainment venues, and tourist hotspots.<sup>66</sup>



## The role of the sharing economy in the travel and tour services in the prevention and response to the sexual exploitation of children

The sharing economy in the travel and tour services sector has grown significantly, driven by digital platforms that connect travellers with local providers offering services. The initial contact between travel agents and individuals can occur through online platforms, which might be less regulated, providing more anonymity for perpetrators or facilitators of sexual exploitation of children, among other risks for children. According to approximately one-third of survey respondents, services by local guides (31%) as well as excursions, tours and visits (28%) provided through online platforms contribute significantly to the sexual exploitation of children. (See Figure 3)

For this type of sharing economy, limited evidence and knowledge were found in discussions with non-governmental organisations regarding the risks of sexual exploitation. Likewise, no existing practices involving businesses in this sharing economy to protect children were identified in the analysed countries. Notably, 82% of respondents stated they are not working with businesses in these sectors.

## Gaps and opportunities to protect children from sexual exploitation in the sharing economy

This analysis showed that the sharing economy in travel and tourism remains poorly understood, particularly in terms of its internal structures, possible mechanisms for engagement, and the role in either preventing or contributing to and facilitating the sexual exploitation of children. The industry itself lacks awareness of the risks and impacts its operational models may have on children, making effective child protection efforts more challenging. Traditional approaches to involving businesses in safeguarding initiatives are often not adapted to the realities of the sharing economy, limiting their effectiveness. While some platforms have started implementing commitments and voluntary measures, interventions to engage sharing economy businesses in child protection remain scarce. To address these gaps, strengthening regulations, raising awareness, and fostering cross-sector collaboration are crucial steps in mitigating the risks of child sexual exploitation within these rapidly evolving digital platforms.

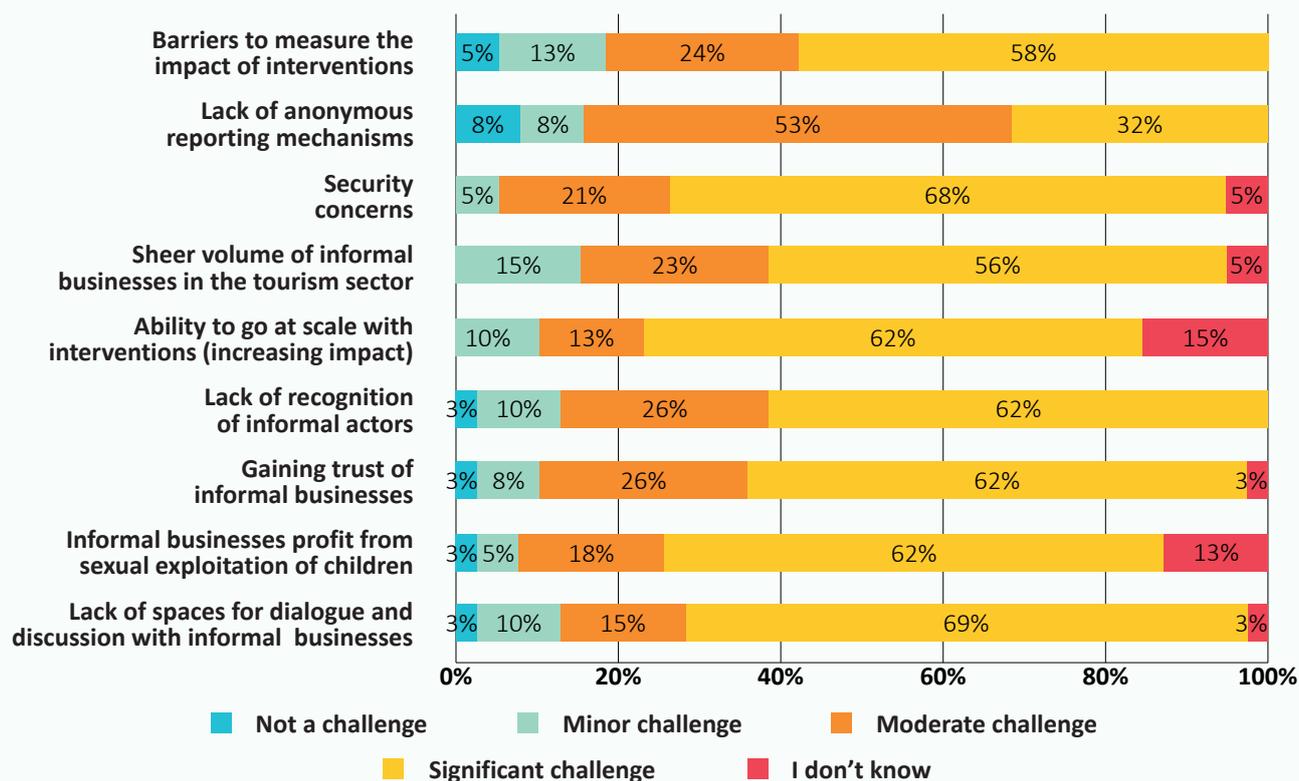


# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

When asked about challenges to engage with informal businesses in the travel and tourism sector to address sexual exploitation of children in their countries, the majority of survey respondents indicated **limited opportunities and lack of spaces for dialogue with informal businesses (69%)** and **security concerns (68%)** as the most significant

**challenges** (See Figure 5). Survey respondents' perceptions, as well as discussions with ECPAT member organisations and Down to Zero Alliance partners provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for engaging with the informal sector.

Figure 5 Are these challenges in engaging with informal businesses in the travel and tourism sector to address the sexual exploitation of children in your country? (N= 39)



## Limited opportunities and spaces for dialogue with informal businesses

### **ECPAT member organisations highlighted as a main challenge in establishing spaces for dialogue with informal businesses the difficulty in reaching out to them**

due to the blurred line between formal and informal economies, as well as the inherent dynamicity and instability of the informal sector. While research and public policies tend to present the informal and formal economies as two independent systems, in reality, formal economies depend on informal activities and vice versa.<sup>67</sup> However, while informal businesses fall outside of legal and policy frameworks and formal regulations, they are managed by community organisations in some countries, which can lead them not to be perceived—or not to perceive themselves—as fully informal. For instance, in Bolivia, certain workers in the informal transport sector belong to local trade unions, creating a sense of formality at the community level.<sup>68</sup> As mentioned before, community tourism in indigenous areas, which often involves a mix of formal and informal economies, is typically organised under the guidance of community organisations or leaders, providing an element of formality.<sup>69</sup> For example, a survey respondent from Brazil noted, “*this is a very thin line between what is formal and informal,*” explaining that some workers in informal tour guides view themselves as “entrepreneurs”.<sup>70</sup>

This overlap makes it challenging to draw a clear line between the two, complicating efforts to engage those working in informal businesses, considering that sustainability and due diligence regulations apply mostly to large corporations constraining engagement to first tier business partners, although greatest risks reside throughout the value chain. However, the interdependence between formal and informal sectors, as well as community-based forms of organisation—where workers may not perceive themselves as ‘informal’—present opportunities for engagement. Leveraging the synergy between formal and informal sectors can help create shared learning and dialogue spaces. Additionally, working with

community-based organisational structures allows for using their centralised and coordinated networks to facilitate engagement.

**Due to the inherent unstable dynamics of informal business operations, it is difficult to reach their workers<sup>71</sup>,** as stressed by a survey respondent from Colombia: “*A challenge is the number of informal vendors who change constantly day by day and who are not fixed in different beaches because they move from one place to another to sell.*”

**Although those working in informal businesses may be interested in attending training sessions and awareness-raising activities, they are often constrained by time pressures and the need to secure daily economic gains.**

For example, in Brazil, an interviewee from a non-governmental organisation talked about the challenges of involving informal businesses in awareness-raising activities, particularly during the Carnival season: “*There is an intense competition for sales spaces and the precarious conditions faced by street vendors [in particular] during these festive periods, making it difficult to approach this sector.*”<sup>72</sup>

## Security concerns related to the engagement between civil society organisations and informal businesses on child protection

The security concerns come both from civil society organisations regarding their own security and from the informal businesses, considering that they operate in grey areas.

Civil society organisations highlighted the risks related to potential links between informal businesses and organised crime activities. Some ECPAT member organisations, for instance in West Africa, have identified this as a significant issue, noting that the informal sector can be connected to organised crime, drug dealers, and trafficking in human beings’ networks, which can pose risks to civil society organisation workers. Similar concerns have been raised by organisations working with informal businesses in Latin America.

The workers in the informal sector who demonstrated interest and wished to protect children interviewed for this analysis highlighted their own security risks, as criminal networks may target them, if they disrupt their profitable activities. For instance, park rangers who engaged in child protection activities with informal and formal tourism agencies in Bolivia have expressed concerns about being threatened by trafficking networks.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, some workers in the informal travel and tourism sector may be concerned about sharing information with civil society organisations, considering that they work in areas outside the scope of government regulation.

Civil society organisations that have experience working with informal businesses on child protection agree that creating opportunities for them to voice their concerns builds trust, encouraging their participation in child protection efforts. Many workers in the informal sector are often genuinely interested in improving their work environment to protect children and benefit from spaces where they can express their concerns, including those related to their security and job instability that affect their own communities.<sup>74,75</sup>

## Other challenges

**A recurring challenge highlighted by interviewees and organisations working with the informal sector was the persistence of social tolerance towards certain forms of sexual exploitation of children. In some cases, the sexual exploitation of children is not fully recognised as a crime but rather perceived as an acceptable means of economic survival for children and communities in vulnerable situations despite its long-term harm to children’s mental and physical health, emotional wellbeing, socio-economic and educational impacts.** The lack of awareness about the gravity of this crime, including the legal consequences that informal businesses and workers can face, makes it more challenging to engage them in prevention and response activities. This is closely interconnected with existing harmful gender and social norms that fuel the tolerance of the sexual exploitation of children. A representative

from ECPAT Indonesia explained, *“For some informal tourism businesses and many families, sexual exploitation of children is a normal business, [sexual activities] with children have achieved a social normality; it is nothing where you are scandalised anymore”.*

At the same time, there are some workers within the informal sector who are willing to contribute to prevention and response efforts but may be concerned about being fined or penalised because they operate informally, as seen in Brazil.<sup>76</sup> This fear makes it challenging for civil society organisations to gain trust from informal workers and engage them in prevention and response initiatives.

**Some legal frameworks also hinder the capacity of governments to engage with informal workers,** as explained by an interviewee from a government institution in Brazil: *“We can only act within what is established, and much is still not clearly defined. I understand the importance of trying to reach professionals who are not yet formalised, but this is an issue that goes beyond the competencies of the Ministry, which is the truth. We can’t reach these people with the structure we currently have.”*<sup>77</sup> Civil society organisations in Latin America highlight the regulatory barriers faced by those who are willing to formalise their businesses. These include a lack of accessible information, bureaucratic procedures, and the high costs associated with government requirements, all of which make formalisation difficult.



# PROMISING STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING THE INFORMAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR IN PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

The survey respondents were asked to reflect on what they consider as the most efficient strategies for engaging with informal businesses in the travel and tourism sector to take measures against the sexual exploitation of children. Conducting joint public awareness-raising campaigns, in partnership with the informal sector, aimed at travellers and tourists was pointed out as a very efficient strategy by most survey respondents (59%), followed by informing about existing laws that criminalise child sexual exploitation (54%) and providing training to informal businesses workers (54%).<sup>78</sup>

Discussions with non-governmental organisations highlight the following key elements as critical approaches for interventions involving the informal sector:

- o **Addressing social and gender norms** that enable and perpetuate the tolerance for the sexual exploitation of children has been recognised as an essential, although challenging, component of interventions. To change these behavioural patterns, those working in the informal sector need to be supported to question their perceptions about children and, in some cases, reflect on their own personal experiences of violence. This step is crucial yet demanding, particularly in communities where deeply ingrained social norms prevail and there are limited opportunities for broader reflection on the issues of violence, including the sexual exploitation of children.

- o **Initiatives engaging the informal sector need to be grounded in their interests, typically related to running a business, while integrating child protection topics.** This may involve addressing business-related concerns, such as marketing strategies or guidance on formalisation processes with the governments. By responding to the sector's immediate needs, such activities can more effectively engage informal workers, creating a pathway to introduce and prioritise child protection.
- o **Recognising and collaborating with community organisations formed by workers of the informal sector, such as unions, social groups, or community associations.** This approach facilitates access to a broader range of workers, ensuring greater outreach while aligning activities with the organisations' dynamics and fostering long-term ownership. The collaborative efforts can also support the development of minimum safeguarding standards, training programmes, and oversight mechanisms, contributing to the mitigation of the risks of sexual exploitation of children.<sup>79</sup>

*"It is necessary to create a joint strategy – inspired by The Code.<sup>80</sup> – in the region where we can implement some form of recognition for the informal sector. This will enable their stronger engagement in the protection of children."<sup>81</sup>*

**Developing multi-stakeholder, comprehensive, and tailored approaches will help ensure impactful outcomes**, as echoed by a survey respondent from Serbia: “[It is recommended] *a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration with various stakeholders, community awareness, education, programme support, training, and a good monitoring system.*”

Below are some practical examples of how civil society organisations have engaged with informal workers across various sectors and countries.

Practical examples in the transport sector

- o In Bolivia, the Munasim Kullakita Foundation led initiatives to protect children in cooperation with the transport sector, including bus terminals, as key workers of change. These initiatives included capacity-building for drivers in the formal and informal transport sectors.<sup>82</sup>

Practical examples in the food and beverage sector

- o The Centre for the Defence of Children and Adolescents in Brazil, in partnership with the local government, implemented awareness-raising actions and training workshops for formal and informal workers, including street food vendors, during major events like Carnival and New Year’s Eve. The focus was on promoting children’s rights and raising awareness about the consequences of the sexual exploitation of children using relevant legislation as well as the practical experiences of participants to illustrate key concepts to prevent sexual exploitation of children.

Practical examples in the informal travel and tour services

- o The Munasim Kullakita Foundation in Bolivia has been working with park rangers to engage both formal and informal tourism workers, including community tourist agents, in child protection. The Foundation supported the National Park Services in adopting a localised code of conduct based on the international initiative of The Code.

Practical examples in the informal adult entertainment sector

- o In collaboration with the district police office, the organisation Shakti Samuha facilitated a training session in February 2024 in the Kaski district in Nepal. The session brought together 33 owners from the informal adult entertainment sector to raise awareness of the risks of sexual exploitation and actions that the sector can take to prevent and respond to these crimes.
- o The Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia (CLARISSA) programme explores the link between Nepal’s informal adult entertainment sector and the worst forms of child labour, including sexual exploitation.<sup>83</sup> Through action-oriented research with business owners, the programme developed strategies to combat child labour, including strengthening sector associations and registering businesses to encourage ethical practices.



## CONCLUSIONS

The informal sector in the travel and tourism industry plays a significant role in supporting the livelihoods of communities worldwide. It provides flexible job opportunities and helps bridge gaps with the formal tourism industry. However, because informal businesses often operate outside legal and formal regulations, they also pose challenges to economies and workers, due to absence of work standards and exposure to health and social risks. These risks include a heightened risks in this sector to instances of the sexual exploitation of children. This report underscores the risks of sexual exploitation of children across the tourism supply chain, particularly within the accommodation and transport services.

The report also highlights the key positive role that workers in informal travel and tourism businesses can take in protecting children from sexual exploitation. However, this can be challenging to achieve in many contexts. Some challenges for engaging informal workers include the lack of formal dialogue spaces, security concerns, and distrust between informal workers, governmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations, which hinders collaborative efforts.

This report underlined the importance and possibility of overcoming a number of challenges and identified barriers—as reflected in examples of good practices—through comprehensive and localised strategies and coordinated regional approaches. Effective engagement can be achieved by combining public awareness campaigns, context-sensitive training programmes, and collaboration with trade unions and community associations.

The findings support the need for a multifaceted approach, leveraging collaboration among informal and formal business workers alongside non-governmental and governmental agencies. The promising practice examples and recommendations



provided aim to inform and inspire action at global, regional, and national levels, encouraging efforts to engage informal economy workers as key allies in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children.

In regard to the sharing economy, although their role is less documented, the analysis concludes that while offering opportunities for flexible work and services, it can also be misused for the sexual exploitation of children. The lack of regulation, higher levels of anonymity of customers, and challenges in implementing child protection measures can create opportunities for perpetrators to gain access to children and sexually exploit them. The analysis highlights a significant gap in research and understanding of the role of the sharing economy in the travel and tourism sector concerning the sexual exploitation of children. Despite increasing recognition of the potential risks associated with these platforms, discussions with civil society organisations reveal limited knowledge and a lack of targeted interventions. Survey data further indicate that engagement with businesses in this sector remains low. The absence of existing interventions engaging businesses in the sharing economy highlights the need for stronger policies and collaborative efforts at global, regional as well as country and local levels.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING THE INFORMAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR IN THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

*“All sectors, civil society, private sectors and government need to come together come forward and have greater policies, so that these children and women who are vulnerable of any sort of violence are protected. So, this needs to be done very urgently.”<sup>84</sup>*

## Recommendations for civil society organisations

**Invest efforts in understanding how informal businesses operate in each context to tailor strategies effectively.** This involves learning about their perceptions of their status as informal entities, exploring the ways they organise themselves (if any), their relationships with communities, interests, and other relevant factors.

**Provide educational materials on the risks of and prevention strategies** against the sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism sector to local organisations as well as government institutions to distribute in their ongoing activities with the informal sector.

**Dedicate time to building trust and creating spaces for open dialogue with workers in the informal sector.** This approach fosters mutual understanding and establishes a strong foundation for meaningful collaboration.

**Work with trade unions and community associations** that comprise both workers in the formal and informal sectors to establish self-regulations and improve the impact of interventions.

## **Develop capacity-building and behaviour-change programmes tailored to the context of the informal travel and tourism sub-sectors, considering workers’ time constraints and financial challenges.**

Evidence suggests the following components to do so, but not exclusively:

- o *Attitudes and skills* to recognise and embrace their role in protecting children from sexual exploitation, as well as to challenge existing social norms that may tolerate certain forms of sexual exploitation of children.
- o *Knowledge* of the manifestations of sexual exploitation of children within their sub-sectors, including associated risks and protective factors, as well as the existing legal framework in the country.
- o *Procedures and practices* for preventing, disrupting and responding to the sexual exploitation of children, including reporting, oversight, and self-regulation mechanisms.

Some recommended strategies for behavioural programmes are:

- o **Combine strategies conducted in formal and informal education spaces.** For instance, behaviour-change initiatives can be carried out in the environments where informal businesses operate, enabling demonstrations on site on how to identify instances of sexual exploitation of children. Meanwhile, formal training sessions can focus on legal frameworks, how sexual exploitation of children manifests, how to establish effective oversight strategies, etc.
- o **Consider providing incentives to encourage the participation of workers of the informal sector in trainings, particularly those with businesses operating on day-to-day basis, struggling for daily income.** This includes, for example, providing training on skills to enhance

their business operations, such as marketing strategies, financial management, and language skills to better communicate with diverse customers.

- o **Tailor training strategies to accommodate the availability of workers in the informal sector and establish continuous learning processes.**

Given the high turnover and job instability in the informal sector, it is necessary to maintain ongoing activities. Existing practices to engage the informal sector show that the widespread dissemination of information, coupled with ongoing campaigns aiming at behavioural change and sustained training efforts, offers promising impacts.

## Recommendations for governments

**Foster dialogue with civil society organisations to gain a deeper understanding on the child protection risks associated with the functioning of informal business in the travel and tourism sector.** Such a collaborative and inclusive approach is crucial for tailoring policies and strategies to local needs and contexts, thereby ensuring more effective involvement of the informal sector in combating the sexual exploitation of children.

**Review and streamline formalisation processes to provide more opportunities for informal businesses that wish to become part of the formal sector.** In many cases, bureaucratic procedures and high costs are significant barriers for informal workers.

**Promote the implementation of codes, standards and procedures for child safeguarding, with proper monitoring agencies in place to ensure the safety of children involved.**

**Develop a multi-sectoral approach that incorporates various ministries including child welfare, tourism, transport, labour, ministry of interior for law enforcement, education, etc.**

**Disseminate information on child protection through spaces where informal workers operate, distributing educational and preventive materials on-site.** This effort can be strengthened through collaboration with existing associations and unions to channel information and implement targeted strategies that ensure the protection of children.

**Incorporate the topic of child protection in tourism-related courses and vocational training programmes.** This will contribute to forming future professionals that will build a safe industry for children.

**Collaborate with regional working groups,** such as the Regional Action Group of the Americas (GARA), to coordinate efforts and maximise the impact on the protection of children.

## Recommendations for formal businesses

**The formal travel and tourism sector can leverage its supply chain, including the informal sector, by clearly and accessibly communicating its policies and procedures on child protection to all relevant stakeholders, including communities, as well as informal and formal suppliers and partners.** This involves encouraging and supporting informal workers to align with their standards of zero tolerance for the sexual exploitation of children, including ending partnerships in case of breaches.

**Establish spaces for dialogue where workers from the formal travel and tourism sector can share their experiences and practices with informal sector counterparts, with the support of civil society organisations.** Such exchange can foster mutual understanding and collaboration, enhancing overall efforts to protect children.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING SHARING ECONOMY BUSINESSES IN THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

## For non-governmental organisations

- o Engage with sharing economy platforms in the travel and tourism sector to understand their models of operations and identify risks and impacts on children in order to implement collaborative initiatives to protect children.
- o Partner with sharing economy platforms to enhance policies and procedures for child protection, for example, by training providers and establishing child protection standards.
- o Work with sharing economy businesses to include child protection measures and messaging into their platforms.

## For governments

- o Establish and strengthen oversight mechanisms to monitor and address risks associated with the misuse of sharing economy services for the sexual exploitation of children. This should include promoting and ensuring the implementation of due diligence processes and child rights impact assessments, in collaboration with civil society and the private sector.

- o Collaborate with the sharing economy to ensure regulations for a safe work environment for youth and young people, as well as to implement preventive measures to protect children from sexual exploitation.

## For formal businesses

- o Formal businesses with delivery platforms should require partner platforms to implement safeguarding procedures, including age verification measures and policies to prevent child labour and sexual exploitation of children.
- o Formal businesses partnering with sharing economy platforms should remain vigilant in identifying and reporting cases of sexual exploitation of children. They should ensure that sharing economy platforms implement safeguarding measures, including awareness and training for staff to recognise and respond appropriately to any potential cases of sexual exploitation of children.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> The World Bank Group. (2018). [Tourism and the Sharing economy: Policy & Potential of Sustainable Peer-to Peer Accommodation](#).
- <sup>4</sup> Voluntourism with children refers to products offered through the travel market, usually for unskilled volunteers that pay companies, or other organisations, to travel and work in distant communities, as an attractive alternative to mass tourism. Voluntourism activities with children can be also informally arranged in the communities, through facilitation of contacts between informal workers and spaces where children live, play or learn.
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- <sup>12</sup> The project “Stepping up the Fight Against Sexual Exploitation of Children – Empowering Children and Communities” (SUFASEC), part of the Down to Zero Alliance, is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Dutch development foreign policy with Defence for Children- ECPAT Netherlands. The programme aims for children in all of their diversity to live free of sexual exploitation, and uses a multi-sector and systemic approach, recognising the complexity of sexual exploitation of children and specific contexts in which it takes place. The Down to Zero Alliance (led by Terre des Hommes Netherlands and including Child Rights Coalition Asia, Conexión, Defence for Children – ECPAT Netherlands, Free A Girl and Plan International) work with civil society organisations) in the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. ECPAT International is a technical implementing partner of Defence for Children – ECPAT Netherlands. The programme aims to reach more than 21,000 children.
- <sup>13</sup> While the analysis intended to capture a global overview of the topic, a specific focus was placed on the countries part of the DTZ Alliance: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines and Thailand.
- <sup>14</sup> Thirty-nine respondents agreed to participate in the online survey, including ECPAT member organisations (50%), representatives of non-governmental organisations (25%) and (25%) academics and others key workers working in the field. The respondents were based in the following countries: Albania, Austria, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Mauritius, Nepal, Norway, Peru, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, and Uganda.

- <sup>15</sup> The survey was divided in three parts covering the following topics: (1) Informal businesses in the travel and tourism sector: Participants were asked about their engagement with informal workers, the prevalence of informal businesses in their country, their perceptions on how informal businesses contributes or are misused for the sexual exploitation of children, and which sectors should be prioritised for engagement to prevent the sexual exploitation of children; (2) The role of the sharing economy: This section explored participants' current engagement with sharing economy businesses and their perceptions of how these platforms influence the sexual exploitation of children; (3) Existing practices with informal businesses: Participants were asked about the activities undertaken with informal businesses to prevent sexual exploitation of children, their views on the most effective strategies for influencing informal workers, and the challenges they face in engaging with such businesses to address the sexual exploitation of children.
- <sup>16</sup> Ten key informants were interviewed, including representatives from civil society organisations and child protection researchers.
- <sup>17</sup> The webinar with partners in Latin America took place online on 16 August 2024, and with partners in Asia on 12 September 2024. Discussions from regional workshops in South Asia (Kathmandu, Nepal, August 2024) and the Americas (San José, Costa Rica, June 2024) on collective action to end the sexual exploitation of children were also included.
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- <sup>32</sup> Researcher expert in the child protection field
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